

## Safety is your responsibility

- Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park is usually hot and dry in summer, with snowfalls common in winter. Be prepared for sudden weather changes in all seasons. Check the latest weather forecast before you leave, either through MetPhone (0900 999 03) or by calling the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre on (03) 318 9211.
- Tell someone of your intended route and expected time out. You can also leave an intentions card at the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.
- Beware of avalanche hazards in winter. For the latest information refer to the website: [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz)
- There is an emergency phone at Castle Hill Village – approximately 12 km from Lake Lyndon car park on SH 73 towards Arthur's Pass.



Avoca Homestead  
Photos: L. Burns



Protect plants and animals  
Remove rubbish  
Bury toilet waste  
Keep streams and lakes clean  
Take care with fires  
Camp carefully  
Keep to the track  
Consider others  
Respect our cultural heritage  
Enjoy your visit  
Toitu te whenua (Leave the land undisturbed)



Speargrass/taramea

## Further information

For walking maps, weather information and informative displays:

Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre  
Main Road, Arthur's Pass  
Phone 03 318 9211  
8.00 am to 5.00 pm (summer), 8.30 am to 4.30 pm (winter)  
[arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz)

For hunting information and permits, and cultural-take permits:

Waimakariri Area Office  
15 Albert Street, Rangiora  
Phone 03 313 0820  
Weekdays 8.00 am to 5.00 pm  
[waimakariri@doc.govt.nz](mailto:waimakariri@doc.govt.nz)

Published by  
Department of Conservation  
Canterbury Conservancy  
Private Bag 4715  
Christchurch  
2007

New Zealand Government

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



# Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park



CANTERBURY



Cover photo: S. Mankelov



Department of Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

## Introduction

Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park covers approximately 21,000 hectares centred on the Torlesse and Big Ben Ranges, in Canterbury's high country. The Torlesse and Big Ben Ranges and the Torlesse Gap are features on the landscape that can be seen from as far away as Christchurch and the Port Hills. Travellers on the Great Alpine Highway (SH 73) between Christchurch and the West Coast gain an increasingly panoramic view of the park as they approach Porters Pass. Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park is a key site for the promotion and protection of eastern South Island high-country landscapes and ecosystems.

## Historic and cultural values

From very early times, the area has held special significance for the first occupants the Waitaha, and through many generations to present day Ngāi Tahu. The dual name indicates the importance of the area to our local and national culture. Korowai (cloak) is symbolic of concepts such as embracement, collectiveness, togetherness and prestige. It recognises the historic connections the Ngāi Tahu tupuna (ancestor) Tanetiki had with the area. The basins and ranges were an integral part of a network of trails, which were used to ensure the safest seasonal journeys and best access to mahinga kai (food-gathering places).



Charles Torlesse, a surveyor for the Canterbury provincial government, led by local Māori guides in January 1849, was the first European to climb the slopes of the range. A few men with picks, shovels and a government grant of 500 pounds, made the first track over Porters Pass in 1858–9. The original (Cobb and Co. Coaches) road is still visible within the conservation park boundaries. Other historic European sites within the park include the old pack track used by the Porter brothers, Avoca Homestead (1906) and the Mt Torlesse Collieries Coal Mines, which operated from 1918 to 1927.

## Recreation values

The Torlesse Range is one of the most accessible in the country, located alongside SH 73, only 75 minutes drive from Christchurch. The main access points into the park are the Kowai River (private), Porters Pass, Lake Lyndon Road, Craigieburn Road and Porter Heights Ski field Road. Access to some areas requires permission from neighbouring landholders.

The area is popular for a wide range of activities such as:

- Tramping and hunting
- Winter climbing and cross-country skiing
- Picnicking and boating on Lake Lyndon
- Botanising, scientific research and natural-history studies

## Natural values

The Torlesse and Big Ben are high, dry mountain ranges with remarkable flora and fauna. Slim-leaved snow tussock/wi kura is common and the high-altitude tussock grasslands represent the eastern limit of mid-ribbed snow tussock.

Other natural features within the park include:

- Mountain beech/tawhairauriki forest
- Species-rich shrublands
- Unusual scree plants such as vegetable sheep (*Raoulia eximia*) and penwiper/porotaka (*Notothlaspi rosulatum*), Haast's scree buttercup (*Ranunculus haastii*), scree lobelia (*Lobelia roughii*) and scree pea (*Montigena novae zelandiae*)
- Native grasshoppers, wētā, cockroaches, lizards and butterflies
- Kea, falcon/kārearea and pipit/pihoihoi inhabit the grasslands
- Tomtit/miromiro, rifleman/titipounamu, brown creeper/pipipi are present in the beech forests

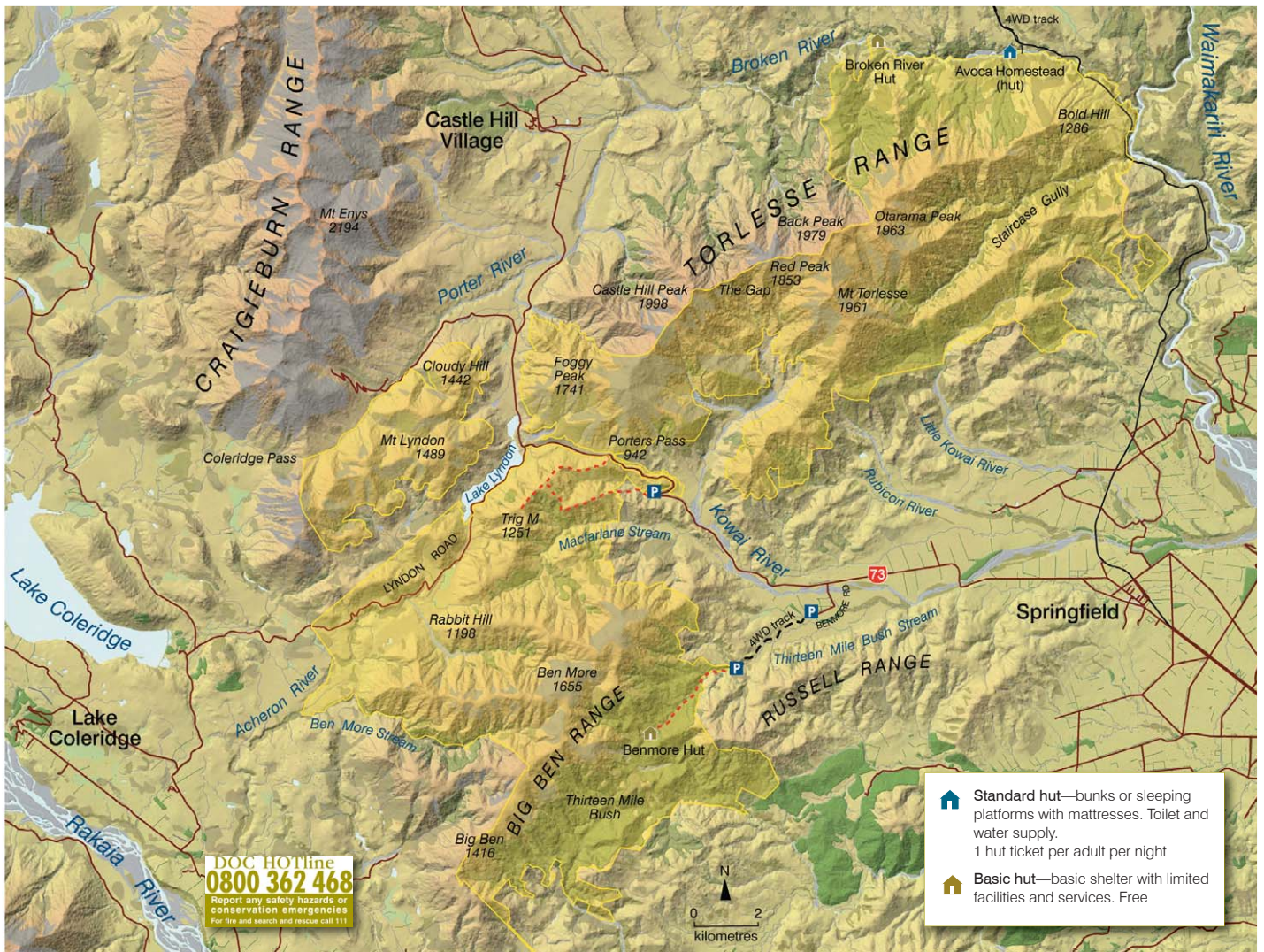


Kea  
Photo: S. Philipson



Penwiper/porotaka  
Photo: C. Jones





**Standard hut**—bunks or sleeping platforms with mattresses. Toilet and water supply.  
1 hut ticket per adult per night

**Basic hut**—basic shelter with limited facilities and services. Free

**DOC HOTline**  
**0800 362 468**  
Report any safety hazards or conservation emergencies  
For fire and search and rescue call 111

### Routes & mountain-bike rides

**Challenging day tramping**  
Track unformed and natural, may be rough and very steep  
Suitable for people with above average fitness.  
High-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required  
Be completely self sufficient  
Track has markers, poles or rock cairns  
Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required

**Intermediate**—Steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at track's outside edge  
Please be considerate of other users on these tracks.



**Thirteen Mile Bush**   
From 4WD car park to Benmore Hut—2–3 hours one way  
Turn onto Benmore Road from SH 73, and turn right at the T-intersection. An access easement is signposted through Ben More Station. This is a private station; leave gates as you find them and note that dogs are not permitted on this easement. There is 4WD drive access to the bush edge, while 2WD access stops about 30 minutes walk short of the bush. From the 4WD car park a route is marked to Benmore Hut.

**Trig M**   
Trig M can be accessed by routes starting from Coach Stream or Starvation Gully, about 4.5 km apart on SH 73. From Trig M there are panoramic views over Lake Lyndon and the option to continue along an unmarked route to Rabbit Hill.

**Starvation Gully to Trig M**   
1 hour 30 minutes one way, 3.2 km  
From the signpost on SH 73, climb the marked track amongst diverse shrublands, traversing open ridges to reach trig point M. About half way up, the track from Coach Stream joins this track.

**Coach Stream to Trig M**   
3 hours one way, 5.5 km  
Note: Part of this route is an easement passing through Ben More Station and is closed for lambing from 1 October to 20 November each year.

There is a car park at the bottom of Porters Pass. From here the route heads up the valley and through a gate onto Ben More Station. Follow a farm track to another gate, which leads back onto public conservation land. The route climbs a ridge and sidles alongside beech forest to link with the track from Starvation Gully to Trig M.

**Unmarked routes**   
These are unmarked routes—suitable for fit, experienced and well-equipped trampers.  
These unmarked routes are subject to low cloud and poor visibility. Topographic maps, route-finding and navigation skills are essential. When snow covers the ground, routes will be less obvious and there is also risk of avalanches.

**Trig M to Rabbit Hill**  
Follow the ridgeline from Trig M to Rabbit Hill. This passes through a tussock basin just before the final ascent to the summit of Rabbit Hill. There are numerous springs in this area and it can be very wet underfoot. (3–4 hours one way)

**Mt Torlesse via Kowai River**  
Access to the base of Mt Torlesse is across freehold and leasehold land and permission must be gained from Brooksdale Station. Please respect this is a working station; leave gates as you find them and avoid disturbing stock. Dogs and vehicles are prohibited.

From SH 73 follow an old vehicle track up the true right of the Kowai River to opposite Kowai Hut. Note: this is a private hut and not open to the public. (1–2 hours one way)  
The spur on the true right of the sidestream, by the hut, is the most direct route to Mt Torlesse. The spur starts off with a gradual climb, becomes a steep ridge and leads directly to Mt Torlesse. (3–4 hours one way)

**Foggy Peak / Castle Hill Peak**  
From the lay-by at the top of Porters Pass, follow an unmarked but well-worn trail up through low scrub and tussock and across gravel screes towards Foggy Peak. Large cairns mark the way in places. (1–2 hours one way)

Beyond Foggy Peak follow the broad ridge. The ridge narrows for the final climb to the trig on the summit of Castle Hill Peak. (2–4 hours one way)

**The Gap**  
From Castle Hill Peak, experienced parties can traverse across to The Gap. Beyond peak 1941 sidle just off the north side of the ridge until you reach the bluffs above The Gap. From The Gap, a steep scree slope and rocky ridge provide a good route down to the Kowai Stream. Some rock scrambling is required.

**Note:** If planning to use this route, prior permission must be gained from Brooksdale Station.

### Hut information

**Benmore Hut**  
An A-frame 3-bunk hut in fair condition. Category: basic (no charge). Access is via Thirteen Mile Bush.

**Avoca Homestead (hut)**  
The Avoca Homestead was built in 1906 and has recently undergone extensive restoration to preserve its heritage value. It features 6 bunks, 3 bedrooms, a lounge and kitchen. Category: standard (1 ticket).

4WD access is possible to Avoca Homestead, and 2 WD access to within a 30-minute walk. Access is via Craigieburn Road (turn off SH 73 near Cass). There are at least six railway crossings along the 25-km stretch with no warnings of oncoming trains. There are also numerous gates across the road. Leave all gates as you find them. Avoca Homestead is finally reached by crossing Broken River. Access may not be possible when the river is high.  
Avoca Station was one of the most inaccessible stations in the Waimakariri Basin. The original Avoca run lay north of Broken River and was enlarged in 1904 by adding a block on the south bank taken from the Mt Torlesse run. In 1917, Avoca was incorporated into Flock Hill.  
The old Avoca run was taken up by Charles Harper, son of the Bishop of Christchurch. He shores sheep on the property and brother George packed the wool out on bullocks, three sacks each, then sledged it over Porters Pass

**Broken River Hut**  
A 4-bunk hut in fair condition. Category: basic (no charge). Access is via Broken River 1 1/2–2 hours upstream from Avoca Homestead.