

This stream often rises rapidly to become impossible to cross. Twenty-five metres below the stream the track begins again; climb the steep bank on the left to enter thick bush.

A further hour and a half of similar going brings you back to the river, 200 metres upstream of an island in the riverbed. There are good campsites on the island and a hot sulphur spring in the old riverbed on the far side. The spring is small but worth a visit if the river is readily fordable.



Do not immerse your head in the spring as there is a risk of contracting amoebic meningitis

From the island, travel is in or beside the riverbed for about 1.5 kilometres. A steep track leaves the river on the true left just before a bluff. This section of the track climbs and descends steeply to avoid a gorge in the river. It is marked but not well defined. If the river is readily fordable it is quicker to stay in the riverbed to the footbridge, however a deep crossing (short swim!) may be necessary in the gorge.

Otherwise, follow the track, being careful on steep and slippery sections. At an easily-missed junction in the track you can either turn right to return to the river and the Otehake footbridge or take the left track to continue climbing, eventually joining the Lake Kaurapataka track.

Remember: Allow plenty of time for the Otehake.

Otehake footbridge – Lake Kaurapataka – Pfeifer Creek – Taramakau River – SH 73

Time: 5 hours

From here the going is easier.

For those who chose to travel down the river from the hot springs, a marked track enters the bush on the true left about 200 metres below the foot bridge and climbs steeply for about 10 minutes to a track junction at the eastern end of Lake Kaurapataka. Follow the Lake Kaurapataka track along the south side of the lake. The track follows the lake edge for the first 20 minutes then winds its way through lush podocarp forest a little way back from the lake.

About midway along the lake, a short side-track on the right leads to a level grassy area beside the lake suitable for a lunch stop or camp site. From here the track leaves the lakeside, winding through ancient tracts of forest, dropping gently to Pfeifer Creek. The track follows the true right of Pfeifer Creek to the Taramakau valley. Take care of stinging nettle/ongaonga growing beside the track.

Time from the Otehake footbridge: about 2 hours 30 minutes

Cross Pfeifer Creek to the true left, picking up a short section of track that leads to a 4WD road. Follow this road down the Taramakau valley through grass and gorse-covered flats. Where the road runs beside a small stream, look for a large track marker on the true left riverbank. Cross the stream and pick up the track (marked with stakes).

The track winds in and out of the bush edge for about 1 kilometre before meeting the Otira River flood track to Morrison footbridge. Continue along the right-hand branch, to a small shelter beside the Otira River. Cross the Otira River (if fordable) over to SH 73 at Aickens. A large marker on the opposite bank marks the crossing point. If Otira River is too high to cross, back-track to the flood track. This track continues up the true right of Otira River for about 2 hours to the Morrison footbridge, which crosses the Otira just below its confluence with Deception River to reach SH 73.

Hut fees

Please purchase tickets before using the huts.

	Bunks	
Edwards Hut	14	Serviced
Otehake Hut	6	Basic

Serviced – 3 tickets per person/night

Standard – 1 ticket per person/night

Basic – Free

Further information

For information, hut tickets, intentions cards, maps, weather forecasts and track condition updates:

Arthur's Pass National Park Visitor Centre

Main Road, Arthur's Pass

Phone 03 318 9211

8.00 am – 5.00 pm (summer),

8.30 am – 4.30 pm (winter)

arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz

Suggestions for corrections or improvements should be emailed to: recreation@doc.govt.nz

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Edwards River – Otehake River



Route guide 7

ARTHUR'S PASS NATIONAL PARK



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

General information

Time: 2 – 3 days (shuttle required)

Grade: Route and tramping track

Experience: Suitable for well-equipped and experienced back-country trampers only.



Best season: Summer and autumn, extreme avalanche danger in winter.

NZTopo50: Otira BV20, Cass BV21, Moana BU20, Haupiri BU21 (NZMS260: Otira K33)

Hazards: Flooded rivers, steep drop-offs and avalanches, unmarked route.

Safety: Safety is your responsibility. This route guide must be read in conjunction with *Tramping in Arthur's Pass National Park*, a free brochure with important safety information.

Note: true left and true right refer to the side of the valley or river when facing and looking downstream.

Introduction

This is a high-level crossing of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana. While it is relatively straightforward tramping up the Edwards, it's extremely slow walking on a very rough unmarked route in the Otehake. Carefully consider the weather, state of the rivers and fitness of the party before attempting this trip.

Getting there

The east-coast end of the track starts beside SH 73, 5 km south of Arthur's Pass village, just after the Mingha Bluffs.

The west-coast end of the track starts beside SH 73 at Aickens, where Taramakau River meets Otira River.

SH 73 – Edwards Hut

Time: 4 – 5 hours

Five kilometres south of Arthur's Pass village, cross Bealey River just above its confluence with Mingha River. If the river is high and not easy to cross, save this trip for another day. The track begins at the bush edge downstream of the Edwards-Mingha confluence. Look for the orange markers and a sign on the river flats which mark the start of a 20-minute track to bypass the Edwards gorge (negotiable if the river is low).

When the track emerges onto the riverbed, travel upstream

on the true left, climbing the bank once or twice when necessary. Cross the East Branch (difficult when high) just above the point where it joins the main river. Pick up the well-defined, marked bush track 100 metres up the East Branch on the opposite bank. There are a few steep sections—one with a hand chain to help—and the odd glimpse of waterfalls in Edwards River.

The track leads to a large upland valley, emerging finally among red tussocks on the upper river flats (take care here as it is easy to lose the track in the maze of tussocks). The track leads back into the forest for a short section before emerging on the river flats with a clear view to Edwards Hut (14 bunks). Total time from the road is about 4–5 hours, the junction with the East Branch being a bit under halfway.

Edwards Hut is on radio link to Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre, monitored during office hours. Some groups have had difficulty reaching the visitor centre on this radio so please read the instructions carefully. Edwards Hut has a log burner for heating but you will need your own cooker and utensils.

Edwards Hut – Taruahuna Pass – Otehake Hut

Time: 5 hours

From Edwards Hut continue upstream along the true left bank over tussock flats or in the riverbed to the summit of Taruahuna Pass. Travel is slow, but on easy gradients and sometimes helped by well-trodden paths. The pass itself is a huge pile of mountain debris, the result of landslides from Falling Mountain triggered by a large earthquake in 1929.



This area is subject to avalanche activity during the winter. During heavy snow conditions, we advise visitors to not travel this route unless sufficiently equipped and experienced to assess the conditions and choose a safe path through avalanche terrain.

Veer right on the landslide debris towards the bottom of the slopes below Tarn Col. Scramble down through rocky terraces, moving towards the true left side of the valley to pick up the cairned route which continues down several streams.

If the river is low, it is easier to follow the river through the shingle bluffs to its junction with Lake Sally Stream. Alternatively, where the river begins to drop away between high shingle bluffs, climb the scree spurs to gain the high terrace on the true left (look for marker poles on the crest). Follow the terrace using a defined but overgrown track through the bush. The route rejoins the riverbed where the Lake Sally side river joins the Otehake. This is about two hours from the summit of the pass.

Ford this side river and continue down the riverbed on the true left for about 15 minutes toward where bush-clad banks draw together. Pick up the marked track on the true left and follow it through bush for about 30 minutes to Otehake Hut (6 bunks) on a small bush-covered flat just above the point where the East Branch of the Otehake joins the West Branch.

The hut is in good condition and stands in rapidly regenerating beech, about 30 metres back from the river and about 300 metres upstream from the junction.

Otehake Hut – Otehake Footbridge

Time: 7 – 9 hours

Travel down the Otehake is much slower than the distance on the map would indicate. The river itself cannot be followed and should be used only where the route leads to it. Parties intending to travel out to the main road in one day down the Otehake should be fit and leave early.

While this unmarked route does not cross over the Otehake itself, you do need to enter the stream to get around a bluff and reach the section of track that bypasses the last gorge above the footbridge. There are also several side streams that can rise rapidly and become uncrossable. Consider the weather, state of the river and fitness of the party before venturing down the Otehake. **Note:** There are no further huts or shelters on this route.

From the hut, the route sets off through bush on the true left, travelling for a short distance along a flat river bank but soon moving into much steeper country—characteristic of the going all the way to Lake Kaurapataka. The track weaves its way above gorges and bluffs, usually 90 to 250 metres above the river, crossing ridges and the beds of steep side streams. Much of the going is slippery with moss-covered rocks and greasy tree roots. Care is constantly needed, particularly where the ground falls away steeply towards the river. A hand-line (15 metres) may be required to safely climb and haul packs up the northern bank of the last creek before you descend towards Whaiti Stream. **Take care**—do not trust the hand-lines left here.

The route is occasionally marked but not well maintained and not always clearly defined. A large slip before Whaiti Stream is dangerous to cross. Travel off the track is very difficult so if you have not seen track markers for 100 metres, you should back-track to the last known marker and look around to find the track. Generally, the track gradually sidles rather than making rapid changes in altitude, except to cross side gullies. After about 4 hours the track drops into the Otehake 200 metres above Whaiti Stream.