

Mt Somers Track Circuit

Circuit should only be attempted by experienced and well prepared trampers.

The two day Mt Somers Track Circuit includes the South Face Route, a track across the southern face of Mt Somers, formed by the Mt Somers Walkway Society in partnership with the Department of Conservation and opened in November 2003.. It involves two full days of tramping (13 to 15 hours tramping time for fit trampers) and traverses areas exposed to cold southerly weather conditions. These notes are written assuming that the circuit is tramped in a counter-clockwise direction around the mountain, starting and ending at Sharplin Falls car park.

Ensure that an entry has been made in the Department of Conservation's Intentions Book. If you intend staying at the Woolshed Creek or Pinnacles Huts ensure that you have hut tickets or passes.

Sharplin Falls Car Park to Pinnacles Hut (5 km, 3 hours, 470m altitude gain)

The tramp starts with an easy 5 minute walk beside Bowyers Stream on the Sharplin Falls track before beginning to climb steeply to reach a rhyolite outcrop, Duke Knob (740m) after 45 minutes. Pause at Duke Knob to enjoy an excellent view of a beech-covered valley. The track then follows a ridge before dropping steeply down to Bowyers Stream. Care should be taken sidling around a slip and then crossing Pony Stream. The track passes through bush along a small flat before crossing Bowyers Stream over a swing bridge.

The track follows up Bowyers Stream, keeping to the true right climbing up and over a number of small ridges. The track then leaves the stream and begins to climb for approximately an hour before reaching Slaughterhouse Gully and Pinnacles Hut.

Pinnacles Hut to Saddle (3½ km, 2 hours, 265m altitude gain)

The track leaves the hut, cuts around a rocky outcrop and passes through sub alpine scrub, gradually working its way closer to the vertical North Face of Mt Somers. Approximately half way to the saddle the track passes beneath a bath-shaped rock pool at the foot of a small waterfall. It is called *Maidens Relief* and provides a pleasant stopping place to enjoy the view across the valley to Mt Winterslow. The track sidles around the head of the valley through tussocks and sub alpine scrub before reaching the saddle at 1170m.

Saddle to Woolshed Creek Hut (3.5 km, 1hr 30min, 350m altitude loss)

The track now drops steadily along a four wheel drive track to the Morgans Stream crossing where Woolshed Creek Hut is only 15 minutes away. The Walkway track continues over a ridge and drops down to cross Woolshed Creek in front of the hut. For trampers on the two day circuit track the hut is the end of the first day.

Woolshed Creek Hut to South Face Route Junction via the Bus Stop (4 km, 500m altitude gain 2 hours)

Cross Woolshed Creek in front of the hut and walk along the true left of the creek. Continue straight ahead at the track junction by the track sign, climb small ridge and drop down to the high swing bridge over Morgans Stream. The track climbs steadily up a ridge before dropping down to Tri Falls Stream. Cross the stream and climb on the true left of stream. The side track to the Howden Falls is highly recommended (5 minutes). After climbing out of Tri Falls Stream the route climbs steadily up a ridge, eventually reaching the Bus Stop at 1150m. A good place to pause and enjoy the view westward to the Taylor Range and beyond to the Arrowsmith Range.

The track then drops to cross a small creek followed by a short climb out onto tussock-covered flats. Another 30 minutes and the junction with the South Face Route is reached. The track straight ahead leads to the car park at Coalminers Flat beside via Rhyolite Ridge (1 hour).

South Face Route Junction to 4WD track (2 km, 1 hour)

The South Face Route leads off at the junction to the southeast at the signpost and drops down to cross Chapmans Creek. After crossing the creek it rises as it sidles across the valley slope to cross a low saddle onto 4WD track. This track heads downhill for 500m until it reaches the bush edge.

4WD track to Acland Shelter (2 km, 1 hour)

The track enters mountain beech forest and drops down to cross the first of five gullies, tributaries of Ghost Stream and Stony Creek. Marker poles clearly define the track across the ridges between the forested gullies, maintaining an altitude of 880 – 900 metres beneath the impressive South Face of Mt Somers. The Acland Shelter is a day shelter and a good lunch stop.

Acland Shelter to Staveley Hill (2.5 km, 1½ hours, 200m altitude gain)

The track leaves Acland Shelter and soon drops down into the bush and crosses Caves Stream. A well formed track climbs steadily for 200m (approximately 30 minutes) through mountain beech forest to break out briefly into sub alpine scrub on Unity Saddle at 1075m. After re-entering the bush the track sidles around a small gully and two avalanche chutes and then meets the Mt Somers Summit track. From this junction it is less than 10 minutes down to Staveley Hill at 1070m.

Staveley Hill to Sharplin Falls car park (3 kms, 1½ hours, 635 altitude loss)

The track now drops steadily down the ridge line of Staveley Hill through sub alpine and manuka scrub. A small grass clearing at the bush line offers the last view out over the Canterbury Plains. The track enters the bush soon passing Hookey Knob (6854m) and drops down steadily to the car park.

Don't forget to sign out in the intentions book in the shelter at the car park.

Comments

Any comments and suggestions which could be included in future editions of the track notes should be sent to:

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10.09.08