Rakaia Gorge Walkway, Canterbury

Wild file
Access: There is a small parking area at the northern end of the Rakaia Gorge Bridge and a larger car park further back along SH72
Grade: Easy
Length: 7.25km
Time: 3-4hr return
Topo50 Map: BX20

Description
The walkway starts across the road from the parking area. For the first 10 minutes the river isn’t visible but then its turquoise waters appear between the trees. The winding path offers tantalising glimpses at first and then a full-on view of the sweeping bend the river takes before flowing under the bridge.

The track zigzags through stands of trees and up onto a glacial and river-cut terrace bordering a field. Hop over the stile and head to the viewpoint providing fine views of the lower gorge, with the Mt Hutt Range towering above.
From here the walkway follows the rim of the Rakaia Gorge. A weathered information board provides the geological story behind the making of the gorge and identifies layers of rock that are visible in the cliffs, including coal seams.
The trail passes through regenerating forest and emerges alongside a fenced field. Continue down into a gully of montane forest and shrub. Here, a short side track leads to the site of the old Snowdon Coal Mine, which is worth exploring.
Boulder-hop across the creek and climb out of the gully to arrive at a signposted junction. The walkway forms a loop from here to take in the Upper Gorge Viewpoint.
Beyond the viewpoint, the path drops steeply down and back into the forest. A short track leads to the river.
Return the way you came.

Elevation Profile

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.