

McGregor Bivouac via Baldy, Tararua Forest Park

From Holdsworth Campsite, take the easy Atiwhakatu Track to Atiwhakatu Hut. The track is well-groomed and levelled with bridged streams. It's designed for families and is about 1.5 hours on cruise control to the hut, which is an inviting modern shelter beside Atiwhakatu Stream. The hut also marks the junction with the track to Jumbo Hut, which is the more direct route to McGregor Bivouac.

Continue up the valley. The swingbridge over the Atiwhakatu Stream is an hour and several sidles away. This is the least satisfying section of the trip but the track regains purpose at the swingbridge, from where it's a short climb to a junction at Atiwhakatu Saddle.

From here the track swings north-west up Baldy, and it's a good 30min of solid yakka to the bushline. Baldy (1325m) is a superb spot for lunch with expansive views, it's about halfway to McGregor Bivouac.

The views are even more impressive while following the cairns up South King. A sign at the ridge top points to Jumbo Hut.

Next are the Broken Axe Pinnacles – the reason for taking this long route to McGregor Biv. Pick your day for this section as it would be wretched in poor conditions.

Crux is the first – and worst – of the pinnacles. Brave trampers might climb up and over. Alternatively, the sign stating 'Jumbo Hut' designates a narrow sidle around the vertiginous bluff. This can be slippery, as it's on the southeast side of the tors. Allow up to an hour to cross the pinnacles. This is the most technical section of the trip, but it needn't be feared – just take time and tread with care.

Once over the pinnacles it's a quick but steepish scramble up McGregor (1540m), followed by a gentle stroll along the ridge to the bivvy turnoff. Once on the ground trail, McGregor Bivouac soon appears far below. It could be difficult to see in claggy conditions, even though it's painted in Forestry Service orange. Stick to the spur and, when you reach the only tarn, head due north – the bivvy will be just below you.

Campsites are scarce at the two-bunk biv but chances are there's room at the inn. The hut book reveals visits about once a month in winter and slightly more often in summer. It's in good nick, with an outdoor grill, a clothesline and candle holders for each squab.

The best way to leave is over Angle Knob, a shorter route allowing a complete Broken Axe Pinnacles circuit. Allow 6–7hr to the carpark via Jumbo Hut this way, and longer if you choose to visit Powell Hut.

You can also get a head start on this trip by spending a night at Atiwhakatu Hut.

Wild file

Access Mt Holdsworth Road end.

Grade Moderate–difficult

Time Two days. Car park to Atiwhakatu hut, 1.5hr; to McGregor Bivvy via Broken Axe Pinnacles, 7–8hr; to Jumbo Hut, 2–3hr; to carpark, 3–4hr

Distance 28.7km loop

Total ascent 1380m

Accommodation McGregor Bivouac, (basic, 2 bunks), Atiwhakatu Hut (standard, 26 bunks), Jumbo Hut (serviced, 20 bunks)

Topo50 map BP33, BP34

Elevation



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