

# Craigieburn Forest Park

## Day walks

CANTERBURY



Craigieburn Forest Park extends from the Waimakariri River to the Wilberforce River—with braided rivers, beech valleys, tussock grasslands, alpine scree and rugged mountain peaks over 2000 metres high.

It is a place of extremes with the sheltered valleys and lower slopes clothed almost entirely in mountain beech, whilst forces of erosion have crumbled the mountain tops to create Craigieburn's characteristic rock scree.

There are tracks and huts throughout the park but all the best day walks are centred in a small corner close to the Great Alpine Highway (SH 73). Amenities here include picnic sites, a shelter, camping areas and the Environmental Education Centre.

Two ski field roads give 4WD and mountain-bike access to the upper valley basins.

There's something here to suit either a family outing, a day walker or a fit tramp, with walks ranging from short nature trails to alpine full day-tramps.

### Access

About 110 km from Christchurch on the Great Alpine Highway (SH 73) towards Arthur's Pass, is a signposted side road to the Craigieburn Picnic Area on the Broken River ski field road. Access to Craigieburn Valley is another one km further along the highway. Both ski field roads have locked gates further up valley during the summer.

### Plants and animals



The forest is mostly mountain beech/ tawhairauriki, which has easy-to-identify small leaves that end in a point, like a 'peak'. It is thought that millions of years ago, much of the forest that covered the ancient landmass of Gondwanaland looked like the forest of Craigieburn. Fossils of beech trees have been found in Antarctica and descendants survive in Chile, Australia and New Guinea.

Above the bush line there is alpine scrub and tussock grassland. Scree plants are sparse but well suited to an incredibly harsh environment of bright light, temperature extremes, moving shingle and drying winds.

During summer you might find skinks (a 'snake-like' lizard) on the mountainside, plus the occasional spider, scree

wētā, armour-plated grasshopper, black scree butterfly, kea and the scarce New Zealand falcon/kārearea.

### Kea

Visitors to the park might see these naturally inquisitive birds. They are the world's only alpine parrot.



**Please do not feed kea**, but let them look for their natural foods (berries, roots, shoots and insect larvae). Feeding attracts kea to areas of human use, such as car parks, picnic and camping areas, where they may damage cars, tents and personal gear. Remember, kea are fully protected.

### Wilding pines

Old experimental pine-tree plots are a feature on the lower slopes around Craigieburn. Pine seedlings—wildings—from the now abandoned trials, are spreading through Craigieburn Forest Park, surrounding farmland and as far as Korowai/Torlesse Tussocklands Park. Wilding pines are a significant threat to our native biodiversity and high country landscapes.

You can help control their spread; if you see any pine seedlings on your walks, pull them out!

### Safety is your responsibility

- Craigieburn is usually hot and dry in summer, with snowfalls common in winter. Be prepared for sudden weather changes in all seasons, especially on routes above the bush line. Check the latest weather forecast before you leave either through MetPhone (0900 999 03) or by calling the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre on (03) 318 9211.
- Tell someone of your intended route and expected time out. You can also leave an intentions card at the Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre.
- Beware of avalanche hazards in winter. Tracks and routes subject to avalanches are marked on this brochure. For the latest information refer website: [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz)
- There is an emergency phone at Castle Hill Village—approximately 10 km from Craigieburn picnic area on SH 73 towards Christchurch.



## Dogs



Dogs are allowed in the front faces of the forest park but must be kept on a leash at all times. Keep to the tracks and marked routes at all times as ground-feeding birds are very vulnerable to dog disturbance. **Please clean up after your dog.**

## Fires

No fires are permitted within Craigieburn Forest Park.



## Forest drives and picnic areas

Both Broken River and Craigieburn Valley ski field roads are short, interesting drives in summer. Both are unsealed, narrow and winding—keep a watch out for mountain-bikers.

There is an attractive picnic area beside Cave Stream on Broken River ski field road, just off the Great Alpine Highway (SH 73). Known as Craigieburn picnic area, this sunny sheltered spot has an open shelter, picnic tables, information signs and grass river terraces for camping.

From the shelter there is a circuit road that passes Jacks Pass and the Environmental Education Centre and continues onto the lookout car park on the saddle. This car park is the starting point for two short walks.

## Mountain biking

Mountain bikes are permitted on the ski field roads and most of the tracks. Please be considerate of other users on these tracks.



## Tracks

Choose the type of track that most suits the skills and abilities of your party. You must be well prepared with suitable clothing and equipment for all weather and conditions. **Safety is your responsibility.**



**Short walk**—Easy walking for up to an hour  
Track is well formed with even surface  
Suitable for people of most abilities and fitness  
Stream and river crossings are bridged  
Walking shoes required



**Walking track**—Easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day  
Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy  
Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities  
Clearly signposted. Stream and river crossings bridged  
Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required



**Intermediate**—Steep slopes and/or avoidable obstacles possibly on narrow track and/or with poor traction. There may be exposure at track's outside edge.



**Advanced**—A mixture of long, steep climbs, narrow track, poor traction and obstacles that are difficult to avoid or jump over. Generally exposed at the track's outside edge. Most riders will find some sections easier to walk.

## Short walks

### Nature Trail

Walking time 20 minutes return, 400 m

This pleasant walk through mountain-beech forest begins at the Environmental Education Centre. You can have a close look at different stages of beech tree life and what grows on the trees—lichens, mosses and a small insect which secretes honey dew (a small droplet of sweet liquid that birds feed on). Between late December to February the red flowers of native mistletoe/pikirangi can produce patches of blazing colour in the tree canopy. Common native forest birds living in this area include rifleman/titipounamu, bellbird/korimako, tomtit/miromiro and grey warbler/riroriro.



## Walking tracks & mountain-bike rides

### Hut Creek Walk

Walking time 1 hour return, 1.2 km

This walk begins from the Environmental Education Centre and ends by the lookout car park. It passes through an area that was used for trial planting by the Forest Research Institute from 1956 to the mid 1970s. Return to the car park by walking back along the road.

### Bridge Hill Track

Walking time 10 minutes one way, 400 m

From the lookout car park follow the track to the summit. From Bridge Hill there are panoramic views of Castle Hill Basin and Torlesse Range in the east; look for the distinctive Torlesse Gap 'notch' in the ridge. The Craigieburn Range in the west rises to a high point of 2194 m at Mount Enys.

### Dracophyllum Flat Track



Walking time 45 minutes one way, 1840m

A popular picnic site, this sheltered clearing is covered by red-brown *Dracophyllum*, native tussock and a host of small herbs and ground-cover plants. The track leaves Jacks Pass and gradually descends to Broken River, which is crossed on a pole bridge. The clearing is five minutes up through mountain beech.

### Lyndon Saddle

From Craigieburn picnic area to Lyndon Saddle—1 hour 30 minutes one way, 2.3 km

Beginning by the shelter at Craigieburn picnic area, the track crosses Cave Stream and grassy terraces before sidling steeply through regenerating mountain-beech forest to Lyndon Saddle.

### Helicopter Hill

From Lyndon Saddle to Helicopter Hill summit—30 minutes one way, 500 m

From Lyndon Saddle the track climbs along a steep ridge with open screes between the beech forests. The top of Helicopter Hill (1256 m) is covered with tussock, low hebes and grasses. From here there are spectacular views of the Craigieburn and Torlesse ranges, and the limestone landscape of Castle Hill Basin.

You will also pass patches of felled pine trees that are



gradually being cleared from the hill, as this is a major take-off site for wind-blown pine seeds to be dispersed across the Castle Hill Basin. Please help by pulling out any pine seedlings you come across.

### Lyndon Saddle to Broken River ski field road

1 hour 30 minutes one way, 2.7 km


From Lyndon Saddle, this track leads down through low glacial terraces with some tall attractive beech forest to reach the Broken River ski field road. From here it is a 20 minute walk down the road next to the meandering Cave Stream to the Craigieburn picnic area.

### Lyndon Saddle to Craigieburn Valley Track

15 minutes one way, 625 m

From Lyndon Saddle the track sidles across open *Dracophyllum* and tussock-covered faces and drops through beech forest to the Craigieburn Valley Track. Here you can either turn left towards Craigieburn Valley ski field, or right to reach the start of the Craigieburn Valley ski field road, (15–20 minutes).

### Craigieburn Valley Track


 *Be aware of avalanches*

From junction on Craigieburn Valley ski field road to ski field huts 1–2 hours, 4.5 km

Circuit return via ski field road 2–3 hours

The track begins beside the Craigieburn Valley ski field road, 1.5 km from the highway and follows through mountain-beech forest until it emerges in alpine tussocks near the ski field huts and car park. From 1948, until the road was built in 1961, this was the only access to the ski field. All the materials for the early huts and ski tows were carried by club members up this track.

### Broken River ski field road to Camp Saddle

 *Be aware of avalanches*

1–2 hours one way, 2.5 km

From the locked gate and car park on the Broken River ski field road, walk 1 km to the signposted track (opposite the ski club tractor shed). An old four-wheel-drive track narrows as it steadily climbs through beech forest. The track then comes out into open tussocks; poles mark the route to Camp Saddle.

Apart from magnificent views, this tussock and scree

saddle offers many interesting botanical specimens. Growing among the rocks are tiny plants that have adapted to the harsh environment—including *Celmisia*, gentians and edelweiss.

From Camp Saddle it is possible to join Craigieburn Valley Track by descending the scree slope for 15–20 minutes (unmarked route and not suitable for mountain biking).

## Ski field basins

During the summer months there is walking access up to the ski field basins of Broken River and Craigieburn Valley. These areas are harsh and alpine and should be treated with respect. Beyond the bush line there are no marked routes. Take a topographic map and adequate clothing for all extremes of weather.

Fit trampers will be able to gain access up onto the main ridge and rocky peaks, which give superb views of the backcountry from Arthur's Pass to Aoraki/Mt Cook. Less fit walkers will enjoy the lower bush and tussock slopes. All buildings are private ski field property and should not be entered.

### Broken River ski field

Walking time: locked gate to huts 2–3 hours return

From the locked gate you can walk up the ski field road all the way to the accommodation huts and up to the rope tows. There is also a bush track beside the inclinators (goods lift), which zig zags directly up to the huts. A pleasant return can be made down the vehicle road.

Tramping time: ski field to main ridge 4–5 hours return

From Broken River ski field huts there is a vehicle track that sidles up to the tussock basin. There are obvious routes up onto the main ridge and onto Nervous Knob. There are superb views down into the Hamilton and Harper catchments and on a fine day you can see forever . . . well to Aoraki/Mt Cook anyway.

### Craigieburn Valley ski field

Tramping time: 5–6 hours return to main ridge

From the locked gate it is an easy walk up the road to the lower Craigieburn ski field huts (about 30 minutes).

The access road continues up the steep valley and fit trampers can reach the 1922 metre Hamilton Peak.

It is possible to traverse the ridge to Nervous Knob and down into the Broken River ski field basin, but this is for experienced trampers and climbers only. You must arrange transport to make this crossing.

## Skiing

Three ski clubs operate fields within the park—Broken River, Craigieburn Valley and Cheeseman. Visitors are very welcome during the winter months. The roads can get snowed under and cars should be equipped with chains.

## Further information

For maps, weather information and informative displays:

Arthur's Pass Visitor Centre

Main Road, Arthur's Pass

Phone 03 318 9211

8.00 am to 5.00 pm (summer), 8.30 am to 4.30 pm (winter)

[arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:arthurspassvc@doc.govt.nz)

Waimakariri Area Office

32 River Road, Rangiora

Phone 03 313 0820

Weekdays 8.00 am to 5.00 pm

[waimakariri@doc.govt.nz](mailto:waimakariri@doc.govt.nz)

Map—topographical map series 260: K34 Wilberforce

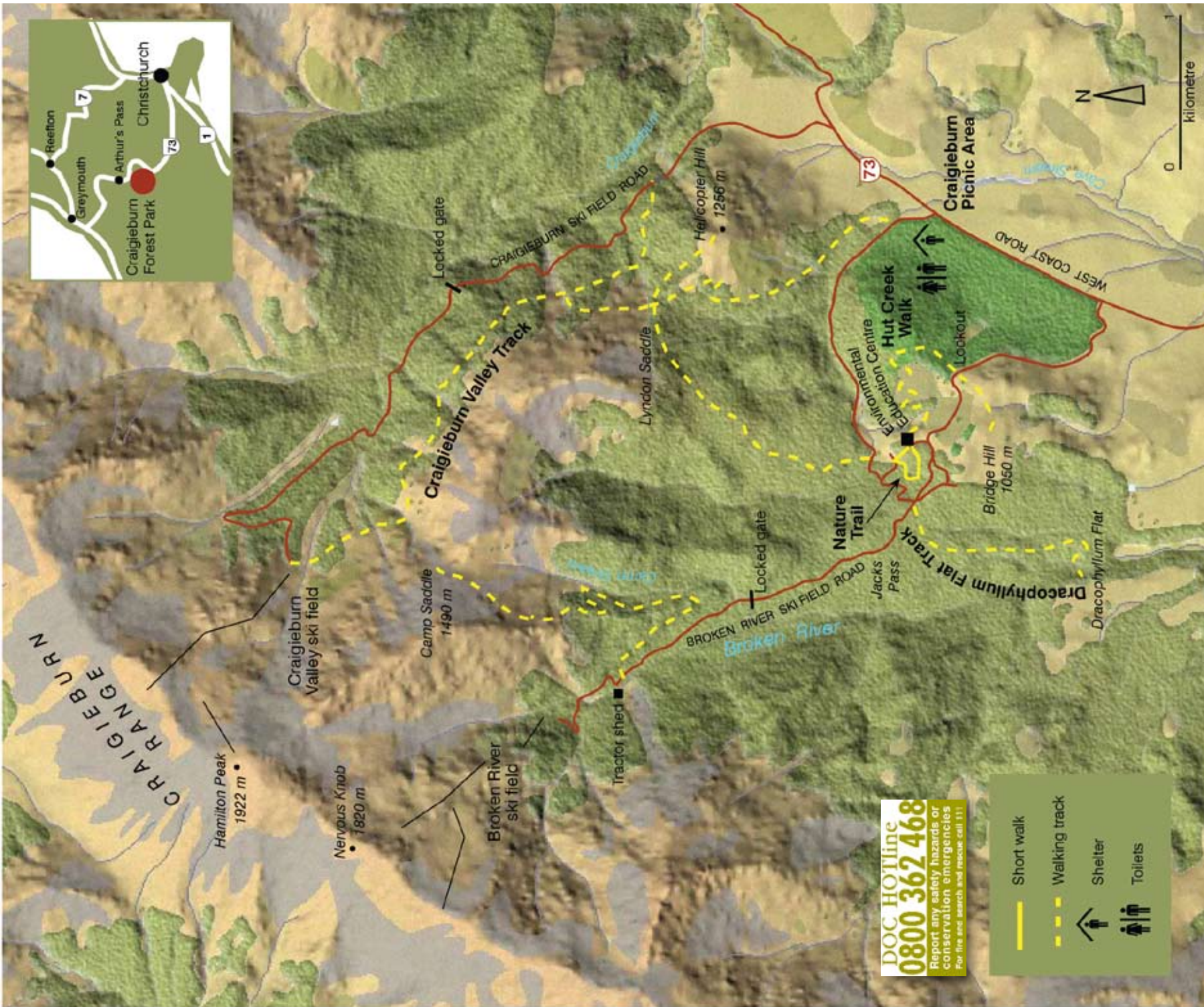
## Canterbury Environmental Trust – Experience the Magic!

The Environmental Education Centre of New Zealand at Craigieburn Forest Park offer:

- A diverse environment
- Environmental resources
- Comfortable accommodation
- Laboratory facilities

To experience the magic contact:  
[www.enved.org.nz](http://www.enved.org.nz)





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**0800 362 468**  
 Report any safety hazards or  
 conservation emergencies  
 For fire and search and rescue call 111

— Short walk  
 - - - Walking track  
 Shelter  
 Toilets



- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste
- Keep streams and lakes clean
- Take care with fires
- Camp carefully
- Keep to the track
- Consider others
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Enjoy your visit
- Toitu te whenua (Leave the land undisturbed)

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Background model: Geographix