



St James Conservation Area Route Descriptions

This describes horse routes in the St James Conservation Area, with ride times and a relative grading of the difficulty.

NB All ride times are given for a medium walk speed for horses.

You will need map NZTopo 50-BT4 Ada Flat.

<http://www.topomap.co.nz/NZTopoMap?v=2&ll=-42.308117,172.708797&z=10>

Peters Valley – Clarence Valley Loop Track. 2.5 hr, Easy

The Dept of Conservation would prefer that you don't ride your horse on the boardwalks as they are built for mountain bike weight. Also, consider the risk of a loose nail on your horse shoe being snagged in the netting that covers the wood. Each of the small waterways that the two bridges cross are easily fordable on the up-hill side (no bogs), and the length of boardwalk at the top end of the Peters Valley is easy to ride around the side of. Please respect that this track is primarily a mountain bike track.

Following the loop clockwise: follow the trail that leaves near to the shelter hut up to the top of Peters Valley. Turn right at the top of Peters Valley then join the vehicle track and follow down to the Clarence valley. Do not be tempted to leave the track to the flats on your left; they are named "Horrible Swamp" for a very good reason! When you pass the shingle pit on your right, veer left to follow the cycle trail to a small unlocked gate back out onto the road. It is 15 mins back to the homestead from here.

To ride this anti-clockwise: ride up the road towards Lake Tennyson for 15 mins before going through a small unlocked gate on your left. Follow the track until it meets the vehicle track beside the shingle pit, then veer left until you get to the cycleway turn-off at the top of Peters Pass. Follow the cycleway back down Peters Valley to the homestead.

Side Trip to Waterfall

Descend the rough bull-dozer track off the top of Peters Pass until you meet the main creek at the bottom of the hill. Follow this creek up until you reach a pretty waterfall.

Homestead – Scotties Camp Hut. 3.5 hrs, Easy

Follow the Peters Valley up to the top. Drop off the bulldozer track until you meet the Edwards Valley vehicle track, turn left. This is mainly a grassy track.

Side Trip to Cow Stream Hot Pools

2 -2.5 hours from the homestead (you will have crossed the Edwards river twice) turn sharp left at a 'T' intersection in the track. Follow the track up a steep terrace and across 2-300m of grassy flat to the hot pools. Lead your horse down to the river level to find a tie up place. There are 4 newly built rock pools of varying temperature 20m downstream from the older main pool. Sandflies are abundant in the evening, so not a great place to camp. You will be eaten!

Scotties Camp Hut to Stanleyvale (via The Racecourse). 5 hrs, Medium

The 'Racecourse' is a flat oval basin high above the ridge on the true right of the Edwards River, above Scotties Camp. It is a high route to the other end of St James which avoids having to cross the Waiau River).

Follow the vehicle track that zig-zags up to Charlies Saddle. A sign-posted poled route leaves the top of Charlies Saddle towards the western (Waiau River) end of the track which sidles around Charlies Saddle. Note: this track is narrow in places with quite a steep drop off. You may prefer to dismount and lead some sections. This part of the route is not recommended in wet or icy conditions.

(An alternate route would be to turn left and steeply climb the ridge which leaves the top-most point of the saddle above at the top of the zig-zag above Scotties Camp. Follow the ridge until you see a lone beech tree which marks an old watercourse which is easy to follow down onto the racecourse where you can re-join the track.)

Follow the poled route to drop down to the Stanley River above its confluence with the Waiau River. Caution: stay on the track because there are many deep bogs around springs on the Racecourse which are disguised as lovely green lawns around a delightful pool of water- enticing on a hot day!

Follow the poled route up the Stanley River to Stanleyvale Hut.

In late summer and autumn, the rowan trees in the upper Stanley attract many bell-birds which sound fabulous in the late afternoon and early mornings.

Stanleyvale Side Trip: Look-out Hill. 1 hr return, Easy

Follow the bulldozer track up onto Glen-Rae flats behind the Hut. As you get to the top of the climb, look for some orange tape on kanuka to your left. Cross a small waterway and follow the track to the top of the hill to gaze over Glen-Rae flats, Mt Moria and across to Mt Clara.

Stanleyvale Side Trip: Lake Hill. ½ day, Medium

Ride around to the far (north-west) end of Lake Guyon and ford the lake outlet beside the cycleway. At the top of the hill, turn left and climb the ridge to the top of Lake Hill. (There is no marked track, but stay on the ridge overlooking Lake Guyon). Picnic at the top. Follow along the top before dropping down a ridge to the left (follows an old fence-line) down to the beech forest at the back of Stanleyvale hut.

Stanleyvale Side Trip: Lake Guyon. 1 hr return, Easy

Follow the vehicle track to the North-west of the hut. Good swimming on a hot day and trout fishing!

Fowlers Hut to Stanleyvale hut over Fowlers Pass. 3 hrs, Medium

This track leaves from behind Fowlers Hut in the Clarence Valley. A wide benched track sidles up to the top of the Pass. At this point dismount and lead your horse down the steep zig-zag until you have reached Smythe stream. The rest of the track is rideable, down through beech forest remnants and following Smythe stream until it meets the upper Stanley river. Follow the track down the Stanley and across the flats to the hut.

From the top of Fowlers Pass, turn left and follow an old fenceline to the top of Rabbit Hill- the first high point. Drop off the top of Rabbit Hill onto the scree slope, zig zagging your way down to the bottom (as yet, this route is not marked). The scree slope is very steep (see pictures below). The top 50m of the scree is solid rock and although horses don't seem to be worried by it, some humans do. Don't go this way if you are not relatively athletic. Otherwise, its medium.

You will come out onto the main Fowlers – Stanleyvale track where Aniseed Creek meets the Stanley river.

Stanleyvale to Poole Hut. 2.5 hrs, Medium

Follow the poled route down the Stanley River, but instead of crossing the lower Stanley and turning left up onto the Racecourse, climb up straight ahead onto the grassy terrace above the true right of the Stanley where it confluences with the Waiau. Look for the bulldozer track which will take you down to the Waiau. Ford the Waiau, climb up onto the terrace and Poole Hut is about 200m downstream.

Note: True right and true left for rivers are always in relation to the direction in which the water is flowing.
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Poole Hut to Henry River. 1 hr, Easy

Follow the cycleway up the Waiau from Poole Hut until you are over Saddle Spur.

At this point the cycleway crosses a swing bridge to cross the Waiau which is unsuitable for horses. Leave the cycleway when you have reached the bottom of Saddle Spur and follow the poled route to the Henry River.

Henry River to Anne Hut. 2 hr, Easy

Follow the vehicle track up to the Anne Hut (you are now on the St James Walkway and Te Araroa trail so there may be trampers). Another 15 mins on from the Anne Hut near the confluence of the Anne and Henry Rivers is the old Anne Hut site. This tent camp site has a good holding paddock.

Anne Hut to Boyle Flat Hut. 5 hr, Easy

Follow the St James Walkway up the Anne River until the track turns right to climb up over a boggy board-walked hill. Don't ride up here. Drop down into the river bed and follow it up through beech forest either until you pass under a swing bridge (about 30 mins) and re-join the track on your left, or about 15 mins up follow an old pack track up through the beech to a grassy track on the true right of the river and follow it along until you meet the tramping track. You can ride the tramping track all

the way over the saddle and down into the Boyle River, or if you prefer you can ride up the river flats of the Anne River until you are nearly at the top of the saddle.

As soon as the track drops down to the Boyle River, leave the tramping track and cross the river to follow the green-triangled horse route markers down the river flats. You will pass the historic Rokeby Hut half-way down. When you are almost at Boyle Flat Hut, the tramping track crosses a boardwalk over a small watercourse. Follow the edge of this creek down to the Boyle River and ride under the swing bridge which leads to the hut. The paddock is just above the river below the hut.

Side trip to Upper Boyle River

The Upper Boyle River (above where the track drops down from Anne Saddle) is very pretty and a great place to camp, no paddocks though.

Boyle Flat Hut to Magdalen Hut. 2.5 hr, Medium

Do not attempt this route if the river is in flood as there are many river crossings!

From the Boyle Flat horse paddock, cross the river 50m downstream to re-join the tramping track as it climbs up into the bush. (This avoids some old dilapidated boardwalks which cross very deep bogs).

Follow the tramping track except where green triangles lead you down to part of the historic cattle droving route (these detours are put in to avoid board-walked or sections of track which are dangerous to horses). Eventually you will come to a gate in the boundary fence near the lower Boyle Gorge swing bridge between St James and Glen Hope Station. Please shut the gate after you. Follow along the river about 30 mins to Magdalen Hut. The Magdalen Hut is situated inside a large holding paddock.

Magdalen Hut to Boyle Village. 2 hr, Medium

Follow down the Boyle River Flats being careful to stay within the riparian strip (no more than 20m from the river itself – so as you don't stray onto Glenhope Station land) About 1 hr down there is a track up onto the tramping track on the true right of the Boyle where the river sweeps in near to the bush on the right. Follow the tramping track until you have crossed a rocky side stream coming from the right with a lot of Tutu growing on the banks. After this stream, look for a marker which will show you where to drop down and cross to the true left of the Boyle again. Follow down the true left until an old stock track will take you up onto a forested terrace on you left. You will soon re-join the tramping track for 20 mins before reaching the Boyle Village on the Lewis Pass highway.

Glen Hope Station Access

You need to contact Todd & Sandra Alfield (03 315 7697) or glenhopestation@gmail.com, or Glen Hope Station on Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Glenhope-Station-1489753867946685/> If you have permission and the key to the locked gate, you can follow their access road down to the Boyle Village or trek up the Magdalen Valley to Steyning Hut and back to the St James Conservation Area.

Scotties Camp to Poole Hut. 2 hrs, Medium

This route can only be attempted in summer when the Waiau River is in low water. Don't attempt to ford during nor-west weather patterns. Ride over Charlies Saddle on the vehicle track and along to where the vehicle track descends to the Waiau river. Ford the river at its widest point; just above the rapids is best.

Follow up the true right bank of the Waiau until you pick up a bulldozer track which climbs over a bluff 200 m below McArthur cycleway bridge. Poole Hut is about 10 minutes up river from here.

NB In spring, the breeding mares and new foals of the St James herd are often on the northern slopes of Saddle Spur. They will generally keep their distance, but sometimes they canter around you at a distance of 30m out of curiosity. As long as you don't go nearer, they won't hurt you.

Side trip to Jervois Hut. Medium, 30-45 mins

Option 1 from Poole Hut: travel up the cycleway towards Saddle Spur to get onto the higher terrace, then 'U' turn on this terrace travelling down the Waiau until you get to the track up to Jervois Hut. The Hut is 30-45 mins up.

Option 2 from Charlies Saddle: ford the Waiau River wherever you can then head over the river bed towards the Jones stream valley. You will climb up a bulldozer track which drops off the upper terrace down to the Waiau riverbed to the right of Jones stream. A track has been cut through Old Man broom which starts approximately 200m to the right of the bulldozer track. It takes 30-45 mins to get to Jervois Hut from here.

Henry River to Lake Guyon and Stanleyvale

Follow the vehicle tracks across the Ada Flats, past the Ada Homestead to the Lake Guyon signposted turnoff. Note that the Ada Homestead is private property, but the cattle yards at the back of the property facing down the Waiau are a great place to stop for a lunch break.

Option: after leaving the Ada Homestead and fording the creek on the vehicle track, turn right and cross the Waiau River to join the cycle trail and follow this down to the Lake Guyon turnoff.

Side trip to Muddy Lakes. 1 hr, Easy

Cross the Waiau opposite Ada Homestead and follow the cycle trail to Muddy Lakes down the Waiau. There is a ford here which will take you back over to the cycle trail below Saddle Spur.

Side trip to Christopher Hut. 1.5 hrs

Follow the vehicle tracks past the western side of the Ada Homestead through a line of willow trees and for about an hour. Then veer left and follow a vehicle track at the end of a large grassy flat down to ford the Ada River. After crossing the river, the hut is about 30 mins further on the bush edge on your left. There is a holding paddock at Christopher Hut.

Lake Guyon turnoff (in the Waiau) to Maling Carpark in the Clarence. 3 hrs, Easy

From this turnoff, follow the vehicle track back over Maling Pass to the carpark near Lake Tennyson.

Side Trip to Caroline Bivvy. 2 hrs, Easy

Go through a gate before the vehicle track starts climbing up towards Maling pass on your left. Follow the rough track up the valley to the bivvy.

Side Trip around to the top of Lake Tennyson. 2 hrs, Easy

From the carpark at Lake Tennyson, ford the Clarence at the Lake outlet and follow around to the beech forest on the far side. A track sidles up through the forest and to the open tussock land at the top of the lake where there are great picnic places. This is the route to the Upper Clarence and Paske Saddle trips.

Commuting back down the Clarence. 4 hrs total, Easy

On a nice day, this is an enjoyable ride.

Maling to Fowlers 1.5 hr

Fowlers to St James Homestead 2.5 hr. If you have a bit of extra time it's a lot more interesting to travel down the true left of the river than on the road after you have passed Fowlers Hut.

Mary Holloway
Hanmer Springs Horse Riders Inc
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