

Around and about Mid-Canterbury

A guide to recreational opportunities



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Above: Rangitika Gorge

Cover: Mt Hutt from Scotts Saddle. Photo: G Iles

All map background models by Geographx.

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Safety information

Outdoor Safety Code

1. Plan your trip
2. Tell someone
3. Be aware of the weather
4. Know your limits
5. Take sufficient supplies

Tell someone responsible where you are going and your estimated return time.

Use the online intention system:

www.adventuresmart.org.nz/outdoors-intentions

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.



- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

Report any safety hazards
or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

Mid Canterbury is a land of contrasts, from flat coastal plains to abruptly rising foothills, large sweeping braided rivers and tumbling mountain streams, and shaded honeydew-scented forests to windswept open mountain tops.

This area is bound by two large braided rivers, the Rakaia and the Rangitata which sweep down from the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, bringing mountains of rock and shingle on their journey. These ravaged landscapes are rare habitats which are home to many of New Zealand's indigenous birds.

The walks in this guide allow you to explore this region from the mighty rivers to the foothill forests through to the alpine open tops.

Track grades



Short walk: Well-formed track with easy walking for up to an hour. There may be steps or slopes. Suitable for most abilities and fitness levels. Walking shoes required.



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. Walking shoes required.



Tramping track: Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking. May have steep grades. Suitable for fit, experienced and adequately equipped people. Tramping boots required.



Route: Unformed, suitable only for people with high-level backcountry skills and experience.



Mountain-bike grade: Intermediate/Grade 3 – Steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at the track's outside edge.

Left: View from Rakaia Gorge Walkway. Photo: S Mankelow

Rakaia Gorge Walkway

3–4 hours return, 10.4 km



This walkway offers several features of geological and historic interest as it traverses the edge of the Rakaia Gorge.

Getting there

Take Highway 72 Inland Scenic Route to the northern edge of the Rakaia River, upstream of the Rakaia Gorge Bridge. It is a 1-hour drive from Christchurch (75 km). Methven is a 10-minute drive (11 km) from the walkway.

Along the way . . .

The walkway passes through several forest and shrub communities before climbing the gorse-lined ferryman's track to the site of a cottage and the ruins of a home guard fortification point (redoubt). Continue along one of several glacial and river-carved terraces to a good lookout point.

The walkway follows the rim of the gorge through spectacular geological areas, showing lava flows of rhyolite, pitchstone and andesite. It then descends into a gully under a canopy of montane forest and shrub, to the site of the Snowdon coal mines. The entrances to several coal mine shafts can be seen here, and the remains of equipment used for extraction.

The track then climbs out of the creek to a signposted junction. The walkway forms a loop from this point, with the right-hand track climbing across tussock-covered terraces directly to the lookout point. The track then passes through the bush to loop back to the junction. A side track off the loop descends to the river (boat landing track 121 m).

Note: This walkway goes over private farmland; show your respect to landowners by keeping to the track and not disturbing stock. Dogs and horses are not permitted.

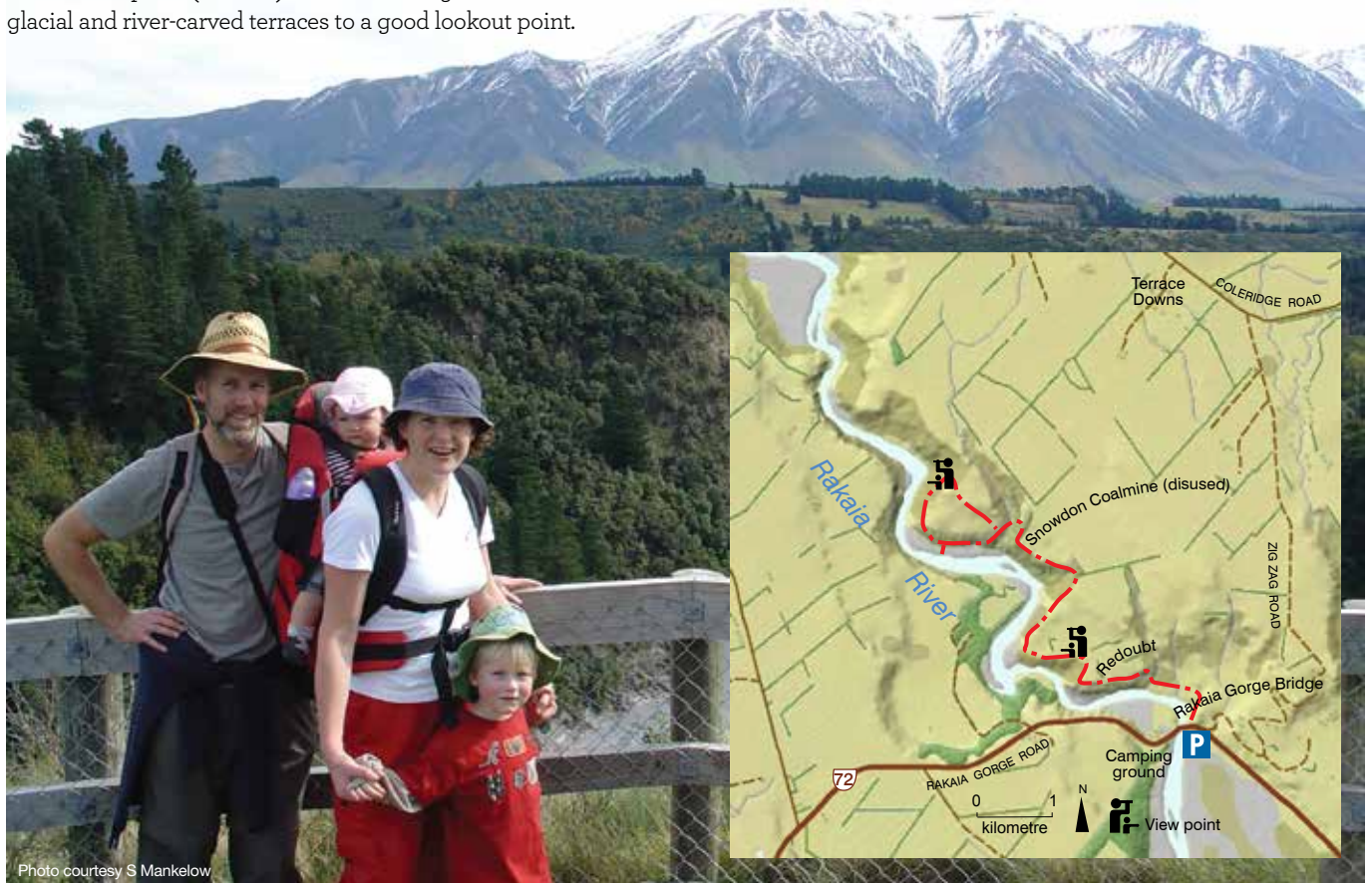
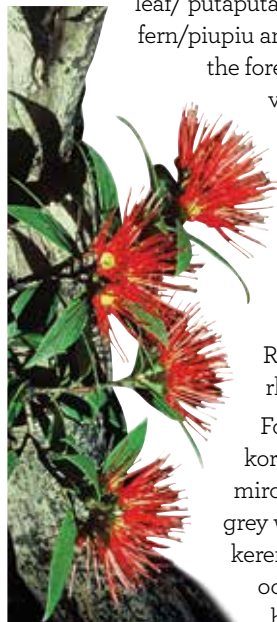


Photo courtesy S Mankelow

Mt Hutt Forest

Plants and birds you might see

The forest is mostly mountain beech/tawhairauriki, with broadleaf/pāpāuma, Hall's tōtara, fuchsia/kōtukutuku, marble leaf/putaputawētā, kōhūhū and pōkākā. Crown fern/piupiu and bush lawyer/tātārāmoa occupy the forest floor. Above the bushline the



vegetation changes to alpine herbs, shrubs and snow tussock/wī kura. Southern rātā (left) – rare in this part of Canterbury – grows in Scotts Creek and Awa Awa Rata Reserve. European larch and alder were planted in 1930 on some lower slopes and the Awa Awa Rata Reserve Society has planted rhododendrons in the reserve.

Forest birds include bellbird/korimako, silvereye/tauhou, tomtit/miromiro, rifleman/tītītipounamu, grey warbler/riroriro and wood pigeon/kererū. New Zealand pipits/pīhoihoi and occasionally kea are seen above the bushline.

In the past . . .

In the early 1850s timber was the colony's most valuable export product. Clearance of forests for farming and the damage caused by introduced animals became a concern. In 1892 amateur botanist, Reverend P Walsh, particularly condemned the introduction of deer, "... even the keenest sportsman would hardly be content to purchase his own gratification by the destruction of that forest which is the glory of this country and the birthright of the community at large."

A world survey of soil erosion produced by G V Jacks and R D Whyte in 1939 noted in its New Zealand section, "... deforestation by cutting, burning or overgrazing the undergrowth in the mountainous areas by cattle, sheep, deer and other animals has greatly accelerated run-off and soil wash ..."

The State Forestry Service was formed in 1920 (NZ Forest Service 1949–1987) to conserve indigenous forests for timber

supplies, to prevent soil erosion, to regulate water flow, and to create exotic forests to ensure future wood supplies.

The European larch and alders on Alder and Ridge tracks were planted in 1930 as one of many state plantings of exotic trees to supply timber for domestic as well as the export markets.

Getting there

Mt Hutt Forest can be accessed from Awa Awa Rata Reserve at the end of McLennans Bush Road, which is off Arundel Rakaia Gorge Road and is 12.5 km from Methven.

The area can also be accessed from Mt Hutt Skifield access road. During summer there is a locked gate 10.5 km up this road. You will need to walk from here.

Pudding Hill Stream Route can be reached via Hart Road.



Walking and tramping tracks

All tracks are one way, unless marked otherwise.



NZTopo50 map series: BX20

1. Rhododendron Walk

10 min, 500 metres  

This pleasant walk follows a stream through native bush and rhododendron plantings.

2. Te Awa Awa Walk

15 min, 430 metres  

This short walk starts in Awa Awa Rata Reserve and climbs gently through native bush before joining the end of the metalled road through the reserve.

3. Alder Track

30 min, 830 metres  



The track starts in Awa Awa Rata Reserve and goes through alder-covered flats at the base of the hill. It then climbs through a larch plantation to connect with the southern end of Ridge Track.

4. Opuke Track

30 min, 830 metre  



This track connects Ridge Track with the end of the metalled road through Awa Awa Rata Reserve.

5. Ridge Track

45 min, 2.2 km  

This track follows the ridge above Pudding Hill Stream and connects with Alder, Opuke and Scotts Saddle tracks.



6. Scotts Saddle Track

2 hours, 4.5 km  

From the car park in Awa Awa Rata Reserve, the track climbs steeply to a ridge top. It passes through beech/tawhairauriki forest before climbing to alpine herb and tussock/wī communities. The track then joins the Mt Hutt Skifield access road at Scotts Saddle.

On a clear day there are good views from Scotts Saddle to Pudding Hill Stream, Mt Hutt Skifield, Canterbury plains and the Port Hills above Christchurch.

7. Pudding Hill Stream Route

3 hours, 8.25 km  

This route can be accessed from either Mt Hutt Skifield access road, the western end of Alder Track or from Harts Road.

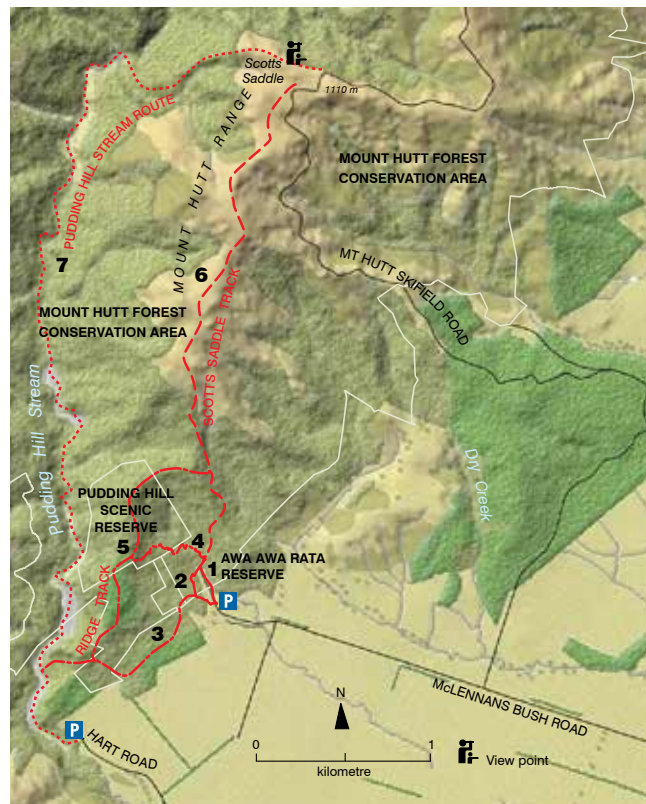
Pudding Hill Stream is negotiable in all but flood conditions. However, about 1 km upstream of the turn into Mount Hutt Range, the stream bed narrows into a steep-sided gorge, which makes further progress difficult.



Caution: This route involves repeated crossings of Pudding Hill Stream. Trampers should be prepared for cold, wet or windy conditions.

Loop tracks

Loops can be made by combining tracks. A loop walk that takes 1 hour 30 min can be made by combining Opuke, Ridge and Alder tracks. A longer loop combining the first section of Scotts Track with Ridge and Alder tracks takes 1 hour 45 min. These loops can be walked in either direction.



Mt Alford Conservation Area

Access to Mt Alford Conservation Area is signposted from the car park at the end of Alford Settlement Road, which is off the Arundel Rakaia Gorge Road (Highway 72). The car park is 12.5 km from Methven.

Access easements will be closed from 20 September to 20 October, inclusive, for calving and lambing.

NZTopo50 map series: BX20

Plants and birds you might see

The land at the foot of Mt Alford is swampy because of poor natural drainage. This, together with the shape of the hills, which catch moist weather from most directions, makes the area unusually wet. Because of this, podocarp tree species such as lowland tōtara and kahikatea survive and are regenerating well in the scenic reserve.

In the past, the area has been logged and burned, leaving a fragmented cover of predominantly black and mountain beech/tawhairauriki, found mainly in the stream gullies.

Short tussock grassland, modified by stock, is found above the present tree line. In wetland areas dense red tussock/ haumata communities occur.

Around the summit of Mt Alford is subalpine shrubland dominated by dracophyllum and slim-leaved snow tussock/wī. A small stand of Hall's tōtara is also present.

Typical forest birds found in the bush are fantail/ pīwakawaka, bellbird/korimako, grey warbler/riroriro, rifleman/ tītītipounamu, tomtit/miromiro and silvereye/ tauhou.

In the past . . .

In 1882 a Christchurch architect, Mr J S M Jacobsen found what he thought were diamonds on Mt Alford. This started a 'rush' in 1883. Mining companies formed hoping the find would rival the Kimberley field in South Africa.

Prospectors applied for licences over 20,000 acres of Mt Alford and a settlement called Diamond Town was laid out in 161 quarter-acre sections.

As time went on rumours about the lack of genuine diamonds became more common until finally a valuation telegram was received stating, "Stones have been tested by the highest authorities who affirmed that they were not diamonds but only crystals". The 'rush' collapsed and those remaining in the area turned once again to the real wealth of the area – its timber.



Mt Alford Track

3 hours, 4.6 km



The marked track passes through Alford Scenic Reserve before climbing beside a stream gully clothed in beech/tawhairauriki and then emerges onto tussock/wī grassland. This open section is on private land so please follow the track markers. The access then re-enters public conservation land and climbs through subalpine vegetation to the summit of Mt Alford (1,171 m). From the summit there are wide views across the Canterbury Plains and the inland mountains.



Rifleman/tītītipounamu
Photo: M F Soper



Grey warbler/riroriro
Photo: M F Soper



Tomtit/miromiro
Photo: A Fleming

Tenehaun Conservation Area

Tenehaun is part of Moorhouse Range, which is to the east of the Rangitata River. It includes Mt Tripp (1368 m), the highest peak in Moorhouse Range, as well as walking and mountain-bike public access easements above Rangitata Gorge.

Plants and birds you might see

Narrow-leaved and short-leaved snow tussock/wī occur on all the upper slopes. The narrow-leaved snow tussock is the most extensive plant community on Moorhouse Range.

Shrubs and small trees are found in most stream gullies and gorges. Typically these are matagouri/tūmatakuru, coprosma/karamū and olearia, with some kōwhai, lancewood/horoeka, ribbonwood/houhere and cabbage trees/tī kōuka.

There is a large wetland at the top end of Nabob Stream with native grasses and sedges.

Open country birds include New Zealand pipits/pīhoihoi, Australasian harriers/kāhu and New Zealand falcons/ kārearea, while tomtits/miromiro, grey warblers/riroriro and silvereyes/tauhou are found among the shrubs.

In the past . . .

Tenehaun was formed in 1889 when Shepherds Bush Run, first taken up by the Moorhouse brothers in 1854, was divided up and sold.

The Rangitata River has always been an important boundary for the property. The Rangitata Diversion Race (RDR), which started as a 1930s Great Depression irrigation scheme and opened in 1945, was the first major river-diversion race in New Zealand. The RDR transports water 67.6 kilometres across the Canterbury Plains from Klondyke in the Rangitata Gorge to the Rakaia River, where it is discharged through Highbank Power Station.

Large concrete siphon pipes were produced at the Birches concrete plant. A siphon pipe used as a shed can be seen in Methven township. During World War II, concrete cylindrical road blocks for home defence were made at the plant. An example can be seen at Ealing on State Highway 1.

Getting there

From Geraldine

Rangitata Gorge

Turn off Arundel Rakaia Road (Highway 72) at Ealing, on the bank of the Rangitata River. Follow Ealing Montalto Road for 14 km and turn left into Klondyke Terrace. This road continues to the Rangitata Diversion Race intake at the Rangitata River. A public access easement starts from this point.

Mt Tripp and Moorhouse Range

Turn off Main South Road (Highway 72) at Ealing and follow Ealing Montalto Road for 19.5 km. At the T junction, turn left into Hinds Gorge Road and then right into Chapmans Road. The public access easement starts at the end of this road.

From Methven

Rangitata Gorge

Follow Arundel Rakaia Road (Highway 72) to Mayfield and then turn right into Mayfield Klondyke Road. At Montalto turn left into Mayfield Klondyke Road; at the crossroads go straight ahead into Klondyke Terrace. This road continues to the Rangitata Diversion Race intake at the Rangitata River. A public access easement starts from this point.

Mt Tripp and Moorhouse Range

Follow Arundel Rakaia Road (Highway 72) to Mayfield and then turn right into Mayfield Klondyke Road. At Montalto turn right into Hinds Gorge Road and follow this for 9 km. Turn right into Chapmans Road. The public access easement starts at the end of this road.

Tramping and mountain-bike tracks

NZTopo50 map series: BX19, BY19

Mt Tripp and Moorhouse Range



Follow the marked public access easement from the end of Chapmans Road to the Hinds River south branch. Public conservation land starts here and gives access to Moorhouse Range and Mt Tripp (see map on back page).

Moorhouse Range can be reached by walking to the end of the public access easement and then following the ridge line, which leads to point 1095. Routes are not marked and this area is suitable for fit and experienced trampers.

Mountain biking is possible along the easement but there are no suitable tracks when you reach public conservation land.

Rangitata Gorge



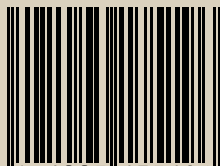
At the start of the Rangitata Diversion Race (RDR) follow the marked public access easement up the face of the terrace. Once you have climbed this section the route is relatively easygoing and gives good views down into the Rangitata Gorge.



Further information

If you need any additional information or wish to report any incidents, issues or sightings of conservation interest contact the DOC office in Geraldine.

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