

Pelorus Track

Mt Richmond Forest Park



Introduction

The Pelorus Track is a semi-remote forest experience in Mount Richmond Forest Park. It leads up the Pelorus Valley and over the Bryant Range to either the Hackett car park in the Aniseed Valley or The Brook in Nelson City. All three ends of the track are ideal for picnicking and day walks.

Classified as a tramping track, the Pelorus is a 3–4 day tramp best suited to fit, experienced trampers—boots are recommended. Although bridges cross the major waterways, there are some streams that can cause delays after rain.

How to get there

The Pelorus Track starts 13 km up the Pelorus Valley at the end of Maungatapu Road, which turns off the Nelson–Blenheim road (SH6) at Pelorus Bridge Scenic Reserve. The Hackett car park is in the Aniseed Valley, 29 km south of Nelson via Richmond and Hope. Access from Nelson is via the Dun Mountain Walkway which begins two kilometres from the city centre in the Brook Valley.



Accommodation

Several huts are provided along the track and its branches. A Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets are required to stay in them. All are standard huts requiring one ticket.

Walking the track

Road end to Captain Creek Hut, 4 h

The track runs alongside private land for the first two kilometres—please keep to the track. No hunting is allowed until the forest park boundary is reached (signposted). From the car park the track follows close to the river for an hour to a deep pool called Emerald Pool. This section of the track makes a good day trip;

Emerald Pool is an ideal swimming, picnicking and fishing area.

Beyond the pool the track leaves the river and climbs steadily to the crest of a major ridge. It then sidles for some time before zigzagging back down to the river, opposite a large tributary. Captain Creek Hut (6 bunks) is about 30 minutes further upstream.

Captain Creek Hut to Middy Creek Hut, 2 h

From Captain Creek Hut sidle above the Pelorus River for about 15 minutes before crossing Captain Creek. A further five minutes brings you to a swingbridge which crosses the Pelorus River itself to the true right bank.

The track now climbs steeply and sidles, before descending again and crossing Fishtail Stream on a swingbridge near its confluence with the Pelorus. From Fishtail Stream the track cuts across a broad loop in the river on a wide terrace. It then rejoins the river and follows it to Middy Creek Hut (6 bunks), opposite Middy Creek.

Middy Creek Hut to Roebuck Hut, 4 h

Just upstream of Middy Creek Hut a swingbridge crosses the Pelorus again. On the other side the track climbs steeply up a prominent spur to a junction (the track to Rocks Hut continues up the spur, see below). The main track branches to the left; the next section is very demanding, as the sometimes rough track sidles across steep, densely-forested faces, through several streams.

Eventually the track crosses Roebuck Creek, on a swingbridge. Roebuck Hut (6 bunks) is just across the Pelorus here. To reach it, ford the Pelorus on foot or cross it using a swingbridge 200 metres upstream.

Roebuck Hut to Browning Hut, 4 h 30 min

After Roebuck Hut the track leaves the Pelorus River altogether. Climb up the ridge between Roebuck and Mates Creeks. This is steep at first but soon levels somewhat. Eventually the ridge is left behind and the track begins a long sidle high above Roebuck Creek.

Shortly before Totara Saddle it drops slightly and negotiates two gullies before the final, short climb to the saddle. From Totara Saddle (690 m) descend steeply for half an hour to Browning Hut (8 bunks) beside Browning Stream.

🚶 Browning Hut to Hacket picnic area, 2 h

Just below Browning Hut, cross Browning Stream and meander down through a lovely section of forest. Cross the stream again just before the junction of Browning and Hacket Creeks. From here it is an hour or so to the Hacket road end and picnic area, through a mixture of plantation and native forests on the true left of the Hacket Stream.

Towards the end of the track you'll pass through part of the Nelson mineral belt. Look out for the tell-tale red-brown rocks and shrubby vegetation dominated by manuka. Side tracks here lead to two interesting features: the delicate Whispering Falls (30 min), and an old chromite mine and the bullock track used to serve it (30 min). Just downstream of this area a suspension bridge crosses the Hacket to the true right bank and soon the car park is reached.

Exit to Nelson City

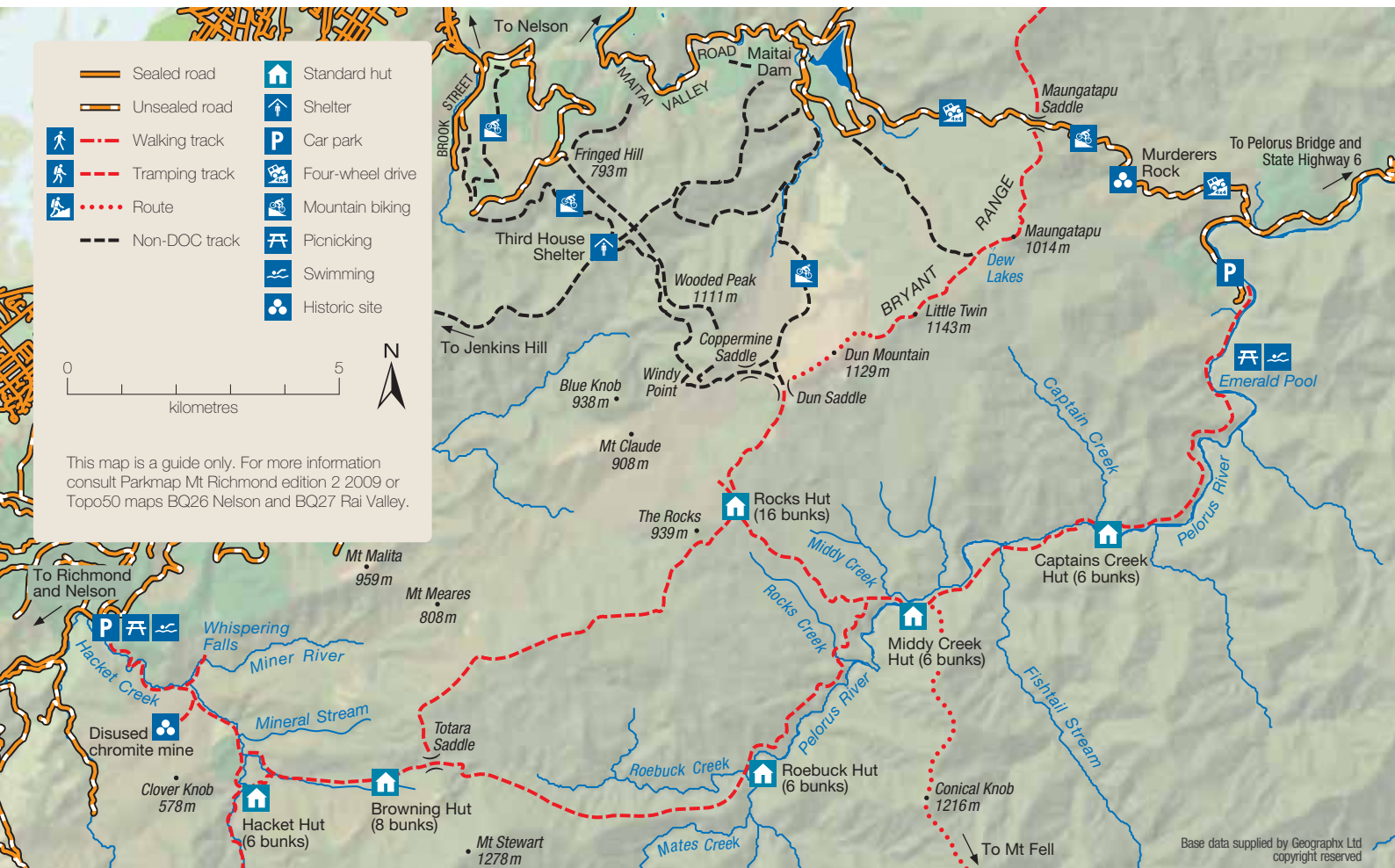
An alternative to the usual Pelorus Track experience is to walk over the Bryant Range from Middy Creek Hut right into Nelson City.

🚶 Middy Creek Hut to Rocks Hut, 3 h

From Middy Creek Hut (6 bunks) cross a swingbridge and then climb for 20 minutes to a junction where the Pelorus Track branches to the left. The Rocks Track climbs steadily from the junction for about 600 metres up a broad ridge. It then enters an area with many hummocks and rock outcrops, turning northwards and meeting the Bryant Range near the 16-bunk Rocks Hut.

🚶🚶 Rocks Hut to The Brook, 5 h 30 min

The route leads from Rocks Hut (16 bunks) up to a junction at Dun Saddle. To the right is the route over Dun Mountain (1129 m) to Maungatapu Saddle and the track down to the Maitai Valley through the mineral belt. The main track branches left, leading quickly down to join the Dun Mountain Trail at Coppermine Saddle. From here to Nelson, the track at Coppermine



Saddle descends gently on the line of the old Dun Mountain Railway, which served the chromite and copper mines nearby until 1866.

From Coppermine Saddle it rounds the aptly named Windy Point just before the mineral belt ends and native forest takes over. The track continues its gentle descent to Third House Shelter. Beyond Third House little changes until the forest suddenly ends where the track meets a fire break and the Dun Mountain Trail. To the left the track leads steeply down to Brook Street in Nelson City. The Dun Mountain Trail continues straight ahead along the old railway line ending up in Brook Street, close to Nelson City.

Other tracks

Rocks Hut to Totara Saddle, 4 h

From Rocks Hut (16 bunks), this track wanders through a landscape of rock outcrops and hillocks. It then climbs over several high points before beginning its descent towards Totara Saddle. It emerges on to an open patch of tussock land associated with the mineral belt, which it crosses for 15 minutes or so before re-entering the forest and descending—steeply in places—to the saddle.

Maungatapu 'track'

This track—actually a 4WD pylon maintenance road—climbs over Maungatapu Saddle between the Pelorus and Maitai Valleys. Allow 4 hours to tramp across the Bryant Range this way. This track is also a popular mountain bike ride. For 4WD access, contact Nelson City Council (03) 546 0200.

Hunting and fishing

Hunting and fishing are popular pastimes in the Pelorus. Both sports require commitment and fitness but the remoteness of the valley means the rewards can be substantial. Each hunter requires a permit from DOC; dogs are allowed under certain conditions. Hunting is not permitted on the first two kilometres of the track, which is alongside private land, or in the Nelson City Water Supply Reserve: the Roding, Maitai and Brook catchments. Anglers must obtain a fishing licence from Fish and Game New Zealand.

Track categories

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.
- Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities.
- Clearly signposted. Stream and river crossings are bridged.
- Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required.

Tramping track

- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.
- Track is mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections.
- Suitable for people with good fitness. Moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience (including navigation and survival skills) required.
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings.
- Tramping/hiking boots required.

Route

- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.
- Track unformed and natural, rough, muddy or very steep.
- Suitable for people with above average fitness. High-level backcountry skills and experience (including navigation and survival skills) required.
- Complete self-sufficiency required.
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings.
- Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required.

Hut category

- **Standard huts** have mattresses, water supply and toilet. Wood heaters are provided at huts below the bush line. The Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets are required.



Please remember

Safety: The Pelorus Track is recommended for experienced trampers prepared with warm and waterproof clothing and extra food. Rivers and streams in the area rise very quickly after rain and should not be crossed when rain-swollen. Please fill in the intentions books and let someone reliable know your plans.

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

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

Remember your safety is your responsibility. To report any safety hazards in the outdoors call
DOC HOTline 0800 362 468.

Rubbish: No rubbish facilities are provided. All visitors need to carry their rubbish out of the Forest Park.

Drinking water: If you doubt the quality of any water source you should boil, filter or treat it before drinking. In dry conditions water should be carried on the ridges.

Dogs are permitted in Mount Richmond Forest Park under a permit available from DOC offices in the Nelson/Marlborough Conservancy. Permits are required from Nelson City Council for dogs and firearms on their land.



**NEW ZEALAND
environmental
CARE CODE**

- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste
- Keep waterways clean
- Take care with fires
- Camp carefully
- Keep to the track
- Consider others
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Enjoy your visit
- *Toitū te whenua* (leave the land undisturbed)

For further information

To find out more about the Pelorus Track visit www.doc.govt.nz or contact:

**Department of Conservation
Nelson Regional Visitor Centre**
Millers Acre Centre/Taha o te Awa
79 Trafalgar Street, Nelson 7010
PO Box 375, Nelson 7040
Ph: (03) 546 9339

**Department of Conservation
Sounds Area Office**
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