



Photographic locations worth sweating for

Mt Fell Hut, Richmond Forest Park

Peter Laurensen guides us through the rugged beauty of Mt Fell Hut in Richmond Forest Park, offering a glimpse into an enchanting location for avid hikers and photographers alike. Discover the striking karst landscapes and panoramic views that await those willing to embark on this challenging trek. Let the breathtaking images on the following pages fuel your desire for adventure and inspire you to explore this hidden gem in New Zealand's wilderness.

WORDS AND IMAGES
PETER LAURENSEN

occasionalclimber.co.nz

It's a slog to get there, but if you're after impressive karst landscapes bathed in magic hour light, then Mt Fell Hut is worth sweating for.

Located at 1,270 metres on the bushline in the Richmond Range, Mt Fell Hut sits just below an alpine meadow, one kilometre south of Mt Fell (1,607m). To the east, seven kilometres as the kea flies, looms Mt Fishtail (1,641m). First built in 1964, due to the threat of landslides, the 6-bunk hut was relocated 250 metres south to its present location in a grassy clearing in the forest in 2017. It was also refurbished, with a new wood burner, two benches, and a water tank.

Mt Fell Hut is a standard DOC hut not requiring booking. Access is from Te Rou Road, off Northbank Road on the true left of Wairau River, from SH6 just north of Renwick. From Timms Creek carpark at the end of Te Rou Road, the 13-kilometre walk-in begins at just 200 metres, so prepare for a big climb. For the initial five kilometres, the trail undulates beside Timms Creek. Several slips require diversions on what is otherwise an easy track. At the foot of a spur dropping off Johnston Peak, a 900-metre unrelenting climb through beautiful native forest ends at a sharp right

turn. From here, the track sidles northwards through mountain beech for about two kilometres to the hut.

It only takes about 30 minutes to reach the ridge above the hut leading up to Mt Fell, above the alpine meadow. This is a perfect spot to enjoy magic hours, with Mt Fishtail's distinctive double-peaked profile taking centre stage at sunrise. From here, there are also views of the Wairau Plains, Tasman Bay, the Pelorus Valley, and even out to Wellington on a clear day. South from the alpine meadow, the summits of Johnston Peak (1,647m) and Mt Richmond (1,760m) offer stupendous panoramic views as a great day trip from the hut. This is karst country, with sculptured limestone ramparts offering another rewarding photographic element.

Of historical interest and providing the origin of Mt Fell Hut's name, in 1942 in stormy weather, a twin-engine Lockheed Electra, a Nelson-bound flight from Wellington, carrying three passengers (including Pamela Fell) and two crew, slammed into the flanks of Mt Richmond, killing all five on impact. The commander's name was Keith Johnston, remembered by Johnston Peak.



SUNRISE FROM 1450M ON MT FELL TO MT FISHTAIL
F8, 1/20 SEC, ISO 125, 24MM



SUNRISE FROM 1450M ON MT FELL, LOOKING TO THE NORTH
F8, 1/5 SEC, ISO 125, 90MM



DAWN VIEW FROM ABOUT 1500M ON MT FELL
SOUTH TO MT RICHMOND RIGHT AND JOHNSTON PEAK LEFT
STITCH OF 3 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F8, 1/20 SEC, ISO 125, 25MM



DAWN VIEW FROM 1450M ON MT FELL, WITH MT FISHTAIL SILHOUETTED LEFT OF CENTRE, TAPAE-O-UENUKU DISTANT SKYLINE, JUST LEFT OF JOHNSTON PEAK, PT 1613 AND MT RICHMOND (RIGHT)

STITCH OF 5 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F8, 1/8 SEC, ISO 125, 24MM



MT FELL HUT, WITH MT FISHTAIL BEHIND
STITCH OF 2 LANDSCAPE IMAGES. F8. 1/320 SEC. ISO 125. 25MM



MT FELL SUMMIT VIEW NORTH TO PT 1411 AND PT 1496 (LEFT), AND EAST TO MT FISIITAIL, FAR RIGHT
STITCH OF 6 PORTRAIT IMAGES, F8, 1/500 SEC, ISO 125, 36MM