

active earth Adventures

HIKING New Zealand

ARTHUR'S PASS ALPINE HIKE

ITINERARY





Hike in the heart of the Southern Alps at Arthur's Pass. Our route traverses beech forests and sub alpine river flats, passing by open scree summits and picturesque tarns. This is a challenging route that takes us up the Edwards Valley before crossing the main divide into the wild headwaters of the Otehake River.

The trail passes through an alpine wilderness of craggy peaks, mountain streams and tussock meadows before descending into the broad river flats of the Hawdon Valley.

On this hike you will experience a remarkable piece of New Zealand that few get to see. Savour the breathtaking vistas of unspoiled backcountry along a trail that is forever changing and guaranteed to provide plenty of awe, wonder and challenge!

You need to be fit enough to carry a backpack with your own personal gear and a share of the group food and equipment.

LENGTH	4 days
GRADE	D (River crossings, some uneven terrain, you need to be reasonably fit and enthusiastic)
START	Central Christchurch, 1:00pm
FINISH	Christchurch 5:00pm
ACCOMMODATION	Lodge and backcountry huts
DEPARTURES	Departures for custom groups of two or more, available on request
PRICE	1 Jul 2026 - 30 Jun 2027 from NZD $2400.00 This is a sample itinerary of what we can offer for custom groups. If this is not quite the trip for you, let us know we can craft a trip that suits you.









ITINERARY

DAY 1 CHRISTCHURCH TO ARTHUR'S PASS VILLAGE

2-3 hours hiking

Meet with your guide at 1pm for a quick chat and gear check to ensure you have everything you need before heading for the hills! It's a pleasant drive across the patchwork like Canterbury Plains, over Porters Pass and into the Waimakariri Basin. Here we don hiking boots and start our adventure with a warmup hike on Bealey Spur. The trail climbs gently through glades of beech forest and tussock meadows to a historic hut and stunning viewpoint of the Southern Alps and the distinctive braided river channels of the Waimakariri River. We take time to enjoy the views and learn about this area before heading back down to the vehicle and on to tonight's lodge accommodation. *Includes dinner.*

DAY 2 ARTHUR'S PASS VILLAGE TO EDWARDS HUT

4-6 hours hiking

With backpacks packed we start our hike by crossing the Bealey and Mingha Rivers. None of the rivers on this route are bridged so we quickly become accustomed to wet boots. The Edwards Valley is a mix of forested sections of trail, open river bed and some steeper sections of natural staircases of rock and tree roots. When the trail climbs high above the Edwards River, we have some great views of the waterfalls below. Eventually the trail emerges out of the forest into the tussock flats of the upper valley. The 16 bunk Edwards Hut is our home for the night and a welcome sight! At nightfall we listen out for the distinct call of the kiwi. Roroa, or great spotted kiwi, are known to inhabit this sub-alpine area. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*.

DAY 3 EDWARDS HUT – TARN COL – WALKER PASS TO HAWDON HUT

6-9 hours hiking

With a big day ahead of us we depart the hut early and follow a trail to the head of the Edwards Valley. We keep an eye out for Whio (Blue duck) that inhabit the upper catchment of the river. The route weaves its way through a distinctive boulder field at Tarahuna Pass. In 1929 an earthquake literally shook the aptly named 'Falling Mountain' to bits with a sizeable chunk of the mountain now smothering the pass with rock avalanche debris. We climb steeply up to Tarn Col and are rewarded at the top by stunning views of the surrounding mountains and the Otehake wilderness area. Now on the west side of the divide you will notice a distinct change in the vegetation due to the higher rainfall. After re-crossing the main divide at Walker Pass we start our descent to Hawdon Hut. We settle in to this modern and spacious hut and prepare and enjoy a final dinner together. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner.*

DAY 4 HAWDON HUT – HAWDON SHELTER TO CHRISTCHURCH

3 hours hiking

This morning's walk is a relatively gentle wander down the Hawdon Valley crossing the main river and some tributaries before eventually arriving at the Hawdon Shelter. Here we meet our shuttle driver to transport us back to our vehicle at the start of the track. We make our way back to Christchurch stopping on route for a wander among the imposing limestone rock outcrops of Kura Tawhiti/Castle Hill and maybe a celebratory ice cream in Springfield. We arrive back in Christchurch in the late afternoon. *Includes breakfast and lunch*.

LIFE ON THE TRAIL

This is a facilitated adventure - we believe great trips/ adventures are a team effort. So we will need your help from time to time when it comes to cooking meals, sharing the load on hikes, and washing up - many hands make light work.

GRADE D

- Average of 5-9 hours physical activity per day.
- Pack weights of 9-12kgs*
- Altitude gains of up to 800m.
- Some uneven track surfaces and river crossings.
- Agility and fitness required.

To enjoy your Arthurs Pass Alpine Hike you need to be fit and have good balance. The track is rough and may be wet. Sometimes the footing on loose rock is unstable so hikers need to be good on their feet and comfortable on rough or slippery ground. Hikers should be able to maintain a slow but steady pace uphill for an hour between rest stops. You will carry your own gear plus a share of the group food and equipment. Each day's walking is designed to be 5-9 hours. We are not the army, but this trip is definitely recommended for people who are regular hikers and consider themselves to be reasonably fit. It's for those who enjoy a bit of a challenge and want to extend their range off the tourist tracks and into real back country with the added security of an experienced guide.

*Will vary depending on the weight of personal discretional items.



GUIDES AND SAFETY

An excellent guide can make the difference between a trip of a lifetime and just an ordinary trip. Our handpicked professionals come from a range of backgrounds. Each has extensive outdoor and hiking experience and a passion for New Zealand's wild and beautiful backcountry. The guides will ensure that your trip is truly inspiring, a huge amount of fun and safe. All guides are trained in Mountain Safety First Aid.

FOOD

Energy snacks and nutritious meals are an essential ingredient in helping you perform to your highest standard. Good wholesome meals are provided and plenty of it. Specific dietary requirements can be catered for. Please advise us at the time of booking if you have any special requirements.



TRANSPORT

You have a journey of approximately 2 hours from Christchurch at the start the hike and then again on the final day.

ACCOMMODATION

We use a private lodge for the first night and DOC huts for nights 2 and 3. On occasions we may be required to camp if there is not sufficient space in the huts. Please note: there are no showers at DOC huts and the toilets are long drop.

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Changes

Please note this is a backcountry wilderness trip where the weather and/or river conditions may mean the itinerary needs to be executed in a different order. Occasionally we may be forced to do different hikes altogether.

Payment

For bookings four or more months before the departure, a 25% deposit can be paid with the remainder due 95 days before your trip. For bookings within four months of the departure, full payment is required.

Cancellations

95 days or more: Full refund less $500 transferable deposit to future departure.
94 to 35 days: 50% of tour price forfeited.
34 days or less: 100% of tour price forfeited.
The tour price is all-inclusive. There will be no partial refunds or credits for unused services within a tour. Any unpaid forfeited amount may be pursued as a debt.

Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you have comprehensive travel insurance. We ask you to fill out a disclaimer before you begin a Hiking Tour. You must follow the instructions of your guide at all times.

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PACKING LIST

Items shown in bold can be hired from us
Please arrange hire at least two weeks prior to your departure date.

CLOTHING - one set for walking, one set for evenings

WALKING CLOTHES: Several layers of wool, polypropylene and/or polar fleece will ensure you remain a comfortable temperature regardless of the weather. **No cotton shirts hiking in the wet please!** Cotton gets cold when wet and is difficult to dry.

- ☐ Raincoat (Gore-Tex or similar)
- ☐ Base layer (top and bottom, wool or polypropylene)
- ☐ Hiking boots or sturdy hiking shoes
- ☐ Spare lightweight shoes or sandals (optional)
- ☐ Shorts or lightweight hiking trousers (quick-dry)
- ☐ Insulating layers x 2 (quick-dry, polypropylene or wool)
- ☐ Socks (2 pairs warm hiking socks)
- ☐ Warm hat or balaclava
- ☐ Sunhat
- ☐ Gloves or mittens (wool or fleece)

SPARE CLOTHING: Extra socks and polypropylene layers are always handy - ensure you have enough warm items. Comfortable clothes for non hiking days. Spare clothing can be left in the secure trailer when we are away on the hikes, so don't worry about the extra weight – ensure you have enough warm items. Weather can change rapidly in the locations we hike so layers of clothing is ideal.

We can offer quality hiking equipment for use on your tour at no additional charge. We are able to supply fleece jacket, thermal top and bottom, raincoat, gaiters and walking poles. Requests for equipment must be made at least 5 days before the departure date.

Backpacks (60L), sleeping bag and liner, and walking poles are available to hire on request.

EQUIPMENT

- ☐ **Backpack** (minimum 60 litres)
- ☐ **Sleeping bag** (minimum 3 season, preferably down, lightweight, between 1-1.2 kg)
- ☐ Flashlight/headlamp
- ☐ Drink bottle or camel back – 1 litre
- ☐ Small day pack
- ☐ Sunscreen and sunglasses
- ☐ Sun cream and lip cream
- ☐ Insect repellent
- ☐ Personal toiletries, medication and first aid
- ☐ **Walking Poles** (optional)
- ☐ Gaiters (optional)

HOW TO PACK

We recommend that you bring two bags on your trip, a hiking backpack with an internal frame (at least 60 litres in capacity) for the overnight hikes, and a smaller day pack for the day hikes. We supply kit bags for the storage of your gear in the trailer when you are away on a multi day hike.

WE SUPPLY

- Pack-liner to keep things dry inside your backpack
- Kit bag to hold your spare gear when you are out hiking
- Emergency first aid kit
- Thermarests (3/4)
- Plates, cutlery, mugs, pots, etc.
- Tents





IMPORTANT INFO

Here is a kickstart on a few things you need to know...

WHEN HIKING

• Stay together. If you get separated, stop and wait until your guide finds you.
• Wait at all track junctions, huts and hazards, as well as river crossings, for the rest of the group to catch up.
• Tell someone if you are heading off the track to use "the bathroom" in case you get lost! It happens! If lost - shout or whistle!
• Watch out for sunburn. Remember, NZ sun burns fast, wear a hat and sun block at all times until you are familiar with its strength.
• Drink plenty of water, it is safe to drink from most of the rivers and streams in the wilderness without treating the water, but do ask.
• Help and look out for each other on river crossings, bush bashing and rock scrambling.
• Ensure you have correct clothing - see 'packing' list.
• Snow slopes are extremely dangerous - guide leads on snow. No fooling around unless guide gives the OK.
• Wasps - be observant (especially in beech forests). If you see a nest back off SLOWLY, unless they start to sting you - then move like greased lightening.

CROSSING RIVERS

• River crossing accidents are a major cause of fatalities in the NZ wilderness so learning correct techniques from your guide is imperative.
• If wearing a rain-coat turn up and tuck under hip belt so pockets don't fill with water.
• You must wear boots when crossing rivers!
• To prevent the spread of Didymo (an invasive algae) boots, gaiters, socks etc. must be washed and treated before entering another waterway.

KAYAKING

• Always attend the safety briefing.
• Always take spare warm clothing in case the weather turns bad.
• Go to the toilet before you get into the kayak!
• Wrap valuables and cameras securely in bags or dry bags and close PROPERLY. Put adsorbent cloth/t-shirt with camera.
• Always stay together.
• Sun protection - the reflection off water doubles the intensity!

CYCLING & MOUNTAIN BIKING

• Always attend the safety briefing, know the meet times and 'back up' plans.
• High visibility clothes if there are road sections.
• Be aware if you are in the front or back of group (otherwise you might be chasing imaginary people).
• Stop to smell the roses - you might be wearing yellow, but its not the Tour de France!
• Helmets are compulsory in NZ.
• In NZ front and rear brakes are opposite to US and Europe.

SWIMMING & BEACHES

Many NZ beaches are too dangerous for swimming, in particular the West Coast beaches.

Where conditions are suitable...
• Talk to your guide before you go swimming and don't swim alone.
• Respect the sea - never turn your back on the sea and watch out for freak waves & rips.
• If you get into difficulty while swimming – raise one of your hands up above your head - stay calm.
• Be careful entering the sea or body surfing, there may be rocks below the water.
• For rescues, things that float are - sleeping mats, spare tyre, empty water bottles (jerry cans), thermarests and dry bags stuffed with clothing.
• Look for jellyfish and stingrays (check along water edge and don't swim if there are lots about).

HOT POOLS (NATURAL)

• Keep head above water at all times – water may contain amoebic meningitis.
• Watch out for boiling water/mud around and in the pool.
• Remove jewellery as it tends to turn green or black.

FIRES

• Observe all fire bans. Keep fires small, use only dead wood and completely put out with water before leaving and at night (includes wood burners in huts).
• Always have a bucket of water near fire to extinguish it and for burns (or stream/river nearby).
• Be careful when wearing synthetic clothing around fires. Sparks put holes in Gore-Tex and tents.
• Do not use axe without guide's okay - wear boots.

HYGIENE & TOILETS

• You'll get to a shower generally every 1-2 days, otherwise there are rivers to swim in and freshwater to wash with.
• Keep streams, lakes and rivers clean - when cleaning and washing, take water and wash well away from the water source (drain used water into soil to allow it to be filtered) - all soaps/detergents are harmful to water-life.
• Always use toilets when they are provided even though long-drops may be a bit rustic.
• In situations where there is no toilet, bury toilet waste. No 1's (pee) off the track - No 2's (poop) in 5-10 cm deep hole 50-100m from any water (lake, river or stream), bury toilet paper, cover up hole with soil/leaf litter. Please do not burn toilet paper.
• Sanitary pads/tampons are treated as rubbish - carried out by user.

ENVIRONMENTAL CARE

• Remove rubbish – pack it in, pack it out. Please help guide to separate rubbish, recycling and compost.
• Keep to the track where there is one – protect native plants and animals.
• Respect cultural heritage.
• Enjoy your visit - camp carefully and leave no trace of your visit. Will the next visitor know you have been there?

OTHER IMPORTANT THINGS TO REMEMBER...

• Laundry facilities are limited while on trips (every 2-3 days).
• Hypothermia - make sure you have the correct clothing! Be prepared for any weather!
• Hire gear - use the supplied liner with sleeping bags, carry all hire gear in pack not tied to outside. Please don't overextend walking poles - they will snap! Please tell us if any repairs are required.
• Equipment – it is so easy to lose stuff in shared huts. Help us keep an eye on gear, thanks.
• Roads - remember kiwis drive on the left, look carefully when crossing the street for an ice-cream.
• Tipping - it is not expected in NZ to tip for service, but if you feel your guide has done an excellent job, tips will be accepted graciously.
• Wild food & berries - always ask before you eat, many are poisonous to us.

Thank you for reading. Have a wonderful trip.

Nothing great was ever achieved without enthusiasm. ~ Ralph Waldo Emerso

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