

Plan and prepare

HEAPHY TRACK



Duration: **4–6 days**
Distance: **78.4 km (one way)**
Mountain biking: **2–3 days**
Distance: **78.4 km (one way)**



Great Walks season
Walking: **All year**
Mountain biking: **1 May – 30 November**



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government

HEAPHY TRACK

If it's varied and rugged landscapes you're looking for, you'll be spoilt for choice on the Heaphy Track.

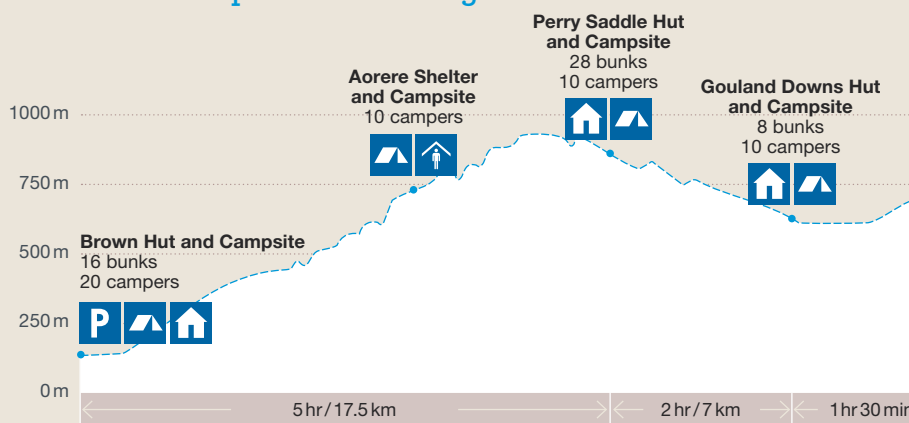
Retrace the steps of early Māori seeking pounamu (greenstone) and 19th century gold prospectors. You'll pass through expansive tussock downs, lush forests and nīkau palms before reaching the roaring seas of the West Coast.

Tackle the track in 4 or 5 days, or take your time and soak up the views over 6 days. There is a popular 2-day, overnight return trip on the western side from Kōhahai to Heaphy Hut.

You can also mountain bike the track during the mountain biking season (1 May to 30 November), which takes 2–3 days.

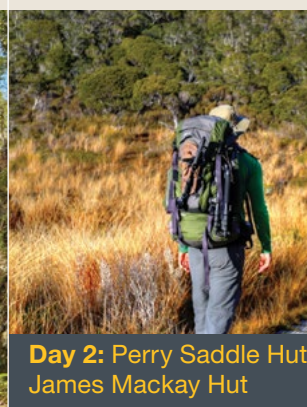
The Heaphy Track in Kahurangi National Park can be hiked in either direction. The track is well marked and signposted, but some sections may be steep and rough and the track could be muddy. This brochure describes a 4-day hike for independent, non-guided walkers travelling from Brown Hut to Kōhahai.

Elevation profile & track guide



5 hours, 17.5 km

As you wind your way through bush you'll climb gradually, following a route once surveyed for a road. It's 4 hours to Aorere Shelter, which affords views of Aorere valley and, on clear days, Mount Taranaki/Egmont. At Flanagans Corner, about 30min before Perry Saddle Hut, a short side track takes you to the highest point on the Heaphy Track (915m) and some stunning views.



6 hours 30 minutes,

Start your day walking through tussock and patches of beech. When the tussock is cleared, the expansive tussockland is revealed. Takahē, which are native birds, have been released here and are easy enough to see one.

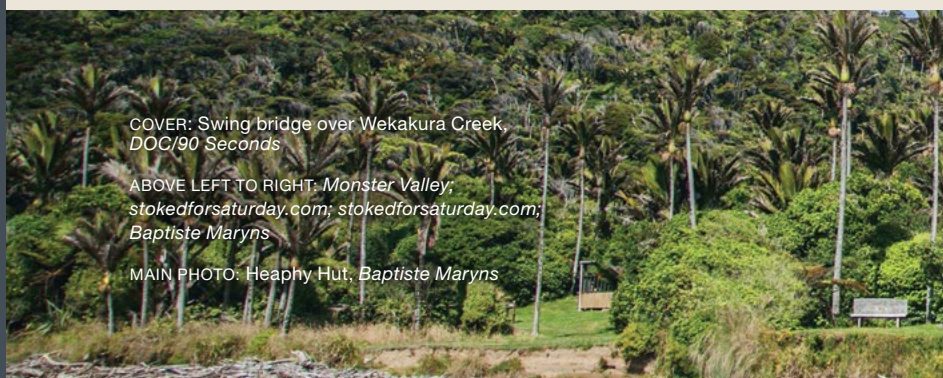
On your way to Goulard Downs Hut, you'll pass the famous pole where hikers have been known to fall. West of the hut, you can visit an area of mossy beech for its unique tree formations. The track continues through beech trees and through tussock. It then takes you on to James Mackay Hut, which offers views of the Tasman Sea 750 metres below.



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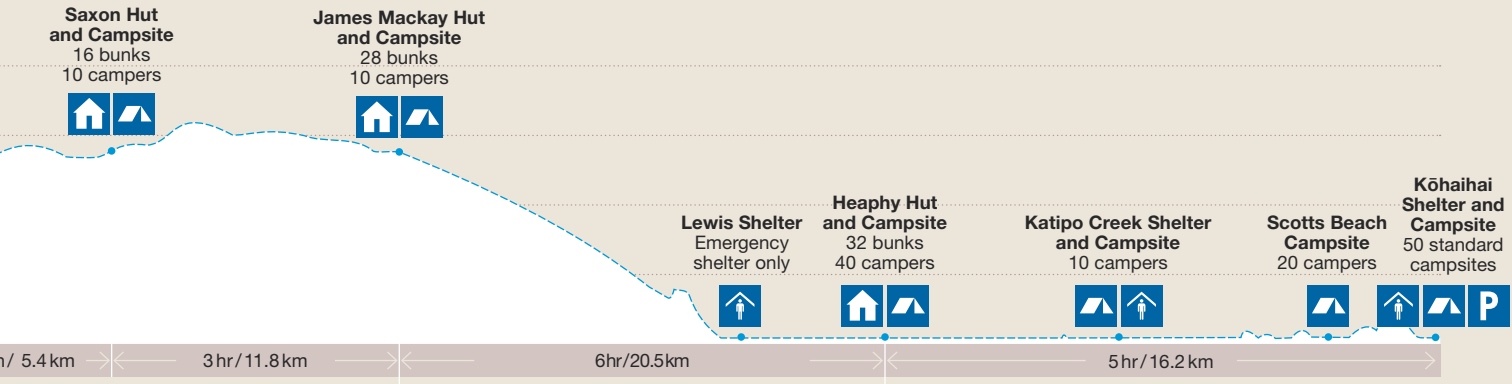


COVER: Swing bridge over Wekakura Creek, DOC/90 Seconds

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: *Monster Valley*; stokedforsaturday.com; stokedforsaturday.com; *Baptiste Maryns*

MAIN PHOTO: Heaphy Hut. *Baptiste Maryns*

hut
 campsite
 shelter and toilet
 car park



to



Day 3: James Mackay Hut to Heaphy Hut



Day 4: Heaphy Hut to Kōhahai River mouth

24.2 km

ough tussock clearings
ere the valley widens,
s of Goulard Downs are
e rare, flightless native
ere – you may be lucky

Downs Hut, you’ll pass the
ave tied their old boots.
isit the ‘enchanted forest’,
est covering limestone
inues past moss-covered
he tussock to Saxon Hut.
es Mackay Hut, which
Sea and Heaphy River

6 hours, 20.5 km

Beech forest gives way to nīkau palms as you descend to the Heaphy River and Lewis Shelter, where you’ll encounter the infamous West Coast sandflies. Lewis Shelter is an emergency shelter only. No overnight stays.

The 148.8 m-long Heaphy River bridge is the largest suspended deck bridge built by the Department of Conservation.

The track then takes you through a forest of kahikatea, rimu and rātā – be aware that in heavy rain, especially at high tide, sections of the track may be prone to flooding. Towards the river mouth, nīkau palms become more common, and the roar of the ocean on the wild West Coast grows louder. Do not swim at the Heaphy River mouth as there are rips and you may get washed out to sea.

5 hours, 16.2 km

On your final day, the track south to Kōhahai follows the rugged coastline of the West Coast, and passes through forests of rātā and karaka trees, vines and groves of nīkau palms. Soon Scotts Beach appears. The clearing here is a good spot to rest before climbing over Kōhahai Bluff. The track follows the bank of the Kōhahai River for 400 metres to the car park. At Crayfish Point follow the track high above the beach well away from the sea. Take care crossing Crayfish Stream, particularly after or during rainfall, as it can flood quickly.

Sections of the coastal track between Heaphy Hut and Kōhahai may be affected by large wave surges during high tides and rough seas. This can cause the track to be temporarily impassable. Check tide timetables at www.doc.govt.nz/heaphytides or in Heaphy Hut or Kōhahai Shelter.

The section of track around the Kōhahai River mouth may experience flooding when the river mouth becomes blocked. An alternative track has been put in place to allow visitors to bypass this area when necessary.






Places to stay

DOC operates 6 huts and 9 Great Walks campsites along the Heaphy Track, which **must be booked in advance all year round**. Campers are not permitted to use hut facilities.

Kōhahai is a Standard campsite which must be booked online in advance on the Campsites/Huts/Lodges booking system. See www.doc.govt.nz/campsites for details.

 **Great Walks huts**
Visit www.doc.govt.nz/heaphytrack for prices.

Huts have bunks, mattresses, a water supply, toilets, hand-washing facilities and heating with fuel. All huts have cooking fuel, except Brown Hut and Gouland Downs Hut. A DOC ranger may be present.

 **Great Walks campsites**
Visit www.doc.govt.nz/heaphytrack for prices.

The campsites offer basic facilities including toilets, a sink and a water supply. Some also have picnic tables and cooking shelters.



Photo: Baptiste Maryns

Highlights

1

Photo: Rob Suisted (naturespic.co.nz)

Air New Zealand partners with the Department of Conservation to bring birdsong back to our Great Walks.



2

Photo: Stefan and Kathrin Marks

3

Photo: Rod Morris

4

Photo: Peter Black

5

Photo: Jake Osborne (DOC)

- 1 **Fantastic flora!** See huge podocarps and giant northern rātā in the lowland forest, a huge variety of alpine and subalpine species on the Gouland Downs, and karaka, ngaio and nikau palms in the coastal forest.
- 2 Try to spy the nocturnal carnivorous land snail **Powelliphanta** around Heaphy Hut on a damp night. These native snails are the largest carnivorous snails in the world, some growing as big as a person's fist. They eat earthworms, sucking them up like spaghetti!
- 3 Listen out for the **great spotted kiwi/ roroa** calling to each other at night along the track. Male great spotted kiwi make a shrill, repeated, drawn-out whistle of 'kiwi'. The females make a low 'churr' sound.
- 4 West of Gouland Downs Hut, walk through the **'enchanted forest'**, moss-covered beech forest set in a limestone outcrop of arches and old caves.
- 5 Keep an eye out for the **nationally vulnerable takahē** on Gouland Downs. DOC's Takahē Recovery Programme, in partnership with local iwi and Fulton Hogan, re-introduced takahē into the area in 2018 to establish a second wild population. The takahē are protected by a 6,400-hectare predator control network, supported by DOC's National Partner for Conservation, Air New Zealand.

What do I do next?



Start off at www.doc.govt.nz/heaphytrack for more information. Consider transport options before booking huts/campsites.

BOOK

Book your huts and campsites online at bookings.doc.govt.nz.



Book your transport to and from the track.



Buy your food and pack your bags – go to 'What to take' on the webpage for a list and make sure you have everything you need for a 6-day independent unguided walk.



Read up on safety and make sure you're well prepared for your journey and changeable weather at www.doc.govt.nz/heaphytrack.



Check the weather, and make sure you've downloaded and printed your ticket and official track guide. You can also pick up a track guide and get the latest weather updates from the Nelson Visitor Centre.



All set! Lace up your boots and get hiking. Don't forget to share your experience on [facebook.com/docgovtnz](https://www.facebook.com/docgovtnz).

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Nelson Visitor Centre

Phone: +64 3 546 8210

Email: nmbookings@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz/great-walks

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities, visit www.doc.govt.nz.

Published by:

Department of Conservation

PO Box 10420, Wellington 6143, New Zealand

December 2021

Editing and design:

Te Rōpū Ratonga Auaha, Te Papa Atawhai

Creative Services, Department of Conservation

This publication is produced using paper sourced from well-managed, renewable and legally logged forests.

R214045

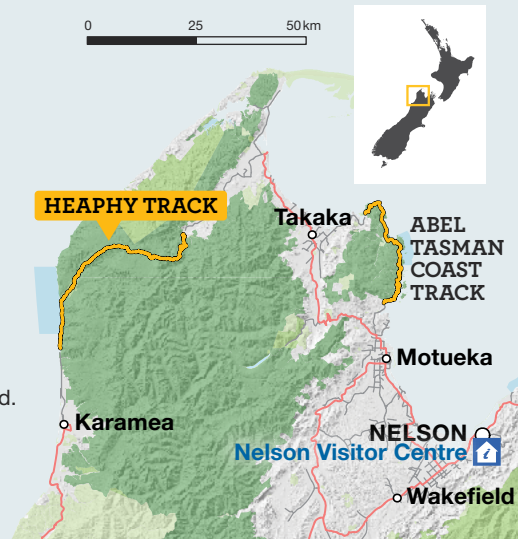
Getting there

You can start the Heaphy Track from the following locations:

- **Brown Hut, Golden Bay:** from Collingwood take the road up Aorere valley to Brown Hut (28 km).
- **Kōhahai, West Coast:** from Karamea, head north to the car park and campsite at Kōhahai River (15 km).

The ends of the track are 463km apart by road, so you will need to arrange transport at each end.

Bus, taxi, air and vehicle relocation services are available from both ends of the track. (Limited bus services operate in winter.)



Safety on the Heaphy Track

- Go to www.doc.govt.nz/heaphytrack for detailed safety and planning information.
- Weather on the Heaphy Track changes quickly; be prepared for rain, snow and wind. It rains heavily and annual rainfall averages over 4,000 mm. Walkers should come well equipped and prepared for all weather conditions. Check weather.niwa.co.nz/parks for the latest forecast.
- Bad weather can damage the track and cause delays. Check www.doc.govt.nz/heaphytrack or contact the DOC Visitor Centre in Nelson for track conditions and weather warnings before you walk.
- Large waves can wash over parts of the track making it unsafe to walk. Allow extra time in case you are delayed.
- There are sometimes large floods in the Heaphy valley (between Lewis Shelter and Heaphy Hut). It is not safe to proceed – you should wait in either Lewis Shelter or Heaphy Hut.
- Do not swim at the Heaphy River mouth as strong currents may wash you out to sea.

Your safety is your responsibility

Care for the Heaphy Track



Protect nature

Don't feed weka – even if they ask. Feeding wildlife is harmful to them. Follow any rules restricting fires and vehicles. No dogs or unpermitted drones allowed. No night riding for Mountain Bikers.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you. Use toilets where provided. You can find them at all huts, campsites and shelters.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by following the Land Safety Code.

- ▶ Choose the right trip for you.
- ▶ Understand the weather.
- ▶ Pack warm clothes and extra food.
- ▶ Share your plans and take ways to get help.
- ▶ Take care of yourself and each other.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture. Respect others by keeping common areas in the hut and around the campsites clean and tidy. Minimise noise when others are sleeping. Walkers and mountain bikers share the track between 1 May and 30 November. Bikers must give way to walkers. Book and pay for your accommodation to help maintain the track and facilities.



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