




Douglas Range route guide

Kahurangi National Park




The Douglas Range route links the Aorere valley with the Cobb Reservoir and includes Boulder Lake, Adelaide Tarn, Lonely Lake and the Cobb valley. This route showcases spectacular views and passes through limestone-capped terrain, classic Kahurangi alpine ridges, tussocklands, beech and mānuka forests, and lakes and rivers. While both ends of the route use tracks that are maintained by the Department of Conservation (DOC), the middle section from Boulder Lake through to Fenella Hut is untracked and generally follows an informal route through steep and rocky terrain that is marked with irregular rock cairns.



Know before you go

-  Wasps are particularly common from December through to April. Carry antihistamines if you are allergic to their stings.
-  It is recommended that you boil, filter or treat water before drinking.
-  Hunters must carry a permit from DOC. To get a permit, visit www.doc.govt.nz/hunting.
-  Anglers must carry a fishing licence from Fish & Game. To get a permit, visit www.fishandgame.org.nz/licences.
-  Minimise your impact on the environment by using a portable cooker.
-  Use only dead wood in the fireplaces at the huts.
-  There are no rubbish facilities in the backcountry. Take your rubbish with you.

For your safety

- Always leave the details of your trip (return date and time, planned route, names of group members, and vehicle licence plates) with a trusted contact and let them know when you return.
- Before undertaking this trip, assess the skill level of your group and read trip reports of others.
- Carry a distress beacon with you as this area is a hotspot for Land Search and Rescue callouts.
- Be aware that poor visibility due to mist on the mountain tops can make route finding and orientation difficult.
-  Streams and rivers on this route are unbridged and may become difficult or impossible to cross during and after heavy rain. If you come across a swollen river, do not cross it. Turn back or wait for the river to subside.
-  Avalanches occur in winter.
-  Many parts of the route have a high level of exposure to adverse weather and freezing conditions can occur at any time of the year.

For more information on staying safe in the outdoors, visit www.adventuresmart.co.nz.

Huts

Backcountry Hut Tickets or a Backcountry Hut Pass entitle you to stay in the huts on this route. Tickets can be purchased from DOC visitor centres or selected retailers. The Backcountry Hut Pass can only be purchased online at www.bookings.doc.govt.nz/web. Get your tickets or pass before you start the tramp.



Serviced huts

Adult (18+ years): One green ticket per night

Youth (5–17 years): One red ticket per night

Serviced huts have mattresses, a water supply, toilets, hand washing facilities and heating with fuel available. They may also have cooking facilities with fuel and a warden.



Standard huts

Adult (18+ years): One blue ticket per night

Youth (5–17 years): One yellow ticket per night

Standard huts have mattresses, a water supply and toilets. Wood heaters are also provided at huts below the bushline.



Basic huts

Basic huts provide very basic shelter with limited facilities. There is no charge to stay here.

How to get there

Turn off Aorere Valley Road at Bainham, 18 km from Collingwood, and follow the road signs along James Road to the bridge at the Aorere River. Cross the bridge and drive a further 200 m to reach a car park, an intentions shelter and the start of the track. Please ensure that you fill out your intentions at the shelter and in the subsequent hut books as they will be used in case of an emergency.

Walking the track

Duration: 5–7 days

Grade: Expert route

Description: Unformed route for challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking trips. The route has directional markers, poles or rock cairns for wayfinding. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings. Suitable only for people with high fitness who have high-level backcountry (remote area), navigation, river crossing and survival skills and experience. Complete self-sufficiency and sturdy tramping/hiking boots required.

Maps: NZTopo50: BP24 Tākaka; BP23 Gouland Downs; BN24 Collingwood; BN23 Paturau River.

This route is described from west to east.

Road end to Boulder Lake Hut, 8–10 hr, 22 km

Many people underestimate the time required for this section of the route so start early or carry camping gear to stay overnight.

The track starts just across the paddock behind the intentions shelter. The first 6 km to Lookout Knob is a gradual climb through regenerating forest before transitioning into mature

forest and then limestone-capped backcountry. **Be aware that there are some challenging limestone slots to cross here and there is a risk of falling.**

The track then continues to climb through beech and mānuka forest, passing an intermittent water source at Beathams Clearing before sidling along the left side of The Pulpit to eventually emerge at the open Cow Saddle. The track is fully exposed to the weather conditions and follows a poled route to Boulder Lake. From Cow Saddle, the track sidles around to the right to a point beside a small outcrop on the skyline ridge. Continue to sidle under the bluffs of Brown Cow Ridge, crossing the top of a steep shingle scree and then descending along a tussock spur to the lake. Continue around the eastern edge of the lake to Boulder Lake Hut (standard hut, 8 bunks).



Access to water is an issue on this track. There is a small stream 30 min from the start and then nothing reliable until you reach Boulder Lake. Make sure you are carrying enough water for your needs.



The sidle and scree crossing under the bluffs of Brown Cow Ridge are an avalanche hazard in winter and a general fall hazard throughout the rest of the year.

Side trip to dam wall and waterfall

From Kiwi Creek, you can make a 30 min (one way) side trip to view the remains of the dam wall that was built by gold miners across the lake outlet stream. The water from the lake was led by a long series of flumes and aqueducts to sluice gold claims on the Quartz Range goldfields, 6 km away. You can view the spectacular 65 m waterfall, which marks the beginning of the Boulder River, by climbing to an obvious vantage point further to the west of the wall remains.

Boulder Lake Hut to Adelaide Tarn Hut, 5–6 hr, 7.2 km

It is advised that you carry a gas or liquid fuel cooker as wood fuel is unavailable at Adelaide Tarn and Lonely Lake Huts.

Carrying a tent is also advised as these huts have limited sleeping space.

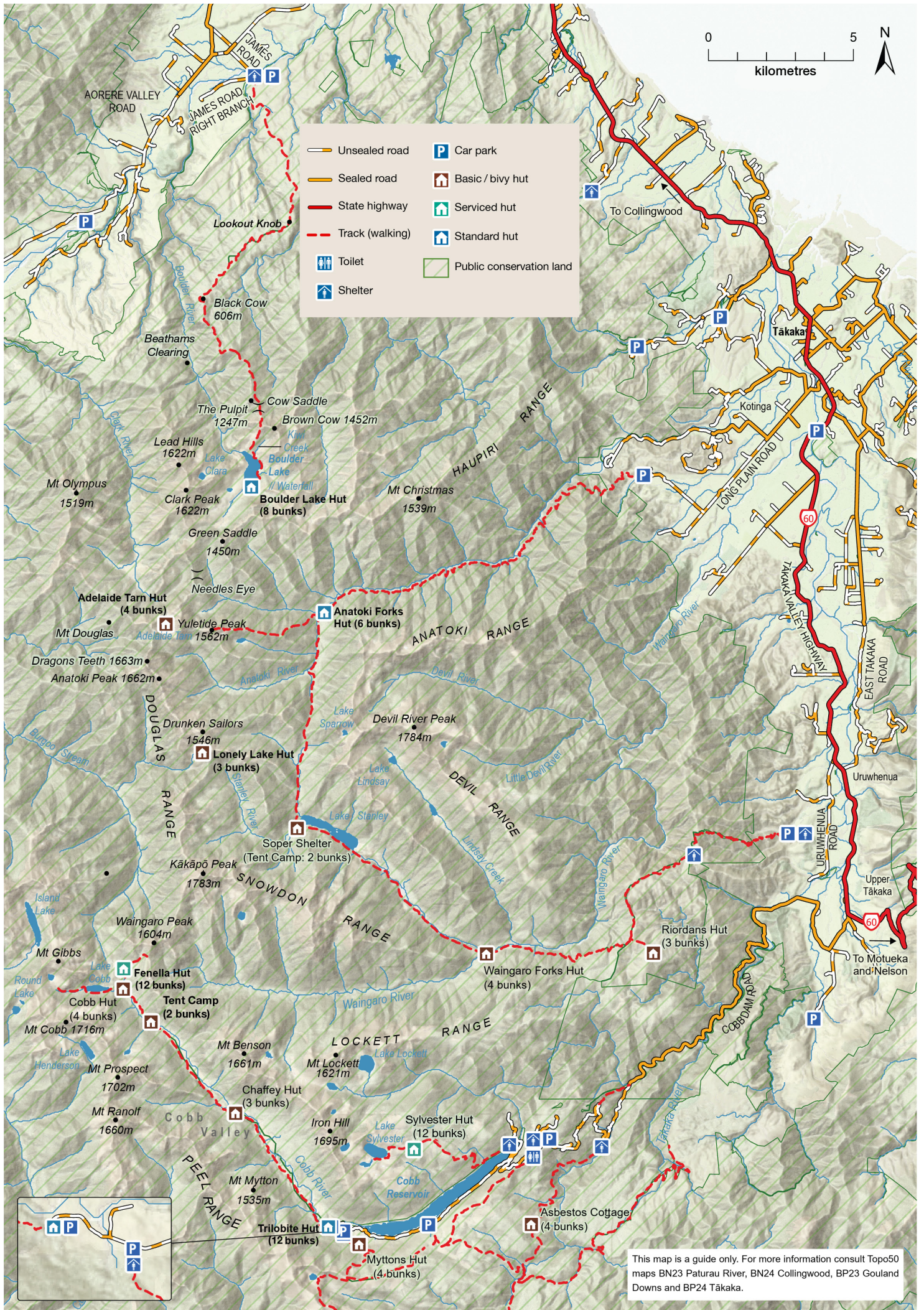
From Boulder Lake Hut, continue up the valley and past the rock cairns before heading up the only tussock spur to Green Saddle. Note that there is an optional sidle to the left onto Green Saddle starting above the bush edge on this spur.

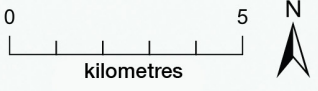
From Green Saddle, continue on to the next small saddle, which is below point 1450 m on the topo map. Here, two large rock cairns on a quartz outcrop mark the first two sidles on the Anatoki Range side of this main ridge to the Needles Eye. The first sidle is on a cairned animal track passing under point 1450 m before gaining and following the stunted bush ridge to the second sidle between points 1411 m and 1488 m.

From this point, descend and sidle through bush on a marked animal track and follow the rock cairns across a tussock rock face and under the obvious rock ribs. This then leads to the top of the first finger of bush in a narrow gut under the Needles Eye. Climb this flax-filled gut to the Needles Eye saddle. From here, descend directly onto a short tussock spur to an obvious track and terrace that leads towards Adelaide Tarn Hut (basic hut, 4 bunks).



Do not attempt to sidle from the Needles Eye around to the hut – it is steep and bluffed. This section is very exposed to harsh weather conditions.





This map is a guide only. For more information consult Topo50 maps BN23 Paturau River, BN24 Collingwood, BP23 Goulard Downs and BP24 Tākaka.

Adelaide Tarn Hut to Anatoki Forks Hut, 5–6 hr, 7 km

From Adelaide Tarn, retrace the route back to the Needles Eye and sidle around the north side of The Needle. The route is cairned over Yuletide Peak and then follows the long, rather broken ridge before descending steeply along a marked track through silver and mountain beech forest to the south branch of the Anatoki River. Once across the river, the track meets the Anatoki Track. Turn left and follow the track to Anatoki Forks Hut (standard hut, 6 bunks).

If going directly from Boulder Lake to Anatoki Forks Hut, follow the cairned route from the Needles Eye, sidling down towards the saddle leading to Yuletide Peak. This route passes under bluff and rocky sections on the northern slopes of the Needles Eye before reaching the saddle and then climbing up and over Yuletide Peak.



The Anatoki River crossing can be extremely difficult, and it may be necessary to go up the river to cross or wait for river conditions to be more favourable before crossing.

Adelaide Tarn Hut to Lonely Lake Hut, 8–10 hr, 8 km

Each grid reference (GR) refers to NZTopo50 map BP23
Goulund Downs

From Adelaide Tarn Hut, climb up behind the hut to the saddle directly east of Mount Douglas, GR 614 672. A steep gut marked with a rock cairn gives access to the headwaters of the Anatoki River. Once in the bush at the base of this gut, head further south until you are below the bluffs that are under the Dragons Teeth. From here, veer east following the course of the stream that becomes the Anatoki River. Follow the Anatoki River downstream to GR 640 652. From this point, climb the ridge to the southwest and emerge on an open ridge east of the Drunken Sailors. From here, sidle on the north side of the Drunken Sailors and follow the cairns leading into a saddle and down to Lonely Lake Hut (basic hut, 3 bunks).

Lonely Lake Hut to Adelaide Tarn Hut, 8–10 hr, 8 km

Each grid reference (GR) refers to NZTopo50 map BP23
Goulund Downs

From the hut, head north up a small gully to a saddle northwest of the Drunken Sailors. From here, sidle eastwards on the northern side of the Drunken Sailors to an open spur. Follow this spur northeast to GR 636 642 and then follow the long ridge that drops to the northeast into the Anatoki River before arriving at GR 640 652.

From here, head up the Anatoki River to the forks at GR 626 665. Take the west branch of the river and follow it upstream until below the bluffs northeast of the Dragons Teeth. Climb northwards up a steep gut to emerge on the saddle east of Mount Douglas, GR 614 672, before heading northeast down into the basin to Adelaide Tarn Hut (basic hut, 4 bunks).

Lonely Lake Hut to Fenella Hut, 6–8 hr, 11 km

From Lonely Lake Hut, follow the non-maintained track that sidles up through the bush and onto the Douglas Range and the open ridgeline. Follow the ridge, with the occasional option of using the animal tracks. Sidle across the scree under Kākāpō Peak and regain the ridge, and then follow the cairned route that sidles below point 1550 m and Waingaro Peak to reach a bushed spur. Continue down a well-marked track to Fenella Hut (serviced hut, 12 bunks).

Note: The route from Lonely Lake to Waingaro Peak is cairned.

Fenella Hut to Trilobite Hut 4–5 hr, 13 km

Fenella Hut was built as a memorial to Fenella Druce, who was killed in 1977 when Three Johns Hut was blown over a bluff in Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park.

From Fenella Hut, the track drops down a series of glacier-worn rocky steps, and after about 20 min, you will reach Cobb Hut (basic hut, 4 bunks). A short side trip will take you to Lake Cobb and Round Lake, both of which provided water for the earlier hydroelectric development. From Cobb Hut, continue down the valley, passing Chaffey Hut (basic hut, 3 bunks) and finishing at Trilobite Hut (standard hut, 12 bunks) and the road end.

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.



Further information

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Published by:
Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai
PO Box 10420
Wellington 6143

September 2024

Editing and design:
Te Rōpū Ratonga Auaha
Creative Services

