

Adams Wilderness Area

Gazetted wilderness areas provide extensive natural settings with diverse topography and very high levels of natural character. No tracks, bridges or huts are provided; they are places in which people must be self-reliant and travel entirely on nature's terms. This is a setting in which people are unlikely to encounter others, or find evidence of others having been there. Legal protection of gazetted wilderness areas ensures that these special places are protected for future generations.

The Adams Wilderness Area was gazetted in 2003 and covers some 46,587 hectares of public conservation land in the central Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana. The core of the area consists of the vast névés of the Garden of Eden and the Garden of Allah, which drain to the Wanganui and Perth rivers. Quirky and interesting place and feature names abound in the wilderness area, inspiring adventure and exploration.

The area comprises some of the most complex mountain country in the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, making it a challenging climbing and ski-touring environment. Parties have to negotiate a maze of gorges, ice falls, glaciers and dense subalpine scrub, not to mention the changeable weather.

Over the last few thousand years, glacial advance and retreat has been largely responsible for the modification of the Adams Wilderness Area landscape. Evidence of the impact glaciation has had is clearly seen on both sides of the Main Divide where massive rivers of ice have carved out steep-sided valleys, leaving a series of cirques and hanging valleys along the dividing ranges.

The composition of flora in the wilderness area is influenced not only by differences in the environment and climate, but also because of its history of glaciation – the main consequence being the absence of beech species throughout. The Westland beech gap extends from Paringa in the south to the Taramakau River in the north, and exists because podocarp forest re-established much more quickly following periods of glaciation. The vegetation varies from tall forest in the low-altitude river valleys to grasslands and herbfields at high altitudes. Common forest species include rimu, miro, kāmahī, broadleaf, southern rātā and Hall's tōtara.

Forest gives way to an extensive zone of subalpine shrubs that include dracophyllum and olearia. Above the shrub zone, tall tussock grasslands of snow tussock occur.

With increasing altitude the tall tussock is replaced by hardy short-tussock species. Herbaceous species adapted to alpine conditions are found through these high-altitude areas and some extend to the highest regions dominated by rock and ice.

Kea, rock wren/pīwauwau, blue duck/whio and New Zealand falcon/kārearea are some of the key native bird species found in the area.



Rock wren/pīwauwau.
Photo: J Van Hal

WEST COAST

Mount Adams

| Whataroa area



Further information

Westland Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre

69 Cron Street
Franz Josef Glacier
Open 7 days

PHONE: 03 752 0360

EMAIL: westlandnpvc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz



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NEW ZEALAND

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
Check before you light a fire - a ban may be in place
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others

Cover: Descending from Mount Adams.
Photo: © Russell Squire

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Introduction

Mount Adams sits proudly on the edge of the Adams Wilderness Area in the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, and is a focal point for travellers along State Highway 6 from Lake Ianthe to Lake Wahapo. At 2,208 m high, the summit provides commanding views across the alps, Adams Wilderness Area, the coastline and the flats in between. The route from Dry Creek (Little Man River) up to the bush edge on Mount Adams was re-opened in 2009. The route is well marked and windfalls are cleared every 2 years.

Tahr, chamois and red deer may be present.

General information



Duration: 2 days

Grade: Route

Experience: Suitable for well-equipped and experienced backcountry trampers and climbers only; navigation and survival skills required.

Best time to go: Summer

Maps: NZTopo50: BW16 Whataroa; BW17 Harihari

Hazards: Flooded rivers, rock fall and avalanche.

Note: true left and true right refer to the side of the valley or river when facing and looking downstream.

Your safety is your responsibility


Before heading into the area, check the latest conditions at DOC's Westland Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre in Franz Josef – conditions can change rapidly.

Know the Outdoor Safety Code – 5 simple rules to help you stay safe:

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

Keep to the track – if you get lost, find shelter, stay calm and try to assist searchers.

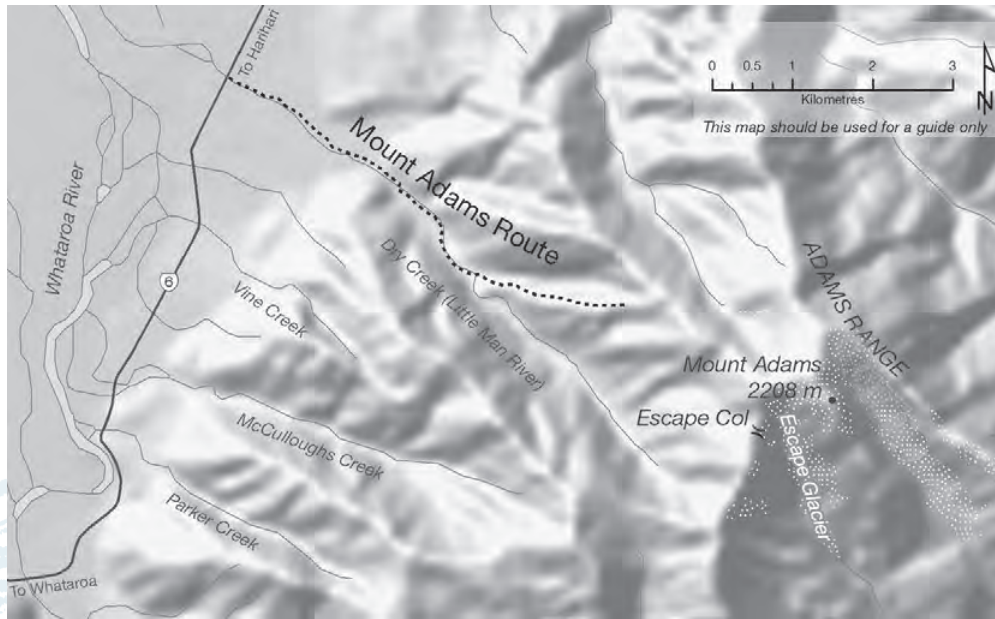
Leave your trip details with a trusted contact, in the hut Intentions Book, and at www.adventuresmart.co.nz. Carry a personal locator beacon, and at the end of your trip don't forget to let your contact know you are safe. More information at www.adventuresmart.org.nz


 *This trip should not be attempted when it is raining, rain is forecast or the river is running high. If you are travelling beyond the snowline then make sure you check avalanche conditions, are sufficiently equipped and experienced to assess the conditions and choose a safe path through avalanche terrain.*

The time given is a guide only and will vary greatly with fitness and weather conditions. Tramping in this area is very demanding and you should allow plenty of time to reach your planned destination.

Getting there

Access to the Mount Adams Route is approximately 10 km north of Whataroa on the northern side of the Dry Creek (Little Man River) bridge. A short farm track leads off State Highway 6 in towards the mountains and your vehicle can be parked near the first gate (be careful not to block the farm access).



 *The marked route ends just past the bushline at the two yellow and orange deer posts. Travel beyond this point is suitable only for mountaineers and those experienced in alpine travel. You must take a map, compass and alpine equipment, and know how to use them.*

Route description

State Highway 6 – bush edge

Time: 5 hours

Follow the farm track upstream for approximately 1 km before dropping down into the riverbed. The route, while mainly on the true right, may change as a result of storms and floods. You will have to pick the best places to cross the river, and re-cross if required. The valley soon becomes confined by steep hillsides and after approximately 2 hours you will reach the second major tributary joining the main river on the true right. At this point the main river cuts sharply back on itself and into a tight gorge. Look for the large orange triangle marking the route entrance into the forest on the true right, around 50 m up from the confluence. This is the last creek so make sure you have enough water with you to last until you reach the snowline and beyond.

The route climbs very steeply up tree-root-covered ground to the crest of a spur about 20 minutes into the forest.

As you continue to climb, the forest progressively gets more stunted and eventually you are moving through subalpine scrub. After climbing steadily for approximately 3 hours you will pop out onto a sloping tussock-covered ridgeline. Further up the ridge there are several good locations to camp – between approximately 1,545 m and 2,100 m.