



Two Thumb Track

 Walking

Difficulty

Hard

Length

74.2 km

Journey Time

3-5 days

Region

[Canterbury](#)

Sub-Regions

[Ashburton District](#), [Mackenzie District](#), [Timaru District](#)

Part of Collections

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

Te Araroa trail section: This is a fine high-country trail providing a challenging traverse through Te Kāhui Kaupeka Conservation Park. You'll walk from the south side of the Rangitata River through to Boundary Stream at Lake Tekapo.

The start of the track is signposted at the Bush Stream carpark beyond Mesopotamia Station, and is mostly unformed but marked with poles from there. Access is via Rangitata Gorge Road. The huts en-route are classic 8-bunk musterers' huts and add an important historic dimension to this tramp.

Bush Stream car park to Crooked Spur Hut - 10km / 4 hours

- Note: Please see the "Additional Information" for transport details - there is very little traffic past Peel Forest

If driving to the trailhead on Rangitata Gorge Road take care to follow the correct gravel track which forks to the right immediately after passing the Mesopotamia Station farm buildings and passes through the fence line over a cattle stop. The wider gravel track straight ahead is a privately maintained private road and is signposted No Access at the first fence. Please respect farm access restrictions. Te Araroa benefits from landowner's goodwill.

Follow markers from the carpark up towards Bush Stream. The path across the stony matagouri flats is not easy to follow as the marker posts are not always visible over the scrub. The trail crosses a farm road and skirts a small canal. After passing the canal the track crosses a low ridge behind a row of poplars. Walk to the left along this ridge a short distance and look out for a 4WD track heading up towards the gorge across the wide matagouri flats to the stream. This is much easier than trying to find your own path through the matagouri. At the stream travel is up, or adjacent to, the river bed, crossings as required. It is not necessary to zig-zag across the river bed to each orange marker pole. Choose your own route based on the river braids as you find them. These crossings are straightforward in normal flows but can be tricky after rain or during spring when the stream is fed by snow melt. Take extreme care at these times. Crossings are recommended as early as possible in the mornings during the snow melt.

The Sawtooth Bluff can be particularly tricky. Before reaching Sawtooth, approximately 5 km from the start, cross to the left (true right) bank as the stream at Sawtooth is narrow, steep and deep, even in moderate conditions.

The track leaves the stream bed 2.5 km past Sawtooth at a marked point on the left and climbs over a steep ridge to avoid a gorge section, and then descends back towards Bush Stream.

To ford Bush Stream a final time head up the true right bank to find the safest place to cross. Previous advice to cross via an island in mid-stream is now out of date due to changes in the gravel banks. Aim to come out of the stream just above the orange triangle marker. Follow the marker back onto the Bush Stream Track and up to Crooked Spur hut.

From the true left side a formed track climbs towards Crooked Spur Hut (5 bunks). This track was still used for mustering purposes up until 2009. The climb to the hut takes about 1hr.

Crooked Spur Hut is tired but provides adequate accommodation. It's in a good location with views down Bush Stream to the Rangitata River.

Crooked Spur Hut to Stone Hut - 9.5km / 5 hours

From Crooked Spur Hut the track goes west around Crooked Spur and climbs steadily for 1.5hrs to a saddle at 1500m. From the saddle the track descends to cross Pack Horse and Sweeps Streams before returning to Bush Stream. The old stock bridge, which may appear on some maps, has been removed. Cross the river upstream from the narrow gorge to reach Stone Hut. Stone Hut (8 bunks) is in reasonable condition.

DOC have removed the bridge over Bush Stream marked on Te Araroa map 122 at km 2,389.1, and on NZTopo50 map BX18. Local signage indicates the required stream crossing below the hut.

Stone Hut to Royal Hut - 6.5km / 2 hours

Beyond the hut Te Araroa follows Bush Stream to Royal Hut (8 bunks). Prince Charles and Princess Anne reputedly visited as children, hence the hut's name.

Royal Hut to Camp Stream Hut - 14km / 6 hours

The first part of the day involves a climb over the Two Thumb Range via Stag Saddle (1925m), the highest point on Te Araroa.

From the hut cross Bush Stream and follow the poles upwards. The climb to the saddle is fairly steep in places but quite safe in reasonable weather. The contours ease towards the saddle, where cell phone coverage is available. At km 2,398.2 the NZ Topo may show a trail branching slightly right to climb towards to the saddle. A better route, sporadically marked with stone cairns, turns to the left to follow a small stream gully up to and around a small rocky spur. The marker poles are widely spaced.

For northbound walkers this preferred route is found by keeping to the right when descending from the saddle

From the saddle the poled route marked on NZ Topo maps follows Camp Stream down to the hut. This is the safest route in bad weather, but the track may be boggy in places.

On a fine day the Ridge Route is preferable as it offers a wide view over Lake Tekapo. Turn right near the Stag Saddle sign and cross higher ground to the track traversing the bare scree slope visible above the saddle to the right. Descend the ridge line for 10 km past marked peak 1944 and the turn off to Rex Simpson Hut (private) to a 4WD track. While unmarked this route is generally sound underfoot and affords excellent views across Lake Tekapo to Mt Cook. This should only be attempted by people confident in navigating and should not be attempted in poor weather. Turn left onto the 4WD track, which fords Camp Stream on its way to Camp Stream Hut (6-bunks)

The more scenic correct route to the ridge track turns to the right at the Stag Saddle sign and rises higher to cross the wide the scree slope ascending the high ridge visible to the right. Once on the high ridge the track is easy to follow all the way to Camp Stream. Do not attempt to cross the broken rock slope on lower contour between km 2,399.8 and km 2,402.

- Note: Camp Stream Hut is owned and managed by the Mackenzie Alpine Trust who ask for a \$10 per person donation to overnight here - please carry some cash and use the honesty box outside the hut.

The alternative marked (and poor weather) route down from Stag Saddle is lightly poled and runs down into the tussock covered Camp Stream Valley. Lower down this valley the 2 routes converge at the 4WD track, turn left here to access Camp Stream Hut, which is on the true left side of the stream. Camp Stream Hut is compact but in reasonable condition.

There is no water supply at the hut so fill up when crossing Camp Stream

Note for Northbound walkers, Camp Stream Hut to Royal Hut

There are two possible routes from Camp Stream, just north of the hut, to Stag Saddle. The DOC sign at the stream crossing indicates Stag Saddle via Te Araroa Trail. This is the valley route, recommended for bad weather when the exposed ridge may be best avoided. The valley route is safer in these conditions but may be swampy.

Te Araroa maps and apps now follow the alternative ridge track to Stag Saddle. To access this going northbound from the stream crossing walk up the 4WD track towards the Coal River Car Park, past two orange marker poles. Turn right at the third pole, which may have an improvised arrow attached, and climb the tussock path to the start of the long ridge leading up to Stag Saddle. Check the Alert or apps for a recent route correction near the top end of the ridge. Watch for the track split between Bunzenberg Peak and Stag Saddle at approximately km 2,400.5

Camp Stream Hut to Boundary Stream carpark - 18km / 5 hours

The track leaves Camp Stream Hut for the Ski Field Road. Trampers leave the hut and follow the track down the true left of Camp Stream, before crossing the Coal River just above the confluence and then continuing on the true left of the Coal River before the steep climb to the road. There is a car park well down the road for those wanting to exit here.

Meanwhile, Te Araroa continues on conservation land parallel with Lake Tekapo and along the base of the Two Thumb Range. The track crosses Washdyke Stream on its way to Boundary Stream where it descends above the true right bank to a car park at Lilybank Road.

Lilybank Road to Tekapo - 15km / 4 hours

- Note: once you cross Boundary Stream, you are surrounded by private land and camping is NOT welcomed - continue all the way to Lake Tekapo Village, or if you wish to camp make sure you do so before crossing Boundary Stream.

Follow the road shoulder 14km south towards SH8.

- Note: wear a high-visibility vest and/or pack cover on this walk and don't wear earphones, as the road is narrow and can be very dusty (poor visibility) in summer.

The road walk ends at the Lake Tekapo Regional Park, which affords lakeside walking for the final 3km section into Lake Tekapo Village.

Conditions

Potential hazards

- Vehicles on road or track Lilybank Road
- River crossings - Never cross flooded rivers
- Small stream crossings
- Track exposed to sun, wind or cold only take ridge route down from Stag Saddle in favourable conditions
- Weather extremes

[Stag Saddle weather - NIWA](#) [↗](#)

[NIWA 3-day forecast Stag Saddle](#) [↗](#)

[NIWA 3-day forecast Lake Tekapo](#) [↗](#)

How to get here

Northern Start: Bush Stream carpark, Rangitata Gorge Road

Southern End: Junction of Pioneer Drive and SH8, Lake Tekapo Village

Transport

Transport to and from the trailheads is available





- The Geraldine Community Vehicle Trust can take TA walkers to Peel Forest on weekday mornings. It is not open on the weekend or Public Holidays. Closed from December 20th until January 5th. The cost is \$24.00 per person. P: 03 693 1007 - E: geraldine.mini.bus@gmail.com
- Rangitata bypass shuttle. Now available for pick up and drop off to Mesopotamia and Potts river car park from Geraldine. Contact Brian 022 069 3981
- [Tekapo Shuttle](#) [↗](#) [↗](#) Te Araroa Track extends from Roundhill Road via Lake Tekapo and continues towards the Lake Pukaki area. If you require transportation along this route, please don't hesitate to contact us. <https://tekaposhuttlenz.com/contact-us/>

Getting there/away






- [InterCity](#) [↗](#) - P: 03 365 1113
- [Atomic Shuttles](#) [↗](#) - P: 03 349 0697 - daily buses to Queenstown and Christchurch

Accommodation






Trail Pass

-  Crooked Spur Hut - km 2,379.5 - Included in The Trail Pass
-  Stone Hut - km 2,389 - Included in The Trail Pass
-  Royal Hut - km 2,395.3 - Included in The Trail Pass
-  Camp Stream Hut - km 2,410 - Private \$10 - Please support this hut, owned by Mackenzie Alpine Trust

En route

- [Peel Forest Farmstay](#)  - 10km from SH72 on the road to Mesopotamia Station. Private rooms and bunk rooms available, self-catering. We now also offer transport to and from Geraldine, the Ashburton Lakes area and Mesopotamia trail-head. Contact in advance Steve and Jenny Deans - Home 03 696 3509, Steve 027 305 0400, Jenny 027 746 4267, sjdeans1@outlook.com
- [Crooked Spur Hut](#)  - 8 bunks - This Hut is tired but provides adequate accommodation. It's in a good location with views down Bush Stream to the Rangitata River
- [Stone Hut](#)  - 8 bunks - This hut is in a reasonable condition
- [Royal Hut](#)  - 8 bunks
- [Camp Stream Hut](#)  - 6 bunks - Compact Hut but in a reasonable condition - note this hut is owned and managed by the Mackenzie Alpine Trust who ask for a \$10pp donation to overnight here - please carry some cash and use the honesty tin inside the hut.

Accommodation


- [Haka House Lake Tekapo](#)  - 5 Motuariki Lane - P: 021 221 7085 [formerly YHA Tekapo. Re-opened November 2022]
- [Tailormade Backpackers BBH](#)  - 9-11 Aorangi Crescent, Lakee Tekapo - P: 03 680 6700 - E: taylor-made-backpackers@xtra.co.nz
- [Lake Tekapo Motels and Holiday Park](#)  - 2 Lakeside Drive, Lake Tekapo. Shared campsite for hikers \$32 pp, no need to book - P: 03 6806 825 or Freephone 0800 853 853 - E: info@laketekapo-accommodation.co.nz
- [Lake Tekapo Holiday Park hiker campsite](#)  - 2 Lakeside Drive, Lake Tekapo. Shared campsite for hikers \$32 pp, no need to book
- [Lake Front Backpackers Lodge](#)  - 2 Lakeside Dr, Lake Tekapo - P: 0800 840 740
- Fairlie Holiday Park (30min drive from Tekapo) - 14 Allandale Rd, Fairlie - P: 03 6856190 - E: fairlieholidaypark@gmail.com - Kitchen, TV room, library.

Many other accommodation options are also available.

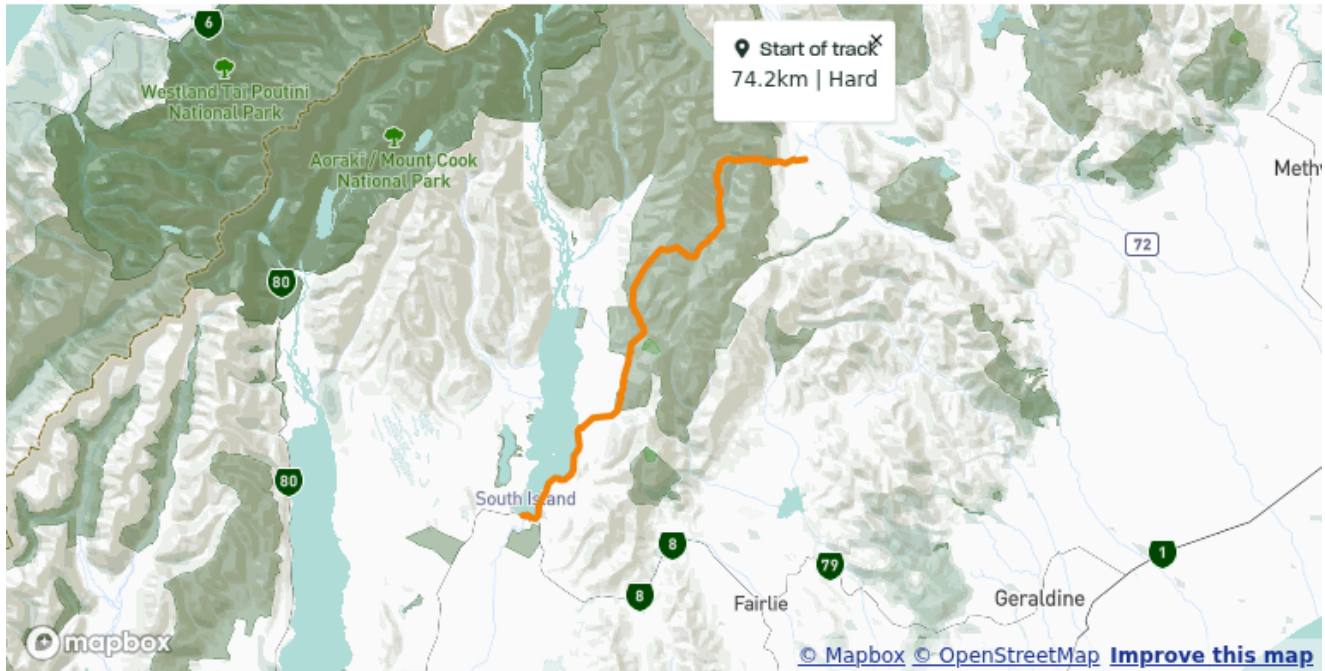
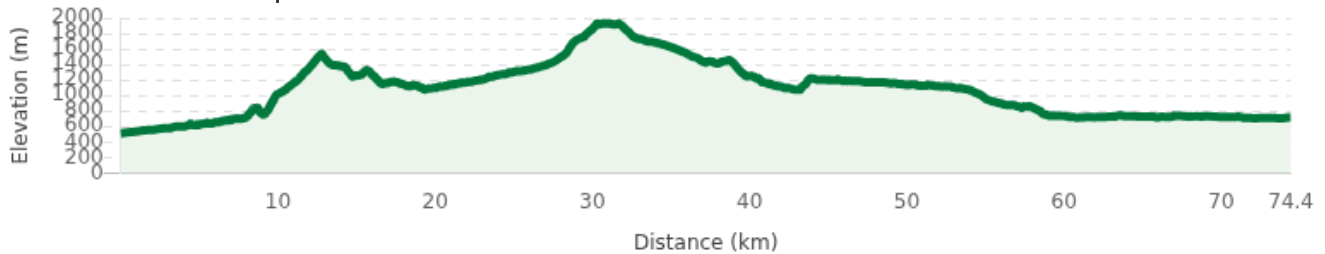
Food And Supply

- [Tekapo Services Ltd \(4 Square supermarket\)](#)  - Main Street - Tekapo Twizel Rd, Lake Tekapo - P: 03 680 6809
- [Doughboys Bakery](#) - 65 Main Rd, Tekapo - P: 03 680 6655 - Snacks and bakery goods

Bounce Box

- Annie from BeSpoke Cycles is keen to receive and hold your bounce boxes - BeSpoke Bike Tours, 8 Simpson Lane, Tekapo annie@bespokebiketours +64 (0) 21 151 3742 W: www.bespokebiketours.nz 

Track Elevation and Map



More information

Lake Tekapo Village

- Lake Tekapo Information Centre - State Highway 8, Lake Tekapo - P: 03 680 6686 - W:
- [Tekapo Springs Sales & Information Centre](#) - State Highway 8, Lake Tekapo - P: 03 680 6579 - E: sales@tekaposprings.co.nz
- [Heartlands Fairlie Resource and Information Centre](#) - 67 Main Street, Fairlie - P: 03 685 8496 - E: fairlie@xtra.co.nz
- [Aoraki Mount Cook National Park DOC Visitor Centre](#) - State Highway 80, Aoraki Mount Cook Village P: 03 435 1186 - E: mtcookvc@doc.govt.nz
- [Kiwi Treasures & Information Centre](#) - State Highway 8, Lake Tekapo - P: 03 680 6686 - E: kiwitreasures@clear.net.nz
- [Twizel Information Centre](#) - Market Place, Twizel - P: 03 435 3124 - E: twizelinfo@gmail.com
- Tekapo Tourism - W: <http://www.tekapotourism.co.nz/>

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](#).



Page last updated: 25/12/2025, 7:17 am