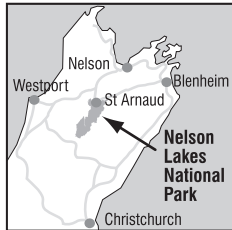


South Marlborough



Rainbow Road and the Upper Wairau Valley



Locality

Introduction

The Rainbow Road is a 'wilderness driving' experience across private land between St Arnaud and Hanmer Springs. It is remarkable for the transition from craggy, beech-covered mountains to flowing tussock lands, where vast screes spill from ridge crest to valley floor in a lonely landscape.

Passes in the Upper Wairau Valley were part of overland routes used by Maori. Later, high country graziers moving mobs of sheep between Canterbury and Nelson/Marlborough built a chain of cob houses. The road was built in the 1950s when the electricity pylons were built through this area to supply electricity to the Nelson and Buller regions.

How to get there

St Arnaud is the main gateway to the Upper Wairau Valley, 85km from Nelson or 131 km from Picton via Blenheim. Access is also possible from Hanmer Springs, 134km north of Christchurch.

Accommodation

Along the Rainbow Road a campsite is provided on private land at Coldwater Creek, with toilets and a water supply. Island Gully Hut (4 bunks) and Connors Creek Hut (6 bunks) are within easy walking distance of the road.

In the back country, huts provide a base for hunters and climbers, and stopping points for trampers. Please purchase Back Country Hut Tickets before your trip.

The Rainbow Road

The Rainbow Road connects St Arnaud to Hanmer Springs via Rainbow and Molesworth Stations. Rainbow Station is leasehold land and access is with the consent of the station owner. The road is open between 28 December and 1 April each year. A \$25 toll per vehicle (\$15 motorbikes, gold coin for mountain bikes) is collected at the Old Rainbow Homestead. A return trip costs \$50. Outside the open period there are locked gates just beyond Rainbow Ski Area turn-off and just before Coldwater Creek campsite (heading south). Please call Star Holdings Ltd phone (03) 545 7600 to arrange access through the station to 4WD, tramp, hunt, fish or mountain bike outside the open period.

For your safety we advise that the Rainbow Road is a wilderness driving experience. Drivers need to be self-sufficient and prepared for sudden changes in weather. You drive at your own risk. The road is only suitable for high-clearance 4WD vehicles; there is no cell phone coverage, and breakdown services may not operate on the private road. Unseasonal snows, slips or elevated fire risk may close the road without notice. The 112km journey takes at least three hours. The guide below starts at St Arnaud, distances in brackets are for the reverse journey.

St Arnaud, 0km (112km)

This is the front door of Nelson Lakes National Park. A network of short walks allows exploration of the glacial landforms, forests and mountains around Lake Rotoiti. There is also a general store which sells petrol and diesel, and a range of accommodation.

Rainbow Road turn-off, 9km (103km)

Rainbow Station turn-off, 12km (100km)

A short side road leads to the homestead where hunting permission can be obtained. Please leave the gates as you find them.

Rainbow Ski Area turn-off, 26km (86km)

Old Rainbow Homestead toll gate, 36km (76km)

Coldwater Creek camping area, 46km (66km)

Beyond the toll gate the Rainbow experience really begins. The road fords several streams, crosses the Wairau on a bridge and then enters Hell's Gate, a narrow gorge. Coldwater Creek is just above the gorge.

Lake Sedgemere, 57km (55km)

Soon after Coldwater Creek the road crosses the Wairau and arrives at the boundary between Rainbow and Molesworth stations. The road enters that classic South Island landscape of rounded, tawny-coloured hills, scrawny matagouri, long screes and azure skies. The road re-crosses the Wairau River and a short side-road leads to Sedgemere Sleepout (basic hut, 6 bunks). From the car park is a route to a viewpoint over several beautiful lakes supporting fragile wetland communities.

Some of the place names here—Turk Ridge, Mt Balaclava, Crimea Range—date the area's European exploration to the Crimean war in the 1850s.

Island Saddle, 68km (44km)

At 1347 metres above sea level, this is the highest point on the Rainbow Road. It is also the watershed between the Wairau and Clarence rivers, and a boundary between Marlborough and Canterbury.

Lake Tennyson, 73km (39km)

This scenic gem was formed behind a glacier-deposited dam of rubble. The lake shore is a lovely place for a picnic. To the west is Mt Una (2301 m), highest point in the Spenser Range. Many of the peaks in this range are named after women, all characters in Edmund Spenser's classic 17th century poem "The Fairie Queene". It is 1.5km from the road to the lake.

Molesworth turn-off, 104km (8km)

The Molesworth Experience, a 191 km drive from Hanmer to Blenheim leaves the Rainbow Road here. The road is open between 28 December and 1 April each year. There is a separate DOC brochure available for this area.

Hanmer Springs (via Jacks Pass Road), 112km (0km)

This resort town, famed for its hot springs, has all the facilities travellers will need: accommodation, eating places, information, fuel and activities.

In the back country

For the experienced back country traveller, options for trips in the upper Wairau are only limited by imagination! Good fitness and self reliance are required as there are few bridges or tracks; most travel is along marked or unmarked routes.

Rainbow Ski Area (Six Mile Creek basin)

Outside of the ski season, the 8km skifield road is closed for vehicle access, but open for walking. Alpine flowers, tarns and views are the summer attractions. A ridge traverse to St Arnaud via Parachute Rocks will take 5–7 hours.

Lees Creek

Cross the Wairau River by swingbridge and follow a marked route into Lees Creek. The narrow valley gives no hint of the beautiful open flats further upstream where Lees Creek Hut (4 bunks) sits. High passes allow for trips over the Raglan Range. The road toll for Lees Creek access is half the full cost.

Hamilton River

A marked route starts 100m past the road bridge over the Hamilton River, reaching the bush edge in about



- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste
- Keep streams and lakes clean
- Take care with fire
- 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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New Zealand Government



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Walking times from the road:

| | |
|--------------------|----------|
| Rainbow Ski Area | 2h |
| Lees Creek Hut | 3h 30min |
| Connor's Creek Hut | 20min |
| Rainbow Hut | 2h 30min |
| Paske Hut | 6h |
| Begley Hut | 6h |
| Tarndale Lakes | 30min |
| Island Gully Hut | 5min |

1 hour 30 minutes. The eastern pass gives the quickest route to Begley Hut (8 bunks).

Connors Creek

Connors Creek Hut (6 bunks) is about 1 km from the Rainbow Road at the end of a 4WD track. A marked route climbs steadily to the bushline in about 3 hours. A saddle above leads over to Begley Hut (8 bunks).

The Rainbow Valley

A route up the valley starts under the pylons, just before the Wairau River bridge. After about 2 km it crosses the Rainbow and follows a 4WD track up the true right bank to Rainbow Hut, nestled in a patch of willow trees just before a gorge. Rainbow Hut is owned by Rainbow Station and requires their permission to use.

Beyond the gorge are plenty of options for exploring remote mountains and the high passes leading to the Sabine and Travers Valleys. There are 6-bunk huts in the Paske and Begley Valleys.

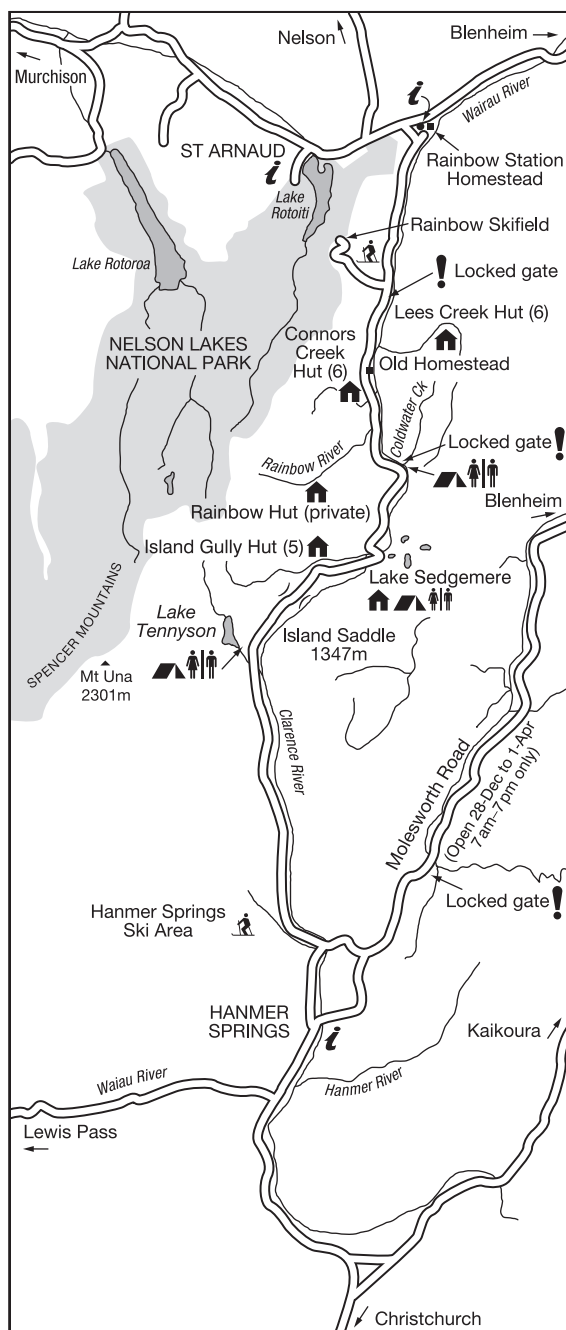
Other activities

Hunting

Deer and chamois are the main game animals. Hunters each require permits from **both** the Department of Conservation and Rainbow Station.

This map is a guide only.
For more information consult Topomaps N29 (St Arnaud), N30 (Tarndale) and N31 (Acheron).

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



Mountain-biking

Permission is required for mountain bike access. Touring cyclists with gear should allow two days to ride from St Arnaud to Hanmer Springs.

Skiing

Rainbow Ski Area generally opens from July to September each year. For more information visit www.skirainbow.co.nz. Information on Hanmer Springs Ski Area can be found on www.skihanmer.co.nz. There is scope for ski touring to the north and south in basins and along the St Arnaud Range.

Kayaking

The Wairau is well suited for less experienced kayakers.

Climbing

Fine peaks ring the Rainbow Valley, providing enjoyable climbing in summer and challenging winter conditions for the adventurous.

Fishing

The upper Wairau waterways provide excellent trout fishing. The fishing season is from 1 October to the end of April. Each angler must carry a Fish and Game New Zealand licence.

Please remember

Back-country safety

Snow and freezing conditions can occur at any time of the year and flooded rivers may extend your trip. Back-country travellers should have adequate food, equipment and experience for their planned trip, and good avalanche awareness. Remember your safety is your responsibility. To report any safety hazards in the outdoors call **DOC HOTline 0800 362 468**.

Road safety

Rain can make the many unbridged streams along the Rainbow Road impassable. There are no petrol stations, telephones or mobile telephone coverage for most of the journey. Check your spare tyre. On-coming traffic is difficult to see and stock wander freely—please drive carefully.

Private land

The floors of the Wairau, Rainbow and Paske Valleys are farmed. Leave gates as you find them and respect stock and property.

Domestic animals

Please leave dogs and domestic pets at home. Hunting dogs and horses may be taken on to private land with permission from Rainbow Station.

Fire

Fire is a major threat to vegetation in this area. We recommend portable cookers are used.

To find out more

For further information visit the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz or contact:

Department of Conservation

Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre
P O Box 55, St Arnaud 7053
Ph: (03) 521 1806 Fax: (03) 521 1896
Email: nelsonlakesvc@doc.govt.nz

Department of Conservation

Nelson Regional Visitor Centre
Millers Acre/Taha o te Awa
79 Trafalgar Street, Nelson 7010
P O Box 375, Nelson 7040
Ph: (03) 546 9339
Email: nelsonvc@doc.govt.nz

Hurunui i-SITE

Amuri Avenue, Hanmer Springs 7334
Ph: (03) 315 7128 Fax: (03) 315 7658

For hunting permission contact the Department of Conservation in St Arnaud and:

Rainbow Station (Star Holdings Ltd)

P O Box 1242, Nelson 7040
Ph: (03) 545 7600 Fax: (03) 545 7601