

Iron Gate Hut, Ruahine Forest Park

Parking at the Petersons Road end is plentiful; don't be alarmed at the number of cars here as the Iron Gates Gorge is a popular day-trip destination. There's a toilet and a small tarn.

The track immediately descends 100m to Umutoi Creek then climbs back up to the rifle range and over a spur to reach Alice Nash Memorial Heritage Lodge in about 40min. This hut is maintained by the New Zealand Deerstalkers Association and is named after a local woman. It was built by her daughters, and information on the kitchen wall tells the story. It's an easy womble on a benched track to get to this point.

After the lodge the track narrows and requires care as it winds up and down into side creeks. Don't be put off, however, as it's entirely doable and easy-going for the most part. A short distance past the lodge there's a junction with the left-branching track descending to the Oroua River. Veer right to continue sidling along the hillside above the river.

Within an hour the unbridged Cumberfield Creek is reached. In low flows crossing is unproblematic but in rain it would be impassable. Although the track frequently passes close to the Oroua, this creek is a top spot for filling drink bottles.

The climb out of Cumberfield Creek is the sweatiest part of the trip. In places all four limbs are required, but the tricky bits are only brief. The track remains high above the river and away from the roaring water for around 700m, then drops to Tunupō Creek. You can bypass the section immediately before the creek in favour of the Oroua River if water levels allow.

After climbing for around 20min from Tunupō Creek, the track flattens off with long stretches of easy forest walking. Some four or five hours from the car park you emerge from the goblin forest and descend a few steps to Iron Gate Hut, rebuilt from scratch in 2019 to replace the old NZFS seven-bunker. There's a picnic table, a woodburner and a meat safe for hunters. At 750m you'll need warm clothes, but in summer the swimming holes and waterfall, just outside the hut, will beckon.

There are who here, even close to the hut. The Ruahine Whio Protectors run a trapping programme in the area and it's easy to see the fruits of their labour.

Longer trips can be made from the hut, such as to Triangle Hut in the north, or directly up and east to Otumore (1519m), Pohangina Saddle and Longview Hut.

Wild File

Access Petersons Road, off Table Flat Road

Grade Easy

Time 4-5hr to hut

Distance 8.07km to hut

Total ascent 613m

Accommodation Iron Gate Hut (\$5, 10 bunks)

Map BL36

Elevation



