

Kakahu Bush is an area of native bush close to Geraldine that has remarkable rock pinnacles and limestone formations. It features two walks, scenic views, historic sites and spectacular rock formations.

Location

Kakahu Bush is situated on Hall Road, Geraldine. To get there, drive 15 km from Geraldine, or 32 km from Fairlie on State Highway 79. Turn onto Hall Road and proceed 2 km until you reach the car park by a large stone lime kiln. Access is also possible from Temuka by driving 23 km inland via Waitohi Temuka Road, Earl Road and Winchester Hanging Rock Road.

Geological features

Geologists regard this area as being of national importance and there are some very interesting and unique geological features. These include an impressive limestone escarpment, mushroom rocks and huge rock pinnacles, some of which have rocks balancing on top.

The bush

This is one of the largest remnants of lowland podocarp hardwood forest in Canterbury. The main species include tōtara, mataī, kahikatea, pōkākā, māhoe, broadleaf/kāpuka, lemonwood/tarata, lancewood/horoeka and five-finger/whauwhaupaku. There are also significant areas of kānuka shrubland, wetlands and dry rock plant communities.

Wildlife

The birds most often seen at Kakahu include wood pigeon/kererū, bellbird/korimako, South Island tomtit/miromiro, brown creeper/pīpī, fantail/piwakawaka, kingfisher/kōtare and pūkeke. Rare long-tailed bats/pekapeka live in hollow trees and limestone crevices and only emerge at night.

History

This was a favourite hunting area for Māori and evidence of early Māori occupation can be seen, including rock drawings, shelters, ovens and rubbish pits. A fine-grained stone was used to produce tools.

In 1853 sawmilling began in the areas and today benched tracks and sawpits are the legacy of this activity. Lime kilns were established in the Kakahu gorge area and used marble from quarries in the gorge to produce a very high grade burnt lime. Coal mining and brickmaking were also carried out in this area by early settlers.

Walks in Kakahu Bush

Key

Walking track: Easy-to-moderate walking from a few minutes to a day. Track is mostly well formed; some sections may be steep, rough or muddy.

Kakahu Escarpment Track



500 m, 10 minutes

From the car park walk 250 m to the road bridge where the track leads across paddocks to the limestone cliffs. At the foot of the impressive limestone escarpment are large mushroom-like rocks which were eroded around their bases thousands of years ago. This area is of great spiritual significance to local Māori and should be treated with respect.

Kakahu Track



8 km, 3 hours return

The first part of the track follows the route of a wooden tramway, which over a century ago brought marble chips from quarries in the gorge to the Hall Road kiln. It then passes through an open area where exotic trees were planted around 1900 as part of a plan to establish a sanatorium for tuberculosis patients.

Re-enter the bush through a gate with a sign and follow the track uphill until you reach a track junction; turn left here and continue uphill to the open paddocks. Follow the marked farm track round the edge of the bush, crossing a small stream before climbing up to Pinnacles Lookout. The lookout gives panoramic views over Kakahu Bush out to the coast. This viewing point is on top of a high bluff and care should be taken not to get too close to the edge.

From the lookout follow the marked track along the edge of the paddock, re-enter the bush and continue downhill over a small stream before climbing back up to the Balancing Rock. This huge stone sits on top of a buried pinnacle. Just past the Balancing Rock is a track junction. Turn left at the junction and continue downhill along the track you came in on, back to the lime kiln and car park.

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Kakahu Bush



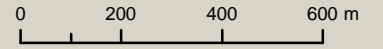
Balancing Rock

Kakahu Bush is jointly managed by the Department of Conservation and South Canterbury Conservation Trust. It is protected by a QEII National Trust covenant. Omya NZ Ltd has given permission for a small section of the walking track to cross land owned by them.



Kakahu Bush Scenic Reserve

- P Parking
- P Pinnacles lookout
- Walking track
- River
- Kakahu Bush Scenic Reserve



P

Kakahu Bush Scenic Reserve

Escarpment Track

Kakahu River

169 m

327 m

Pinnacles Lookout

Balancing Rock

Kakahu Track

Hall Road

Honey Road

Meredith Road

Winchester Hanging Rock Road

Limestone Road

Kakahu Hill

Rapuwai Road

Kakahu