



Breast Hill Track

 Walking

Difficulty

Hard

Length

54.9 km

Journey Time

3-4 days

Region

[Otago](#)

Sub-Region

[Queenstown-Lakes District](#)

Part of Collections

[Te Araroa - New Zealand's Trail](#) , [Te Araroa - South Island](#)

Te Araroa section: Breast Hill Track takes walkers to the summit of Breast Hill (1,578m). Views of Mt Aspiring dominate the western skyline, with Lake Hawea far below. The track was formed using public access easements across the large Hawea Station following a tenure review. It is a crucial and spectacular connection for Te Araroa

The track begins on a public access easement across Longslip Station, a run established by pastoral lease in 1858 and which once comprised 42,526ha. In the 1880s, the property was overrun by rabbits and abandoned. In 1897 Lake Hāwea and Ben Avon Stations were subdivided off, and what remained of Longslip Station then passed through a succession of lessees before going through tenure review, a process that concluded in 2008.

Access over the final 18km of this track became available when Lake Hāwea Station completed its tenure review in 2010. This property has been owned by the Rowley family since 1912. Like Longslip Station, Lake Hāwea Station still operates as a working farm.

Birchwood Carpark to Top Timaru Hut - 22.5km / 7-8 hours

A marked route leads off from the carpark and follows a fence line on the true left of the Avon Burn (stream). Ford the burn, then climb to the farm track above the true right bank. Turn right here and head upstream on the farm track as it climbs into the Avon Burn catchment towards Mt Martha Saddle (1680m).

The Tin Hut (6 bunk beds), located at km 2,567.4, 9.2 km after the trail crosses Birchwood Rd (SOBO), or 13.3 km after Top Timaru Hut (NOBO), is not covered by the Backcountry Hut Pass. It is a private hut owned by Longslip Station. Available at \$10/night using an honesty box system, or you can use internet banking when you next have service. Account details are displayed in the hut.

From Tin Hut the track is a steady climb on a worn 4WD track to Martha Saddle. The stream at Tin Hut is not suitable for collecting drinking water due to the number of cows using it, but there are two good side streams 2 km up the track. Martha Saddle offers extensive views in both directions and has some cell signal coverage

Beyond the saddle Te Araroa descends on an unmarked bulldozer track to Top Timaru Hut (6 bunks). The track is occasionally washed out, but travel is still straightforward. The route remains on the true left of the Timaru River all the way down to the hut. From Martha Saddle the track descends across wide scree slopes to reach the river bank. It crosses the lower edges of some rocky stream washouts, which contribute a fine grey sediment that discolours the Timaru River all the way to Lake Hawea. This makes the water at Top Timaru Hut unpleasant, but a good side stream opposite the hut offers a better alternative.

An alternative route using the Melina Ridge Track and Mt Prospect Track branches off just above Tin Hut. It rejoins Te Araroa at km 2,581.6, bypassing Top Timaru Hut. This route is not part of Te Araroa, but may be preferred by some hikers.

Top Timaru Hut to Timaru River Junction — 11.5km / 6-8 hours

In dry conditions it is possible to walk along the river bed from Top Timaru Hut to km 2,586. This avoids a long climb on a 4WD track immediately after the hut, and bypasses numerous short steep descents and eroded sidles. It also bypasses some very pleasant walks through beech forest glades. There are a large number of fallen trees along the track.

The bulldozed track on the river's true left continues downstream to the tree line, about a 30-minute walk from Top Timaru Hut. Once in the forest progress is slower on a marked track that climbs, descends, and sidles through this steep-sided river valley. This is to the Breast Hill Track/Timaru River Track junction. Along the way, the track is on the true left for about 2.5km, then emerges from the forest at a grassy area. From here, the track leads down to the first of about a dozen river crossings. These are straightforward in normal flow.

The route along the Timaru River beyond km 2,585.5 (southbound) requires hard scrambling along steep banks. In low water conditions, it may be easier to walk in the riverbed, but careful continuous assessment is required as even when the water is low, the riverbed route may encounter flooded gorge sections with steep sides.

There is one place where it is necessary to use the higher track even when the river is very low. This is from approximately km 2,586 (southbound). The gorge narrows a little further down at km 2,586.5, creating turbulent rapids followed by a narrow chute between sheer rock walls. Attempting to climb around this obstacle is extremely dangerous. The discoloured water makes it difficult to judge water depth when climbing over partly-submerged boulders. If you reach this point in the river be prepared to backtrack and use the higher-level marked route between km 2,586 and km 2,587.

Immediately before km 2,587 there is a 20 m waterfall visible on a side stream on the river's true left. For northbound walkers using the river this waterfall marks the point where it is advisable to switch to walking on the marked track, at least for the next km. After that the northbound river route to Top Timaru Hut will generally become easier than the preceding river walk from Breast Hill Track junction.

Timaru River Junction to Stodys Hut — 2.2km / 1.5-2 hours

The track from the junction climbs steeply to the tree line and then sidles across an open section. The track then returns briefly to the forest before reaching Stodys Hut (6 bunks), an old musterers' hut on the tree line. The hut has a dirt floor but was restored to a reasonable condition in 2010. The nearby creek may be only a trickle in dry conditions. It may be advisable to top up at a sidestream 100 m before the hut. This is the last reliable water source until Pakituhi Hut.

Stodys Hut to Pakituhi Hut via Breast Hill — 11.2km / 3.5-4.5 hours

The route between the huts is high and exposed, but from Breast Hill has impressive views over Lake Hāwea and beyond to the Alps, including Mt Aspiring. It is a Te Araroa highlight.

From Stodys Hut, Te Araroa follows an old farm track up to the ridgeline, then turns right and follows the farm track along the broad ridge as it undulates towards the Breast Hill summit (1,578m). The track is lightly marked, but all junctions are signposted, so navigation is usually easy. Beyond the summit, the track is close to a fence line and mostly unformed. It descends to the 8-bunk Pakituhi Hut (1300m), 200m along a side trail to the left.

The hut can also be accessed along a foul weather route, which departs Te Araroa on the left a little over 1km before it reaches the summit. This alternative route is less exposed but lacks the drama the Breast Hill route affords.

Pakituhi Hut to Gladstone Reserve — 4km / 3-4 hours

There are no streams en route so carry plenty of water from the hut.

This challenging section descends 950m to the Timaru River Rd, initially climbing from the hut to a small saddle and then down a steep face on a zig-zagging track. Turn left at the road. The Gladstone Reserve is lakeside and about 1km distant, with another 6 km of gravel cycle track to reach Lake Hawea accommodation, post office and store

- Note: Allow more time if walking this section in the opposite direction.

Conditions

Potential hazards

- Farming operations at both ends
- River crossings - Never cross flooded rivers
- Track exposed to sun, wind or cold
- Weather extremes
- Few water sources in places

How to get here

Northern Start: Birchwood Road carpark, Ahuriri Valley

Southern End: Gladstone Reserve, Lake Hāwea





Transport

Alpine Coachlines - P: 03 443 9120 - Wānaka based.




Wānaka Bike Tours - offers a Bike and Shuttle service to suit Te Araroa hikers! For an additional \$25pp, Wānaka Bike Tours will carry hikers' packs so they can skip the walking and bike from Lake Hāwea to Lake Wānaka or vice versa. Regular departure times apply, so please contact Wānaka Bike Tours to find out more. 03 443 6363 / info@wanakabiketours.co.nz / www.wanakabiketours.co.nz

Accommodation

Trail Pass

-  Tin Hut - km 2,567.4 - Private \$10
-  Top Timaru Hut - km 2,580.8 - Included in The Trail Pass
-  Stodys Hut - km 2,594.4 - Included in The Trail Pass
-  Pakituhi Hut - km 2,605 + 0.2km - Included in The Trail Pass

Accommodation en route

- The Tin Hut (6 bunk beds), located 9.2 km after the trail crosses Birchwood Rd (SOBO), or 13.3 km after Top Timaru Hut (NOBO) is not covered by the Backcountry Hut Pass. It is a private hut owned by Longslip Station. Available at 10\$/night using an honesty box system, or you can use internet banking when you next have service. Account details in the hut.
- [Top Timaru Hut](#)  - 6 bunks
- [Stodys Hut](#)  - 6 bunks - the hut has a dirt floor but was restored to reasonable condition
- [Pakituhi Hut](#)  - 8 bunks

Lake Hāwea Village - Accommodation

- Lake Hāwea Motel - 56 Capell Ave - P: 03 441 1188
- [Haweahotel](#) , 1 Capell Ave, P: +64 3 443 1224, W: www.haweahotel.nz  E: reservations@haweahotel.nz
Hotel and Budget accommodation available.

Our Lakeside Restaurant and Gardenside Bar are open from 8am – Close daily.

We can offer packed breakfasts and lunches for our guests if they want to set off early.

- Lake Hāwea Holiday Park - 1208 Makarora Rd - P: 03 443 1767 - cabins and camping

Food And Supply

Sailz Lake Hāwea Restaurant & Bar - P: 03 443 1696 - General store, post office, café and restaurant. Open daily from 7.30am.

Lake Hawea Fresh Choice, 5 Bodkin Street. Open 8:00 m to 9:00 pm

More information

Before starting Te Araroa either as a through-walker of the whole country or a section walker, [please register on Te Araroa website](#). Please also [visit the website](#) or [download the app](#) for detailed maps, trail alerts and other relevant information.

This track is part of the Herenga ā Nuku Aotearoa track database. Herenga ā Nuku has [maps and advice about public access to the outdoors](#).

We encourage you to continue gaining the skills and knowledge required for a safe trip. The NZ Mountain Safety Council has lots of free resources and information you can use. These can be accessed via www.mountainsafety.org.nz.

We recommend trying these online learning tools:

- [Trip Planning](#)
- [Tramping/field Skills](#)
- [Basic Navigation](#)
- [River Safety](#)

Additionally, check out the range of helpful videos available from the NZ Mountain Safety Council [YouTube channel](#).

