



Rakaia River to Rangitata River

(Map 102, 103, 104, 105, 106)

Northern Start	Glenrock Stream, Double Hill Run Rd
Southern End	Potts River Bridge carpark, Hakatere Potts Rd
Distance	70km
Time	4 days
Tramping Standard	Tramping track

Route

This Te Araroa section, from the Rakaia River to the Hakatere Heron Road, starts on a public access easement over Glenariffe Station, 34km from SH77. It then crosses the 60000ha Hakatere Conservation Park before finishing in the Heron Basin on a paper road that runs through Castle Ridge Station.

It's an area rich in high country history dating back to 1857 when Clent Hills Station was first farmed as a 20000ha run under licence from the Crown. Over the years the station has survived many incarnations the most recent being the Nature Heritage Fund purchase of 10000ha, which reduced the station to a rump of 2000ha within the Heron Basin. The Clent Hills pastoral lease was in the Buick family from 1923 to 1982. The first 3 years of this tenure was spent eradicating rabbits before stock could be reintroduced to the property.

Glenrock Stream to Comyns Hut - 15.7km / 4-5hr

From the DOC sign notifying "Access to North Branch Ashburton Stream" the track follows markers through farm land up the true right side of Glenrock Stream - look out for electric fences. At the 1.7km mark the track crosses the stream and then merges with a farm track that begins to climb towards the Conservation Park boundary. Along the way the track passes a stand of Kowhai trees. No camping is permissible until inside the Conservation Park boundary.

From the Conservation Park boundary the route zig-zags up an old farm track to Turtons Saddle (1120m). Beyond the saddle travel remains on the farm track and is initially east and upwards but soon turns south sidling then descending towards the Turtons Stream's true left bank. The A-Frame Hut toilet becomes visible in the lower portions of the descent.

After 8.7km the track reaches Turtons Stream, which is the first water source en route that is both reliable and potable. The track remains on the true left and crosses Ensor Stream 1.5km before A-Frame Hut, a tidy 3-bunk hut near the Comyns Stream's confluence with Turtons Stream. It takes about an hour from the saddle to reach this hut.

Beyond A-Frame Hut the track continues down the true left of Turtons Stream for about 2km. This is to the first of 4 river crossings in close succession. The track then climbs and descends into Mutton Gully. Once out of this gully, Turtons Stream is forded a final time. It's then an easy 700m walk to Comyns Hut (8 bunks).

The current Comyns Hut was built in 1957 to replace the original and derelict hut, which was built in the 1890s and still stands nearby. The 'new' hut is basic but was improved following restoration work in 2008. The hut door and walls act as an informal and historic register and make interesting reading.

Comyns Hut to Double Hut junction - 16km / 6-8hr

This part of the track is rough and unformed. Trampers are required to pick their own route between markers which, in poor weather, may not be visible from one to the next. The physical and navigational challenges rise accordingly.

A marker behind the hut shows the route heading west up the North Branch Ashburton River towards Round Hill Creek. Travel quickly becomes confined to the stream bed and involves frequent river crossings. These are straightforward in normal flows.

Round Hill Creek joins North Branch Ashburton as the latter heads north towards Petticoat Lane. From this confluence Te

Araroa continues up Round Hill Creek, past Logan Stream, and then departs to begin the ascent towards Clent Hills Saddle (1480m). On a clear day the saddle affords great views of the Longman Range, Ricki Spur and the wider Lake Heron Basin.

Care needs to be taken to ascertain the correct route beyond the saddle. Do not descend. Instead continue to the right along the saddle and link to the upper-most track crossing a large scree slope. On the far side of the scree the route continues to slide through tussock to the next ridge. Marker poles become evident again along the way.

From the ridge the poles lead down and to the right, diagonally away from the Swin. Eventually, after crossing 3 further scree slopes, the track reaches a dilapidated fence along another ridge line.

Follow the fence line down the ridge to a rock cairn and arrow, which indicate the way down and to the right towards the next pole and ultimately to an unnamed stream, which is a tributary to the Swin River. Once across this stream the final climb begins towards the Mellish Saddle.

The route down from the saddle becomes easier and remains above the true left bank of Mellish Stream. It emerges into the wider Heron Basin and passes a sign-posted junction with a side trail out to the road end at Lake Heron. Continue on the main track for about 1km to another junction near the Swin River, which is crossed on foot but seldom an issue. From here Double Hut (6 bunks) is 1km away on another side trail. Double Hut has 6 bunks and is in reasonable condition.

The side trail to the right provides an exit to the Lake Heron Car Park and then to Hakatere Heron Rd. Once on the road it is a few 100m to the right around the lake shore to Lake Heron Campground. Or turn left for 16.3km to Ashburton Gorge Rd and then left another 39.6km to Mt Somers Village where there is a tavern for meals, a general store and camping accommodation.

Double Hut junction to Hakatere Heron Rd (via Manuka Hut) - 14km / 3-4hr

The track continues south for 6.4km across grassy and gravel flats passing the Seagull and Manuka Lakes along the way. This is to a junction from where Manuka Hut (6 bunks) is hidden 300m upstream and to the left.

Note: The next reliable water source on Te Araroa beyond Manuka Hut is on the Clearwater Track and 17.3km distant.

Beyond the Manuka Hut junction Te Araroa continues south for a little over 2km and then turns west to climb to the ridge on Emily Hill's south flank. The poled track line then sidles down through matagouri and spear grass to the flats. From here it's easier going across to a carpark at Lake Emily. At this point the track leaves the Hakatere Conservation Park and joins with a marked paper road that bisects Castle Ridge Station. Trampers should take care to follow the markers to avoid straying onto private property.

Its 5km from Manuka Hut to the Lake Emily carpark and then another 3.2km on the Castle Ridge paper road to Hakatere Heron Rd. This is where the Clent Hills Track ends. There is a farm gate across the paper road about 600m before the finish point. This gate should be left as it is found (open or closed).

For trampers continuing south, turn left onto Hakatere Heron Road and walk 4.4km to the Clearwater Track trail head. This is on the right hand side of the road just beyond Buicks Bridge.

Clearwater Track - 21km / 4-6hr

This high county track passes through the Hakatere Conservation Park on land formally comprised in the 9119ha Hakatere Station. This pastoral leasehold property was purchased by the Nature Heritage Fund in October 2007 and returned to the conservation estate. Free public access is now afforded, as is protection to significant wetlands and expansive tussocked landscapes.

There are no huts en route but trampers can camp as it suits.

From the south side of Buicks Bridge, which crosses the South Branch Ashburton River, marker poles lead westward across easy open country. This is towards the gap between Mt Guy and Dogs Hill. At the 5km mark the track crosses a fence line and later it joins an old farm track, where it stays for another 5km. At this point the marked track turns left and heads towards a saddle at the western end of Mt Guy. It passes a tarn along the way.

From the Saddle there are sweeping views over Lake Clearwater towards the Harper Range, of Mt Potts, and to, then beyond, the Rangitata River. Follow the fence line down to the creek at the base of the hill. The track then heads south-west towards the head of Lake Clearwater and joins with another old farm track, which continues towards the Potts River but stops at a gate. Te Araroa heads northward here to avoid crossing private property then bends around towards the lip on the Potts River's true left bank. Once on the lip the track stays high and follows the fence line. It then drops steeply into a gully, which opens to the Potts River bed. If the Potts River is running clear then the best travel is usually downstream direct to the carpark at the road bridge.

If the Potts is discoloured this exit will be impassable. The proper course then is up the other side of the gully. Trampers are then able to remain on the Potts side of the fence line through to the road. From here it's a short walk down hill to the car park and trailhead.

Its 18.5km to the left on Hakatere Potts Rd to Ashburton Gorge Rd, then on to Mt Somers Village and Methven. Its 3km to the right on Hakatere Potts Rd to Mt Potts Lodge.

Other Information

Accommodation en route

[Glenrock Lodge](#) - Double Run Rd (adjacent to Trail) - P: 03 3185855 - E: hello@glenrocklodge.co.nz - special \$50 rate for Te Araroa walkers (self-catering)

[Comyns Hut](#) - 8 bunks

Double Junction Hut - 6 bunks

[Lake Heron Campground](#) - GPS co-ords -43.49462, 171.15600 - Toilets and water only. (Only Open between 1 October and

30 April)

[Mt Somers Village](#) - tavern for meals, a general store and camping accommodation.

[Manuka Hut](#) - 6 bunks

[Mt Potts Lodge](#) - 2131 Hakatere Potts Rd, Ashburton Lakes - P: 03 303 9060 - E: info@mtpotts.co.nz - Offers a range of accommodation.

[Alps 2 Ocean](#) offer a number of forms of assistance in this area. Check out their website for details and to book - their services must be pre-arranged.

Potential Hazards

- Farming operations
- River crossings - Never cross flooded rivers
- Small stream crossings
- Track exposed to sun, wind or cold
- Weather extremes
- Few water sources be sure to fill at Manuka Hut

Requirements

- Keep to the track
- Respect private land
- No dogs

Amenities (Start)

- Full range of amenities in Methven
- Car park
- Toilets in Methven
- Shop in Methven

Amenities (On Route)

- No amenities
- Accommodation huts