

# Mt Aicken Route Guide

**TRACK GRADE: Tramping Track & Unmarked Route**

**WALKING TIME: 6 to 8 hours return**

**SKILLS REQUIRED: You must have good navigation skills to be able to attempt this mountain successfully.**

**FEATURES: Steep climb, alpine tops, great views**

Follow the Punchbowl Falls walking track for about 15 minutes. The turn off to Mt Aicken is found at the highest point on the Punchbowl Track (not signposted). The track climbs rapidly passing an old pipeline that once fed a hydroelectric generator plant used during the rail tunnel construction. The track then climbs steeply, being well marked at this point, but shortly opens onto the first of several boggy clearings where some stone cairns mark the way back into the forest above. Take note at this point of the cliff line into the Punchbowl Falls area that the track traverses up and where the track leaves the cliff for your return journey. A small easily climbed 3 metre rock step is encountered in the next section of forest. The track skirts out onto a small cliff with some further steep scrambles overlooking the village then ascends to a short scree gully beside a bluff to arrive at treeline. **DENSE TRACK MARKING STOPS AT THIS POINT.** It is very important you remember this location and the route onwards for your return journey, **IT IS** the only way off this mountain!



The route then climbs easily the sparsely tussocked cliff edge of the Punchbowl Creek escarpment with strategic snow-pole markers every 300 metres or so. The tussock line is reached at about 1600m, with the ridge becoming very rocky. It then climbs up a short scree slope onto a step. From here the route climbs up a steep gully (exposed to Punchbowl Creek) onto a very small saddle on a ridge sweeping down southwards, **THIS IS WHERE TRACK MARKING STOPS** (Snow-Pole in Saddle, and Orange Triangles bolted to rocks below). Keeping Punchbowl Creek on your left side continue to follow this ridge, the initial section is jagged and narrow (care is required in icy or windy conditions) but soon relents into easily followed ridgeline. The prominent 1844m high point is soon reached with its jagged spur dropping off southwards. Continue to keep the Punchbowl Falls Creek on your left and follow the broadening ridge onto the 1863m high point. The actual summit of Mt Aicken (1858m) is along a loose craggy ridge to the southeast, it is rarely climbed and can be dangerous in strong winds or icy conditions.

On your return journey it is important to keep Punchbowl Creek on your **RIGHT** (north) side. Should you leave the ridge for any reason make sure you regain it again, it is important to note that from the correct route you can always look down the very steep escarpment into Punchbowl Creek.

Common navigation problems include...

- Dropping into the scree basin from the 1844m point, either regaining the southern ridge and following it or continuing down easy ground - both lead to the extremely dangerous Graham Creek area - you must retrace your steps northwards.
- A very common practice is to follow the correct ridge, but continue along the ridge southwards, therefore avoiding the steep gully climb from the lower route, this is OK as long as you descend the earliest scree towards the tussocks then travel immediately northwards again to rejoin the route on the edge of the steep Punchbowl escarpment.
- Another very common problem is for walkers to descend towards the obvious trig station (large man made marker) seen from the bluff at treeline, avoid this as no track leads to or away from it, the track is northwards from this bluff.