

Otepatotu Reserve, Banks Peninsula

If a relatively easy, and short, hike through a remnant forest, typical of the forests that once covered 90 per cent of Banks Peninsula, is to your liking, then you mustn't pass up the opportunity to wander the trails of Otepatotu Reserve.

Loosely translated as, 'Place of the Fairies', this and the reserve's scenic wonders should be enough to attract children and adults for a look-see when traversing the Summit Road between Hilltop and Akaroa.

It stands above the highway just north of the road to Le Bons Bay and offers the complete package when it comes to the tick-list for a family outing – excellent picnic area, fantastic views, a good track (sometimes muddy), and a rapidly changing forest mosaic that will keep all comers entranced with its beauty and diversity.

A windy trail leads to the summit at Lavericks Peak (755m), just 150m higher than the roadside car park.

It's a toss-up between two superlatives when you visit here, is it the views or the forest diversity which claim first prize? The view improves at the flat summit, which is encircled by columns of basalt cliffs and presents a formidable aspect when seen from the road, there is a complete 360-degree panorama of rocky tors, steep farmland, vegetated gullies, beach, bay, and ocean.

Then there's the forest. Dry and shrubby down low, it morphs into a full immersion in the cloud forest as you reach the bluffs. Straight-trunked totara guard the path like a pack of loose forwards, hemming in the trail and marking out the way ahead. Wands of ferns hang from branches and, if it's a cool and cloudy day, mist will be drifting through the trees, a spectre of gloom coating all with moisture.

Beyond the summit, the track continues east along and then down a fence line, steeply at first, it then enters the canopy forest on the south side of Lavericks Peak where broadleaf, fuschia, mountain holly, and five finger compete for space. The track angles off into a shallower decline farther down and then intersects with the upward trail which returns to the car park.

Wild File

Access On Summit Road, midway between Okains Bay Road and Le Bons Valley Road

Grade Easy

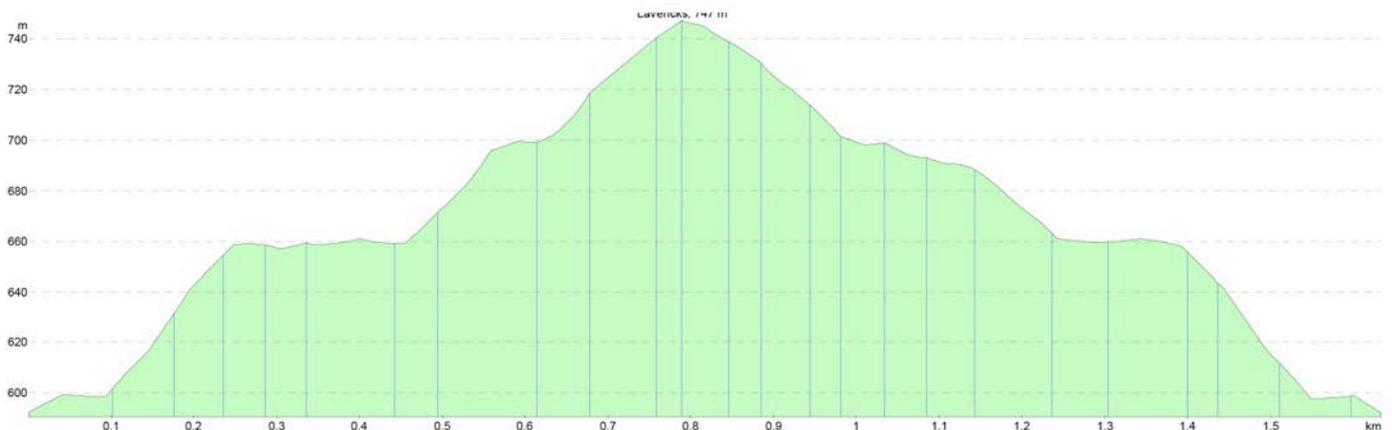
Time 40-60min to summit

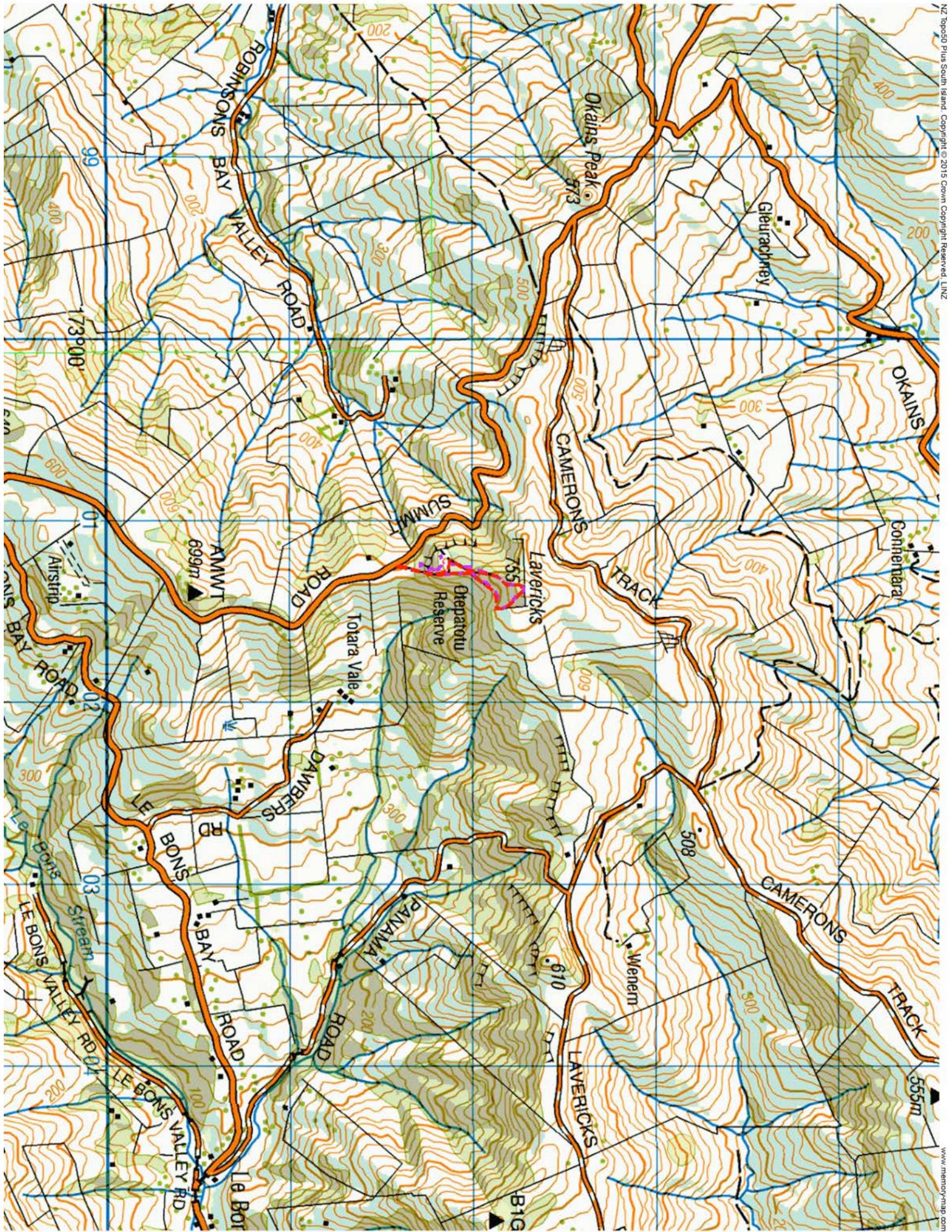
Total ascent 157m

Distance 1.63km

Map BX25

Elevation Profile





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