

# Oteake Conservation Park

Traverse the tops of mountains



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Cover: 4WD tracks in Oteake. *Photo: ©Stef Cotteret*  
 Back: The ranges of Oteake Conservation Park at sunrise.  
*Photo: Crystal Brindle*

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# Oteake Conservation Park

## Haere mai, welcome

Explore and experience Oteake, a vast landscape of golden tussock and changing light.

Oteake is 67,000 ha of mountainous high country, tussock plateaus, scree slopes, shrubland and wetland. The distinctive flat-topped Hawkdun Range is the park's centrepiece, often featured in painting, photography, poetry and prose.

Oteake Conservation Park and adjoining public conservation land covers 79,000 ha, including large sections of the Saint Bathans, Ewe, Hawkdun, Wether, Ida and Saint Marys ranges and parts of the upper Manuherikia basin. The park offers spectacular 4WD opportunities and tramping, mountain biking, fishing, backcountry skiing, horse riding, photography and hunting opportunities. There are many significant gold-mining sites to explore, including Buster Diggings and the Scandinavian Water Race.

## Oteake highlights

- Experience the landscape of changing light with a 4WD along the tops via Mount Buster Rd to Johnstones Creek Track.
- Travel the backcountry tracks linking Saint Bathans with Omarama.
- Stay overnight in a high-country mustering hut.
- Enjoy unique native shrubland and waterfall views with a walk along the Little Kye Burn.
- Explore Buster Diggings, spectacular quartz gravel sculptures.
- Mountain bike the Ida Water Race Track with your family.



### Check, Clean, Dry

Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.



### No unauthorised drones

An authorisation is required from DOC to use drones on public conservation land. To apply, visit [www.doc.govt.nz/drones](http://www.doc.govt.nz/drones).



## History

The Kai Tahu iwi believe that Oteake ('place of the ake') is named for the ake ake: *Olearia avicenniifolia*, a conspicuous shrub daisy found in the park. Oteake is also the indigenous name for both the Kye Burn and a stream on the other side of the range.

Oteake was important to tangata whenua from coastal Otago kāika (settlements) for mahika kai – places for gathering food. Weka were hunted and plants gathered. Stone quarries in the upper Manuherikia are evidence of iwi activity.

Oteake's European history began in the 1850s, when pastoral leases were issued throughout the South Island's high country, creating large leaseholdings such as Hawkdun, Omarama, Otekaike and Morven Hill stations. These were subdivided over time, and more recently have become Oteake Conservation Park.

The park shows evidence of gold mining with remains of water races, prospecting pits, hut sites and alluvial mining sluicings. Buster Diggings, a spectacular sculptural landform created by alluvial gold mining, was once New Zealand's highest goldfield at 1,200 m.

Buster diggings. Photo: Amanda Ware



## Plants and animals

Oteake's landscape comprises rounded tussock-covered hills, grey shrubland on the valley floors, and alpine herb fields and fell fields in the hilltops. Otago species reach their northern limits here, and Canterbury species reach their southern limits. The park protects numerous communities, including cypress hebe, native coral broom and scree pea.

The New Zealand falcon/kārearea, geckos such as the Otago large gecko (*Woodworthia* sp.), and rare native fish like the roundhead galaxias (*Galaxias anomalus*) and flathead galaxias (*Galaxias depressiceps*), are found here.



Coral broom. Photo: K McKinley



Manuherikia alpine galaxias. Photo: Rod Morris



Kārearea/New Zealand falcon. Photo: K Lane



Scree pea. Photo: G O'Rourke

## Things to see and do

Oteake offers spectacular walking and tramping, 4WD journeys and more.

All marked tracks are suitable for horse riding, mountain biking and walking (except Little Kyeburn Track, which is for walkers only). The many unmarked tracks in the park require good route-finding and backcountry skills.

Several access routes cross private land. Respect this by keeping to the formed tracks and leaving gates as you find them.



### Walking and tramping



All tracks in the park are suitable for walking/tramping and many offer views, and picnic and swimming spots. Little KyeBurn Track is a great summer day walk along Kye Burn stream through native shrubland up to the remarkable Buster Diggings.

For more walking tracks, see the 'Track descriptions' section overleaf.

### 4WD and motorbike tracks



The park's 4WD tracks are open to vehicles between Labour Weekend and 30 April, but may be closed at any time as tracks are susceptible to damage.

All vehicles must stay on the formed marked tracks shown on the map. You must have experience driving 4WD vehicles on steep and rough terrain.

Do not attempt routes if you are unsure. It may be difficult to reverse or pass other traffic. You should be self-sufficient and carry recovery equipment appropriate to the conditions and terrain.



### Other activities



**Hunting:** There is good hunting for deer and pigs in Oteake Conservation Park. Visit [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) for a permit. Do not hunt outside the park.



**Dogs:** Dogs are allowed in Oteake Conservation Park but must always be under control.



**Horse riding**



**Ski touring/  
snow shoeing**



**Fishing**

## Places to stay

See map for hut locations.

You can stay in one of the distinctive huts for a memorable overnight experience. Some are former mustering huts relocated from the Roxburgh dam or Otago Central Railway.

### Huts

The park has ten huts and a basic campsite (see below). You need to buy a hut ticket before your stay.



**Standard hut:** Has mattresses, water supply and toilets. One hut ticket per night, children up to 10 years free.



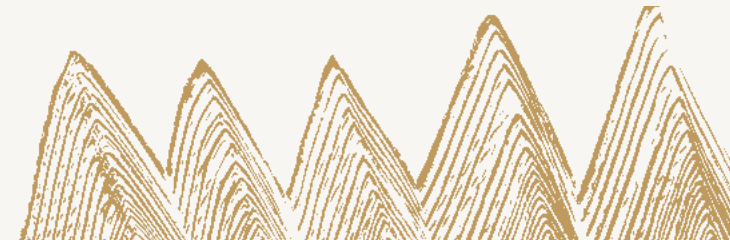
**Basic hut:** Basic shelter with limited facilities. Free. Some huts have fireplaces. Bring your own wood if you plan to use them, as this is tussockland – there are no trees.

### Camping

The Homestead off Hawkdun Runs Rd is the only campsite within the park. St Bathans Domain and Danseys Pass Recreation Reserve, off Kyeburn Diggings Rd, are nearby and provide good bases from which to explore Oteake.



All campsites are 'basic' campsites – they are free of charge, have toilets, and use water from nearby streams. You can camp anywhere in the park. Choose your site carefully to minimise damage to the landscape, and follow the Leave No Trace rules.





**Untreated water** – Water at huts is not treated or tested, and may not be suitable for drinking, food preparation, tooth brushing or washing dishes.

**Boil water before use.**



**No fires** – as the huts do have fire places.

Note: Ida Railway and Tailings huts have a shared-use arrangement with the Mount Ida syndicate. These huts may be in use from 7 January to 30 April – call DOC to check availability (see back cover).

TOP TO BOTTOM: Ida Railway Hut. Photo: Phil Tisch Wire Yard Hut. Photo: DOC Buster Hut. Photo: Tessa Bunny



## Mountain biking

Oteake offers tracks for everyone, from beginners to adventurous bikers, with half- and full-day options. Some popular mountain bike tracks include:

### Half day: Mount Ida Water Race Track

18 km



A great family trip with views and opportunities for smaller loops.

### Full day: East/West Manuherikia Track Loop

50 km from Hawkdun Runs Rd, or  
43 km via Saddle Ridge Track



43 km starting from Broken Hut Rd



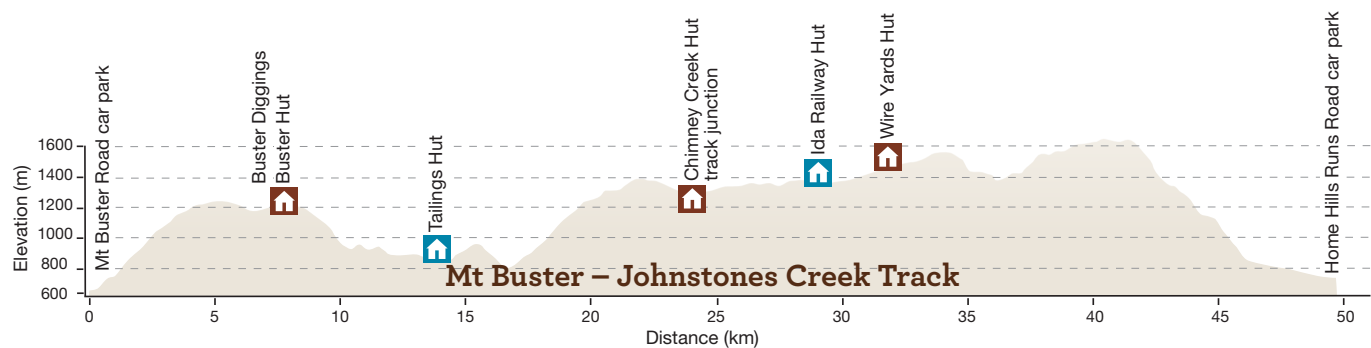
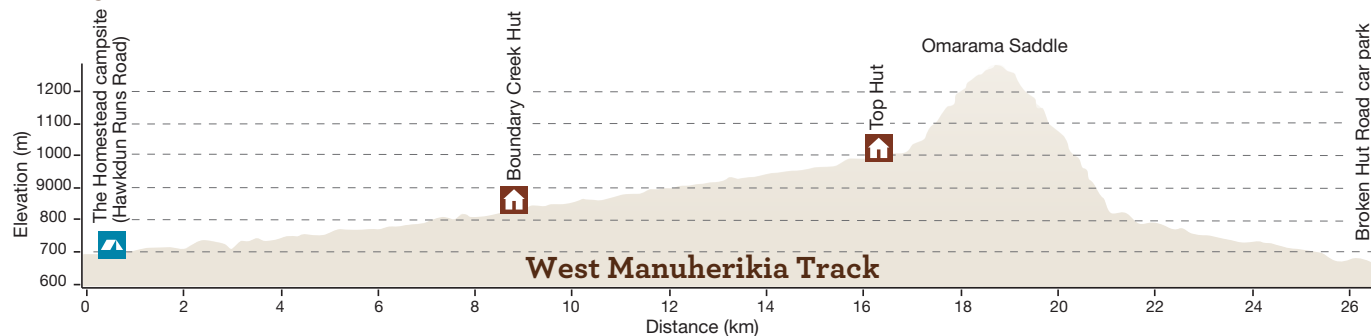
There are many river crossings on West Manuherikia, and a steady climb after Top Hut. Saddle Ridge Track is steep; for an easier gradient but longer ride, take Broken Hut Rd.

For more mountain biking tracks and details on track grades, see the 'Track description' section overleaf.



East Manuherikia Track. Photo: Phil Oliver

## Track gradients



# Track descriptions

The map in this brochure is a guide only – you should carry 1:50,000 topographical maps: sheets NZTopo50 CA14, CA15, CA16, CB14, CB15, CB16, CB17.

## Track grades



**Walking track** – easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day. Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy. Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities. Clearly signposted. Stream and river crossings are bridged. Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required.



**Tramping track** – challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking. Track is mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections. Suitable for people with good fitness. Moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required.



**Route** – challenging overnight tramping/hiking. Track unformed and natural, may be rough and very steep. Suitable for people with above-average fitness. High-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills, required. Track has marker poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings. Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required.

## Mountain bike grades



**Easy** – mostly flat with some gentle climbs on smooth track with easily avoidable obstacles such as rocks and potholes.



**Intermediate** – steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles, possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at track's outer edge.



**Advanced** – a mixture of long, steep climbs, narrow track, poor traction and difficult obstacles to avoid or jump over. Generally exposed at the track's outside edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.

## 4WD access tracks

1

### West Manuherikia Track



Broken Hut Rd to Top Hut: 11 km

Top Hut to Boundary Creek Hut: 8.5 km

Boundary Creek Hut to Hawkduns Rd: 8.5 km

8–10 hr tramp, 28 km

From Broken Hut Road car park, the track travels along the flat across farmland before a steady climb to the Omarama Saddle (9.5 km from the car park), providing an easier gradient than the East Manuherikia Track. The track descends steeply to the valley with numerous river crossings to Hawkdun Runs Rd. There are two huts along this track.

2

### East Manuherikia Track



8–10 hr tramp, 22 km

From the Broken Hut Road car park it is a steady 5 km climb to Little Omarama Saddle (1,357 m) and then a long descent to Hawkdun Runs Rd.

3

### Johnstones Creek Track



Multi-day tramp, 34 km. Refer to gradient graph.



Recommended for experienced 4WD drivers. It is steep with several river crossings. From Home Hills Runs Rd (720 m) the narrow, rough track climbs steeply onto the Hawkdun Range (1,620 m). The track then follows the crest of the range before reaching Wire Yards Hut. Ida Railway Hut is a further 3.5 km, and another 6 km is the turn-off to Chimney Creek Hut. The track then descends steeply into Boundary Creek, climbs again then drops into Guffies Creek before reaching the Mount Buster and Hut Creek Track junction at Tailings Hut.

4

### Mount Buster Track



Mt Buster Rd to Tailings Hut:

5–6 hr, 15 km



Starting at the Mount Buster Rd Oteake park entrance, crossing the Little Kyeburn (660 m), the well-formed track climbs steeply to the Buster Diggings (1,200 m). The track then descends steeply into Guffies Creek passing the turn-off to Brown Hut. To reach Brown Hut, turn right onto Brown Hut road which climbs for 2.5 km before reaching Brown Hut (1,100 m). To reach Tailings Hut stay on the Mount Buster Road and continue for 4 km. There are many river crossings.

5

### Hut Creek Hut Track



Tailings Hut, past Hut Creek Hut to

Conservation Boundary: 4–5 hr, 15 km



It is 8 km from the Tailings Hut to Hut Creek Hut. Beyond Hut Creek Hut, the track becomes rocky, steep and narrow. The track ends at the park boundary with no access to the Waitaki valley.

6

### Mount Kyeburn Track



5–6 hr, 14 km



Recommended for experienced 4WD drivers. From Buster Diggings (1,200 m), the track follows the ridge below Mount Kyeburn (1,560 m) where the track becomes narrow and exposed, and drops steeply to Danseys Pass Rd (700 m). A less challenging track from Buster Diggings is the Mount Buster Track.

## Your safety is your responsibility

**Take clothing for all weather.** Oteake is subject to flooding, snowfall and weather extremes.

**Topographical maps** are essential for all backcountry trips.



**Mobile phone coverage** is not reliable in the park. Satellite phones, mountain radios and personal locator beacons increase personal safety.



**River crossings:** Be aware of weather conditions in the catchment headwaters. Do not attempt to cross swollen rivers or streams. Check fords before entry.



**Avalanches** can occur from May to November. See the 'Be Avalanche Alert' page at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)



**NO FIRES anywhere in Oteake Conservation Park.**



**No dogs.**

## Before your trip:



- Visit your local DOC office or [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) to make sure all huts and tracks are open.
- Check the weather forecast.
- Leave your intentions with someone, and register on [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

# Mountain bike and tramping tracks

## 7 Ewe Range Track

3 hr, 6 km



This track climbs steadily through private farmland. You will encounter rocky outcrops and then a view towards Lake Ōhau from the top of Ewe Range (1,350 m in altitude). From the saddle, this track provides access for experienced trampers and backcountry skiers (in winter) to explore the Hawkdun Range.

## 8 Otamatapaio Track

4–5 hr, 15 km (from 2WD car park)



Turn off SH83 onto Backyards Rd. Follow this gravel road for 2 km to the beginning of the 4WD road. There is parking for 2WD vehicles here – 4WD vehicles can continue another 5 km on public conservation land to the final car park. From here, walk along the marked route for 7.5 km through private land to the conservation boundary and a further 2.5 km to Otamatapaio Hut (10 km total from the top car park). The route follows an old farm track along the river for most of the way.

## 9 Saddle Ridge Track

3 hr, 7 km



### Loop options:

9 hr loop from Broken Hut Rd car park, 22 km

43 km loop from Hawdun Runs Rd

A rough and steep climb that links the East and West Manuherikia tracks with spectacular views of Aoraki/Mount Cook.

## 10 Mutton Creek Track

3 hr, 6 km



### Loop options:

9 hr, 24 km loop from Hawkdun Runs Rd

7–8 hr, 17 km loop from Boundary Creek Hut over Mutton Creek Track down east and back up the west branch to hut

Links the lower sections of the West and East Manuherikia tracks. A shorter loop option for cyclists and trampers, this is a rough track with a very steep climb at both ends.

## 11 Berwen Track

1.5–2 hr, 5 km



4–5 hr, 13.5 km (one way) from Hawkun Runs Rd via East Manuherikia Track

The track crosses private farmland and links the East Manuherikia Track with the Hawkdun Range.

## 12 Homestead Track

45 min, 1.7 km



Short track that follows an old water race and starts at The Homestead campsite.

## 13 Mount Ida Water Race Track

4–5 hr, 18 km



A well-formed track with a gentle gradient. The track can be accessed from three 4WD tracks: Shepherds Hut Creek Track, Hut Creek Track and Pierces Gorge.

## 14 Little Kyeburn Track

2 hr, 5 km



A popular tramping track (600 m) that travels up the Little Kyeburn through remnant tōtara and native shrubland to the spectacular Buster Hut and Buster Diggings. A great trip in summer to view the scenic waterfall and swim in the rock pools. From the Oteake Conservation Park entrance, travel 2 km along the flats to the start of the gorge and marked track.

## 15 Otamatakou Track

2 hr, 5 km



From SH83 to Otamatapaio Scenic Reserve Boundary, along an old vehicle track. This reserve protects an area of remnant native vegetation.

## 16 Baldy Knob Route



Otamatapaio Scenic Reserve to Oteake  
Conservation Park boundary: 3–4 hr, 11.5 km

This route provides a tramping link from the top of Otamatapaio Scenic Reserve to the Hawkdun Range.

## 17 Dog Gully Route

2 hr, 5 km



From the final Otamatapaio Track 4WD car park, walk 6 km along the Otamatapaio Track until you reach the Dog Gully Route junction on the right. Follow Dog Gully Route for another 5 km to the conservation boundary. This is a marked route.

## 18 Wether Range Route

1 hr 30 min – 2 hr, 3 km



Access off SH8. This is a steep, marked route (there is no established track) through private land following a boundary fence to the top of the Wether Range and Killermont Conservation Area.

## 19 Manuka Creek Route

2–3 hr, 7 km

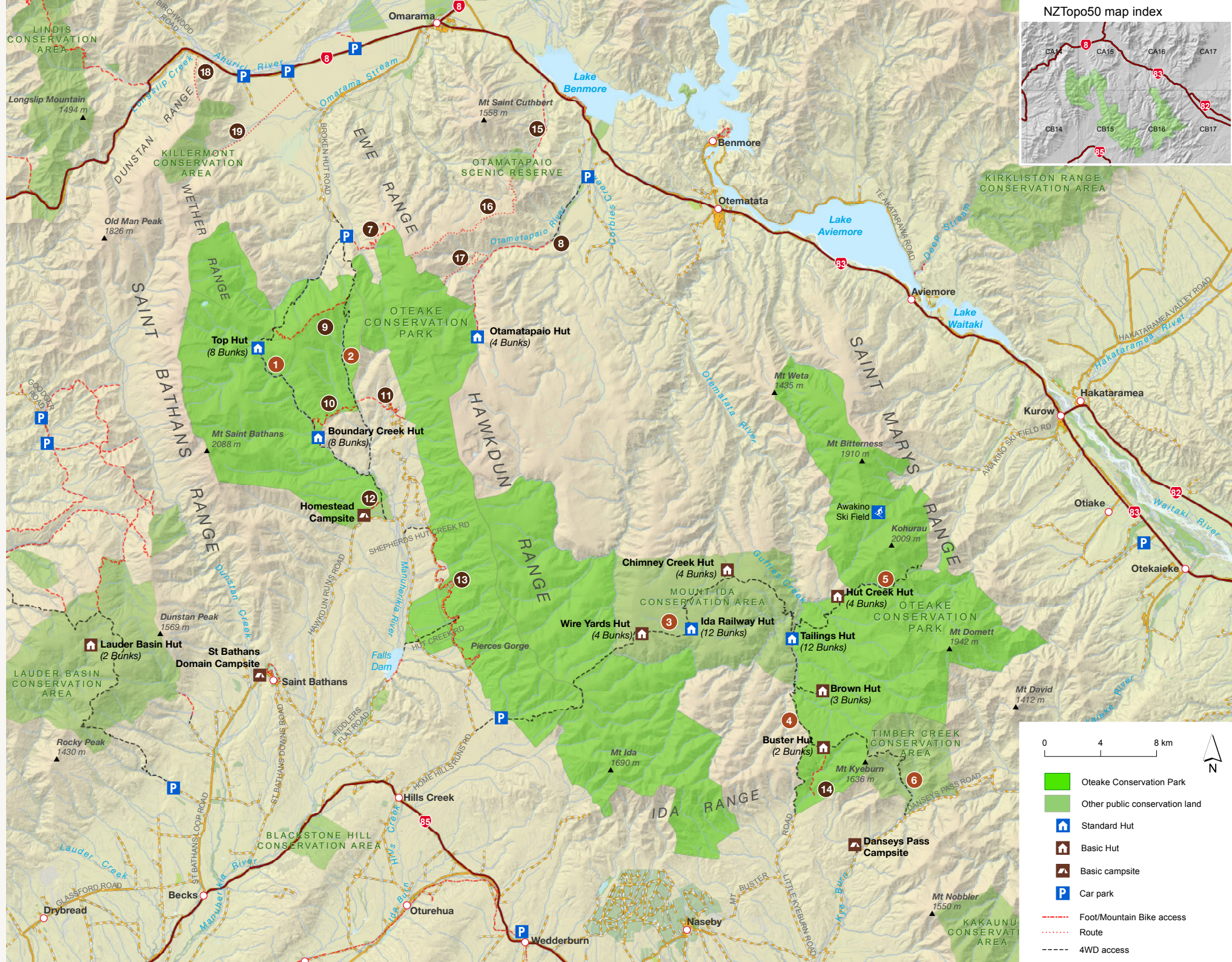
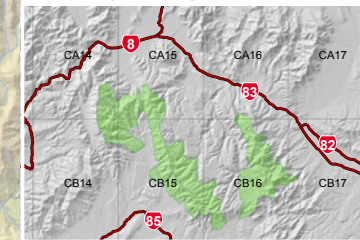


From Shortcut Road off SH8 to Killermont Conservation Area Boundary. This is a route with no formed track. Follow a marked route through private land to Manuka Creek and access to the Wether Range.

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire  
*Check before you light a fire – a ban may be in place*
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



leave no trace  
NEW ZEALAND



- Oteake Conservation Park
- Other public conservation land
- Standard Hut
- Basic Hut
- Basic campsite
- Car park
- Foot/Mountain Bike access
- Route
- 4WD access