

CANTERBURY

Tracks in the Mount Somers area



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

The Mount Somers Track is a 1–2 day circuit, linking the popular Pinnacles and Woolshed Creek Huts. The track was created by the Mt Somers Walkways Society, which was established in 1983 by locals from Mount Somers and Staveley. The track is managed by the Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC), with a significant amount of the track maintenance and weed control being carried out by the Mt Somers Walkways Society.

There are also a number of shorter walks and tracks in the area.

If you intend to walk only one way and require vehicle transport, a local service is available (phone **03 303 0809** before you start your trip).



Swing bridge near Woolshed Creek. Photo: Julia Wells

Getting there

The Mount Somers Track can be started from Staveley or Mount Somers township.

From Staveley, turn off Inland Scenic Route 72 at Staveley and follow the road to Sharplin Falls car park, which has toilets and an information panel.

From Mount Somers township, follow Ashburton Gorge Road for approximately 10 km before turning right onto Jig Road, which will take you to the Woolshed Creek picnic area. Here you will find a large, grassy, sheltered picnic area with toilets and information.

Hunting

Recreational hunting is allowed on public conservation land around Mount Somers, but hunting is not allowed in Sharplin Falls Scenic Reserve. A DOC hunting permit must be carried at all times. Information on hunting on public conservation land and hunting permits is available at www.doc.govt.nz/canterbury-hunting.

Native plants

The forest along the track is a vestige of the extensive tracts that once covered the foothills. Catastrophic fires that were started accidentally or to clear the land for farming swept through, destroying the forest. Later, burning of alpine tussock reduced the height at which forest occurs, except for a band on Mount Somers.

The forest remnant is dominated by beech, especially tawhairauriki / mountain beech with some tawhai / silver beech occupying the most favourable sites. Other trees include southern rātā, māpou, pāpāuma / broadleaf, putaputawētā / marbleleaf, toatoa / mountain celery pine and houhere / mountain ribbonwood.

Above the treeline, subalpine scrub includes snow tōtara, mountain neinei, wharariki / mountain flax, snow tussock and snowberry.

Native animals

Korimako / bellbird and tauhou / silvereye are the most common native birds in the forested areas, although tītīpounamu / rifleman, pīwakawaka / fantail and miromiro / tomtit are also present. Above the bushline, kārearea / New Zealand falcon, pīhoihoi / New Zealand pipit and kāhu / Australasian harrier may be seen.

The Bluff wētā (*Deinacrida elegans*) is found in the Mount Somers area. With distinctive red, black and white banded legs, this high-altitude giant wētā can weigh up to 16 g or about half the weight of a mouse. It has only been found in the Kaikōura Ranges and Mount Somers, and belongs to an ancient group that is a similar age to the rhyolite that makes up the mountain!



Bluff wētā (*Deinacrida elegans*).
Photo: Sam Purdie

Huts and campsites

There are two huts on the Mount Somers Track. Woolshed Creek Hut sleeps 26 on sleeping platforms, while Pinnacles Hut sleeps 19 on single and double bunks. Water is supplied from either a rainwater tank or directly from a stream. All drinking water should be boiled before use.

Both huts have wood stoves for heating, but cooking facilities and utensils are not provided.

Annual hut passes may be used for Pinnacles and Woolshed Creek Huts but advance booking is essential. Book online at www.doc.govt.nz/online-bookings.

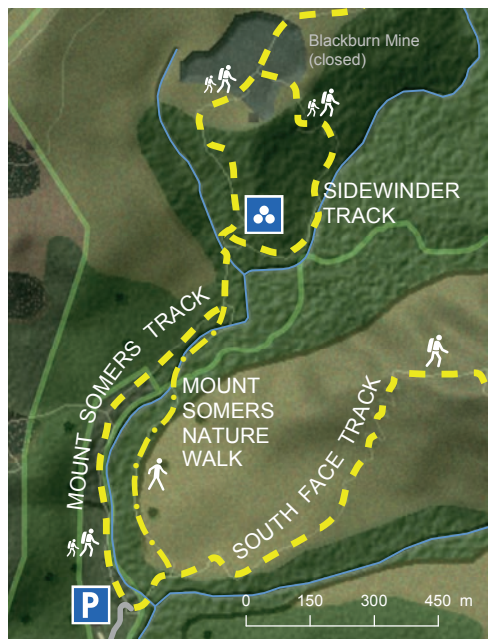
There are also bookable campsites close to the huts, although there is very limited space near Pinnacles Hut (6 sites).



Woolshed Creek Hut. Photo: Brian Dobbie



Pinnacles Hut. Photo: Brian Dobbie



Warning

Woolshed Creek Hut and Pinnacles Hut are reached on tracks that are classified as intermediate tramping tracks. The track into Pinnacles Hut from Staveley car park is considerably more challenging.

After a period of heavy rain, side streams may be dangerous to cross.

These include:

- Pony Stream between Sharplin Falls car park and Pinnacles Hut on the Mount Somers Track
- the unnamed stream between Woolshed Creek Hut and the Bus Stop on the Bus Stop Track
- Woolshed Creek on the Mount Somers Nature Walk.

Please note that even small streams may be impassable after heavy rain.

- Car park
- Historic site
- Information
- Picnic area
- Serviced hut
- Shelter
- Toilet
- Public conservation land



Easy to intermediate walking track: Mostly well-formed track; easy to moderate walking for up to a day.



Intermediate tramping track: Generally well-formed track for day or multi-day tramping / hiking trips.



Advanced tramping track: Mostly unformed track with steep, rough or muddy sections; has directional markers, poles or rock cairns.



Vehicle track

The map in this brochure is a guide only and is not a substitute for a topographical map. Use map series NZTopo50 BX19 and BX20.

All track times and distances are one way.

MOUNT SOMERS TRACK



Woolshed Creek car park to Woolshed Creek Hut 3 hr, 5.1 km

From Woolshed Creek car park, follow the Mount Somers Track along Woolshed Creek. This is the tramway route that brought coal down from the Blackburn Mine. After crossing a small stream, climb up past the mine site to a high point where you can enjoy superb views of the upper south Ashburton Gorge. The track then descends back to Woolshed Creek before arriving at Woolshed Creek Hut.

Note: The easiest (but less scenic) route is via a marked path off the Mount Somers Track. The path initially follows a fence before diverting to a vehicle track. Turn right at the vehicle track and follow it as it climbs and then descends to Woolshed Creek Hut.

Woolshed Creek Hut to Pinnacles Hut 3 hr, 6.2 km

From Woolshed Creek Hut, cross Woolshed Creek and follow the Mount Somers Track up to a ridge before dropping down to Morgan Stream. A sign just past the Morgan Stream crossing indicates a short side trip down to the creek to view some interesting boulder features referred to as water caves. From Morgan Stream, it is a steady climb up through tussock and sub-alpine scrub to a saddle (1,170 m). Follow the track downhill (passing the junction for Te Kiekie Route) to Pinnacles Hut. The hut is named after the rock formations on the northern face of Mount Somers, formed by the cooling of very hot, sticky lava flows some 90 million years ago.

Pinnacles Hut to Sharplin Falls car park 3.5 hr, 5.8 km

From Pinnacles Hut, follow the track down the true right of Bowyers Stream before crossing a bridge. Continue downstream, crossing Pony Stream (side streams may be difficult to cross after heavy rain). Follow the track uphill to Duke Knob (739 m) before descending through tawhairauriki/ mountain beech forest back to Bowyers Stream. Follow this stream to Sharplin Falls car park.

SOUTH FACE TRACK



Woolshed Creek car park to Sharplin Falls car park 7 hr, 11.6 km

From Woolshed Creek car park, cross Woolshed Creek and climb steeply up a rocky ridge. The track then travels around the southern face of Mount Somers through a mix of open grassland and forest. This section of track eventually rises to its highest point (1,080 m) near the Mount Somers Summit Track junction. The Acland Shelter provides welcome shelter and rest about 1 hr 30 min (4 km) before the junction. The shelter is not intended to be used overnight.

The final steep downhill section is through regenerating forest areas but is open enough to continue to provide interesting views to the east.

SIDEWINDER TRACK



45 min, 1 km

This steep track begins with a short walk through a small pocket of tawhai/ silver beech that survived the fires which swept through the Ashburton Gorge. The track then climbs steeply up to and through the tailings of the old Blackburn Mine, where it links with the Mount Somers Track to provide either a return trip back to Woolshed Creek car park or a chance to continue on to Woolshed Creek Hut.

MOUNT SOMERS NATURE WALK



30 min, 1 km

Cross the bridge and follow the South Face Track for 5 min to the start of the Nature Walk, which then continues up the true left bank of Woolshed Creek. Cross the river to the right bank (take care fording the river, if in doubt return the way you came). The Mount Somers Track can be followed downstream to Woolshed Creek car park.

MOUNT SOMERS SUMMIT TRACK



In winter, the south face of Mount Somers gets very little sunlight, making the snow hard and icy. An ice axe, crampons and some mountaineering experience are required to safely reach the summit. Cloud can quickly reduce visibility, especially when there are southerly fronts.

South Face Track to Mount Somers summit

3.5 hr, 5.7 km (from Sharplin Falls car park)

The summit (1,688 m) and surrounding plateau is worth a visit, with 360-degree views of the surrounding mountains and coastal plain.

TE KIEKIE ROUTE



Mount Somers saddle (1,170 m) above Pinnacles Hut to Mount Somers summit

2 hr, 2.7 km

Te Kiekie Route provides a link to the summit from the Mount Somers Track. It makes a great day trip option if you are staying at Pinnacles Hut.

BUS STOP TRACK



Woolshed Creek Hut to South Face Track

2 hr, 4.6 km

From the hut, the track climbs 330 m to a local feature known as the Bus Stop. From here, the track crosses the western face of Mount Somers, where it links with the South Face Track. The South Face Track can then be followed to either the Woolshed Creek car park or the Sharplin Falls car park.

Note: The Mount Somers Track is the easiest way to get to and from Woolshed Creek Hut. The Bus Stop Track is the more challenging option but makes for a good round trip.

TĀHEKERUA / SHARPLIN FALLS WALK



40 min, 1.3 km

This track is located in Sharplin Falls Scenic Reserve in the foothills of Mount Somers and is accessed off Flynns Road in Staveley.

From the car park on Flynns Road, follow the Mount Somers Track for a few minutes before turning left at a sign for the Tāhekerua/ Sharplin Falls Walk.

This track was built and is maintained by the Mt Somers Walkways Society. There are numerous seats and benches along the well-constructed gravelled track that winds through mixed beech forest and over two bridges. The walk has easy gradients but is not a level path, and there are climbs and descents along the way.

At the end of the walk, you will reach the Sharplin Falls lookout, which is a lovely spot to have lunch or just take in the view.



Tāhekerua/Sharplin Falls Walk. Photo: George Iles

Care for Aotearoa



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



Keep NZ clean

Use toilets where provided. Take all rubbish with you.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by following the Land Safety Code.

- ▶ Choose the right trip for you.
- ▶ Understand the weather.
- ▶ Pack warm clothes and extra food.
- ▶ Share your plans and take ways to get help.
- ▶ Take care of yourself and each other.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



tiaki
100 Years of Conservation

To learn more about staying safe in the outdoors, visit www.adventuresmart.org.nz. In an emergency, dial 111.

Further information

Aoraki / Mount Cook National Park Visitor Centre

1 Larch Grove
Aoraki / Mount Cook 7999

PHONE: 03 435 1186

EMAIL: mtcookvc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz

0800 DOC HOT
362 468

For safety hazards and
conservation emergencies



BETWEEN WATERWAYS

Check, Clean, Dry

Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering and when moving between waterways.

Cover: Looking into the Stour valley. Photo: DOC

This information was accurate at the time of printing.
For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities,
visit www.doc.govt.nz.

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