

## Red Hill and Olivine ranges, South Westland

Start at the car park at the end of Jackson River Road and head up the Cascade River valley, following a track through stunted bush. The track is all that remains of explorer Charlie Douglas' benched track which, in the late 19th century, forded the river and followed its western bank, before crossing a low saddle into the Gorge River.

Continue up the lower Cascade, through patches of thick lowland bush – some boulder hopping is required along the river margins. A small gorge just after Woodhen Creek is the most challenging part of this section. Before the valley closes in at Cascade Gorge, climb a steep and narrow spur out of the valley on the true left. This reaches a savannah-like landscape, just below the bushline near the northern end of the Red Hills Range. It's a nice place to camp.

After climbing beyond the bushline, head along the rolling tussock tops towards Red Mountain. At Peridot Stream, you can set up camp. Red Mountain is achievable from here as a side trip if you choose - climb erratic boulders to the summit for epic views of the surrounding mountains.

After camping at Peridot Stream, descend into the Cascade Valley. Due to the ultramafic rock, the bushline here is 400m lower than that on the eastern side of the valley.

An easy, relatively scrub-free line goes to flats near Durwoods Falls at the top of Cascade Gorge.

Captains Creek provides a route up and onto the Olivine Range through challenging terrain, with a maze of house-sized boulders covered in thick bush. It can take about four hours to navigate to the top of the creek. At a shoulder near the head of Captains Creek, cross into the headwaters of Falls Creek. Continue east along the range towards the range-crest just north of Joe Peak, which has views of Mt Aspiring/Tititea.

To traverse north towards Bald Mountain and Tararua Peak, descend the steep snowgrass into the headwaters of the true right branch of Falls Creek and onto the ridge-crest through challenging terrain. The terrain becomes easier on the northern side of Bald Mountain, leading to Tararua Peak. There is a good campsite in a basin off the col to the south of the peak.

Continue along the ridge to Staircase Mountain and onto the Thomson Range. From Staircase Mountain north, the range is surprisingly rugged. Head into the upper Martyr Valley and across the swampy flats at the confluence of the two main branches of the river. Deer tracks lead to the flats in the upper basin below Collyer and Dagon peaks. Climb to the saddle between Dagon and Collyer and onto the Thomson Range. The narrow ridge leads to Lake Leeb. A saddle leads down to the ridge crest running north to Mt Lindsay. The terrain is rugged with massive schist blocks making navigation difficult.

Head north along the tops before dropping to the bushline. There is flat land with a nearby tarn which is good for camping.

From here, there is an easy traverse along the narrow bushy tops between Turney and Thomson Stream to lakes Leeb and Clarke.

Head down Carl Creek to rejoin Jackson River Road.

### Wild File

**Access** From the DOC interpretation panel overlooking the Cascade River on Jackson River Road

**Grade** Difficult

**Time** 9-10 days in fair weather

**Distance** 87km

**Total ascent** 7772m

**Map** BZ11, BZ10, CA10

## Red Hill and Olivine ranges, map1

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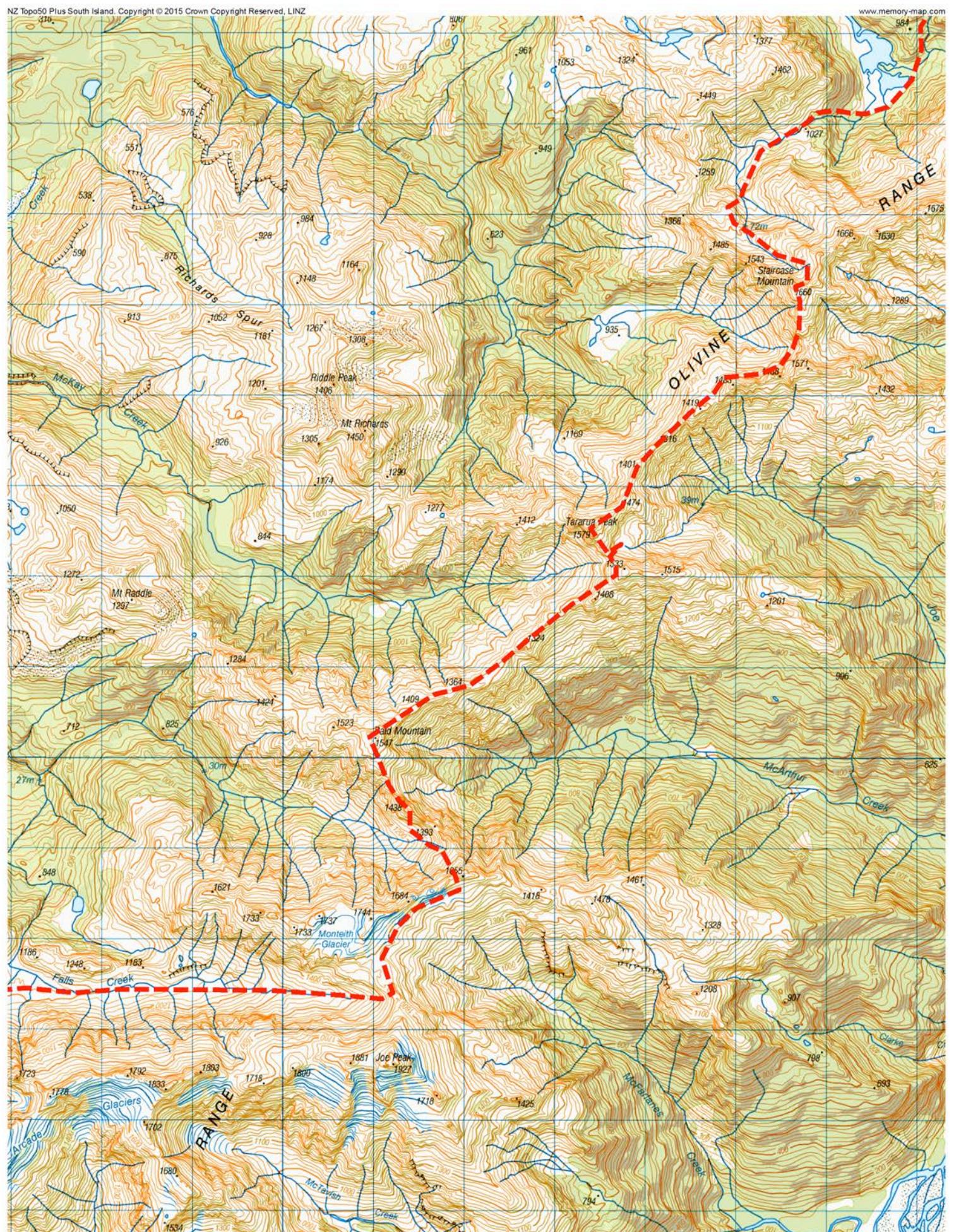
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## Red Hill and Olivine ranges, map2



## **Red Hill and Olivine ranges, map3**



## Red Hill and Olivine ranges, map4

