

NEW ZEALAND WILDERNESS EXPERIENCE

6 DAYS DEPARTING 5TH MARCH 2012

DETAILED ITINERARY

The Heaphy Track is one of New Zealand's Great Walks and is without doubt the most diverse. It combines bush clad walking, sub alpine traverses and a breathtaking coastal section, with fantastic views over alpine downs, and out to the wild West Coast of the South Island.

The Heaphy Track, located in Kahurangi National Park at the north-west corner of the South Island, is the longest of the Department of Conservation (DOC) Great Walks. For 78.4 kilometres the track crosses the Park's range of landscapes, starting from the junction of the Brown and Aorere Rivers, over expansive tussock downs to the lush forests, nikau palms and roaring seas of the West Coast.

The track is wide and benched in most sections and popular with all ages and abilities - from walkers wanting an adventure experience to first time hikers. Our guides are filled with stories, anecdotes and fun facts that help bring the Heaphy Track to life.

Each night you come to rest at basic but comfortable accommodation in Department of Conservation huts. These huts have running water, toilets and cosy fires for heating. There are even toilets at the huts and shelters along the way.

DAY 1 - 5TH MARCH

THE ADVENTURE BEGINS FROM NELSON

We start bright and early this morning on our way to the start of the track. Your guides will pick you up from your accommodation at approximately 7 am and you'll depart in our comfortable mini van. The drive will take approximately 1.5-2 hrs; this is a beautiful trip allowing glimpses of the Tasman bay and the memorable Takaka hill. On the hill you will be treated to a fascinating landscape of water etched marble outcrops, sinkholes and caves.

Gaining the summit you will be rewarded with some great views over the famous Able Tasman National Park and Golden Bay. Our morning break is in the lovely country town of Takaka. Here we will stop and relax for around 30 min, a great time to sit down at the historic Wholemeal Café and enjoy a muffin or coffee!

Back on the road again for the final driving leg, a 1.5 hr drive from Takaka, we skirt the coast line before heading inland on a well graded gravel road, toward the start of our walk.



Upon arriving at the start of the track the walk starts off through regenerating Manuka and Kanuka trees, where it soon changes to the lush beach tree dominated Aorere valley. Look out for the views of the Aorere River and the Dragons teeth on the Douglas Mountain range. When we stop for our tasty lunch, keep an eye open for any curious Tom Tits which may be perched on a branch or trunk scanning for insects!

After our days walk we arrive at our home for the evening, Perry Saddle hut. Here its time to relax.

The evening leads into a delicious dinner and is usually a great time to share stories, play cards or just relax in front of the coal range; it's all about enjoying yourself on the Heaphy!

As you fall asleep tonight keep one ear open for the haunting calls of the Great spotted Kiwi....

Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2 - 6TH MARCH

ACROSS THE GOULAND DOWNS

After a good nights sleep, its time to get ready for our day ahead. This is day of exploring. Throughout your adventure, each morning there are options of steaming bowls of porridge, freshly toasted bread with delicious local jam or local honey, and even a bowl of healthy muesli, depending on what you prefer.

If the weather is favourable today we have the option of climbing Mt Perry; this is a peak of 1238 metres, giving you a panoramic view out and over the Kahurangi Nation Park and the Able Tasman National Park. This is a poled route which can be tricky to negotiate in parts, as the terrain can be steep and rocky but the views are well worth it.

Onwards we continue leaving Mt Perry behind us, we head into the sub alpine world of stunted Mountain and Silver Beech trees, and as these open out to the Goulard downs we are faced with a view of the vast plains where in 1910 a Geological party reported that this area was full of Weka and Kiwis. These downs were also used during the early 1900's for the grazing of sheep, and as an overland route for cattle being moved to the West Coast. In 1917 however its significance was recognised when it was turned into a wildlife refuge. Today as you're meandering along the trail you may be lucky enough to see the rare Blue Duck or Whio as it is otherwise known.

We stop for lunch at the Goulard Downs hut, where the guides once again work their magic with a mouth watering platter of delights; you'll be amazed at what comes out of their packs!

After lunch, it is time for boots back on, and the journey to tonight's accommodation at Saxon Hut.



We walk for aprox 2 hrs in total this afternoon, during which time we pass through some more stunning Gondwana style beech forest; this is an enchanted area and well worth exploring. There are many limestone formations, caves, and arches to find.

After reashing the hut today, you will be able to gaze out from the deck back to the east where you can make out Perry Saddle and the Downs we have just traversed. Once again we feast on a pre dinner snack, followed by our main course, and a little something sweet to top it all off. If you haven't already, make sure you check out the night sky, this far away from artificial light the stars are amazing!

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3 - 7TH MARCH

ACROSS THE SAXON DOWNS, AND TOWARD THE RIVERS

This is the longest day of our walk, so it's a good idea to fuel up the body for the day ahead. We will walk for approximately 4 hrs this morning, and as we leave the hut we descend to grassy flats beside the Saxon River before gently climbing a broad ridge where we cross over the boundary line between the east and west regional areas. The track from here crosses through the Mackay Downs, crossing several small streams which wind on to the edge of the Downs before tumbling downward to the Heaphy River. The track here is also interesting as you will start to see the unique Karamea granite, a mix of granite, mica and quartz giving it an interesting speckled pink appearance.



We arrive at Mackay Hut and its time for Lunch, a good opportunity to take the boots off for a well deserved rest. From the hut we descend through a great cross section of New Zealand flora, from sub alpine plant life, to stunted beech, and then into the ancient Podocarp forest, a thirty meter canopy towers over us as we descend toward the confluence of the Lewis and Heaphy River. Our descent gives us tantalizing glimpses of the Heaphy and allows us to measure our progress as we get ever closer.

There are some great glimpses of the river as we head down this section, and there are sometimes several curious Bush Robins along the way to interact with. As the track gets lower we also start to see the magnificent Nikau Palms. Suddenly we reach our hut at the confluence of the Heaphy and Lewis, and its packs off, sleeping bags out, and time to put your feet up while the guides organize another scrumptious meal.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



DAY 4 - 8TH MARCH

THE HEAPHY RIVER MOUTH!

We leave the picturesque location where the Lewis hut balances on the fork of the two rivers this morning, and head off to an even more impressive location, the Heaphy River Mouth. The environment from here undergoes yet another drastic change; as we meander along the river side the towering Nikau Palms give the surrounds a truly tropical feel. We near the coast and the strange formations of the layered limestone karst rock formations appear. It would almost seem as if Indiana Jones is about to bound out of the surrounding bush... About 3 hrs after we leave the Lewis Hut we arrive at the Heaphy. For many of our guests this hut has been the most memorable, situated in such a stunning location.

Having reached the River mouth we are greeted with the impressive West coast beach. With the Nikau palms clustered around, curious Weka's and deer prints to be found in the sandy beach close by, there is defiantly a feeling of wilderness in the air. Prepare to be impressed with our final night's dinner on the track. And then relax on the beach and watch the sun set over the Tasman Sea.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner



DAY 5 - 9TH MARCH

THE WILD WEST COAST

Today we get up bright and early for our 16km walk through the most spectacular part of the walk, the Wild West coast. As we skirt the shore line there are opportunities to walk along the beach in some sections. Although hard on the legs it does indulge the other senses, the roar of the waves the salt in the air and the occasional Cormorant drying his wings in a magnificent hug salute. Our track winds in and out of the Nikau Palms with the many different types of coastal plants clustered around their feet. Today we also cross over some amazing bridges spanning some impressive creeks and rivers on their way to spilling their contents into the Tasman Sea.

Keep an eye on the side of the trail and you may be rewarded by seeing one of the famous giant carnivorous snails, the Powelliphanta. These ancient animals are a throwback from Gondwana times, and their main diet is the giant New Zealand earth worm!



Toward mid day we have one final push up and over the Kohaihai saddle, a climb of approx 30 min, before we descend to the end of the track where we meet our transport and fresh lunch.

After feasting on a delicious selection of fine food, we load up into the van for a two hour drive to Westport. We stop in Westport for a 30 min break before once again driving onward to the Nelson Lakes, following the mighty Buller River up to its source for our destination for the evening, where we find a well deserved shower, restaurant, and perhaps a bottle of bubbly!

We arrive this evening at St. Arnaud, set amongst the stunning Nelson Lakes; our accommodation is in the Swiss style Alpine Lodge where your bags will be place in your rooms. We will meet again for dinner at 7:30pm. It's a great evening of good food, good company and a great time to catch up on the stories of the trip.

Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 6 - 10TH MARCH

ALPINE LODGE IN THE NELSON LAKES

This morning we load up the van and head back to Nelson, arriving around lunch time, perfect for any connecting flights, or simply exploring Nelson city.

Meals: Breakfast



INCLUDED WITH THIS TRIP

- Experienced Local guide
- Park entrance fees
- Fuel plus other activities as detailed in itinerary
- Operation of the above itinerary, with the following inclusions...
 - Plate/bowl, Knife, fork, spoon set.
 - Healthy Snack packs for your Adventure
 - Hand Sanitizer
 - Wet Wipes
 - Ear plugs

ACCOMMODATION

4 nights National Parks Huts
1 night Lodge

MEALS

As detailed in the itinerary

TRANSPORT

minibus/4WD vehicle, walking

NOT INCLUDED WITH THIS TRIP

- Visa fees - each member of the group must carry a valid passport (valid for at least 6 months beyond the duration of your trip) and have obtained the appropriate visas
- Tips, personal telephone charges.
- Travel Insurance (compulsory) - You will need to give the policy number to your leader on Day 1
- Items of a personal nature; postage, drinks and souvenirs
- Entrance and activity fees during free time which are not detailed on the itinerary
- Other meals not mentioned on the itinerary
- Medical Advice - Please refer to your GP or local travel clinic for up to date travel health advice for the area(s) you are visiting.



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