

## Hawdkun Range – St Bathans Range Traverse, Oteake Conservation Park

### WILD FILE

**Access** Off SH8, just south of Omarama, onto Broken Hut Road. Follow this to the signposted public car park. Between Labour Weekend and April 30, 4WD vehicles can be taken to Little Omarama Saddle or Omarama Saddle

**Grade** Moderate

**Time** 4-6 days

**Distance** 68.4km

**Total ascent** 4856m

**Accommodation** Boundary Creek Hut, 8 bunks

**Map** CA14, CA15, CB14, CB15

### Description

At 65,000ha, Otago's Oteake Conservation Park is immense. It's relatively easily traversed though and offers big views of big country. But the distances covered and exposure to the weather can be daunting.

From the summit of Little Omarama Saddle, 1357m, a grand traverse of the Hawdkun and St Bathans ranges can be achieved – a loop of some 23.2km.

The first day includes an easy climb to the base of the Hawdkun Range from Little Omarama Saddle, followed by a steep pull up the eastern face of the Hawdkun to reach the crest. After topping out on the range, head south, scrambling over a couple of easy summits, all the time admiring the massive views granted of Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park and its attendant ranges away to the north. Choose a campsite in one of the headwater basins of the unnamed large creeks draining the eastern flanks of the Hawdkun into the head of Otamatapaio River. These basins were formed from intense glaciation which covered the peaks and valleys just a few thousand years ago. They also contain mountain tarns, the jewels of the Oteake. For such a barren, desiccated landscape you would expect water to be a problem. However, in almost every basin on both ranges large tarns can be found about 100m below the range top and in some cases, as the ridges are often so flat, wetlands and streams are present even at ridge top level.

The second day is a long one, yet not without highlights, beginning with more of that big-time view. Traverse a steep-sided watershed and make steady progress south of the campsite, staying at or just below 1800m.

At Johnstons Creek, turn to the west and drop off the high top into the head of the creek, a tributary of the Manuherikia River East Branch.

Then follow the Berwen Track, a 4WD trail, to the East Manuherikia and a suggested impromptu camp beside an old musterer's hut.

Next day, take the Mutton Creek Track, which connects the east and west branches of the Manuherikia. It is a relatively easy trip, gaining 300m before descending again. and we marched it out in just two-and-a-half hours. Low cloud and drizzle clung to the ridge tops and a cool southerly wafted along the valleys on the descent. The west branch of the Manuherikia boasts two shelters – Boundary Creek Hut and Top Hut. The former will provide access to the St Bathans Range.

The climb from the hut consists of 1300m of ascent and over 11km of high ridgeline to reach the St Bathans Range at 2100m, followed by an equally long traverse north to gain a campsite at Hidden Lake.

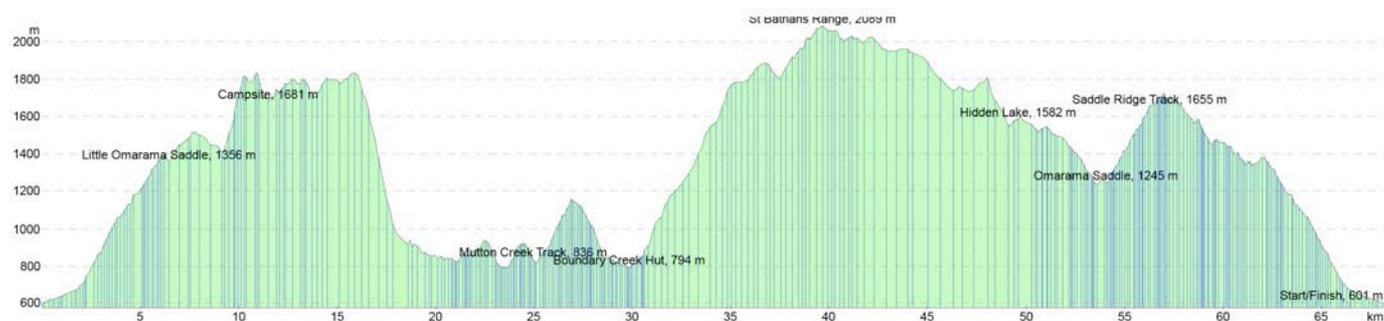
Near the crest of the St Bathans Range, the spur narrows and climbs over a sub-summit of loose blocks to finally top out at 2098m. The view here is immense.

Walking along the range top to Hidden Lake is fairly easy.

Hidden Lake is bordered by cliffs to the north and a moraine dam to the south and east. it is large, deep and still. Pitch tents nearby.

Exit the basin over the moraine dam to reach the long gentle ridge that descends to Omarama Saddle. then there's just one last climb along Saddle Ridge Track, climbing 500m to an 1800m summit and then another undulating descent over easy terrain to Little Omarama Saddle.

### Elevation Profile

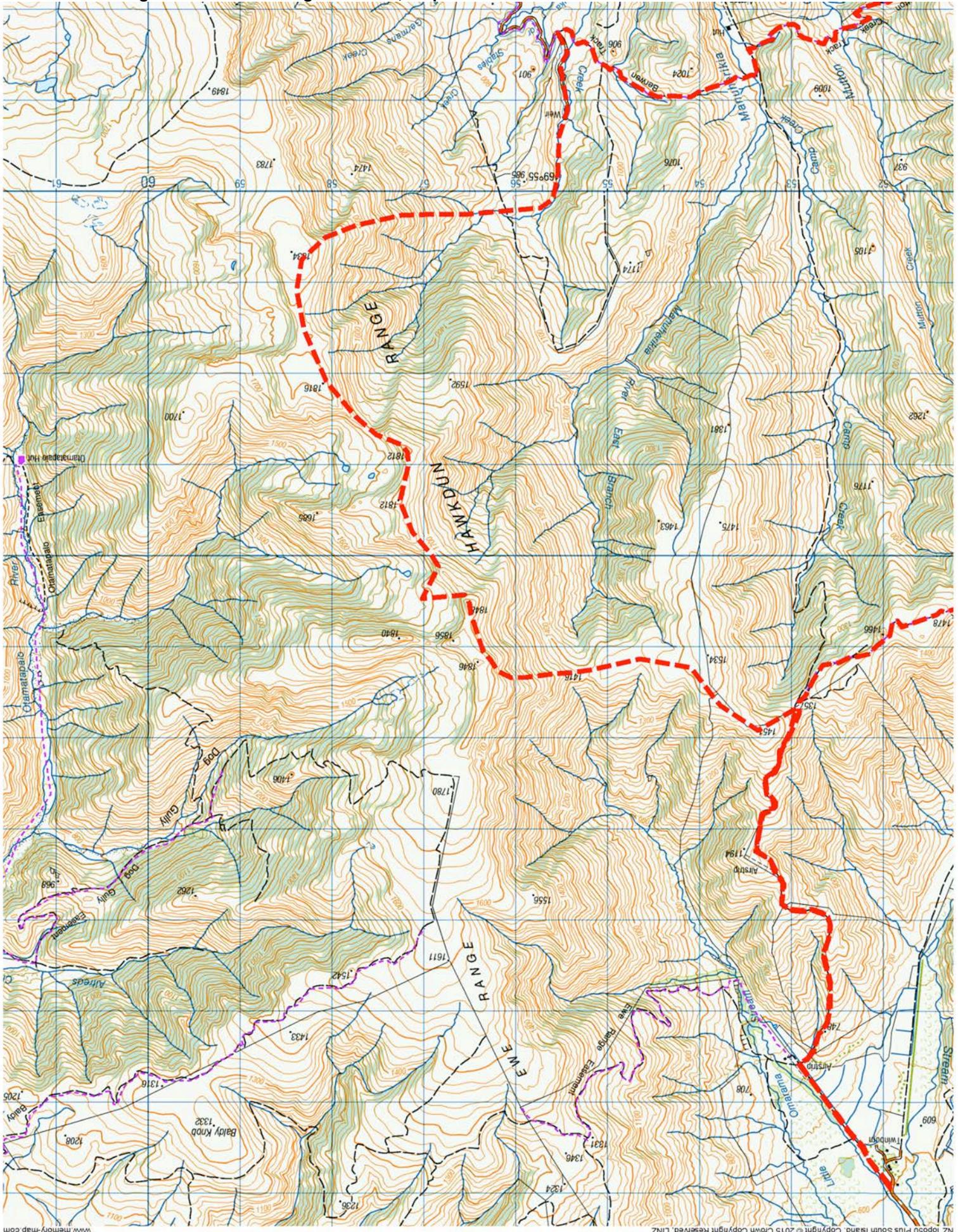


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Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to map this route correctly, Wilderness Magazine does not take responsibility for any errors in the route. Users should use discretion when planning their routes and gather as much information as possible before departing.

Maps are created with Memory-Map software, version 6. This software shows purple tracks and hut icons as verified routes and huts – meaning they are where they say they are and should be passable. If a purple track is shown, it is the route from the Memory-Map software. If a red or blue route is shown, it has been drawn by Wilderness.

# Hawdkun Range – St Bathans Range Traverse, map1



# Hawdkun Range – St Bathans Range Traverse, map 2

