

Your safety is your responsibility

Know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 simple rules to help you stay safe:

1. Plan your trip
2. Tell someone
3. Be aware of the weather
4. Know your limits
5. Take sufficient supplies.

Leave your trip details with a trusted contact. For more information see www.mountainsafety.org.nz



AVALANCHE WARNING

The Rock and Pillar Conservation Area is very exposed. Winter conditions can occur at any time and snow is likely, especially during winter. The terrain's avalanche classification is 'simple' at the northern end and on the tops, and 'complex' on the eastern faces. Seek avalanche information at www.avalanche.net.nz if you plan to be in this area in winter or spring.



Mobile phone coverage is not reliable in the conservation area. Satellite phones, mountain radios and personal locator beacons are recommended.



Fires are not permitted.



No unauthorised drones.

Visit www.adventuresmart.co.nz for more information.

Dogs

Dogs are permitted in the conservation area, but not on adjoining private property or access tracks on private property. Be aware of the conservation boundary where it borders private land. Dogs are not permitted on the Sutton Salt Lake Track.

Further information:

Dunedin Visitor Centre

50 The Octagon
PO Box 5244
Dunedin 9058

PHONE: 03 474 3300

EMAIL: dunedinvc@doc.govt.nz

Kā Moana Haehae/Alexandra

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www.doc.govt.nz

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Back: *Anaphalioides bellidioides*. *Photo: J. Barkla*

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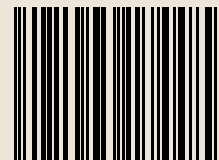
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New Zealand Government

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or conservation emergencies
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111



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OTAGO

Tracks in the Rock and Pillar Conservation Area

A beautiful mountain escape
just one hour from Dunedin

 Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

The Rock and Pillar Range is one of Otago's most distinctive upland features. This flat summit ridge is dominated by distinctive schist tors and rock pillars. The public conservation land lies 1,000 m above the plains and climbs through tussock, subalpine shrublands and snow tussock, providing breathtaking views.

Highlights

- Explore and walk through the snow tussock and rock tors.
- Stay overnight in a character hut and enjoy spectacular sunsets.
- See the kārearea/ New Zealand falcon glide in the updraught.

Photo: J. Barkla



Geology and natural history

Formed over the last 3 million years, the 'Rock and Pillars' are a series of folds (steep ranges rolling onwards like an ocean swell), the result of deep local faulting.

Some blocks of schist rock remain long after the surrounding rock has eroded away. These 'tors' are a feature of the bleak and windswept ridges. Freeze and thaw cycles make it difficult for plants to grow and have left wave-like ridge patterns in the soil.

A lens-shaped cloud formation, known locally as the 'Taieri Pet', is seen regularly during north-west winds.

Plants

Above 900 m the plants most commonly seen are the blue tussock (*Poa colensoi*) and the aromatic daisy *Celmisia viscosa*, along with low herbs, cushion plants and hebe shrublands. As the snowbanks recede in late spring, the first flowers emerge; peak flowering time for high-altitude plants is mid-January to mid-February. Look out for the endemic daisy *Celmisia haastii* var. *tomentosa*, among native grasses and speargrass (*Aciphylla* sp.) on the upper flanks. Lower down, snow tussock (*Chionochloa rigida*) mixes with shrubs and native herbs.

The wetlands and tarns host mosses, cushion plants, herbs and sedges. A small stand of tōtara at the range's northern end is a remnant of ancient forests of the lower slopes. There are also fuchsia (*Fuchsia perscandens*), native ferns and harakeke/mountain flax scattered in gullies.

Animals

The height of invertebrate activity coincides with late summer flowering when, in good weather, geometrid moths flit about feeding on nectar. The tarns and bogs also support numerous life forms, most notably diurnal stoneflies and caddis flies.

The mountain stone wētā (*Hemideina Māori*), 65 mm long, is unique to Otago. It can survive months of extreme conditions due to the antifreeze properties of its blood.

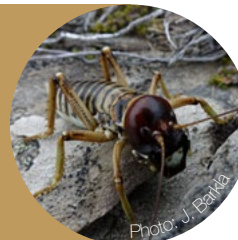


Photo: J. Barkla

On the cushionfields you might see a flightless chafer beetle (*Prodontria montis*) unique to this area. Another beetle (*Megadromus bullatus*) is easily recognised by its size and greenish metallic sheen. It has been found as high as 1,100 m.

You will also see plenty of birds. South Island pied oystercatcher/tōrea, banded dotterel/tūturiwhatu and black-backed gull/karoro frequent the area. The Australasian harrier/kāhu and New Zealand falcon/kārearea can be seen gliding in the updraughts in search of prey.

On sunny days you might see skinks basking on the schist outcrops.

History

Patearoa is the Māori name for the Rock and Pillar Range. Many taoka/artefacts typical of the Waitaha, Kāti Mamoe and Kāi Tahu iwi have been found, indicating their long and continuing relationship with the area.

The Strath Taieri area was a mahika kai – a place to gather and hunt food. The people of this harsh landscape made use of natural resources such as harakeke/flax and tī kōuka/cabbage tree: the stems and roots of tī kōuka were cooked and eaten, and the leaves of both plants were made into pāraerae/sandals that protected feet against the rough terrain.

The area was also rich in other resources. Māori valued plant species like the taramea/wild Spaniard, tikumu/mountain daisy, and tauhinu/cottonwood; and silcrete rock, used for large knives, was quarried throughout the Strath Taieri and Maniototo. These knives were probably used in moa and seal butchery, and have been found in many historic sites throughout southern New Zealand.

European pastoralists arrived in the mid-1800s, followed by gold prospectors and miners. The Otago Central Railway served this district from the late 1880s until 1990. In 2000, the rail corridor became the Otago Central Rail Trail, a popular multi-day cycle trail.

Visit www.doc.govt.nz or www.otagocentralrailtrail.co.nz for more information.

Hunting

You need permits to hunt in the conservation area. The Western Rock and Pillar area requires a 'restricted' permit, available from DOC's Alexandra Office. Open permits (for the main Rock and Pillar Conservation Area) are available online; for these and for more information, visit www.doc.govt.nz/hunting



Photo: J. Barkla

1 Rockvale Track

2 hr 15 min, 5 km to conservation area boundary
4-6 hr, 15 km from conservation area boundary to Rock and Pillar Ridge Road junction via Rock and Pillar Range North Track

The car park is signposted on SH87, about 22 km north of Middlemarch. To reach the marked track, turn left at the second stile and follow the markers to the conservation boundary.

2 Last Creek Track

1 hr - 1 hr 30 min, 3 km to conservation area boundary

At the intersection of SH87 and Ngapuna Road, follow the Otago Central Rail Trail north for 200 m before reaching the beginning of the track. Follow the markers that begin on the fence line.

3 Kinvara Road

3 hr, 10 km to summit (on foot)
1 hr 30 min, 6 km to conservation area boundary

Kinvara Road climbs up to the ridge top where it joins with the Rock and Pillar Ridge Road and the Rock and Pillar North Track. Access and parking are at Kilmory Station, just south of Lug Creek.

Vehicles must keep to the road to preserve the environment.

Seasonal restrictions: This road passes through a deer farm. Newborn deer are present from mid-November to mid-December, and hinds may pose a danger at this time - use alternative access to the Rock and Pillar Conservation Area.

4 Glencreag Track

45 min, 1 km from car park to conservation area boundary
2-3 hr, 5 km from car park to Big Hut

This track is signposted from SH87 (Wandle Road). The access road (a 4WD road through private property) begins near the junction with McKinnon Road. From the car park, walk the marked track to the conservation boundary. A marked track continues from here to Big Hut. It is a 1,000 m climb - do not attempt it in winter without alpine equipment and experience.

5 March Creek Track

1 hr 30 min, 3.7 km to conservation area boundary

Access is from McKinnon Road near March Creek. Cross the stile and follow the markers to the conservation area boundary.

6 Brookdale Track

1 hr 30 min, 4.3 km to conservation area boundary

The car park and track are reached through a farm gate by turning left at the end of Rock Road. Follow the marked track along the fence line to the conservation area boundary.

7 Stonehurst Track

2 hr, 5.7 km to conservation area boundary
4 hr, 13 km to Old Dunstan Road

Parking is near the southern end of Gladbrook Road. Follow the marked track via a farm road to the conservation boundary, or access from Old Dunstan Road at a stile next to the Loganburn reservoir.

Entry from Gladbrook Road is closed for lambing 1 September - 31 October.

8 Sutton Salt Lake Scenic Reserve Walking Track

1 hr, 3.5 km loop

Sutton Salt Lake is New Zealand's only inland salt lake. It has no outlet, so the lake has concentrated the salts from surrounding soils.

Getting there: Go south from Middlemarch about 9 km along SH87, then 2.5 km along the unsealed Kidds Road.

9 Rock and Pillar Ridge Road

2.5 km to McPhees Rock, 3 km to conservation area boundary
13 km Old Dunstan Road to Summit Rock
3.5 hr, 12 km Old Dunstan Road to Big Hut
15.3 km Old Dunstan Road to SH 87 to Kinvara Road junction

A 4WD road 300 m north of McPhees Creek ford on Old Dunstan Road leads to McPhees Rock and on to the summit. The road to the conservation boundary crosses private land, so respect the landowner's property. Mountain bike and 4WD enthusiasts could consider the 25 km day trip from old Dunstan Road to Kinvara car park via McPhees and Summit rocks.

Vehicles and mountain bikers must keep to the road to preserve the environment. Old Dunstan Road is only open to vehicles 1 October - 31 May.



10 Western Rock and Pillar Conservation Area

2.5 km to conservation area boundary

Steep, rolling tussockland with views of the Maniototo Plain. Access is from the car park south of Waipiata, via Orangapai Road and Hamilton Diggings Road.

Note:

- To access by 4WD or horse, you need the combination for the locks on the gates at either end of the road, available from the Kā Moana Haehae/Alexandra DOC Office.
- This track is open to vehicles 1 November - 30 April. There is NO public access from the Western Rock and Pillar Conservation Area to the main Rock and Pillar Conservation Area.

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
Check before you light a fire - a ban may be in place
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



Huts

Big Hut (16 bunks)

Big Hut is owned and maintained by the Rock and Pillar Hut Trust. The hut has solar lighting, a large common room and table tennis facilities, but no heating. Trampers need to bring their own cookers and utensils.

Fees (per night)

Adult: \$12
Child: \$7 (up to 12 yr)
Pay fees at the hut.

Book in advance by emailing kate@strathburn.co.nz or text **0274438134**.

For more information about payment for Big Hut and its history see www.middlemarch.nz/big_hut



Photo: J. Barkla

Leaning Lodge Hut (currently unavailable for use)

Contact the Otago Tramping and Mountaineering Club for updates: otmc@ihug.co.nz

www.otmc.co.nz/committee.html