



## Hunters Hut – Smyth Hut

Time: 6 hours

The tramping track to Smyth Hut is on the true left of the Wanganui River. Access is difficult due to sustained flood damage.

At Poker Bluff, the track climbs high above the bluff before dropping steeply down into the riverbed again upstream of the bluff. From here the track up to Devastation Creek follows the river edge all the way. There are sections of track over small bluffs, and these are marked at each end by large orange markers. The last section of track starts just downstream of Devastation Creek. Cross the creek and follow the markers as a guide to meet up with the track upstream again. This area is quite changeable so take care and follow the markers. The track then climbs around steep bush hillsides and slips, and includes several short beach sections over huge boulders, which must be negotiated.

Smyth Hut (6 bunks) is perched on a terrace opposite the Smyth River. There is no longer a swing bridge across the Wanganui River. This was destroyed in 2013 and is unlikely to be replaced.

## Hot springs

Sitting astride the Alpine Fault, where the Australian and Pacific tectonic plates collide, the Wanganui valley is home to some very relaxing hot springs. These pools can change, depending on river conditions.

Impressive hot pools may be found nestled amongst massive boulders in the riverbed near Smyth Hut. Follow the track back downstream for approximately 5 minutes from the hut. The pools are in a small creek/flood channel spread across a short stretch downstream from the hut. Several pools, ranging in size from small one- or two-person pools up to larger pools accommodating around six people, offer a relaxing reward with stunning alpine views.

Amethyst hot springs are about 15 minutes walk from the road end car park. These pools are easily flooded by the main river and therefore often need to be dug out, so make sure you have a shovel with you. The pools provide a relaxing end to a long trip in the hills.

## Dogs

Dogs are prohibited except when authorisation has been granted by DOC. People wishing to take a dog into this area must obtain a dog permit from the Franz Josef office at least 1 week prior to their trip.

## Hunting

In the Wanganui valley you can find red deer, tahr and chamois, as well as a few feral goats in the lower section. Chamois can be found in most of the river's tributaries from the low level to the alpine herbfields. The higher concentrations of tahr are found in the Adams Wilderness Area above Hunters Hut, with groups also around the head of the river near Smyth Hut. Red deer are found throughout the catchment. Good trophies of all three species may be taken in the Wanganui. All hunters must have a hunting permit, available on the DOC website.

## Hut fees

Please purchase hut tickets before using the huts.

Hunters Hut                    6 bunks                    Standard

Smyth Hut                    6 bunks                    Standard

**Standard** – 1 ticket per person/night

## WEST COAST

# Wanganui valley

## Harihari 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](mailto:westlandnpvc@doc.govt.nz)

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



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- 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: Wanganui valley at Henders Creek.

Photo: © Katrina Henderson

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## Introduction

The Wanganui River catchment has an area of approximately 40,000 hectares and offers hunters, trampers, kayakers and mountaineers challenging terrain in an impressive West Coast river valley. The forest is typical of the central Westland beech gap with a canopy dominated by southern rātā, kāmahi, quintinia/tāwhewhēo and Hall's tōtara. Rimu is locally common at lower altitudes. The forest grades into a zone of dense subalpine scrub which includes a mix of dracophyllum and olearia species. Above this are extensive tussock grasslands, herbfields, bare rock and ice. There has been no possum control undertaken by the Department of Conservation in this catchment, and the effects of browsing by the uncontrolled possum population can be seen in the extensive canopy dieback of species such as southern rātā and Halls tōtara. This is especially evident when compared to the nearby Whataroa valley, where possum control is undertaken and the forest remains healthy.

The climate is variable and subject to extreme change in a very short time. Rain is frequent with prolonged wet periods during spring and summer. Snow can lie above 900 m for up to 5 months of the year and snow storms may occur at any time on the tops, even in summer. At times warm rain will bring a rapid thaw that results in high discoloured rivers and a danger from avalanches; extreme care is needed in these conditions.

The tramping tracks are well marked with orange plastic markers – windfalls are cleared annually and the tracks are scrub-cut every 3 years. The routes are also well marked and windfalls are cleared every 2 years.

 **This valley is subject to flooding at any time of year. Do not attempt this trip in bad weather or when rain is forecast. If rivers and side streams are in flood, do not attempt to cross. Seek shelter and wait until water levels fall.**

## Getting there

Access is off State Highway 6, 8 kilometres north of Harihari (on the northern side of the Wanganui River bridge) where a small side road takes you to the start of the track.

 **Times given are guides 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 planned destinations.**

## General information



**Duration:** 3 days +

**Grade:** Tramping track and route

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

**Best time to go:** Summer and autumn.

**Maps:** NZTopo50: BW17 Harihari; BW18 Whitcombe Pass

**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 Awarua/Haast Visitor Centre or 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](http://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](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

## Route/track description



**Road end – Hunters Hut**

**Time:** 5 hours

The track begins by crossing a couple of paddocks and joining the access road to the rock quarry. The track climbs up to the quarry, before dropping back down to a terrace. After travelling through a section of gorse and scrub, then crossing a rocky beach, the track enters a bush section that carries through to Shearers Flat. From this point follow the riverbed

up to Henes Creek. Above here the track heads up Mystie Flat, before another riverbed section. The track then crosses a small flat, before entering the bush again. After Steep Creek, riverbed and flats are crossed before the track climbs up and over Annoyance Bluff. From here up to the cableway across the Wanganui River the track traverses Jones Flat. Once across the cableway, an easy 10-minute walk downstream on the true left bank takes you to Hunters Hut (6 bunks).



*Ensure that you follow the operating instructions on the cableway as improper use could cause injury.*

### Lambert Tops Route

**Time:** 4 hours to bush edge from Hunters Hut

The route to the Lambert Tops was re-opened in 2008 and is now maintained. Follow the Gorge Track from Hunters Hut to the Lambert River. The Lambert River bridge was destroyed in 2018. Crossing on foot may be possible in low conditions. Do not attempt to cross if you are inexperienced or when the river is high. Follow the track to the signposted junction before turning left and climbing steeply up a ridgeline, following a spur that runs alongside Lambert Gorge. The route provides access into the Adams Wilderness Area and numerous hard mountaineering trips are possible.



*The marked route ends at the two yellow and orange deer posts. Travel beyond this point is suitable only for those experienced in alpine travel.*

### Blue Lookout Route

**Time:** 3 hours 30 min to bush edge from Hunters Hut

The route to Blue Lookout was re-opened in 2008 and is now maintained. From Hunters Hut follow the track towards the Lambert River. The route to Blue Lookout is sign-posted at Benighted Creek. Follow the creek upstream for approximately 500 metres and look for the orange marker on the true left of the creek. The route heads steeply up through stunted forest, before opening out to subalpine scrub and huge rock slabs. This route also provides access into the Adams Wilderness Area.



*The marked route ends at the two yellow and orange deer posts. Travel beyond this point is suitable only for those experienced in alpine travel.*