

Plan and prepare

HEAPHY TRACK



Duration: 4–6 days
Distance: 78.4 km (one way)



Great Walks season:
All year



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

New Zealand Government

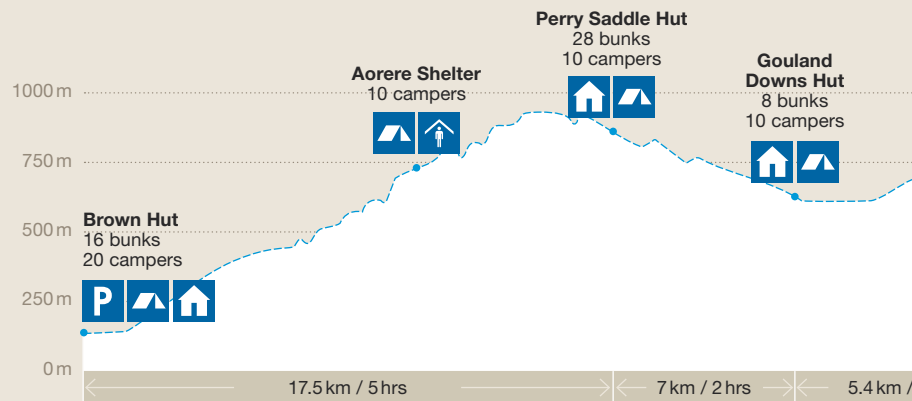
HEAPHY TRACK

IF IT'S VARIED and rugged landscapes with mountain views 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 and it is a 2–3 day ride.

The Heaphy Track in Kahurangi National Park can be walked 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



Day 1: Brown Hut to Perry Saddle Hut

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. A short track about 30 minutes before Perry Saddle Hut leads to a stunning viewpoint at Flanagans Corner, the highest point on the track at 915 metres.

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

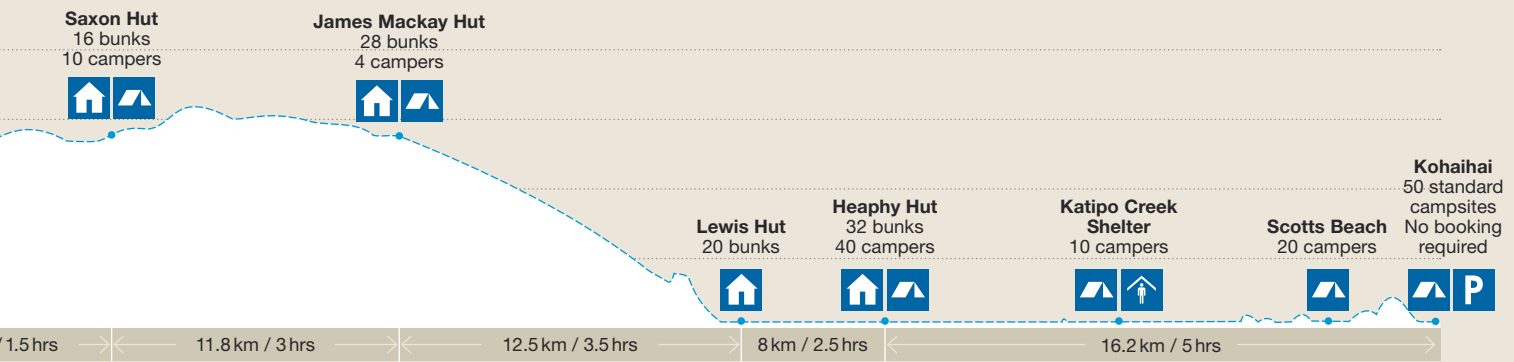


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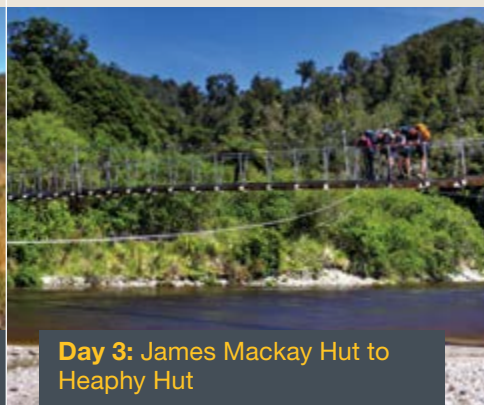


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Day 2: Perry Saddle Hut to James Mackay Hut



Day 3: James Mackay Hut to Heaphy Hut



Day 4: Heaphy Hut to Kōhāihai River mouth

6 hours 30 minutes, 24.2 km

Start your day walking through tussock clearings and patches of beech. Where the valley widens, the expansive tussocklands of Goulard Downs are revealed. Takahē, which are rare, flightless native birds, have been released here – you may be lucky enough to see one.

You'll pass the famed pole where walkers before you have tied their old boots on your way to Goulard Downs Hut. The track continues past moss-covered beech forest and through the tussock to Saxon Hut. It continues on to James Mackay Hut, which offers views of the Tasman Sea and Heaphy River mouth 750 metres below.

6 hours, 20.5 km

Beech forest gives way to nīkau palms as you descend to the Heaphy River and Lewis Hut, where you'll encounter the infamous West Coast sandflies. 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.

5 hours, 16.2 km

On your final day the track south to Kōhāihai 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 Kōhāihai Bluff. The track follows the bank of the Kōhāihai River for 400 metres to the car park. At Crayfish Point there is a 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.

There is a risk of wave surge at high tide between Heaphy Hut and Kōhāihai. Be prepared to wait for up to 2 hours until the tide retreats. Check tide tables in Heaphy Hut or Kōhāihai Shelter.



HIGHLIGHTS

1

Photo: Rob Suisted (naturepic.co.nz)

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 Goulard 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 man's fist. Living mainly in the forest, they eat earthworms, sucking them up through their mouths like spaghetti!
- 3 Watch and listen for the **great spotted kiwi/ roroa**. You might not see one, but you may hear the birds calling to each other at night from the Perry Saddle, Goulard Downs and Saxon huts. Male great spotted kiwi make a shrill, repeated, drawn-out whistle of 'kiwi'. The females make a low 'churr' sound.
- 4 West of Goulard 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 **endangered takahē** in the tussock grasslands of Goulard Downs. In autumn 2018 DOC's Takahe Recovery Programme, with iwi and partners, released 30 birds with the aim of establishing a second wild takahē population.



PLACES TO STAY

DOC operates 7 huts and 9 campsites along the Heaphy Track, which **must be booked in advance all year round**. Campers are not permitted to use hut facilities.

Kohaihai is a Standard campsite and does not need to be booked in advance. See www.doc.govt.nz/campsites for details.



Great Walks huts

\$34 per adult per night;
17 years and under free
(booking required).

Huts have bunks, mattresses, a water supply, toilets, hand-washing facilities and heating with fuel. They may also have a lighting source, and basic cooking facilities with fuel. A DOC ranger may be present.



Great Walks campsites

\$14 per adult per night;
17 years and under free
(booking required).

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



Photo: Baptiste Maryns

WHAT DO I DO NEXT?



Start off at **greatwalks.co.nz/heaphy** for more information. Consider transport options before booking huts/campsites



Consult tide timetables and **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** – download the Great Walks packing 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 **greatwalks.co.nz/heaphy**.



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/GreatWalks**.

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Nelson Visitor Centre

Phone: +64 3 546 8210

Email: nmbookings@doc.govt.nz

greatwalks.co.nz

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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 Karamaea, head north to the car park and campsite at Kōhahai River (15 km).

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

Bus, taxi and air services are available to either end of the track (limited bus services operate in winter).

HEAPHY TRACK



Know before you go

It is important to plan your trip thoroughly to ensure you stay safe, and have a great time. Before you go, know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 simple rules to help you #makeithome.

1. **Plan your trip.** Travel times vary greatly in New Zealand, so carefully planning your route is essential. Seek local information about what to take, and allow enough time for the journey. Book accommodation, transport and transfers to the start/end of track early.
2. **Tell someone your plans** – Safety is your responsibility. Leave your intentions – including your trip details and emergency contact information – with a trusted contact. It could save your life if things go wrong. Head to **mountainsafety.org.nz** for more information.
3. **Be aware of the weather** – New Zealand weather is very changeable. Plan for the worst, expect the best. Check **metservice.com** for the most up to date info.
4. **Know your limits** – Always follow the track markers and signposted tracks. You can expect to walk up to 6 hours a day depending on your fitness level. If you get into trouble don't make a bad situation worse. Think **STAR** – Stop / Think / Assess / React.
5. **Take sufficient supplies** – With NZ's changeable conditions many hikers are frequently caught out by isolated local conditions. Carry – and expect to use – rain jackets all year round. Take an extra day's supply of food and an emergency shelter. Don't rely on cellphone signal alone for communication. Food and drinks are not available to purchase at Great Walks huts or campsites. Plan to be self-sufficient.

Heaphy Track safety

- Weather on the Heaphy Track is changeable with annual rainfall averaging over 4,000 mm. Heavy rain can occur with little warning, and even small streams are dangerous in flood. Be prepared for rain, snow and wind, especially on the exposed sections of the track.
- During winter, adverse weather can damage the track significantly. These areas will be marked by signs and warning tape, although you should check with the Nelson DOC Visitor Centre before your walk.
- The Heaphy valley (between Lewis Hut and Heaphy Hut) can experience severe flooding events. It is not safe to proceed when the track is flooded, and users should take shelter in either the Lewis or Heaphy huts.
- Sections of the coastal track are subject to large wave surges during high tides and rough seas – this may cause the track to be temporarily impassable. When planning your trip, ensure you check tide charts and allow adequate time in case of delays.
- Go to **greatwalks.co.nz/heaphy** 'Know before you go' section for detailed safety information, and 'What to take' section for a comprehensive gear list.
- Heaphy is a shared track during the mountain bike season between 1 May and 30 November. Bikes must give way to walkers. Check **doc.govt.nz/mountain-bikers-code** for safety information.

Remember – your safety is your responsibility