

FREE



# HEAPHY TRACK



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



Great Walks season:  
All year



[greatwalks.co.nz](http://greatwalks.co.nz)

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*Te Papa Atawhai*

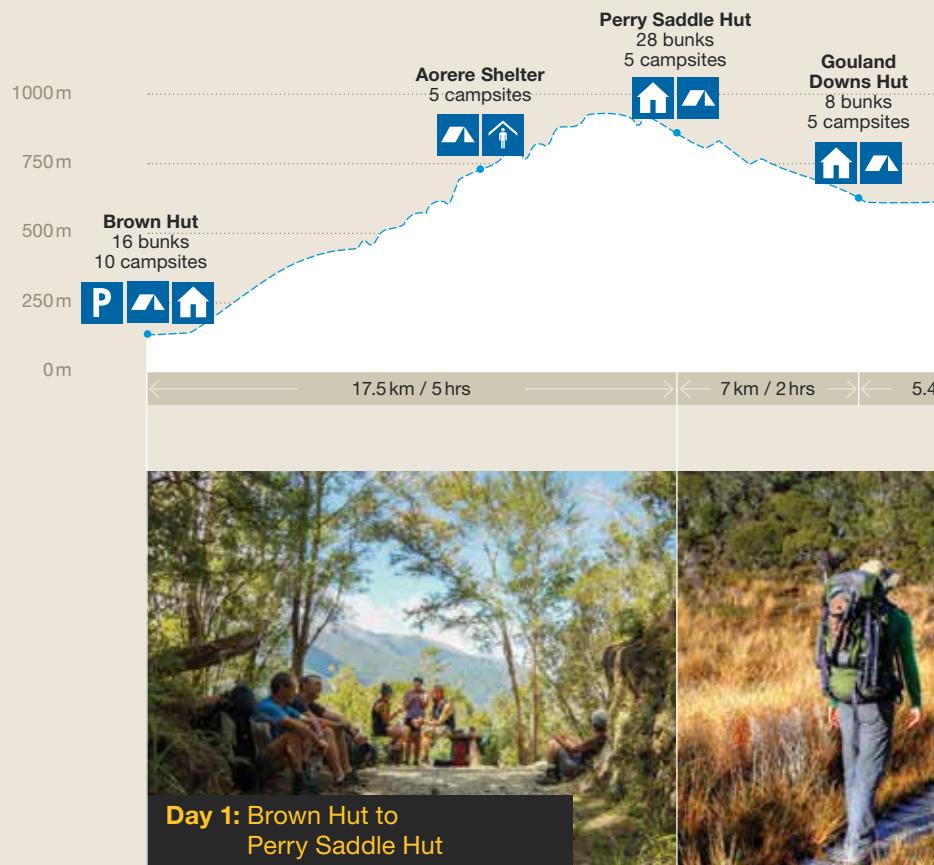
# HEAPHY TRACK

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 Kōhaihai 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 guide describes a 4-day hike for independent, non-guided walkers travelling from Brown Hut to Kōhaihai.

## 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. 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.

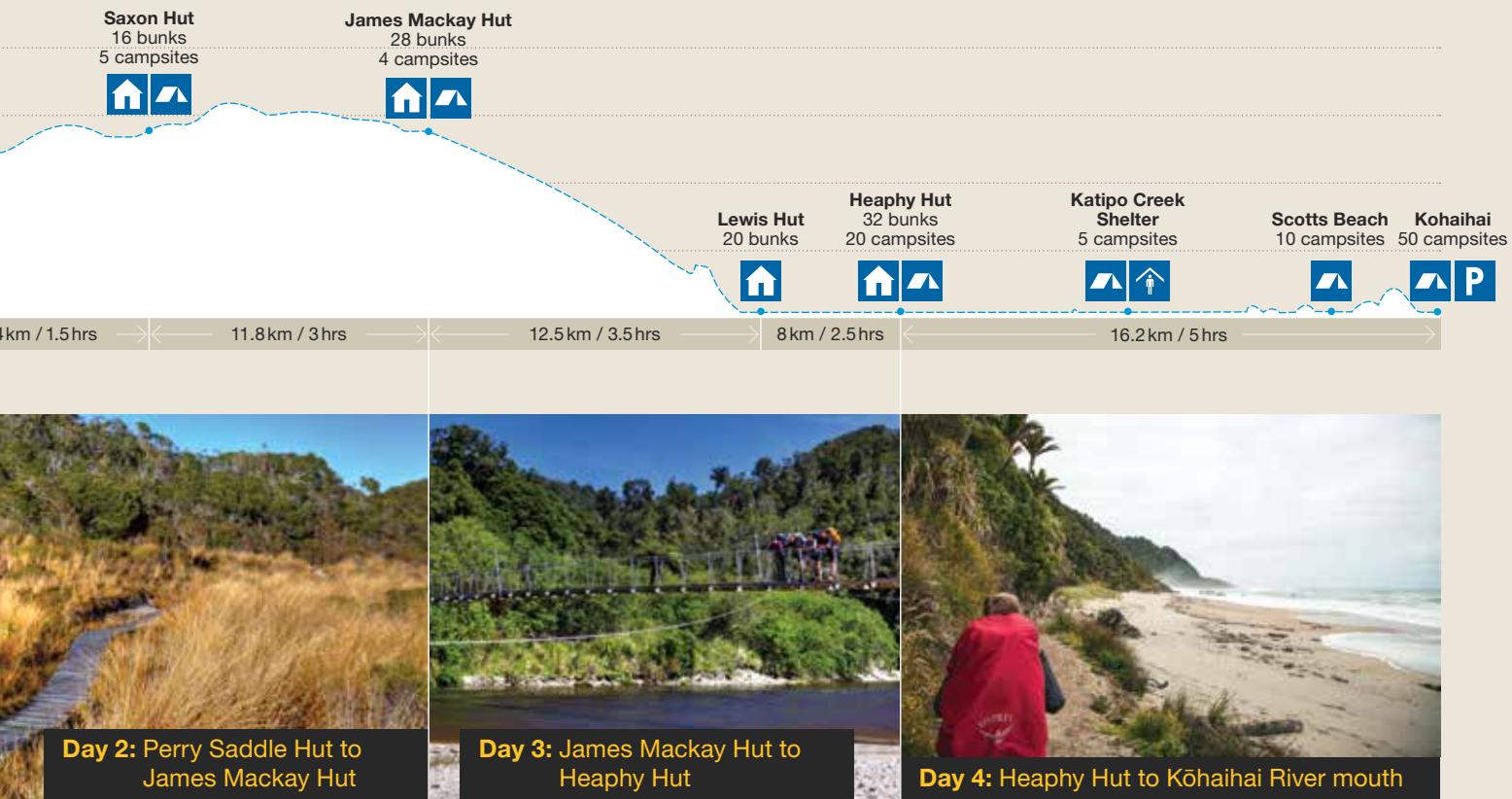


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### ↗ 6 hours 30 minutes, 24.2 km

Start your day sidling through tussock clearings and patches of beech. Where the valley widens, the expansive tussocklands of Gouland Downs are revealed.

You'll pass the famed pole where walkers before you have tied their old boots on your way to Gouland Downs Hut. Rest up here, or continue on to James Mackay Hut, which offers views of the Tasman Sea and Heaphy River mouth 750 metres below.

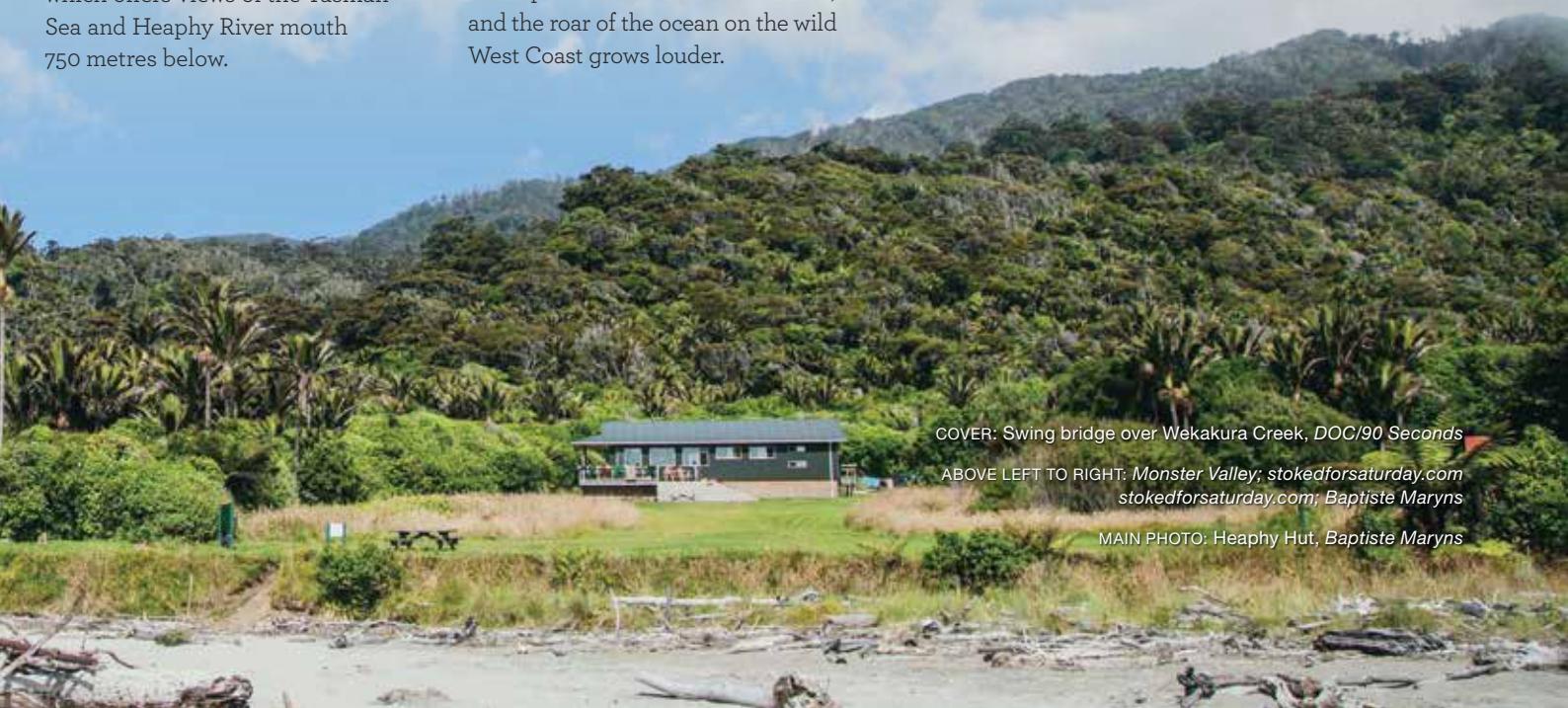
### ↗ 6 hours, 20.5 km

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 track then crosses the Heaphy River and 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 Kōhaihai follows the rugged coastline of the West Coast, and passes through forests of rātā and karaka trees, vines and groves of nīkau palms. Consult tide tables on the DOC website (also at Heaphy Hut and Kōhaihai Shelter) for Crayfish Point, which can be impassable 2 hours or so either side of high tide when sea conditions are rough. Soon Scotts Beach appears. The clearing here is a good spot to rest before climbing over Kōhaihai Bluff. The track follows the bank of the Kōhaihai River for 400 metres to the car park.



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

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Monster Valley; [stokedforsaturday.com](http://stokedforsaturday.com); [Baptiste Maryns](http://Baptiste Maryns)

MAIN PHOTO: Heaphy Hut, [Baptiste Maryns](http://Baptiste Maryns)

## HIGHLIGHTS

1

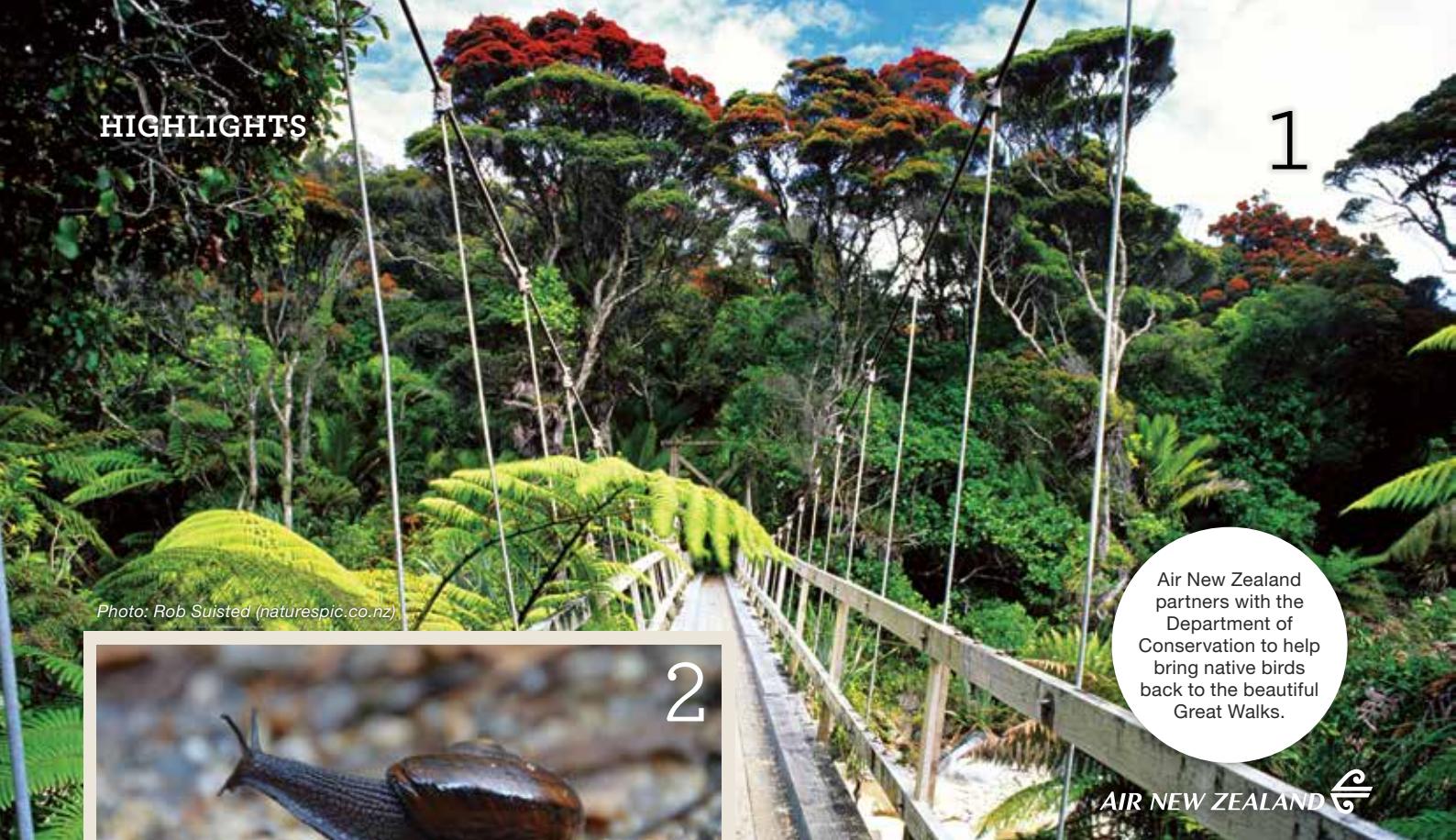


Photo: Rob Suisted (naturespic.co.nz)

2



Photo: Stefan and Kathrin Marks

AIR NEW ZEALAND

Air New Zealand partners with the Department of Conservation to help bring native birds back to the beautiful Great Walks.

1 **Fantastic flora!** See huge podocars and giant northern rātā in the lowland forest, a huge variety of alpine and subalpine species on the Gouland Downs, and karaka, ngaio and nīkau 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, Gouland Downs and Saxon huts. Male great spotted kiwi make a shrill, repeated, drawn-out whistle of 'kiwi'. The females make a harsh, low 'churr' sound.

4 Walk through the '**enchanted forest**', moss-covered beech forest set in a limestone outcrop of arches and old caves.

5 You may not be able to see it, but the brand new **Heaphy Hut** is located right next to one of New Zealand's oldest and most interesting archaeological sites – an ancient village situated on a nearby river bank, believed to have been settled by Polynesians in the 13th – 14th century.

3



Photo: Rod Morris

4



Photo: Peter Black

5



Photo: Richard Rossiter



## GETTING THERE

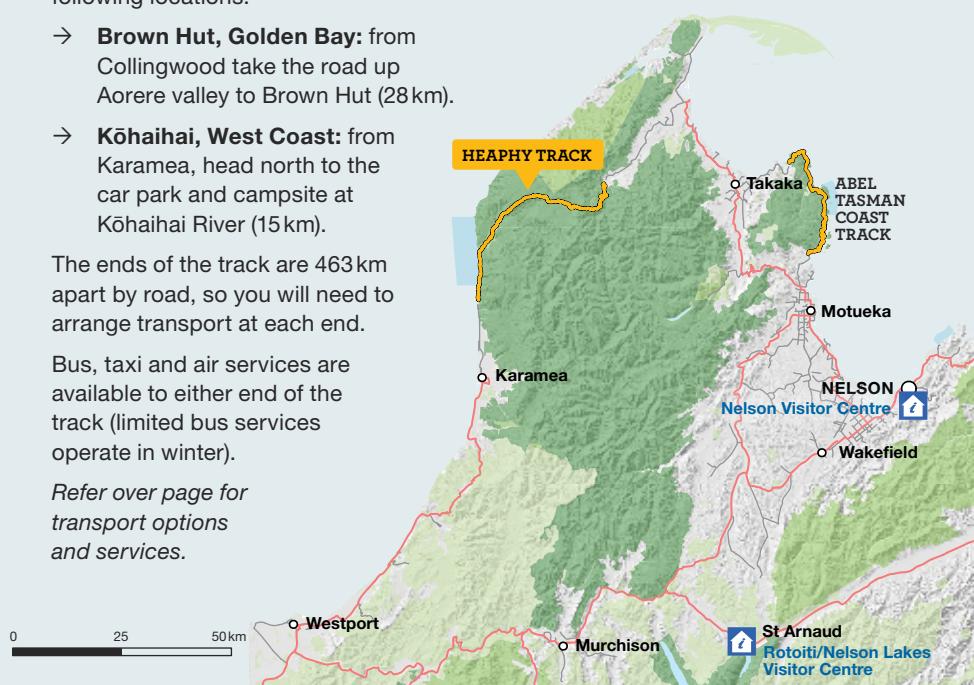
You can start the Heaphy Track from the following locations:

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

*Refer over page for transport options and services.*



## PLACES TO STAY



*Photo: Baptiste Maryns*

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.

Kōhaihai is a Standard campsite and does not need to be booked in advance. See [www.doc.govt.nz/campsites](http://www.doc.govt.nz/campsites) for details.



### Great Walks huts

\$32 per adult per night; 17 years and under free (bookings 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 (bookings required).

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

**Sign me up! What do I do next?**



- 1 Start off at [greatwalks.co.nz/heaphy](http://greatwalks.co.nz/heaphy) for more information.



- 2 Consult tide timetables and **book your huts and campsites** online or at a DOC Visitor Centre.



- 3 **Book your transport** to and from the track – operators are listed online and in this brochure.



- 4 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.



- 5 Read up on **safety** and make sure you're well prepared for your journey and changeable weather at [greatwalks.co.nz/heaphy](http://greatwalks.co.nz/heaphy). Make sure you have left your intentions with a trusted contact at [adventuresmart.org.nz](http://adventuresmart.org.nz).



- 6 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.



- 7 **All set!** Lace up your boots and get hiking. Don't forget to share your experience on [facebook.com/GreatWalks](http://facebook.com/GreatWalks).

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Golden Bay, New Zealand

**HEAPHY TRACK HELP**  
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email: [info@heaphytrackhelp.co.nz](mailto:info@heaphytrackhelp.co.nz)  
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## HEAPHY TRACK HELI TRANSFERS

[www.helicoptersnelson.co.nz](http://www.helicoptersnelson.co.nz)



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## Visitor Centres

DOC has 22 visitor centres across New Zealand, packed with useful information about where to go and what to do.

Drop in to your local Visitor Centre to plan your next outdoor adventure.

[doc.govt.nz/visitorcentres](http://doc.govt.nz/visitorcentres)



Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai



[www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

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PLANS**  
IT MAY SAVE  
YOUR LIFE



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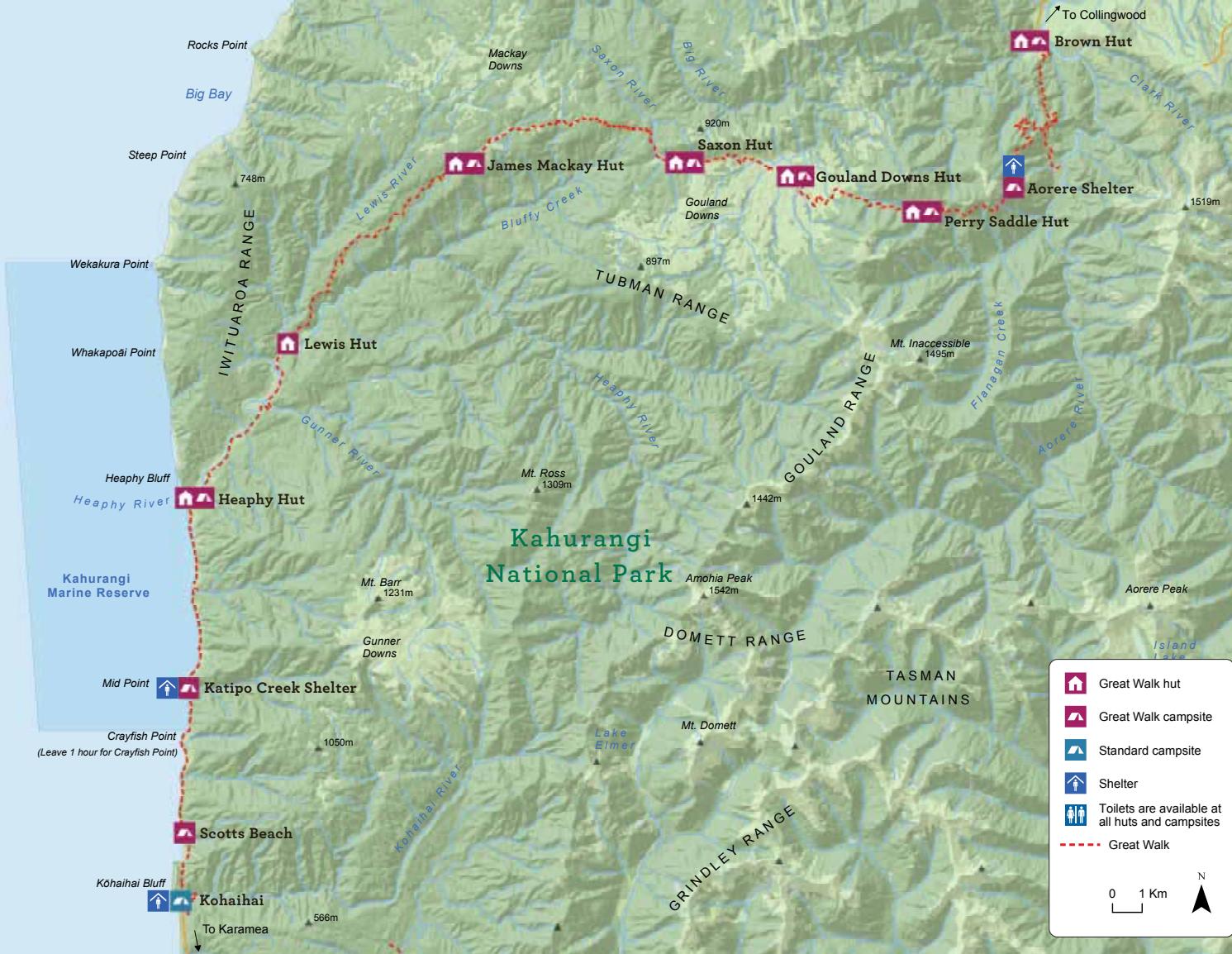
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## Know before you go

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 [adventuresmart.org.nz](http://adventuresmart.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](http://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](http://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 September. Bikes must give way to walkers. Check [doc.govt.nz/mountain-bikers-code](http://doc.govt.nz/mountain-bikers-code) for safety information.

Remember – your safety is your responsibility