

# 11 winter

## weekend **GETAWAYS**

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***Keen to head away for the night to a hut that's both accessible and cosy? Ticked all the usual suspects and unsure where to go next? Wilderness asked our contributors for their top winter huts within a day's walk.***

*These are huts you can reach without having to rush. Some have soaring, snow-capped vistas, some offer native bush and birdsong. Huts beside rivers, huts with hot pools nearby – huts you're likely to recommend to others.*



**Mt Fell Hut,**  
Richmond  
Forest Park

Enjoy a great view to Mt Fishtail, with even better views from the alpine meadow and peaks above.

The 6-bunk Mt Fell Hut was built in 1964, and, in 2017, was relocated 250m south to its present location on the bushline just below an alpine meadow at 1270m, 1km south of Mt Fell (1602m). To the east, 7km as the kea flies, looms the distinctive profile of Mt Fishtail.

It takes about 30min to reach the ridge leading to Mt Fell, above the alpine meadow. This is a spot to enjoy the sunrise with views of the Wairau Plains, Tasman Bay, the Pelorus Valley and even Wellington on a clear day. Johnston Peak (1647m) and Mt Richmond (1760m) offer a day trip from the hut for those suitably prepared and equipped.

The walk begins at just 200m, so prepare for a big climb. For the first 5km 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 900m unrelenting climb through native forest ends at a sharp right turn. From here the track sidles northwards through mountain beech for about 2km to the hut.

Mt Fell Hut is a standard hut and does not require booking.

**Grade** Moderate–difficult **Time** 5–7hr **Distance** 12.8km

It's a big climb to Mt Fell Hut, but worth it





**Rangiwahia Hut,**  
Ruahine Forest Park

**Easy access to the tops for beautiful sunrises and sunsets.**

Rangiwahia Hut is perched above the bush-line at 1327m on a broad spur that extends 3km west off the main Ruahine Range. It offers unimpeded views that take in Ruapehu and Ngauruhoe to the northwest.

The trailhead car park is at 920m, leaving a one- to two-hour 500m climb up a well-formed track to reach the hut. En route the trail crosses a spectacular and photogenic arched bridge at about 1000m.

Rather than simply retracing steps on the return journey, continue up the spur to the summit of Mangahuia (1583m) where even better views can be enjoyed. The trail beyond Mangahuia leads about 5km down another spur back to the car park.

Rangiwahia is a serviced hut with 13 bunks. It's popular on weekends and holidays, so booking is required.

**Grade** Easy-moderate **Time** 1-2hr **Distance** 3km

Rangiwahia Hut provides unimpeded views of the Ruahine Range and far beyond

Roaring Stag Hut is in a sun-drenched clearing by the Ruamahunga River >

**Roaring Stag Hut,**  
Tararua Forest Park

**Relax on the veranda as the soothing headwaters of the Ruamahunga River flow by.**

Surrounded by lush native forest, 12-bunk Roaring Stag Hut sits on a sun-drenched bench at 440m on the true left of the Ruamahunga River. Originally an NZ Deerstalkers Association hut built in 1961, the hut was upgraded in 2005 by DOC and NZDA to include a wrap-around veranda.

Access is from Putara Road end, about 15km west of Eketāhuna. Take the trail for about 2km up the Mangatainoka Valley to a swing-bridge, followed by a steep climb to a junction at 760m on a ridge. A right turn at the junction ascends to Herapai Hut. Turning left (south), the trail drops gradually to the Ruamahunga River. Several unbridged side streams normally present no difficulty but can rise significantly after rain.

Roaring Stag Hut is a standard hut and does not require booking.

**Grade** Moderate **Time** 3-4hr **Distance** 7km







**Bushline Hut,**  
Nelson Lakes  
National Park

Bushline Hut is the midpoint of a superb 9km circuit in NLNP

**Tread a well-maintained loop trail through beech forest and alpine tops with stunning views of Lake Rotoiti**

The original Bushline Hut was built in 1944 at the tree line, at 1280m, but it burned down in 1987 and was reincarnated in 1987 as a 14-bunk hut. The views over Lake Rotoiti and across to the St Arnaud Range are stunning.

The hut is located at the midpoint of a superb 9km circuit that can be walked from either end. To go clockwise, take Paddy's Track. This starts 500m down the road from the Mt Robert Road car park and sidles across the mountain's open face, crossing several scree-filled gullies before climbing to Bushline Hut.

To complete the circuit, from the hut continue west on Paddy's Track above the bushline, into alpine herbs and shrubs, to a junction with Pinchgut Track at 1420m. This is also the flat summit of Pourangahau Mt Robert. The left turn at the junction leads past 2nd Basin and the old Mt Robert ski field buildings to Lake Angelus. The right turn leads down, past Relax Shelter, into beech forest and a sometimes steep but well-graded zigzag track to the car park.

Bushline Hut is serviced; bookings are required.

**Grade Moderate Time 2hr Distance 4.5 km**