

Boulder Bank Lighthouse, Nelson

The trip begins from Nelson's oxidation pond and requires sturdy footwear because, at first, the boulders underfoot are quite large. Hiking poles are invaluable. A sunhat, food and drink are mandatory.

As you set off westward, you'll see this rocky finger snake ahead for 9km into the hazy distance. Inland are views across the mudflats of Nelson Haven to the forested hills that preside over the cathedral city. For some, this trek can seem relentless, but the view to landward indicates your forward progress.

Further along the spine of this narrow strip of land stands a solitary tree, home to a dozen shags. After some 90 minutes there are half-a-dozen corrugated-iron baches strewn along the ridge-top, in various states of disrepair. When their current owners expire, so too will the leases, and the rustic shanties will be removed. Eventually, Boulder Bank will be in the hands of its original custodians: the seagulls, oystercatchers and shags.

A couple of hours' boulder-bashing will see you at the 18m-tall lighthouse. Climb the concrete steps to read the plaque welded above the door frame. This cast-iron tower was made in Bath, England, in 1861 and shipped to Aotearoa. Decommissioned in 1982, it was New Zealand's longest-operating lighthouse and serves as a reminder of the importance of marine transport to the early colonial settlement of Nelson.

The lighthouse can be explored if you collected the key from Port Nelson prior to the trip. A hatch at the top gives access to the wrap-around balcony and unparalleled views in all directions.

If there's time, a quick reconnaissance of the final kilometre of the Boulder Bank leads to 'The Cut', where a hole was blasted through the breakwater in 1906 to allow the passage of ships.

Across the water is Haulashore Island, where fur seals line the rocky embankment and shags guard the shoreline. The distant Wharepapa / Arthur Range is an idyllic backdrop to a postcard-perfect place, particularly when dusted with snow.

Wild File

Access From the oxidation pond at the end of Boulder Bank Drive

Grade Easy

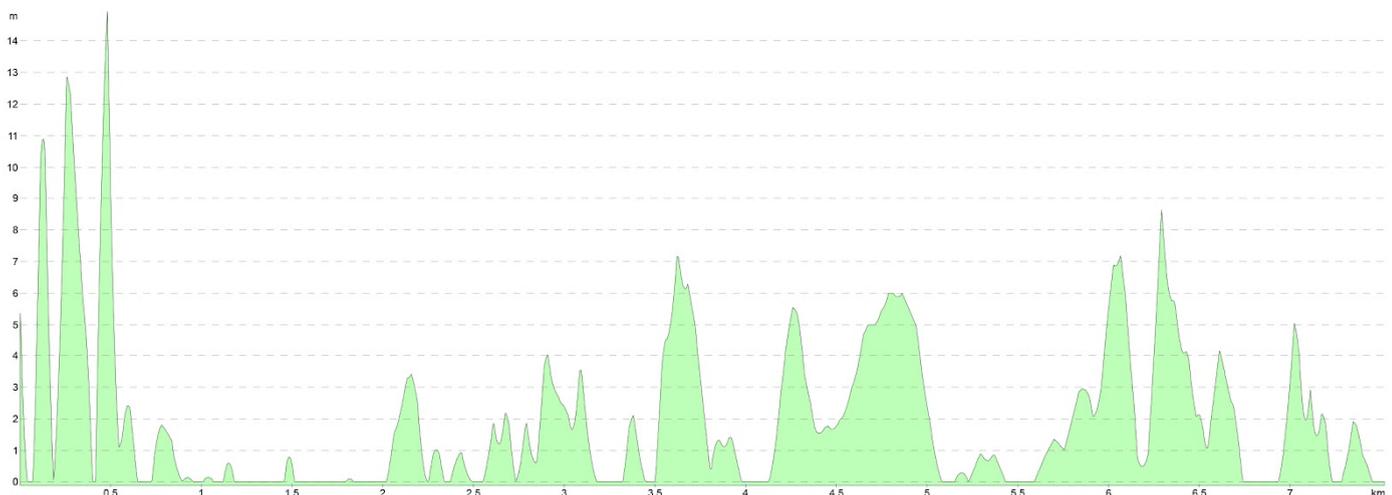
Time 2-4hr to lighthouse

Distance 7.5km to lighthouse

Total ascent 90m

Topo50 map BQ26

Elevation



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