

## Isthmus Peak Track, Matatiaho Conservation Area

A short drive north of Wanaka, Isthmus Peak features grandiose views of both Lake Wanaka and Hawea, but with a fraction of the company of the popular Roys Peak Track.

The most dangerous part of the walk is crossing SH6 at the start. The parking area is on the right, just before traversing The Neck between lakes Hawea and Wanaka. This is a hotspot for oblivious drivers, concentrating more on the scenery than the road.

The track is marked through farmland owned by Glen Dene Station (check closure dates with DOC, as it is often closed for lambing and fawning in spring).

On the steady climb through the paddocks schist pillars and exposed outcrops line the ridges. The Otago schist started forming around 500 million years ago, as sedimentation on the eastern edge of Gondwanaland laid down multiple layers at the coastal margin.

A right turn at the signpost on the ridge leads to the summit at 1386m. From here, the previous courses of the Hawea and Wanaka glaciers are evident. Near the zenith of the last Hawea advance, terminal moraines built up, which now form the southern dam at the end of the lake. The glaciers scoured the valley floors to below sea level (making today's lakes nearly 400m deep) and sculpted the characteristic U-shaped valley walls. At The Neck, the two glaciers joined.

The Waitaha ancestor, Rakaihautu, left many descendants, of whom Rokotewhātu is said to have conferred the name 'Hawea', meaning 'doubt' – a reference to his forebear's indecision about which way to travel when he visited.

**Access** From Wanaka, follow SH6, 32km north. The car park is signposted on the right, just before the road leaves the shores of Lake Hawea

**Grade** Moderate

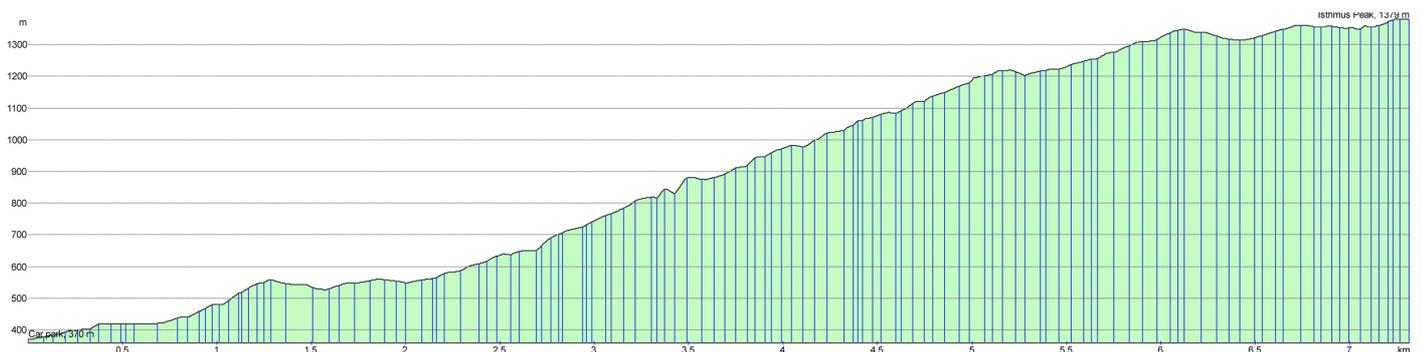
**Time** 5hr return

**Distance** 7.3km

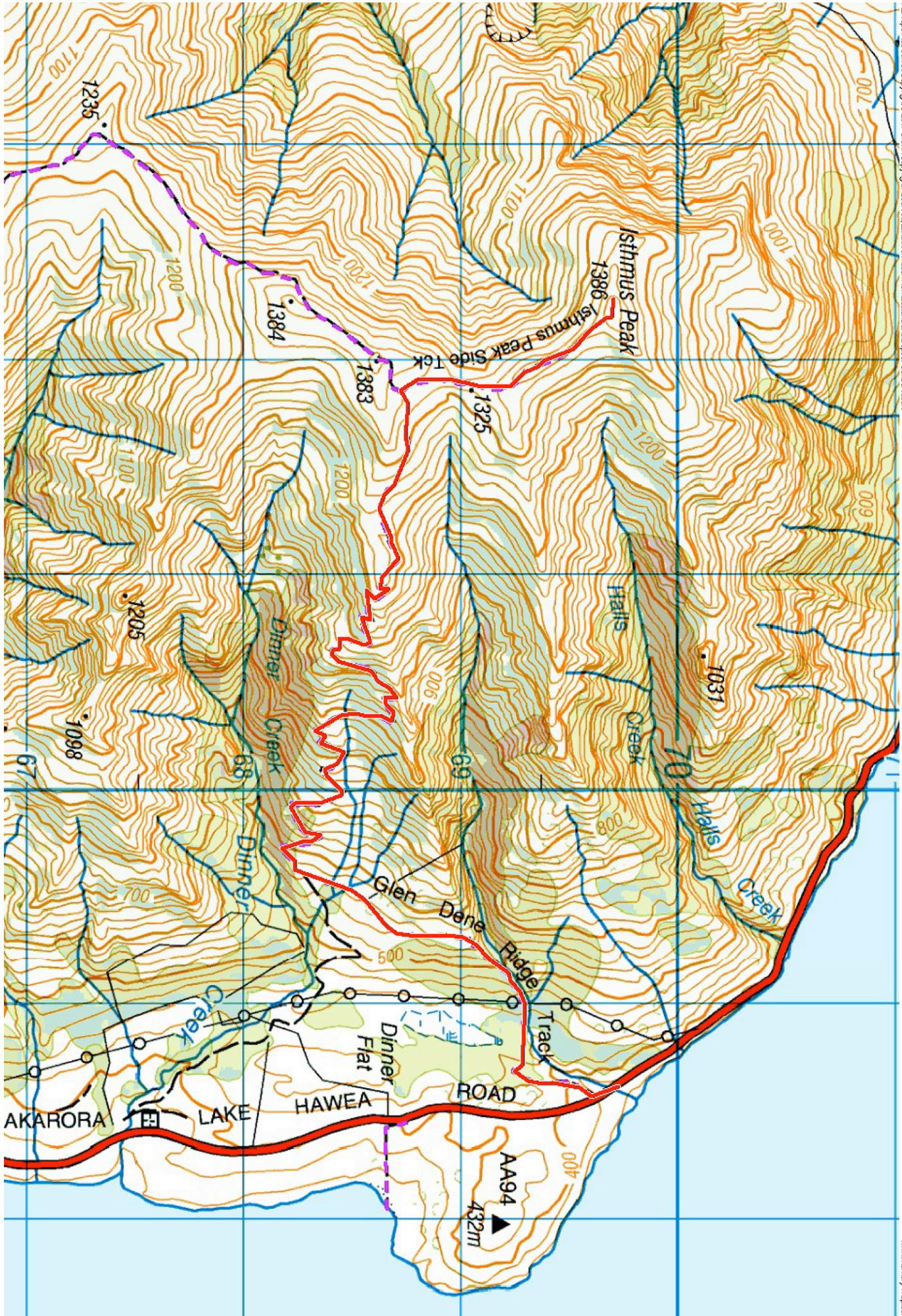
**Total ascent** 1145m

**Map** CA12

## Elevation Profile



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