



Tararua Ranges

 Walking

Difficulty

Hard

Length

43 km

Journey Time

3–6 days

Region

[Wellington/Kapiti](#)

Sub-Region

[Kāpiti](#)

Part of Collections

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

Te Araroa trail section: This section involves 3–6 days through forest and alpine terrain and includes many steep ascents and descents. It begins at 150m above sea level and reaches its highest point at Mount Crawford 1,462m. Views in the Tararua Range in clear weather are outstanding.

Warning: Weather in the Tararua Range is notorious for deteriorating rapidly. Be prepared for extreme conditions at all times. There can be gale-force winds and heavy rain. Snow can fall in any season. Be prepared to wait out storms or for streams to subside after heavy rain. Do not cross swollen streams. Be sure to fill in the intentions book at the start of the track.

The trail is divided into three stages of 1–2 days each, depending on fitness and weather conditions.

1. Poads Road (Levin) to Te Matawai Hut (900m), via Waiopehu Hut (960m)
2. Te Matawai Hut to Nichols Hut (1160m) via Dracophyllum Hut
3. Nichols Hut to Pārāwai Hut (Ōtaki Forks, Road End, 100m) via Waitewaewae Hut (310m)

See the note below regarding Otaki Forks Road access.

If exiting from the Mangahao-Makahika Track, walk approximately 7km down Gladstone Road to Poads Road on the left, crossing an old concrete bridge and walking uphill to the car park.

From Levin, take transport for 7km to the car park at the end of Poads Road.

Poads Road - 2.5km

Poads Road to Waiopehu Hut - 9km / 4-5hr

This route to Waiopehu Hut (960m 18 bunks) involves a climb of 800m. The track starts at a DOC notice board and initially crosses private farmland. Follow the blue posts and farm track.

The Ridge Track to Waiopehu Hut veers right soon after entering the bush. The track is marked through the forested areas and the alpine areas follow a very defined ridge with some marking where possible. There is a pleasant lunch spot at a clearing about half an hour before the hut. The Waiopehu Hut is at the bushline offering good views across the plains and east to Tararua high peaks.

Waiopehu to Te Matawai Hut - 6km / 4hr

The track climbs over Waiopehu Peak (1094m), Twin Peak (1097m), Richards Knob (985m) descends to Butchers Saddle (690m) before climbing to Te Matawai Hut. Ascent 500m, descent 600m. Climb the 100 vertical metres to the shoulder of Waiopehu Peak, then descend and climb Twin Peak (with memorial for person killed in a major storm 1936). This part of the track is in scrub, offering good views of surrounding hills. Descend through leatherwood and bush, then climb to Richards Knob where there is a track direction sign. At the intersection of Gable End and Dora Ridge Tracks, turn right (southeast) and follow Dora Ridge Track down to Butchers Saddle and up to its junction with the Yeates Track, that connects with the south branch of Ohau River. Go right (southeast) and follow up the ridge to Te Matawai Hut and helipad.

Te Matawai to Dracophyllum Hut - 8km / 4-5 hours

This route to Dracophyllum Hut (1100m, 2 bunks) climbs Pukematawai (1432m), along the main range, over Butchers Knob (1158m) then through bush to Dracophyllum Hut. 700m ascent, 500m descent.

Follow Northern Crossing Track up the ridge to shoulder of Pukematawai (sign where Main Range Track starts). Much of track is above the bushline and can be covered in snow in winter (June -September).

Descend on the Main Range Track over various bumps to the bushline beyond Butchers Knob. Dracophyllum Hut is another hour away through beech forest. A small hut with 2 bunks and water tank.

Update November 2025: five tent platforms have been added to Dracophyllum Hut

Dracophyllum Hut to Nichols Hut - 5km / 4 hours

The route to Nichols Hut (1160m, 6 bunks) climbs Puketoro (1152m), Shoulder of Kelleher (1142m) and Nichols (1242m) (all unmarked) along the Main Ridge to Nichols Hut.

The track is mainly through bush, climbing into open at Puketoro and Kelleher (unmarked). At Kelleher Shoulder a cairn marks where the track descends down a steep tussock ridge, snaking down to bush. From here it follows an undulating ridge, finally climbing to the top of Nichols (unmarked) from where the track descends through tussock to the hut, east of the saddle.

Update November 2025: four tent platforms have been added to Nichols Hut

Nichols Hut to Waitewaewae Hut - 8km / 4-5 hours

Route to Waitewaewae Hut (310m 16 bunks) via Mt Crawford 1462m. 380m ascent, 1240m descent.

- Note: In strong winds and rain it may be necessary to stop at Nichols Hut until weather clears.

Follow the ridge up the summit of Mt Crawford for great views of the Tararua Range, Kāpiti Island, the coast and possibly Mt Taranaki. Descend to Junction Knob, turn right to Shoulder Knob, where the track re-enters the bush, and descends steeply to the Ōtaki River (bridged) and then Waitewaewae Hut, where there is river swimming.

Waitewaewae Hut to Parawai Lodge - 10km / 4-6 hours

Route to Parawai Lodge (100m altitude, 18 bunks) and Ōtaki Forks car park. Ascend to the Plateau (530m) then descend Saddle Creek (200m) and cross Ōtaki River swing bridge to the carpark. 250m ascent, 460m descent.

Follow the marked track down the terrace the hut is on. The wet weather track then climbs and crosses a number of gullies and streams before the climb to the Plateau. These streams can be difficult and dangerous to cross in heavy rain. Be prepared to let levels fall during wet weather.

Dry weather route: Follow the track to Ōtaki Forks for roughly 100m along the terrace then drop down the bank on the unmarked route and cross the Ōtaki River. Below here the river bends around to flow east. Cross back to the west bank on the bend and head to the orange marker by a side stream just below the long slip in the west bank. Follow the markers and track up this stream (Arapito Stream) to join the main wet weather track where it crosses Arapito Stream. This point is signposted.

After crossing Arapito Stream the track climbs up the valley crossing a number of gullies before reaching the Plateau. The track crosses Plateau Stream three times in a short distance before a short 20m to 30m climb to the saddle. From here the new track heads south along the ridge, climbing gently (the map still shows the old route closed by a large slip). There are a couple of flat boggy sections on the ridge. From the ridge, the new track crosses a steep slope before dropping down to the old tram track. A well-graded track leads from here to a swing bridge over the Ōtaki River. It then climbs over a terrace on the south side of the river before dropping to Pārāwai Lodge. The carpark and road are across another swing bridge beside the Waitotauru River.

There is a DOC warden located across the swing bridge near the overnight carpark.

If continuing on to the next section (Pukeatua) turn left at the road and continue for 2km to end of the road: camping area, and the start of Fenceline and Pukeatua Tracks. Ōtaki Township is 10km away down Ōtaki Gorge Road. Transport is recommended as the road is narrow and winding.

Note: The current LINZ Topo50 maps shows Ōtaki Gorge Road terminating after Shields Flat. That is no longer correct. The road now connects to Te Araroa near Boiellies Campsite.

Conditions

Potential hazards

- Poisons and traps
- Farming operations – do not disturb stock
- River crossings – never cross flooded rivers
- Track exposed to sun, wind or cold
- Weather extremes – be aware of the weather forecast and be prepared to wait bad weather out if necessary.

Weather in the Tararua Range is notorious for deteriorating rapidly. Be prepared for extreme conditions at all times.

Be prepared to wait out storms. Snow can fall in any season. Be sure to fill in the intentions book at the start of the track.

[Tararua Range \(Arete Hut\) weather - NIWA](#) [↗](#)

[Tararua Range \(Waitewaewae Hut\) weather - NIWA](#) [↗](#)

[NIWA 3-day forecast](#) [↗](#)

[Tararua Range \(Powell Hut\) weather - NIWA](#) [↗](#)

[Tararua Range \(Kime Hut\) weather - NIWA](#) [↗](#)

How to get here

Northern Start: Junction of Gladstone and Poads Road, Levin

Southern End: Otaki Forks, Otaki Gorge Road

Transport

Levin - Getting to/from the start

From the north Te Araroa enters the Wellington region at Poads Road, 7 km from Levin (Taitoko). Levin has a full range of services and amenities available and is a good point for resupply

Getting there/away

- Levin is on [State Highway 1](#) [↗](#), and on the [North Island Main Trunk](#) [↗](#) Line with a [station](#) [↗](#) used by the [Capital Connection](#) [↗](#) long-distance commuter train between Wellington and Palmerston North - P: 0800 801 700
- [InterCity](#) [↗](#) - P: 04 385 0520
- Rental Cars - multiple options available

Ōtaki

Ōtaki Forks Transport Options: Bookings Essential

If exiting at Ōtaki Forks the Gorge Road is narrow and winding - not safe for walkers.

- Local Taxi Service - Wally (retired) Phone 06 362 6319
- [Paraparaumu Taxi Service](#) [↗](#) - Tues, Thurs, Fridays 10am-3pm P: 0800 508 294

Accommodation

Trail Pass

- 🏠 Waiopehu Hut - km 1,586 - Included in The Trail Pass
- 🏠 Te Matawai Hut - km 1,591.3 Included in The Trail Pass
- 🏠 Dracophyllum Biv - km 1,598.8 - Included in The Trail Pass
- 🏠 Nichols Hut - km 1,603.9 - Included in The Trail Pass
- 🏠 Waitewaewae Hut - km 1,612.2 - Included in The Trail Pass
- 🏠 Parawai Lodge - km1,622.1 - Included in The Trail Pass
- 🏠 Boielles Campsite - km 1,622.2 - Included in The Trail Pass. (Bookings required 1 Dec - May)

Other Accommodation

Levin

[Makahika OPC](#) [📍](#), 865 Gladstone Road, Levin.

- Privately Owned Property.
- Sally & John Duxfield - Phone +64 217 25593. Please use text message.
 - Please do not leave phone messages.
 - Email: director@makahika.co.nz

Season dates | We are set up from the 1st October, until the end of March. Outside of those dates, please text and see if we have capacity to host you.

- Enter the double gates, veer right, and put up your tent outside the 'little Black Shed' and the white marquee. This is your space. The houses are out of bounds, please respect our space.
- The Outdoor Centre is out of bounds. Please do not walk around the property, we have clients on site every day, Monday to Friday.
- John and Sally live on the other side of the property so the tent site may not always be attended when you arrive.
- This is our home. Please be respectful of our animals, and the facilities that we provide. We provide, shampoo, body wash, toilet paper. These supplies, plus the Portaloo (empty) and gas for the shower, cost us \$230.00 per week. So PLEASE be respectful and pay for your stay with us.
- \$15.00 per person per night - Cash Only
- No need to pre-book, first in, first served.

Site Information.

- Approximately 15 small tent sites available on grass area, near the little black shed
- Outdoor kitchen with fresh drinking water (All water at Makahika is suitable for drinking)
- Portaloo
- Hot Shower
- Full cell phone coverage on site
- No Wi-Fi
- Charging station for electronics.
- Rubbish removal - you can leave your rubbish
- Drop off and hold of drop boxes (no charge for storage)
- Drop off for groceries from New World, Levin. DO NOT USE WOOLWORTHS
 - **Delivery Address** - Top House, 865 Gladstone Road, Levin 5571.
 - Please DO NOT order lots of COLD items as we do not have fridge space for your perishable food.
 - If we are home, we will provide updated weather advice for Tararua Forest Park. We suggest you use MetService Tararua Forest Park Forecast. <https://www.metservice.com/mountains-and-parks/national-parks/tararua-forest> [📍](#) This is the most accurate for our region.

Levin

- [Levin Holiday Park](#) [📍](#) (camping, cabins & motel units) - 38 Parker Ave, Levin - P: 06 368 3549 - E: lhpxtra.co.nz
- [Tōtara Lodge Motel](#) [📍](#) - Cnr Devon & Bristol St - P: 06 368 4114 - E: reservations@totalodgemotel.co.nz
- [Panorama Motel](#) [📍](#) - 170 The Avenue SH 1, Levin - P: 06 368 5401 or 0800 660 220 - E: admin@panoramamotel.co.nz
- [Bentons Motel](#) [📍](#) - 2 York Street (Cnr of York - P: 06 367 8282 - E: bentonsmotel@xtra.co.nz

Levin Trail Host

- Beni Paroli (AT hiker) P: 06 368 4570, 027 9304151 E: pepperonis@xtra.co.nz for pickup, shower, meal and bed - Levin;

Ōtaki

- [Boilles DOC Campsite](#) - an open grassy field directly adjacent to the Waiotauru River and near Parawai Lodge. There is a small cooking shelter, flush toilets, good river swimming. \$10 per night
- [Ōtaki Forks/Schoolhouse Flat DOC campsite](#) - 2km up road near start of Pukeatua Track, \$10.00 per night - please note this site is closed until further notice due to the closure of Ōtaki Gorge Road.
- 2 Campgrounds at Ōtaki Beach, - approx 6 km west of SH 1
- [Ōtaki Manaaki B & B](#) - 102 Rāhui Rd, Ōtaki - P: 0274 783 220
- [Ōtaki Motel](#) - 260 Main Highway, Ōtaki - P: 06 364 8469 or 0800 662 243 - E: info@otakimotel.co.nz
- [Railway Hotel](#) - 6 Arthur St, Ōtaki - P: 06 364 7165

Ōtaki Trail Host

- Beni Paroli (AT hiker) 06 364 6261 pepperonis@xtra.co.nz for pickup, hot shower, meal and accommodation Ōtaki Beach.

Food And Supply

Levin

- [New World Supermarket](#) - 21 Bath St, Levin - P: 06 368 6538
- [Countdown Supermarket](#) - 15 Bristol St, Levin - P: 06 366 0050

Ōtaki

- [New World Supermarket](#) - 155-163 Main Highway, Ōtaki North - P: 06 364 8640
- [Countdown Supermarket](#) - Cnr Mill Rd & Aotaki St, Ōtaki - P: 06 364 9001

Track Elevation and Map

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. You can access them at 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](#).



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