

COBB VALLEY

Topo250 Map: Sheet 12 (250,000 scale)

Topo50 Map: BP24 Takaka & BQ24 Tapawera (50,000 scale)

How to get to START: Starting point is in Motueka at the Top 10 Holiday Park (**WP01** 16masl)). Take the SH60 north-wards, up and over Takaka Hill then turn off to the left in Upper Takaka on the sign-posted road following the Takaka River. This is not very far but the road is narrow and twisty so do not be in a hurry and allow about 2 hours. Pass the power station then get up to the viewpoint above the dam (**WP2**1058masl)

Rough description: A fairly hard three day two nights tramp with the option to "knock-off" Mount Arthur (**WP34** 1799masl) on the way. The huts are all different with Balloon being newer, Flora rather past its sell-by date and Mnt Arthur Hut delightful for its position and views. Times may seem a bit slow to young bloods but the average age of the party on this occasion was over 68!

Day 1 Cobb Dam to Balloon Hut: There is a shelter plus information boards at the start (**WP02** 1058masl). The track heads off to the SW along Cobb Ridge which is undulating to rolling and covered with low bush – many ferret traps seen. After 45 – 50 minutes go straight ahead for Peel Ridge – the track to the left is to Asbestos Cottage – and soon descends to pass through a boggy area. The next junction takes about 2 hours to reach (**WP04**1043masl), left is for Broken Bridge and Flora Valley whilst right is for Lake Peel and Cobb Dam. Ten minutes later there is an open area with a junction (**WP05**1014masl) with the target, Lake Peel, to the left whilst straight goes down to the road running along the edge of Cobb Dam.

Start of track



Side track heading to Lake Peel



Balloon Hut



NZ Grid GPS: Geodetic Datum 49

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS 84

Access & Location



Red is the road route to the start and yellow waypoints show the tramp route

From here there is a bit of a grunt up to the SW for 40 minutes with the tree line (**WP06**1201masl) indicating that the climb is almost over. Soon after this a long, exposed, ridge walk slowly ascends one of the grassy tableland areas until a junction (**WP07**1407masl) is reached in about 4 hours. The signpost indicates left for Balloon Hut, straight for Lake Peel and right for the Cobb Valley and Myttons Hut.

There is then rather a daunting looking track sidling basically west towards Lake Peel. In fact this is quite an easy section but there are tricky bits as the rough track passes below some bluffs and over minor landslip zones. There is an indistinct junction (**WP08**1358masl) with a minor track going in to Lake Peel but views of the lake are good enough from the main track. There is now more ascent as the track sidles up to the next ridge but the crest (**WP09**1462masl) is easily reached in about 45 minutes from Lake Peel.

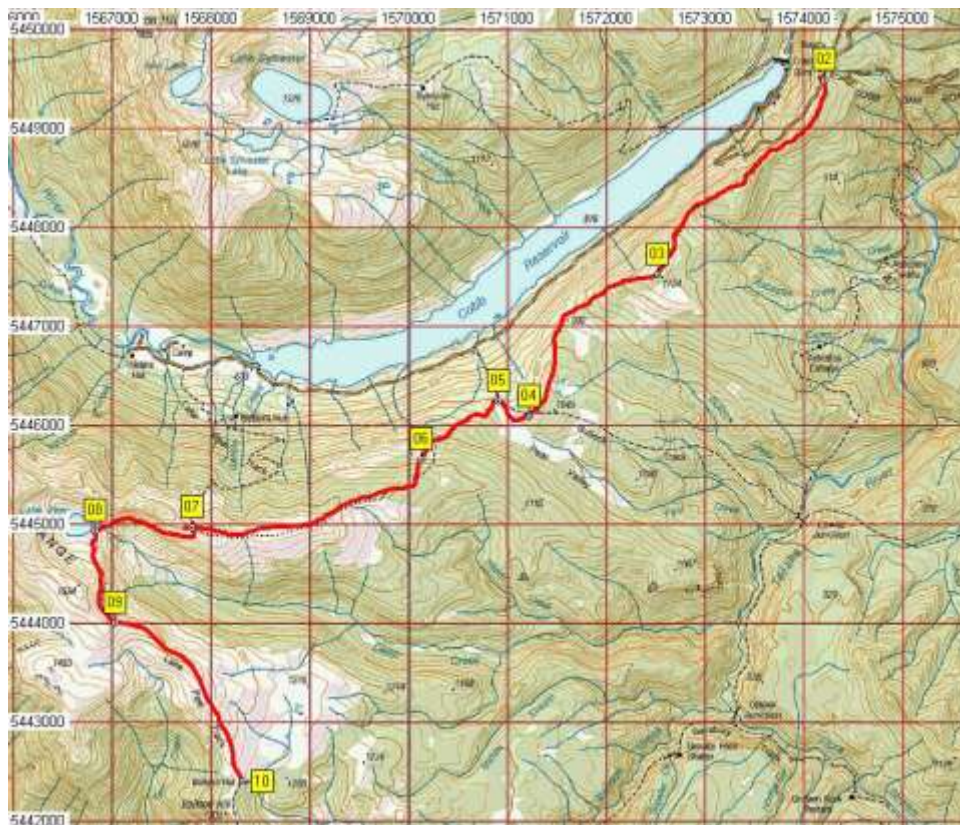
There is now a hugely long, gentle-looking grassy tableland to descend to reach Balloon Hut. At first this looks like nothing at all but it is a long way and if the wind is blowing this can be a very difficult descent – on the day in question fully laden trampers were being blown off the track and it took up to 45 minutes to complete.

Lake Peel

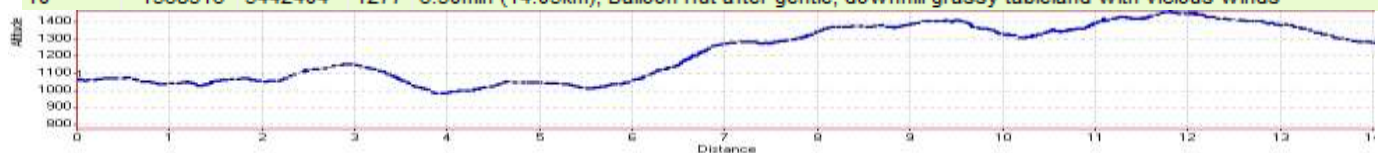


Balloon Hut is quite modern with 14 bunks, gas fire and gas cookers, good sized cooking shelf, table plus an outside sink with water supply from a roof tank. Overall this is a fairly hard day with very varied walking and vegetation. Some very rough, rugged terrain around Lake Peel and the grassy area approaching Balloon Hut is anything but easy when strong winds are blowing.

Total Distance : 14.046 Km
Minimum Altitude : 983 Meters
Maximum Altitude : 1462 Meters

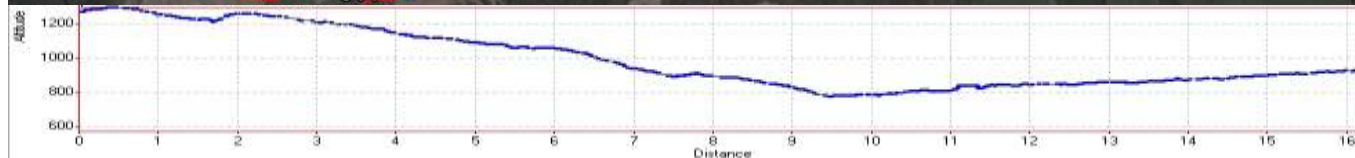


Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
01	1601202	5449646	15.8	Top 10 Holiday Camp Motueka
02	1574204	5449489	1058	9:45am; Start tramp above Cobb Dam going SW along Cobb Ridge
03	1572517	5447521	1155	50min (2.89km); junction left for Asbestos Cottage and straight for Peel Ridge. Soon down to bog
04	1571215	5446097	1043	2hrs (5.13km) ; junction left for Broken Bridge and Flora Valley. Right for Lake Peel and Cobb Dam
05	1570904	5446254	1014	2:10min (5.58km); junction left for Lake Peel and right for road on Cobb Dam edge. Open area
06	1570130	5445665	1201	2:50min 6.69km); lunch at tree line after fair grunt up poor track
07	1567811	5444972	1407	4:10min (9.39km); junction with left for Balloon Hut and Lake Peel. Right for Myttons Hut
08	1566824	5444933	1358	5hrs (10.75km); mini track off right to Lake Peel after rough track under bluffs, minor landslips
09	1567022	5444004	1462	5:45min (11.78km): minor crest after easy side with sign for Lake Peel
10	1568316	5442404	1277	6:30min (14.05km); Balloon Hut after gentle, downhill grassy tableland with vicious winds



Day 2 Balloon Hut to Flora then Mount Arthur Hut: There is easy walking at the start of Day 2 with a good track through more grassy tableland to reach a junction (WP111254masl) in 45 minutes where, by going straight, the route goes to Salisbury Lodge. Forest is entered (WP121212masl) in about one hour and 5–6 minutes later there is a sign-posted (WP131199masl) junction with right for the Lodge in the middle of wet forest. Salisbury Lodge (WP141140masl) – very large, modern and with solar heated hot water on site as a huge panel can be seen – is reached in 1:15 minutes from Balloon.

Map and Google Image with GPS data – Day 2



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
11	1568938	5440670	1254	Day 2 45min (2.34km); junction with right for Leslie Valley and straight for Salisbury Lodge
12	1569577	5440535	1212	1hour (3.02km); enter forest at end of open, grassy table-land with views
13	1569980	5440692	1199	1:05min (3.49km); right at junction for Salisbury Lodge in wet, low forest
14	1570540	5440541	1140	1:15min (4.17km); Salisbury Lodge - big, new hut with solar water for warden's hut / toilet block
15	1570844	5440772	1119	1:30min (4.56km); sign for start of Gordon's Pyramid route to Mnt Arthur
16	1571118	5441136	1094	1:35min (4.94km); rejoin main track in mixed grassland with islands of trees
17	1571177	5441173	1087	1:36min (5.14km); site of the old (1928 - 1975) hut
18	1571352	5441459	1060	1:45min (5.57km); down into valley with new bridge and track off right for Dry Rock Shelter
19	1572629	5442641	888	2:45min (8.25km); wood bridge on shelf path near waterfall just before Growler Shelter
20	1573757	5442799	782	3:10min (9.79); Asbestos Cottage track joins from left, Flora Hut at 8km. New bridge, easy track
21	1574495	5442348	811	3:35min (10.79km); Helipad, road then swing bridge to Gridiron Shelter
22	1574546	5442288	834	3:45min (11.05km); Upper Gridiron Hut on rock shelf up steep track - diversion worth making!
23	1575385	5441978	851	4:10min (12.4km); junction right to Gordon's Pyramid. Flora Hut at 3.8km then swing bridge bypass
24	1575977	5441925	857	4:28min (13.31km); bend with stream & small track off right. Many birds in the area
25	1577370	5440952	925	5:10min (16.25km); Flora Hut
26	1576997	5440156	1197	35min (1.24km); grunt above Flora Hut towards Mnt Arthur Hut, plus or minus level walking
27	1576367	5440065	1301	1hour (1.91km); high point 1 hour above Flora Hut in scrub with views
28	1576156	5439265	1306	1:45min (2.79km); Mount Arthur Hut on track downhill towards carpark

Five minutes or so after Salisbury Lodge there is a sign (WP151119masl) indicating the Gordon's Pyramid route which goes to Mount Arthur going off to the right in the middle of this large grassland area with islands of trees. Information available at Mount Arthur Hut indicates the Pyramid route is much shorter than going via Flora Hut! The loop passing Salisbury Lodge rejoins the main track (WP161034masl) two minutes before the site of the old (1928 – 1975) Salisbury Hut (WP171087masl). Ten minutes later the track heads downslope to cross a new bridge (WP181060masl) with a track to the right for the Rock Shelter. Soon after this the track is super-wide like a road as it passes through thick, mature forest which seems serenely calm.

The next feature is a wooden bridge (WP19888masl) on a section of "shelf-like" track at a waterfall some metres before Growler Shelter. Twenty five minutes after Growler the track coming in from the left (WP20782masl) is from Asbestos Hut then soon there is a new bridge on very easy walking track.

Growler Shelter



Some of the best fun of the day comes next with helipad (WP21811masl), road then a swing bridge to Gridiron Shelter – in early 2010 huge renovations were being carried out on this shelter and it was not accessible. Just past here there is a trackside hut with a small track zig-zagging steeply upwards to Upper Gridiron Hut (WP22834masl) – this side trip must be taken. The hut is built in closely under the overhanging rock – so close that the ceiling is rock – there are 3 bunks, wood-burner, outside sink and water plus there is a superb swing seat!

Upper Gridiron Hut

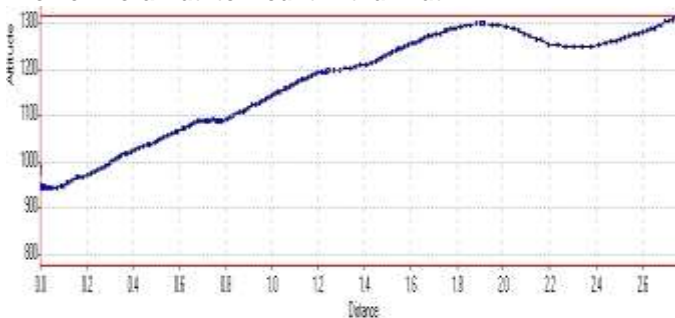


Back on the main track there is next a wooden archway inscribed with some data about population etc of Gridiron Gulch – obviously a hangover from the gold mining days. At a bend in the road (WP23851masl) reached in about 4 hours there is a junction with right for Gordons Pyramid and Flora Hut stated as 3.8km away. Then there is a swing bridge offering a shortcut avoiding a loop in the road.

The promised hour to Flora seems to go on forever but there is a bend in the road (WP24857masl) at a stream with a possible small track going off to the right after 20 minutes and this area has many interesting birds

These included ever so inquisitive robins, bellbirds and lots of riflemen. Flora Hut (WP25925masl) reached in about 5 hours is well past its sell by date but during inclement weather it does offer a huge wood store with simple bunk rooms at either end with open fireplaces – but the fires are inclined to smoke badly!

Profile: Flora Hut to Mount Arthur Hut



On the day in question the ladies in the party stopped the night at Flora whilst the men continued up the very steep, grunty track to Mount Arthur Hut. The track levelled out a bit after 35 minutes (WP261197masl), there was a high point in scrub (WP271301masl) offering views one hour up and Mount Arthur Hut (WP281306masl) was reached in 1:45 minutes from Flora.

Balloon to Flora

Total Distance : 16,247 Km
 Minimum Altitude : 779 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 1300 Meters

Mount Arthur Hut offers great views all the way to the coast, has 10-12 bunks, a gas fire, bench and table. Outside sink and water supply with picnic table as well plus informative distance board.

Flora to Mount Arthur Hut

Total Distance : 2,793 Km
 Minimum Altitude : 943 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 1315 Meters

Day 3 Mount Arthur Hut and Mount Arthur:

To ascend Mount Arthur it is possible to go up the very steep, rooty slope behind the back, right hand side of the hut when facing it or back-track a hundred metres or so to the track junction off left. Whichever way you go it is uphill but the views improve as height is gained. Within 30 minutes a cairn is reached (WP291357masl) from where the way ahead can be seen as a long grassy slope to the SW but the summit of this is reached within 30 minutes (WP301447masl). The track is very clear and well marked as it continues then the junction at 2km (WP311501masl), which dips downwards to the right, is the one that goes to Salisbury Lodge via the Pyramids The slopes slowly get steeper and fifteen minutes later there is a small indistinct track off to the right with a “water” sign – this is a sink hole and there is water (WP321548masl). After this it is essential to keep an eye on the track – it is just too easy to get drawn into using one of the limestone ridges to get up the mountain – but if this is done some serious scrambling down bluffs and scree slopes can ensue. The blue poled track going off to the left to Ellis Basin Hut is met in about 1:45 minutes (WP331679masl) and about 20 minutes later after a fairly tricky scramble up some rocks and bluffs the trig point (WP341799masl) is arrived at. All in all a pretty good ascent in just over 2 hours by three men with an average age of 70!

The signs at Mount Arthur Hut



Mount Arthur lower slopes



Mount Arthur upper slopes

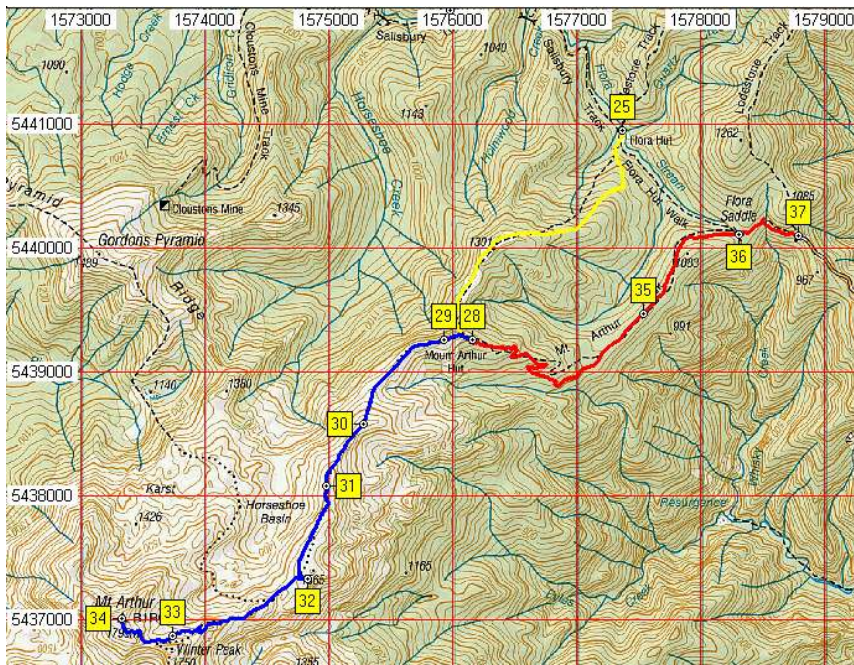


Track up Mount Arthur



Map and Google Image with GPS data – Day 3

Mount Arthur Hut



Ascent of Mount Arthur

Total Distance : 4.871 Km
 Minimum Altitude : 1290 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 1802 Meters

The walk back down off Mount Arthur to the hut takes about an hour since most of the going really is easy walking.

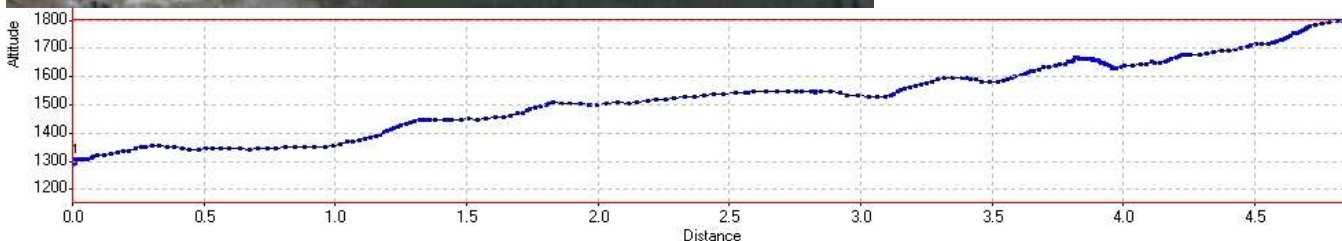
The tourist track from Mount Arthur Hut down to the car park comes as a great relief, if the legs are weary, or a bit of a high speed stomp if there is any power left in them. This is a wide, well benched track with a very easy grade so good progress really can be made. The only features of note are a picnic table in a clearing (**WP35**1097masl) then a road (**WP36**1011masl) where the route goes to the right to arrive at the car park (**WP37**969masl).

Mnt Arthur Hut to car park

Total Distance : 4.130 Km
 Minimum Altitude : 967 Meters
 Maximum Altitude : 1311 Meters

NB: On the map:

- Red** – Flora to Mount Arthur Hut
- Blue** – Ascent of Mount Arthur
- Yellow** – Mount Arthur Hut to car park



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
29	1575924	5439261	1357	Day 3 - Ten minutes above Mnt Arthur Hut at cairn on ridge
30	1575275	5438580	1447	30min (1.32km); local crest after grassy ascent
31	1574972	5438077	1501	45min (1.97km); junction with Pyramid route off downhill to the right
32	1574823	5437334	1548	1hour (2.83km); water supply in sink hole 100m or so off track to SE
33	1573739	5436870	1679	1:45min (4.2km); track junction with Ellis Basin Hut track off to the left - blue poles
34	1573323	5437009	1799	2:05min (4.87km); Mount Arthur trig
35	1577536	5439473	1097	35min (2.36km) below Mount Arthur Hut on tourist track - picnic table
36	1578306	5440112	1011	55min (3.45km) below Mount Arthur Hut - turn right on to road
37	1578787	5440099	969	1:15min (4.13km) car park at end of trail 1 hour below Mount Arthur Hut

Notes:

- **GPS** Garmin GPSMap 60CSx
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level

Updated June 2019