

## Arahura to Whitcombe Traverse, West Coast

For a classic backcountry hut-bagging trip, traverse the Arahura to the Whitcombe Rivers over Styx Saddle, Lathrop Saddle, the Toaroha Range, Toaroha Saddle and Frew Saddle. An 'extended mix' of a well-trodden West Coast circuit, it has 15 huts on its path.

Travel is fast along the old pack tracks of the Arahura. Lower Arahura Hut makes a good lunch spot, with an overnight at Mudflats Hut.

Cross Styx Saddle to Grassy Flat Hut, then climb the steep and muddy track to Browning Range Bivouac.

Top Craford Hut, at the head of Crawford Creek, is next. Then its Crawford Junction Hut. If rivers are in high flow, travel along their edges will be slower than usual.

A short cableway leads across the river just above the junction. Decode your route upvalley, alternating between the track, boulders on the edge of the riverbed and the river itself, before reaching Top Kokatahi Hut.

Zit Saddle is reached after a steep climb out of Top Kokatahi Hut, weaving up the steep riverbed and then ascending tussock slopes. After two days of walking deep in the valleys, the view will be entrancing: below and distant lay the coastal plain and the Tasman Sea. The range falls away steeply into the Toaroha.

Head for a cream coloured dot in a clearing far below – Adventure Bivouac makes a perfect morning tea spot. A long and steep downhill tramp to the river follows. The trail then follows the river towards the upper Toaroha Valley to Top Toaroha Hut.

From Top Toaroha, head to Poet Hut; first braving the steep climb to Toaroha Saddle and signing the book at Toaroha Saddle Bivouac. You'll be sometimes hauling on small trees, feet slipping in the wet gravel. The final climb to the saddle is a push through sometimes waist-high tussock.

It's a quick descent off the saddle, where you'll meet the roar of the Mungo River. A rooty track leads to a sunless grassy clearing and there stands Poet Hut.

From Poet Hut, pick your way downstream over boulders alongside the roaring river. From the deep watercourse of the Hokitika River, head up a devious line through schist cliffs to Bluff Hut, sited spectacularly on a rock outcrop on the flank of the Main Divide.

A vague trail leads through the broad valley, once home to a large glacier, before it turns right and up the slope to Frew Saddle. Weave through tall tussocks, taking the line of least resistance.

Surrounded by golden tussock is Frew Saddle Bivouac. From the bivvy, follow poles to Frew Creek and travel along the creek bed. The track leaves the creek and follows a bush spur to the 10-bunk Frew Hut.

After Frew Hut, follow the true right bank of the Whitcombe to the Collier Gorge swingbridge.

The four-bunk Rapid Creek Hut is reached, and then after 300-400m a cableway leads across the Hokitika River. The benched track drops to the riverbed about 600m from the road end.

### Wild File

**Access** Milltown Road, inland from Hokitika

**Grade** Difficult

**Time** 7-9 days, but many options exist to shorten the trip

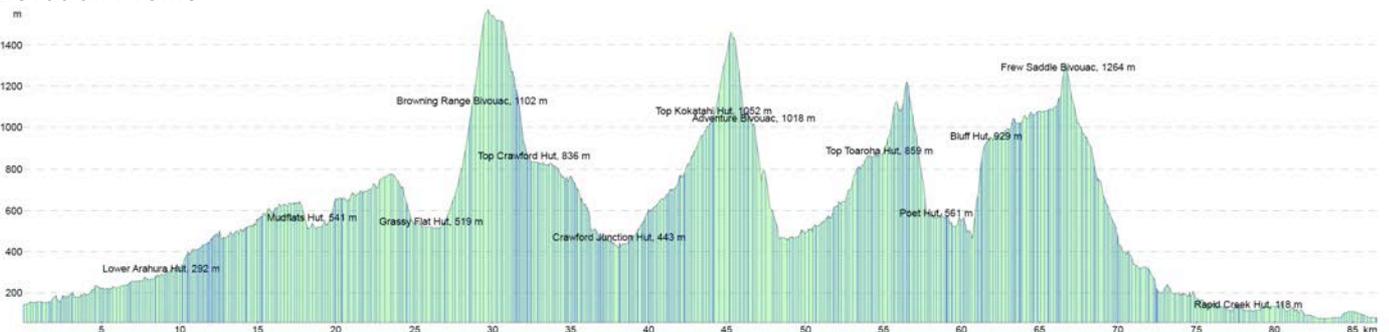
**Distance** 86.6km

**Total ascent** 6433m

**Accommodation** Numerous huts and bivouacs

**Map** BV19, BV18

### Elevation Profile



Aranura to whitcombe | raverse, west Coast. map 1





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