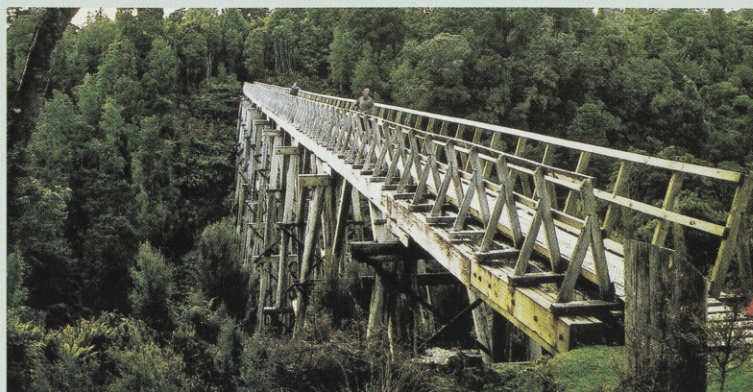


# Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track Aspires to 'Great Walk' Status

Local enterprise, assisted by the Government, is behind the development of a new long walk in Southland. The Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track is a three-day/two-night walk which aspires to the status of other tourist 'great walks'.

The 53-kilometre walk begins and ends at Bluecliffs Beach, Te Waewae Bay, which is about 20 minutes drive from Tuatapere. It traverses the Hump Ridge area, on the southeastern edge of Fiordland National Park, following a new 23-kilometre trail, before returning along 30 kilometres of the existing South Coast Track. In places it also crosses the Rowallan Maori lands.

The spectacular nature of the walk includes the richly forested Waitutu marine terraces, and podocarp and beech forests which rise to the subalpine zone with spectacular sandstone outcrops and mountain tarns. Wildlife to be seen en route



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Percyburn Viaduct, one of three restored from the timber milling days of Port Craig.

includes kea, kaka, yellow-crowned parakeet, fur seals, and Hector's dolphin in the surf along the coastal leg.

Trampers spend the first night (after a nine-hour uphill walk of 18 kilometres) at the purpose-built Okaka Hut, just below Hump Ridge, at around 900 metres. A summit-loop boardwalk offers even more spectacular viewpoints.

The second (seven-hour) day descends the southern end of Hump Ridge to sea-level again, through the Waitutu Forest,

then joins the South Coast Track, for a total of 18 kilometres. In part, it follows an old logging track, crossing immense, restored wooden viaducts, and ending the day's walk at the timber ghost town of Port Craig. A new 'village' here accommodates walkers on the track.

The third day returns along the coast to the beginning again, a 17-kilometre walk of six to seven hours.

Overall the track rating is 'moderate'. The tramping



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The return journey includes a section of the South Coast Track.

instructions, however, recommend starting before 8am each day, carrying full wet-weather gear, and being fit enough to handle rough, uneven surfaces, climbing and descending for up to 18 kilometres a day. Unpredictable wind, rain and snow are possible year round.

The Hump Ridge Track is run by a local trust in Tuatapere, set up to develop tourism after the withdrawal of the old Forest Service from the area. The development budget of \$2.8 million has produced two large lodges (costing \$40 a night), and the new tracks which include six kilometres of board walk. Besides Government and local funding, volunteers have contributed in excess of 20,000 hours to the project.

Contact: Tuatapere Hump Ridge Track, PO Box 21, Tuatapere, Southland.



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Boardwalking just above the Okaka Hut. Part of the roof of the new lodge is visible beyond.



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