

NELSON/TASMAN

# Angelus Hut tracks and routes

| Nelson Lakes National Park



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

## Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Can I do it?</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Overview of tracks to Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Location</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Getting there</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Walking seasons</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Hut and campsite</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Hut etiquette</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>History</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Planning, preparation and equipment</b>	<b>8</b>
Weather	8
What to take	8
Trip intentions	8
Safety	8
Sandflies	9
Wasps	9
Giardia and norovirus	9
Rubbish	9
<b>Map</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Other activities</b>	<b>16</b>
Climbing	16
Hunting	16
Ski touring/snowshoeing	16
Botanising	16
Transport	16
<b>Please remember</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>To find out more</b>	<b>back</b>



Angelus Hut. Photo: J Wotherspoon

## Introduction

Angelus Hut, superbly sited in a grand landscape adjacent to Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus in Nelson Lakes National Park, is a comfortable refuge in any season. At 1,650 m altitude, however, the weather can change very quickly. Snow, frost and freezing winds can occur even in midsummer. In winter, the lake is frozen and snow blankets all four routes to Angelus; you are likely to have to dig your way to the hut.

## Can I do it?

All visitors to Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus should be well-equipped with warm and waterproof clothing, tramping boots, a map, and adequate food and fuel. Winter visitors should carry, and know how to use: ice axe, crampons and snow shovel; also an avalanche transceiver and probe.

You must be fit enough to walk for 2–3 days, up to 12.2 km for 6 hours per day and climb to 1,800 m. You must be comfortable on rough terrain and without a fear of heights.

Ensure weather and track conditions are suitable.

Your safety is your responsibility. Before you go into the outdoors, tell someone your plans and leave a date to raise the alarm if you haven't returned. To do this you can use the New Zealand Outdoor Intentions process on the AdventureSmart website [www.adventuresmart.org.nz/outdoors-intentions](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz/outdoors-intentions). It is endorsed by New Zealand's search and rescue agencies and provides three simple ways to share the details of your trip with a trusted person.



Robert Ridge Route. Photo: J Wotherspoon

## Overview of tracks

### Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus

#### Pinchgut Track, Robert Ridge Route

The most popular route in fine weather. Expect ice and snow during winter and spring. A very exposed ridge subject to high wind and poor visibility. There is no water along the track/route.

#### Speargrass Track, Speargrass Creek Route

This route is often used to exit Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus in bad weather. There are unbridged stream crossings, and the route is marked with poles for navigation. There may be muddy sections below the bush edge.

#### 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.

#### Travers–Cascade Track/Route

Expect ice and snow during winter and spring. Above the bush edge route navigation is via poles and cairns. From May to November, the bridge over the Hukere Stream is removed due to avalanche risk. After rain and during snow melt, crossing the river can be difficult – take extreme care.

#### Mt Cedric Track/Route

This route would only be used by trampers accessing Angelus Hut via the Travers–Sabine Circuit. There is no water along the track/route. Expect ice and snow during winter and spring. The track is a steep climb to the bush edge. Route navigation above the bush edge is via poles and cairns. A very exposed ridge, subject to high winds and poor visibility.

## Location

Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus is in Nelson Lakes National Park and St Arnaud village is the gateway to the park. The Department of Conservation has a comprehensive visitor centre there. Hotel, motel, backpacker, campground and bach accommodation is available. A shop with a postal agency sells groceries and petrol. Lake Rotoroa has a backpacker hostel and campground. Water taxis operate on both lakes.



## Getting there

St Arnaud is easily accessible from both Nelson and Blenheim. From each location it is a 1 hr 30 min drive on good roads. It is a 5 hr drive from Christchurch.

## Walking seasons

Angelus Hut is open all year with two distinct seasons.

**Bookings are required all year round.**

**Peak season 1 October – 30 April.**

	Angelus Hut (serviced)	Angelus Hut Campsite
Adult (18+)	\$30	\$15
Youth (5–17)	\$15	\$7.50
Infant	Free	Free

**Low season 1 May – 30 September.**

	Angelus Hut (serviced)	Angelus Hut Campsite
Adult (18+)	\$15	\$15
Youth (5–17)	\$7.50	\$7.50
Infant	Free	Free

Campsite users are encouraged to use the hut facilities and toilets.

Book online at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz), or at Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre, or DOC agents by phone or email. Booking fees may apply. There is a warden at the hut.

**Bookings are required all year for Bushline Hut, located on Pourangahau/Mt Robert. Bookings may be made with a valid Backcountry Hut Pass.**

## Angelus Hut

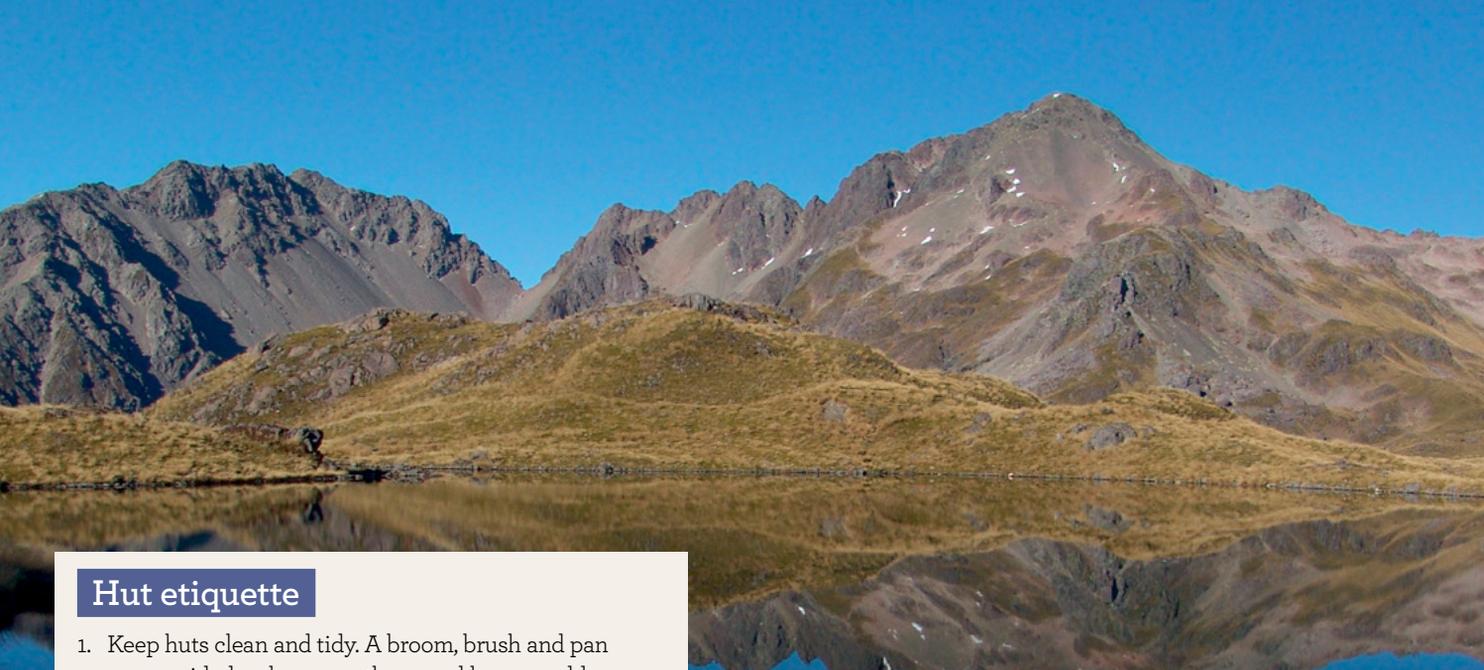
Angelus Hut is well insulated with a wood burning stove for heating (not suitable for cooking on), toilets, bunks, mattresses and water supply. The hut does **not** have lighting, gas cookers or pots and pans.

The hut must be booked all year round. For dates and booking options refer to page 4. Overnight stays are limited to two consecutive nights. School groups, guided walking groups and independent walkers can stay in the hut. Please be considerate of other visitors. Hut users are expected to use firewood sparingly, leave the hut clean and tidy and take rubbish out with them.

## Angelus Hut Campsite

The campsite must be booked all year round. For dates and booking options refer to page 4. The designated camping area is below the hut near the lake. Campers can use the hut to prepare and eat meals and must use the toilet facilities at the hut. School groups, guided walking groups and independent walkers can stay at the campsites. Please be considerate to other visitors: leave the campsite clean and tidy and take your rubbish out with you. The Angelus basin is a fragile area – camping away from the hut's toilet is discouraged.





## Hut etiquette

1. Keep huts clean and tidy. A broom, brush and pan are provided – please use them, and leave muddy boots outside.
2. During cooking always open a window or door to allow fumes to escape. Keep an eye on boiling water/food.
3. Take care using wood burners, keep the fire contained and never leave it unattended. Only burn dead dry wood and be careful with hot ashes. Make sure the fire is extinguished before leaving. Use wood sparingly and replace any you use for the next visitors. Do not burn rubbish in the wood burners.
4. Share huts with others by being considerate, make room for late comers and keep quiet if others are sleeping.
5. Carry it in, carry it out – recycle ALL your rubbish. Take two bags, one for recycling and the other for rubbish/food scraps to carry out with you, and dispose of it responsibly. Refer to Leave No Trace on the DOC website.
6. No smoking in huts; take your cigarette butts out with the rest of your rubbish.
7. No dogs allowed in the Nelson Lakes National Park.
8. Before leaving, close doors and windows securely.
9. Always pay hut fees.

## History

Perched high on the ranges between Lakes Rotoiti and Rotoroa in Nelson Lakes National Park is Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus. It is really a large alpine pond or tarn – a legacy of recent ice advances and typical of the many tarns in the park. During successive major ice advances, which ended about 10,000 years ago, glaciers and permanent snowfields covered much of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana. Erosion by ice has left its characteristic mark: steep valley walls, bluff-ringed side creeks, sharp ridges and peaks and round, lake-filled basins.

The trip along Robert Ridge to Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus is one way to enjoy the alpine environment. The first recorded person to scramble along Robert Ridge was Julius von Haast in 1860, but it is unlikely he was the first.

The lake was previously known as Rangimārie (a Māori name given by a European meaning ‘peaceful’). Later, a group climbing the obvious peak to the south named the peak, and by association, the lake ‘Angelus’ after a devotional prayer. They also named nearby Hinapouri Tarn (dark waters), and Hukere Stream (cascading waters).

Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus and Maniniaro/Angelus Peak.  
*Photo: Markus Baumann*

## Planning, preparation and equipment

Plan, prepare and equip yourself well. Have the right gear and skills for the trip. For up-to-date track alerts, weather and other safety information, go to [www.doc.govt.nz/plan](http://www.doc.govt.nz/plan). This information is also displayed on the Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre noticeboards.

### Weather

Hospitable and welcoming on a fine day, the Angelus basin and the alpine access routes are prone to sudden weather changes bringing freezing winds and snow at any time of the year. Even small streams are dangerous in flood. Winter conditions or bad weather could slow or stop your progress to or from the hut. A fall onto hard or icy snow could be lethal. Snow avalanches are possible.

### What to take

Pack a range of equipment for warm, cold, windy or wet conditions. You will need at least one set of clothes to walk in and another dry set to change into at night. Cotton clothing is not suitable; wool and modern synthetics are better as they dry quickly and give more warmth. Winter visitors should carry, and know how to use, ice axe, crampons and snow shovel, and an avalanche transceiver and probe.

You will need to provide your own sleeping bag, gas, cooking equipment, food and utensils.

Take a day's spare food in case of delay due to weather conditions.

### Trip intentions

Leave details of your trip (return date and time, planned route, party members names and vehicle licence plate numbers) with a trusted contact, and don't forget to let them know when you return. You can also do this with the New Zealand Outdoor Intentions process on the AdventureSmart website [www.adventuresmart.org.nz/outdoors-intentions](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz/outdoors-intentions).

Remember to fill in hut books during your trip, even if you do not stay in the hut. They can assist in search and rescue operations, and may help save your life.



Trampers on Robert Ridge Route. Photo D Parr

### ! Safety

Be ready and have the right equipment for heavy rain, flooded streams, snow and cold winds.

**Your safety is your responsibility.**

### ! Sandflies

Sandflies are tiny black insects that cause itchy bites. Cover up and use insect repellent.

### ! Wasps

There are many wasps in the area, especially from January to April. Consider carrying an antihistamine product and, if you are allergic to stings, ensure you bring your medication.

### Giardia and norovirus

Giardia has not been found in waters along the track but its presence cannot be dismissed. To avoid giardia, water should be boiled, chemically treated or filtered.

Beware of catching or spreading norovirus (stomach bugs): good hygiene practices are essential. Always clean hut surfaces after use.

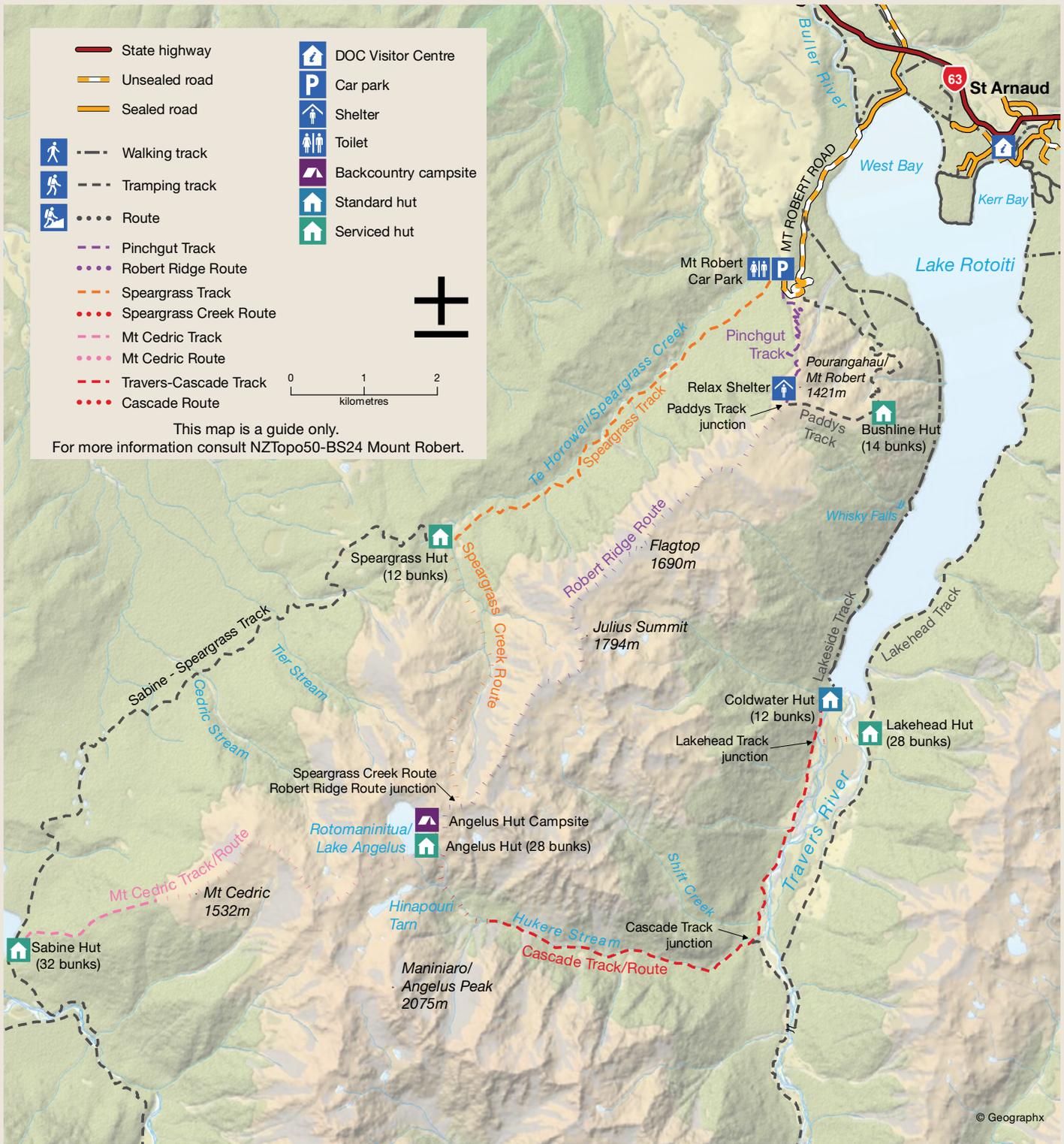
### ! Rubbish

No rubbish facilities are provided. Carry out all your rubbish from the park. Do not put plastic or foil bags in the fireplace because they do not burn cleanly. Do not deposit rubbish in toilets.

- |   |                        |   |                      |
|---|------------------------|---|----------------------|
|   | State highway          |   | DOC Visitor Centre   |
|  | Unsealed road          |  | Car park             |
|  | Sealed road            |  | Shelter              |
|   | Walking track          |  | Toilet               |
|   | Tramping track         |  | Backcountry campsite |
|   | Route                  |  | Standard hut         |
|  | Pinchgut Track         |  | Serviced hut         |
|  | Robert Ridge Route     |   |                      |
|  | Speargrass Track       |   |                      |
|  | Speargrass Creek Route |   |                      |
|  | Mt Cedric Track        |   |                      |
|  | Mt Cedric Route        |   |                      |
|  | Travers-Cascade Track  |   |                      |
|  | Cascade Route          |   |                      |



This map is a guide only.  
For more information consult NZTopo50-BS24 Mount Robert.

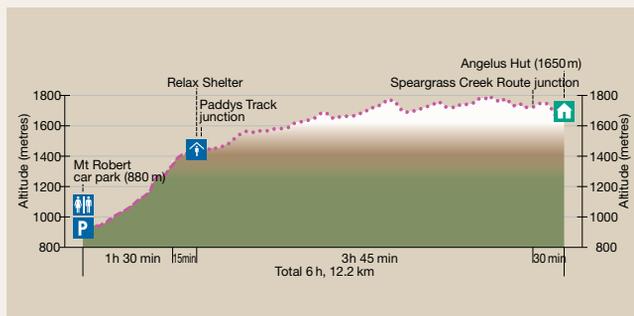


## Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus

  Pinchgut Track, Robert Ridge Route  
12.2 km, 6 hr

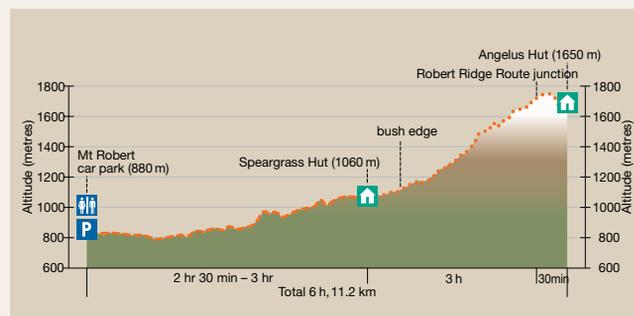
From the Mt Robert car park, a steep zigzag track (the Pinchgut Track) climbs up to the junction with Paddys Track (Bushline Hut 30 min from junction). The Pinchgut Track ends and the route along the ridge is marked with poles. The route follows a broad ridge to Julius Summit (1794 m). From here the route has some sharp and rocky sections. Take care here in icy or winter conditions as accidents have occurred on this section. Continue past the junction with the Speargrass Creek Route (30 min from Angelus Hut) onto the ridge overlooking the Angelus basin. Follow the poles down to the lake and hut.

There is no water along the track/route so remember to carry your own. Be prepared for snow and ice during winter and spring. Robert Ridge is very exposed and is subject to high winds and poor visibility at any time of year.



  Speargrass Track, Speargrass Creek Route  
11.2 km, 6 hr

From the Mt Robert car park follow Speargrass Track to the Speargrass Creek Route junction approximately 5 min before Speargrass Hut (1060 m, serviced 12-bunk hut). From the car park to the track junction takes approximately 2 hr 30 min – 3 hr. From the track junction it is a poled route with many unbridged stream crossings up Te Horowai/Speargrass Creek; it intersects with the Mt Robert Ridge Route 10 minutes short of the view overlooking the Angelus basin. Follow the poles to the lake and hut. Expect muddy sections below the bush edge. This way is often used in bad weather.

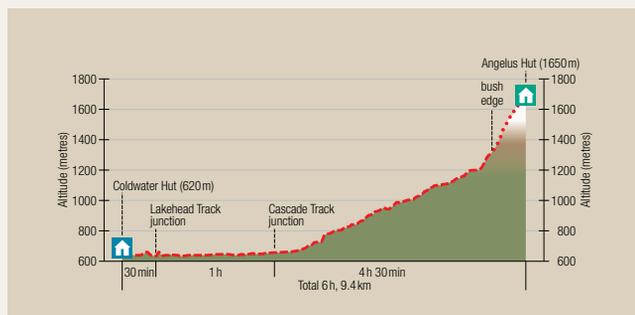


  Travers – Cascade Track/Route  
9.4 km, 6 hr

From St Arnaud the options are to walk to either Lakehead Hut (9 km, 3 hr) or Coldwater Hut (12 km, 4 hr).

From Coldwater Hut to the Cascade Track junction it is 2 hr. From Lakehead Hut it is also 2 hr to the Cascade Track junction. Note this includes crossing the unbridged Travers River. If the Travers River is in flood a swingbridge is located 1 hr 30 min upstream. From the Cascade Track junction it's a steady climb for 4 hr alongside the Hukere Stream.

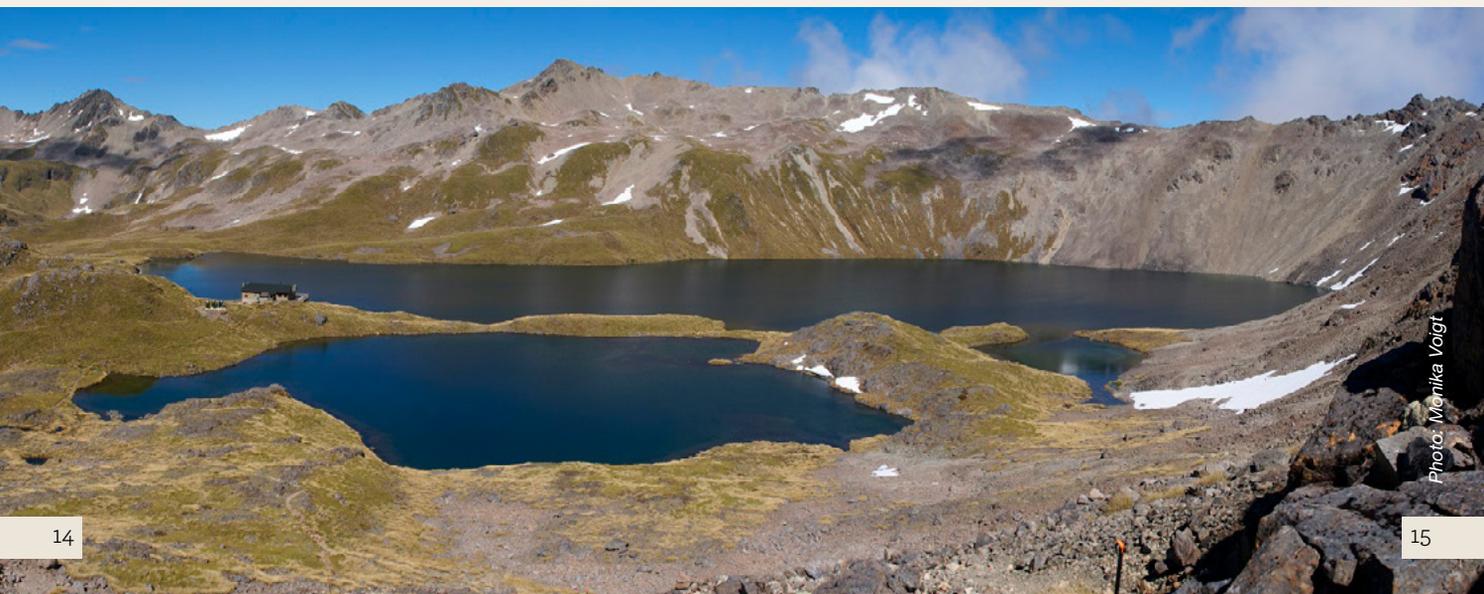
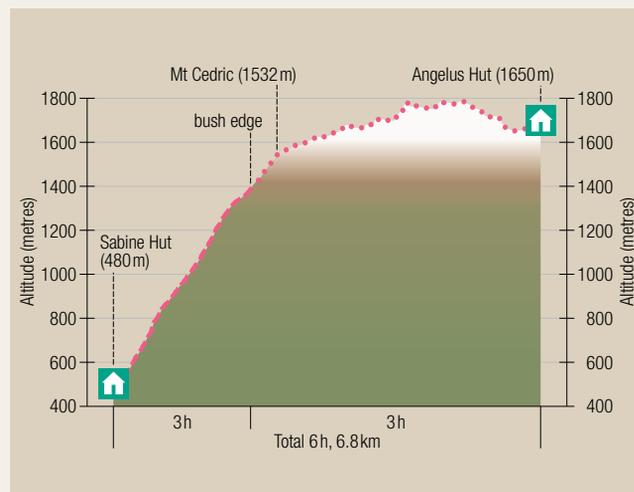
The track ends at the bush edge. Climb the steep poled route to Angelus Hut. Snow and ice can create hazards requiring suitable experience and equipment to safely negotiate this route. From May to November, the bridge over the Hukere Stream is removed due to avalanche risk. After rain and during snow melt, crossing the river can be difficult - take extreme care.



  Mt Cedric Track/Route (from Sabine Hut)  
6.8 km, 6 hr\*

This is a very steep route to the Angelus basin which is exposed above the bush edge. The track begins behind Sabine Hut (serviced hut, 32-bunks) and climbs very steeply and steadily to the bush edge. Poles and cairns mark the route from here, which eventually drops off the eastern side of a high ridge of Mt Cedric (1,532 m) and onto Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus. There is no water along the track/route. Snow and ice can create hazards - make sure you have the experience and equipment to safely negotiate this route.

\* subject to snow and weather conditions.



## Other activities

### Climbing

In summer the best side trip from the hut is the climb of Maniniaro/Angelus Peak (2,075 m). If the mountain is clear of snow, no special equipment or experience is required. The less energetic could climb to Sunset Saddle and then traverse west for 10 min to the Travers Range. This provides spectacular views of the D'Urville and Sabine rivers twisting lazily to the head of Lake Rotoroa.

### Hunting

Speargrass valley is a popular hunting area. A hunting permit is required; you can get one from the DOC website [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz), from the Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre, or any DOC office in Nelson or Marlborough.

### Ski touring/snowshoeing

The Robert Ridge in winter is good for both of these activities, with skiing possible through to Angelus Hut in ideal conditions.

### Botanising

The alpine basins in the area offer good places for studying plants (botanising). Habitats ranging from screes and bluffs to stream beds, small bogs and open tussock slopes.

### Transport

Contact the Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre or the DOC Nelson Visitor Centre for information on the local land and water transport operators.



Buttercups – *Ranunculus*. Photo: J Wotherspoon

## Please remember



### Safety

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



### Environmental care

The alpine environment, although apparently harsh, is very fragile.

- Do not wash utensils or use soap in the lake – use the hut facilities.
- Use the toilet facilities provided.
- Use firewood sparingly – the stove is only for heating.



### Bring your own water

There is no water source on the Pinchgut Track, Robert Ridge Route and Mt Cedric Track/Route.



### Domestic animals

No domestic animals are permitted in the national park.



### Drones

No unauthorised drones in the Nelson Lakes National Park.

## Care for Aotearoa



### Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



### Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by planning and preparing for your trip.



### Keep NZ clean

Take all rubbish with you and use toilets where provided.



### Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



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tiaki

Te Kāwanatanga  
o Aotearoa  
New Zealand Government

## Further information

### Department of Conservation Rotoiti/ Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre

PO Box 55, St Arnaud 7053

**PHONE: +64 3 521 1806**

**EMAIL: [nelsonlakesvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:nelsonlakesvc@doc.govt.nz)**

### For booking huts or campsites go to:

[www.doc.govt.nz/online-bookings](http://www.doc.govt.nz/online-bookings)  
where you will also find terms  
and conditions.

If you need help with your booking,  
contact the Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes  
Visitor Centre:

**PHONE: +64 3 521 1806**

**EMAIL: [nelsonlakesvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:nelsonlakesvc@doc.govt.nz)**

**Hunting permits** are available online at  
[www.doc.govt.nz/hunting](http://www.doc.govt.nz/hunting) or contact the  
Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre.

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

*Front cover: Angelus Hut. Photo: One Shot/Tony Brunt*

*Back cover: Hukere Stream. Photo: Markus Baumann*

This information was accurate at the time of printing.  
For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities,  
visit [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

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