

Possum Hut, Silver Peaks, Otago

Wild file

Access From Mountain Track Road

Grade Easy-moderate

Time Car park to Possum Hut via Eucalyptus Spur, 1.5-2hr; Possum Hut to Green Hut site, 45min; Green Hut to car park, 1hr

Distance 8.83km

Map CE17

Description

When people think of heritage sites in the Silver Peaks, they usually think of the early tramping and mustering huts or the 'caves' – rock bivvies. Often overlooked is the Depression-era gold-mining history. The most obvious example of that is Possum Hut, tucked in the head of the Waikouaiti River South Branch.

Although there's a DOC sign on Mountain Track Road indicating access to the hut (often referred to as Hunters' Access), that route is steep, rough and unappealing. A better option starts 750m to the south, initially following the main marked Silver Peaks route. The track climbs briefly, then skirts the northern slopes of Hightop, where the reward for coming this way is an expansive view of the whole eastern side of the range.

After 20 minutes, and just a couple of minutes past the sign marking the turn-off to Swampy Ridge, an unmarked but obvious track veers off to the right. This is Eucalyptus Spur. It's usually easily followed as it drops 250m to the nascent river, but the area can suffer from the effects of snow damage, so progress can be slow at times.

At the bottom of the spur, turn upstream and walk for a few hundred metres to the hut.

The hut, of cob construction with iron cladding, is in a bad way. The bunks have disappeared, presumably up the chimney. So has the unique stained glass window, which comprised four old long-necked Speight's bottles implanted in the cob, and, latterly, the door.

It seems the hut was built in the 1930s by local farmers Joe Clark and Philip Powell as a base for goldmining at a time when a government subsidy was available. On approach to the hut, the track is clearly on the line of an old water race. From the hut, the track towards the site of Green Hut, possibly the first tramping club hut in the South Island, climbs steeply through manuka, before turning into a pleasant ridge wander. A homemade sign at Possum Hut suggests a time of two hours but even with fallen trees to negotiate it takes less than half that. From the Green Hut site, continue along the Possum Hut Route to complete the loop to the car park.

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.

