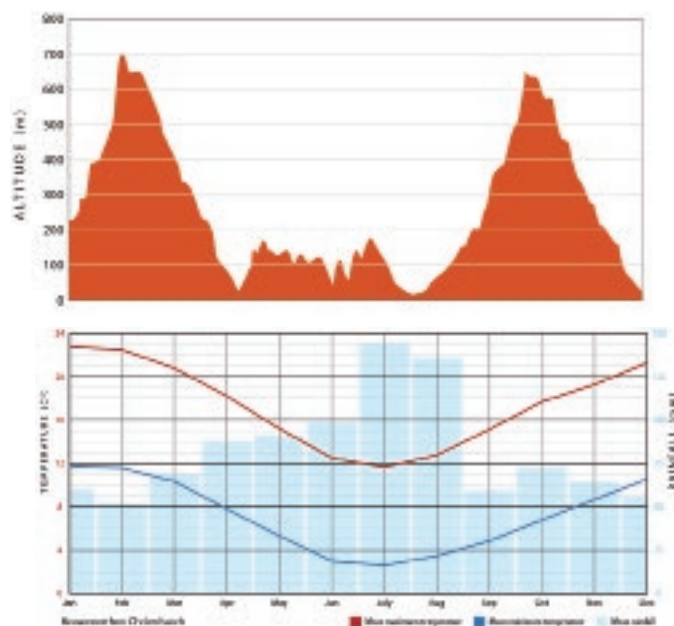


Track Notes: BANKS TRACK - AKAROA NEW ZEALAND



Words: LOUISE REYNOLDS
Photos: ANDREW STEVENSON



QUICK FACTS

Location	Akaroa New Zealand
Activity	Hiking
Total distance	31 km (11km/8km/12km)
Total estimated time	3 days (there is an option to walk the track in two days by combining the first two stages)
Difficulty	Moderate trail is undulating with some steep sections and is well marked and maintained
Date completed	October 2017
Cost or permits	\$NZ 260 (3 days) \$NZ 195 (2 days)

July/August 2018. **WILD**

The Banks Track is a 31-kilometre trail on Banks Peninsula, around 80 kilometres from Christchurch on New Zealand’s South Island. While it may lack the fame of some of New Zealand’s great hiking trails, it is walked by around 2000 people each season. It has the distinction of being New Zealand’s first hiking trail exclusively on private land, passing through farmland and a privately-owned nature reserve that grants access to walkers.

The trail first opened to walkers in 1990. After 27 years in the same format, one of the farms was withdrawn at the end of the 2016-2017 hiking season. A revised three-day route was launched in October 2017 featuring new sections of track opened to walkers for the first time.

The route first crosses the rim of an extinct volcano, often crossing farmland, then skirts around the coast before crossing back over the volcano rim. It’s possible to complete the track over two or three days with the three-day option most popular. The number of walkers is strictly limited to minimise the impact on the landscape and ensure walkers never feel crowded. At any time, a maximum of 12 four-day hikers and six two-day hikers are on the track.

ACCESS

The Banks Track is accessed from Akaroa on Banks Peninsula, around 80 kilometres from Christchurch. Regular shuttle buses operate to and from Christchurch. The drive from Christchurch takes about an hour and a half. Hikers are collected by shuttle bus from Akaroa the afternoon before starting the hike. Pre-walk accommodation at Onuku Trampers Huts is included in the walk fee.

SEASON

The trail is open during hiking season from the start of October through to the end of April.

ACCOMMODATION

There is strictly no camping on the Banks Track. Accommodation on the trail is in basic farmhouse or cabin accommodation at Flea Bay and Stony Bay. You will need to carry or hire a sleeping bag. Each night's accommodation has a kitchen with cooking equipment. At Stony Bay a small honesty shop stocks provisions from fresh fruit and vegetables to meat and even quality New Zealand wines. Walkers need to carry provisions for two or three days and/or cash for honesty shop purchases.

SAFETY

The track is well maintained and signposted. Some of the cliff top sections are quite exposed. It can get windy, so care should be taken when walking near cliff edges. Stay on the marked trails at all times. Trail surfaces may be slippery when wet. Take care not to disturb domestic or wild animals.

ROUTE INFORMATION

The Banks Track is exclusively on private land with walkers given access by registering. You must book and pay a fee in advance to access the trail. Basic route maps are available on the track website. Detailed route information is provided in a booklet about the track received by registered walkers. The booklet also acts as your 'ticket to hike' on the track. Further information on Banks Track is available from www.bankstrack.co.nz

THE WALK

Day 1 Onuku to Flea Bay - 11km

The first leg, if you're doing the three-day hike, is an 11 kilometre trail from Onuku to Flea Bay. It begins with a steady climb over pastureland and offers views of the stunning Akaroa Harbour; the crater of an ancient volcano flooded by the sea. The first point of interest is the ruins of an old dairy and colonial house known as Paradise. From here the trail continues to climb to Trigg GG, the highest point of the track at 699 metres. On a clear day it's possible to spot Mount Cook peeping over the Southern Alps some 230 kilometres away.

After descending through farmland there is a dramatic change in landscape as the track descends for three kilometres through a beautiful beech forest called Tutakakahikura. It's difficult to imagine this near pristine forest is someone's home; it feels like you're in the heart of a national park. Yet the forest is within a 600-hectare sheep and beef farm that has been farmed for generations by the Helps family. The forest has been gifted to New Zealand by the family. A covenant under the Queen Elizabeth II Trust protects adjoining land in perpetuity from ever being developed or cleared. It is a great highlight of the Banks Track.

A huge 400-year-old red beech stands among the thick green ferns. The way is dotted by bridges and waterfalls, including the impressive Flea Bay Waterfall. The first day ends at Flea Bay, a marine reserve supporting mainland New Zealand's largest colony of little penguins. More than 1300 breeding pairs were counted in 2012. Around 300 penguin nesting boxes have been installed on the Helps farm, funded partly by donations from Banks Track walkers.



zs czsdf szdfz ddsdv



s\ f \sd df dfxjfh jdjh dfjhvdjfh jhvf jdg
jxdj g xdjfh vjxdvdfx



New Zealand



Christchurch Akaroa

s\ f \sd df dfxjfh jdjh dfjhvdjfh jhvf jdg
jxdj g xdjfh vjxdvdfx



Day 2 Flea Bay to Stony Bay - 8km

The second section of the track from Flea Bay to Stony Bay is just eight kilometres long but blessed with some incredible coastal scenery. For much its length, the track meanders along exposed cliff tops overlooking dramatic coast. Farmers have thoughtfully placed little signs along the track to prompt walkers to look up and take in the best views. One points out an island nook that's been carved off the mainland by erosion. The sea has worn a hole through the middle of it. In the distance stand the 200-metre high cliffs of Dyke Head.

The track descends from the cliff top to a unique rest stop; a whimsical rock and timber hut built into a rock face. Just metres away, New Zealand fur seals can be spotted lazing in a cave. Shortly after, the track reaches the site of mainland Canterbury's last colony of sooty shearwater birds, also known as mutton birds or Titi, and an impressive feat of engineering put in place to protect them. The colony was brought back from the edge of local extinction when an impenetrable wire mesh fence was installed high on the cliff to keep predators out. Just prior to the end of the stage, an optional short detour to No Albatross Point provides further opportunities to view New Zealand fur seals.

Day 3 Stony Bay to Akaroa - 12km

From Stony Bay the track turns inland, heading west up the Stony Bay Valley. The first 1.5 kilometres of the new Opa-

tuti Track was marked out during winter 2017. It follows a stream through farmland until it meets the boundary of Hinewai Reserve, New Zealand's largest private nature reserve. Many native birds and around 300 species of native plants are known within the reserve, including more than 60 types of fern.

The Banks Track now heads across the south-east corner of the reserve, climbing steadily through regenerating bush and tall beech trees. A lookout over Mamaku Gully provides views of rare Mamaku tree ferns. These are New Zealand's largest tree ferns and can stand up to 10 metres tall. The trail continues to climb steeply (the track gains 690 metres in altitude from Stony Bay) until it reaches a new hut on the pleasantly flat Tara Track on the crater rim. From here you can see right back over the valley to the day's starting point at Stony Bay and the surrounding peaks. The trail doesn't remain flat for long, soon plunging downhill on its return to Akaroa, descending via the publicly accessible Purple Peak Track and adjoining the Purple Peak Curry Reserve. Finally, walkers make their way back into Akaroa following public paths and roadways. **W**

CONTRIBUTOR

Cazs zsOximover icionve rcemus vit. Sin se que temoris ulicam.Et reconsum serdius nem des auconsum ego tus signatuit; Cupero perbis vertem in vilium condi patilicum unc ommo verfectur adeo nit. Viverferi,



s\ f \sd df dfxjfh jdjh dfjhvdjfh jhvf jdg
jxdj g xdjfh vjxdvdfx