

Whariwharangi Hut, Abel Tasman National Park

Wild file

Access: Roads to Totaranui and Wainui car park both branch off Abel Tasman Drive 21km east of Takaka. Wainui car park is a further 3.5km and Totaranui a further 11km

Grade: Easy, but with steep ascents and descents

Length: 16.9km

Time: 7-8hr

Accommodation: Whariwharangi Hut (20 bunks), Totaranui, Mutton Cove and Anapai Bay campsites

Topo50 Map: BN25

Description

Just about the only criticism of the Abel Tasman Coast Track is the number of people who walk it. The golden beaches, easy walking and endless swimming holes bring with them boat loads of tourists with whom you have to share.

One way to avoid the crowds is to walk a part of the track that stays relatively quiet throughout the summer, even at high noon. The northern section from Totaranui to Wainui Bay is a path far less trodden, not because it's less scenic – many regard it as the most stunning section of the track – but because it takes a little more effort to reach.

The drive from Nelson takes an extra 90min compared to the bustling southern entrance to the park.

The northern end of the track can be turned into a seven-hour loop starting from either the car park at Wainui Bay or the Totaranui campground. It passes four gorgeous beaches, a seal colony and the most picturesque hut – Whariwharangi Hut – on the track.

From Totaranui head inland, away from the Coast Track and up Gibbs Hill. This is by far the least attractive section of the walk – it's a means to an end and it's good to get this out the way first, so you can truly enjoy the rest.

The top of Gibbs Hill provides a remarkable view of Farewell Spit. On a clear day you can see the giant sandy arm in its entirety and even the sea beyond. The track then descends quickly and you soon join the coast track where you can head left to Wainui Bay or right towards Whariwharangi Bay.

It's worth heading left just to get a glimpse of Wainui Inlet, which looks like a serene lake at high tide and golden whipped cream at low tide.

Otherwise, a right turn winds you down to the historical Whariwharangi Hut – a world apart from the other huts on the track. It's a restored two-storey farmhouse originally built in 1896. It feels and smells like a backcountry hut and, if you arrive early enough, you can enjoy a snore-free night in the twin room upstairs.

The track continues to Whariwharangi Bay and runs alongside it before heading up into the forest. It's definitely worth the side trip to Separation Point – the last bit of which provides the only genuinely steep section of the walk – where you can relax on the rocks and watch the seals lazing below.

The walk back to Totaranui takes you past Mutton Cove, Anatakapau Bay and Anapai Bay – idyllic spots with small campsites at Anapai and Mutton Cove located close to the shore. Anapai Bay has a small archway and stack at its northern end which, when combined with the colour of the sand and the water, makes an unbeatable photo opportunity.

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.

