

Te Araroa Trail – Northbound Guide

Manawatū

3D view north-west: Makahika to north end Burtton's Track

9. Makahika Camp to Burttons Whare: 8 hrs 20, 25.5 km (maps 69, 68)

You could do the leg from Makahika Camp to Palmerston North in two or three days. If doing it in two then the Moturimu Whare shelter and campsite in the Gordon Kear Forest is one option for the overnight stay. It is about 11.5 hrs from Makahika to the Gordon Kear shelter, and about 7 hrs 15 from there to Palmerston North. Or you could camp at Burton's Whare site, which is about 8 hrs 20 from Makahika and then 10.5 hrs to Palmerston North. Burton's Whare is not a particularly wonderful spot: it is shady and the ground mostly slopes.

If doing it in three days, then the official TA notes suggest the Tokomaru Shelter the first night and the Moturimu Whare the second. So that would be 6 hrs 15 mins the first day, 5 hrs 20 the second, and 7 hrs 20 the third. Or you could do Burton's Whare the first night and Kahuterawa Reserve picnic area the second: 8 hrs 20; 5 hrs 40; 4 hrs 50. Whew, I think I got the maths right on all these. They do all tend to add up to about 19 hours from Makahika to Palmerston North in total, so I must be right.

Makahika–Mangahao Track: 5 hrs (+ 30 mins to the start from Makahika Camp), 13.5 km

Continue north about 2 km along Gladstone Rd to the Poulton Drive parking area. Cross the stile and follow a poled route for half an hour along an unfenced right-of-way through private land that crosses the Makahika Stream. You reach the Tararua Park boundary and an information sign. Across the river is the former sawmill site. At a grassy open clearing amidst native bush about 1 hr from Makahika Camp prime minister Helen Clark unveiled a plaque commemorating the opening of the track in 2008. There is a toilet here and it makes a nice place to camp. The trail then follows the former tram-line route with benched track and cuttings clearly visible in many places. Near the terminus of the Makahika tramline formation the Bartholomew Timber Company ended native logging in this area of the Tararuas in the early 20th century.

The track departs from the tram-line at right angles at a large orange marker and climbs steadily to the Makahika Ridge at around 650m, with first Kapiti Viewpoint (Archey's Lookout) and then Horowhenua Lookout, a small cleared area with seating. Then there is a gradual

descent, veering to the north, passing an area of revegetating mānuka on land that was once farmed. After crossing the three tributaries of Blackwood Stream (named after the black beech in the vicinity) there is another ascent and you pass some fine examples of large rimu trees that escaped the bushman's axe. You could potentially camp around here. On the following descent you come to an information sign and then a car park.

End of Makahika–Mangahao Track to Burton's Whare site: 2 hrs 50 mins, 10 km

Follow the road north along the edge of the Tokomaru No. 3 Reservoir (lake) 2.5 km to the junction of Tokomaru Valley & Mangahao Roads, then turn downhill on the Tokomaru Valley Rd. Despite the lake, the whole valley is rather unattractive and there are really no camping options in it. It is about 40 mins along the unsealed country roads to a rusty white gate that marks the beginning of Burton's Track. After the gate on the left are some dilapidated buildings and a few hundred metres further on is the Tokomaru Shelter. It would have taken you about 6 hrs 15 mins to here from Makahika Camp.

- Tokomaru Shelter – Old Tokomaru Valley Rd. Has toilet, fresh water in a nearby stream and camping sites. It was refurbished by local members of the Te Araroa Trust. You can [donate at the GiveALittle site online](#) to support this work.

James Burton was a farmer who purchased a cheap block of land in the Tokomaru Valley in 1908. The local council refused to pay for constructing a road to his farm, so he did it himself with explosives and pick and shovel. The track begins as an easy, mostly level, benched route of good width through regrowth bush, following the Tokomaru River. After about 1.5 hrs nice grassy camping spots start appearing by the track. These include one at the site of Burton's whare (bush hut), located within grid reference 1814/5509, just before the first track is shown on the TA map going uphill across the river.

The site of the former swing bridge that crossed to Jim Burton's farm on the western side of the river – and that killed him when it collapsed in 1941 – can be seen. You may also see a cottage on the other side of the stream. However, THIS IS A PRIVATE RESIDENCE. Please stick to the marked route (do not cross the river) and continue south. The trail here goes over private land and this arrangement requires the owner's goodwill for it to continue. No travelling at dark, fires, guns, etc.

3D view west: Burton's Track to Palmerston North

10. Burton's whare to Fitzherbert Bridge: 10.5 hrs, 41.5 km (maps 68, 67)

Burton's whare to end of Burton's track: 2.5 hrs, 6.5 km

After a few more grassy clearings the track crosses the river. There is a large orange triangle on your side to mark the crossing, but only an obscured small one well downstream to mark the point where you rejoin the track. By now the route has ceased to be the easy wide track made by Burton and is a regular tramping track. It makes a long climb uphill to about 500m to finally exit at an exposed grassy spot. You could camp here but a more sheltered spot is beside the track 10 minutes further on, though neither has water and both are on private land. The total time to do all 13.5 km of Burton's track is about 5 hrs 15 mins.

Burton's Track end to Back Track: 1.5 hrs, 4.5 km

The track goes downhill on a 4WD road from the stile and DoC sign at the end of Burton's

Track. From regrowth native bush you change onto forestry roads through ugly broken country covered with the pine plantations of the Gordon Kear Forest. As at 2017, after harvest and with saplings only a few years old, the landscape is one of visual desolation, but this will improve as the trees grow. Go downhill, keeping to the left at each junction. The route from here all the way to Palmerston North is generally well-marked with TA signs.

- Moturimu Whare campsite – There is a new shelter by a fresh water source built at the junction of Toko Corner Rd and Centre Rd by the Palmerston North City Council within the Gordon Kear Forest. It is the only place you can legally camp in the forest and it is nicely placed at 28 km from Palmerston North (and 32 km from the Makahika Camp).

At the bottom of the Gordon Kear Forest roads there is a locked gate and a stile and then a climb up a hill to intersect with Scotts Rd. Keep going ahead, not left, on what is now Scotts Rd, winding around the side of the hillside with mature pines below the road and farmland above. You will reach signs for Back Track on the left.

Back Track: 1 hr, 3 km

Back Track is a wide, easy track used by mountain bikers, so watch and listen out, especially in weekends, as they come hurtling down. There are a few streamlets crossing the track whose water should be good to drink. It is a steady descent, mainly through native bush, with some pine forest above, but also open farmland that allows good views over the Manawatū. At the bottom, cross Black's Bridge to arrive at a large car park and picnic area with toilets. You could possibly camp here, but it may be frowned upon and there are better places further on.

Back Track to end of Greens Rd: 2.5 hrs, 10.5 km

The route heads now down Kahuterawa Rd following the Kahuterawa Stream. There are some nice looking camping spots along the stream about 15 mins from the car park but they are probably on private land. However, 40 minutes from the carpark there is the **Kahuterawa Reserve picnic area**. This is an excellent camping spot and camping is explicitly permitted. Further on, turn right into Greens Rd and follow it uphill and then down through open farmland.

Greens Rd to Old West Rd: 1.5 hrs, 11 km

Take the gravel road/track that descends gradually through native bush from the end of Greens Rd for 35 minutes. Watch out for mountain bikes on this track. At the bottom the trail passes the entrance on the right to the Turitea dams. Cross the bridge and follow the road for about 200m and then turn left into a track that follows the stream for 20 mins. It exits at a road bridge on Ngahere Park Rd. Cross this, then a short distance down turn left into Turitea Rd. After a one-way bridge a track begins again by the stream at right before joining the road once more at another bridge. Turn right and later cross over along the road when a gravel path on the left emerges. This takes a turn down what looks like a private driveway before the road begins to go up a hill. The path emerges on Old West Rd. Cross the road to pick it up again and climb up a short set of steps onto grazing land used by Massey University for farm animal research and from which there are views of the university's Sports Institute.

Old West Rd to Fitzherbert Bridge: 1.5 hr, 6km

The trail continues through open parkland, play areas and alongside bush streams. A short side trip can be taken into the Massey Aboretum after climbing down the stepped terrace where good views over the picturesque Massey University Campus are seen. The trail follows the

Lower Turitea Walkway, a well-formed pathway with 3 footbridges over the Turitea Stream. You end up walking through Bledisloe Park to exit on Tennent Drive, just east of the main entrance to Massey University. There is an underpass here to take you to the other side of Tennent Drive and to continue on your direction on Dairy Farm Rd. Near its end turn right and cross the new He Ara Kotahi pedestrian bridge. Turn right on the other side and as you follow the river pass the Palmerston North Holiday Park and then the Esplanade, an extensive bushy park with pond, play area and the like. Eventually you get to the Fitzherbert Bridge. (If you are pushed for time or just plain tired you could have turned right at Tennant Drive and followed it to the Fitzherbert bridge directly, saving about 2km, but via a less pleasant route.) You will probably want to exit the trail and head into town to resupply and stay the night. Fitzherbert Avenue is the major road leading from the Fitzherbert Bridge to The Square at the heart of the city. Immediately on your left on the avenue is a drinking fountain and toilets by the play area near the car park. Buses into the centre of town stop around here too. Further into the Esplanade park is a pleasant café.

- Homestay, 50m off the trail near the Fitzherbert Bridge over the Manawatu River. Beds and camping options. Brian and Paula, ph 027-6900 260 or 027-222 3742, degoldiway@gmail.com
- [Palmerston North Holiday Park](#) – 133 Dittmer Drive, some distance from The Square and supermarkets, but has a good variety of cabins and ample tent sites, 06 358 0349, 06 358 0349.
- [Pepper Tree Hostel](#) (BBH) – 121 Grey St, north of The Square, 06 355 4054, 06 355 4054.
- Achilles Court Hostel – 42 Achilles Crescent, 06 354 1127, 06 354 1127.
- [Railway Hotel Backpackers](#) – 275 Main Street, south-west of The Square, 06 354-5037, 021 144-0896.
- [Whiowhio Hut](#) – 20 Dorset Crescent (adjacent to the riverside walk), 027 470 9829. Urban tramping hut. Kitchen, shower, laundry, bikes and electricity. Payment by koha (donation). Hosted by Te Araroa walkers and whio (native blue duck) enthusiasts Anthony and Fiona (aka Whinny and Whiona).
- Pak'nSave supermarket is on Fitzherbert Ave, just before The Square on the left; Countdown is more or less on the other side, but hidden within The Plaza mall, accessible from Ferguson St or Church St. And there are a variety of Asian food stores all about 2-500m from The Square: Hana Mart, 199 Cuba St; Jia Hua, 517-525 Main St; Dong Sheng, 78 Rangitikei S; Moshims Discount House (Middle-Eastern?), 401 College St. Binn Inn is at 690 Main St, about 1km north-east of The Square.

Palmerston North to Bulls

The route from Palmerston North towards Whanganui (also spelt Wanganui) is mostly road walking. Much of this is on long, straight country roads. Traffic is not dense but drivers in these parts can go very fast and there is often little road shoulder. Wear something highly visible and walk on the right-hand side, facing traffic. Also note that because the route sometimes follows closely parallel roads, or routes just off the roads, it is not possible to tell from the resolution of the TA maps exactly where you should be walking at times. These notes provide a better guide on the section from Palmerston North to Feilding than the maps.

3D view south-west: Palmerston North to Bulls

11. Palmerston North to Feilding: 6.5 hrs, 23.5 km (maps 67, 66)

The route starts at the Fitzherbert Bridge over the Manawatū River and goes along the popular Riverside Walkway. You can get to the bridge from The Square at the centre of town by taking one of the buses that go to Massey University or the suburb of Summerhill. They depart from Main St on the north-western side of The Square (bus 12 or 14, not the less direct 12A). There is an information centre just within The Square opposite the bus station. The buses you want run down Fitzherbert Ave. Get off after Te Awe Awe St but before the bridge.

Start walking at the town end of the bridge on the eastern side along the sealed path that follows the river. On the western side is The Esplanade, with toilets, should you need them. At one point the path takes a large loop to the left, following the stopbank, but you can save a bit of time by taking the rough track that follows the river and later joins the sealed path. After crossing Ruamahanga Park turn left onto a long straight track that takes you to Napier Rd, the main road to the Hawke's Bay. When you reach this busy road turn left, pass Café 116, a popular spot with cyclists and walkers, and cross over and enter the city's earliest cemetery. Find your way through this by staying parallel with Napier Rd. Exit onto Vogel St on the north-west side. Head down this long straight road, passing through traffic lights at the intersection with Tremaine Ave. (Just before here, on the right, is Kipling St with toilets at the Roslyn Branch Library.) The road then becomes Railway Rd, and it takes you over the railway. Continue on it as it turns right at a roundabout near the airport. The road soon runs parallel to the railway line. When you get to the intersection with Roberts Line you need to turn right into that road and cross the railway line. Immediately to the left turn into what looks like a private drive through a farm gate and follow the line of trees parallel to the rail line. This is Sangsters Rd. Keep going in the same direction over farm land through more gates and over stiles after it ends, always staying near the fence line running beside the railway. Eventually your path becomes Sangsters Rd again. Then turn right into Cleverly Line and left into Stoney Creek Rd.

Soon you will reach the settlement of Bunnythorpe. It is known for its electrical sub-station that supplies the lower central North Island (visible off in the distance at right as you approach the village) and the historic Glaxo factory beside the road at your right. This was one of the origins of the large British pharmaceutical company GlaxoSmithKline. There is a dairy, toilets and a takeaway bar on your route through the village. A drinking fountain is hidden behind the toilets.

Turn left onto the Kairanga-Bunnythorpe road and cross over the rail line. Then turn right immediately on the other side. You are now on a gravel road but this runs out quickly. Keep going straight ahead, parallel with the rail line, through long grass and weeds. You will come to a crossing over Jacks Creek comprising concrete rubble. Then not far on is Mangaone Stream. Go left downstream 15 or so metres for another crossing point over rubble. Watch the first chunk of concrete – it is very wobbly! You should achieve both crossings without getting wet in normal flows. With higher water levels these will still be the best places to cross. You next come to the Refuse Transfer Station. Squeeze round the side of its fence and onto Waughs Rd that leads from the station. After 2km you reach a complicated intersection and rail crossing in one. Turn right over the line then left into Campbell Road to again put you walking beside the rail line on the less busy side – except it is on the north-east side this time. There is a bit more road margin than Roberts Line but traffic still goes very fast.

Pass by Taonui (Feilding) Aerodrome on your right. There are public toilets by the car park here. Campbell Road is a long stretch but as it eventually turns to the right there is a crossing over the rail line on the left to bring you to a concrete footpath beside the main road into Feilding. After 1 km take South Rd diagonally off to the left. And if you are headed into the centre of Feilding turn off at right on Manchester St. You will smell the Feilding saleyards as you pass them on the left, close to the centre. Farm animals are bought and sold here on Fridays and it is worth catching the event if you are in town on the day.

Finding somewhere cheap to stay in Feilding is a bit of a problem. There is a motorcamp (Feilding Holiday Park, 5 Arnott St) but it is about 4km north-east of the trail route. It does have bunkroom beds though. There are a couple of old hotels. The cheapest is the Denbeigh but at \$50 a single it is grossly over priced (peeling wallpaper, no curtains, no towels, window that wouldn't stay open in my room...) The Mahoe b&b as you enter South St is about \$100 and is on Airbnb. There are some other cheap places on Airbnb too. If you are searching for Feilding on the internet, note the 'ei' spelling – not, as you would expect in the English language, Fielding. There is a large New World supermarket rather hidden off Fergusson St to the south-west of the Denbigh Hotel, and many moderately priced restaurants and takeaway food places all centred around the square and its offshoot streets. A generous meal can be had for \$13.50 at the Sushi House Restaurant at 106 Fergusson St (it closes around 7pm). Binn Inn is at 85 Kimbolton St, just north-east of the centre of town formed by Manchester Square.

12. Feilding to Bulls: 5.5 hrs, 20 km (maps 65, 64)

Keep going along South St until it meets West St. Turn right into that, then left after 300m onto Ranfurly Rd through some leafy residential housing and onto the top of the hill. The road then comes down to meet Sandon Rd, where you turn left to head west. It is a 6 km stretch of reasonably busy road to Mt Biggs School.

An alternative suggested in the official notes, which is a bit longer but on less busy roads, is to turn left from South St before Manfield Park down Kawakawa Rd. Turn right when you reach Awahuri–Feilding Rd, then left into Lees Rd. This eventually joins up with Sandon Rd about 500m before Mt Biggs School

Turn right from the school into Mount Stewart–Halcombe Rd and then left into Ngaio Rd. The traffic seems to lighten up from this point. About 2km along is the Mt Lees Reserve. There are toilets here and a tap with drinking water. Also a pleasant shelter (summer house) with a small kitchen attached. You could easily make a cup of tea here and you can camp adjacent to it or in other areas (for a donation). There is also a B&B in the homestead. The cheapest rates are \$60 single and \$90 double. It looks like a nice place to stay. 06 329 3938.

Continue on another 2 km to the Air-force's Ohakea aerodrome radio station. Turn left here into Wilson Rd. Don't go straight ahead in the same direction as Ngaio Rd at the Wilson Rd intersection. It used to be the TA route but there is no longer public access down here. The route along the river is difficult going anyway. Three km down Wilson Rd turn right onto the gravel Hurst Rd, and then left into a pleasant sealed road, Wightman Rd. This brings you to the State Highway and the major bridge over the Rangitikei River when you turn right.

There are plenty of places to eat in Bulls as it is a transport junction, but not so much accommodation, though there is the campground as you come in and Lancewood Lodge as you exit. There is a smallish Four Square supermarket at 114 Bridge St (closes 8pm), and free wifi at the public library on SH1 heading north, with its distinctive WWI roll of honour entrance.

- [Bridge Motor Lodge and Caravan Park](#) – just over the bridge at 2 Bridge St, 06 322 0894, with tent sites and great value backpacker bunks.
- [Lancewood Lodge](#) – 170 High St, Bulls (on the trail, about 600m from the intersection that marks the centre of Bulls). Has a number of accommodation options including tent sites (\$10 + \$10 for access to showers and lounge), bunkroom (\$23) and private rooms (\$42pp). 0274 269 994 (Jo) or 022 199 6497 (Rhys).
- Jo and Mike Gallen Homestay at 48 Brandon Hall Rd, 500m off trail. Hut that sleeps 3, and room for camping. Pay by koha (donation). 027 322 1040, johancon@xtra.co.nz.

Always check the Trail Status pages of the official Te Araroa website for recent changes or alerts on the trail.

Last updated 29 October 2020

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