Otaki Forks & Field Hut

Facilities

- **Parking**
- **Toilets**
- **Wheelchair accessible** (Around camping areas and picnic areas)
- **Pram accessible** (Around camping areas and picnic areas)
- **Walking tracks**
- **Dog walking** (On leash)
- **Swimming**
- **Fishing**
- **Camping**
- **Bird watching**
- **Picnic table**
- **Kaiing**
- **Walking tracks**
- **Hut accommodation**
- **Look out** (Further up and down, not at Field Hut)

Highlight

Enjoy one of the Kāpiti Coast's best recreational areas, with great camping, fishing and tramping, and explore the relatively complete, timber industry, heritage site. The drive in on the narrow hillside-hugging road is an adventure in itself.

Description, values & significance

Otaki Forks is the main western entrance to the Tararua Forest Park. The Waioauru River and Waitatapia Stream meet the Otaki River here and the open river terraces make this area perfect for recreation. The forest at the forks is regenerating after milling in the 1930’s, and the tramway for log removal and associated sawmill machinery has been preserved. Otaki Forks is the best access to Field Hut, one of the first purpose-built tramping huts in the country and the oldest surviving recreational hut in the Tararua Ranges. Over the years much of the original material has been replaced but the hut remains an important recreational and historic attraction because of its external resemblance to the original, its illustration of early hut construction methods, and its sentimental value to generations of trampers who had their first experience of the rigours of the Southern Crossing while shivering in mist-shrouded Field Hut.

Accessibility/How to get there/particular time of year to visit

Otaki Forks is 19km inland from Otaki township – approximately 1½ hours drive from Wellington or Palmerston North. The easiest turn-off from State Highway 1 is at Otaki Gorge Road, just south of the State Highway 1 bridge over the Otaki River. The last 5km of the Otaki Gorge Road is unsealed, narrow and windy – please drive carefully.

Threatened species/species of interest

Otaki Forks is characterised by herbfield and tussock grasslands. The area is the habitat of regionally critical species including streamside daisy, leek orchid, and scarlet mistletoe. There are totara remnants along the river terraces, and much of the surrounding forest consists of kamahi, tawa, hinau, toro, rewarewa, matai, miro, and rimu. The river flats are the home to paradise shelduck, pipit, spur-winged plover and welcome swallow and a wide variety of forest birds which inhabit the forest.

Key threats

Otaki Forks is a kilometre from the western edge of Project Kaka, a band of the forest from Otaki to Holdsworth receiving possum control (1080) on a three yearly rotation which potentially also controls rats (the previous seven yearly rotation did not control rats), to improve biodiversity outcomes. Forest outside of Project Kaka may not receive any possum control.
Walks (length)
There are a number of easy short walks (ranging from 30 minutes - 2 hours) to stone walls and old boilers, remnants of a pioneering era. A track leads to Field Hut, taking approximately 2.5 to 4 hours depending on your level of fitness.

Walks (grade)
Easy to moderate

Manager
Department of Conservation

Protection status
ōtaki Forks and Field Hut are both inside the Tararua Forest Park and both have Reserves and Conservation Act protection status.

How to get there