



# Photographic locations worth sweating for

Round Lake, Kahurangi National Park

Peter Laurenson continues his exploration of New Zealand's Cobb Valley, venturing beyond Cobb Lake to the serene Round Lake. He navigates tranquil beech forests, tussock wetlands, and rugged alpine ridges to uncover striking viewpoints and mirror-like waters. We join him as he captures the beauty of this remote wilderness and highlights its potential for captivating landscape photography.

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My last article focused on some great photographic locations near Fenella Hut at the head of Cobb Valley. This time we'll go up to the source of Cobb River, beyond Cobb Lake to Round Lake. Less than 20 minutes' walk below Fenella Hut, the trail also branches west at Cobb Hut. Climbing steadily for 80 metres, the trail crests a spur, acting as the wall containing Cobb Lake. This is also where you can follow the spur north up to one of the viewpoints I described last time.

From the spur, the trail drops again to reach the eastern shore of Cobb Lake, with the karst ramparts of Xenicus Peak towering overhead in the north. This is the best spot to view the lake, especially if it's calm and the lake surface becomes a mirror. An easy saunter along the soggy southern lakeshore soon heads back into the bush before emerging onto tussock wetlands at the western end of the lake. Then it's back into the beech forest, first ambling along a flat section before a steady 200-metre climb to Round Lake at 1,300 metres.



ROUND LAKE, WITH THE PEEL RANGE BEHIND  
STITCH OF 3 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F8, 1/200 SEC, ISO 125, 24MM



THE DOUGLAS RANGE AND DRAGON'S TEETH, FROM MT GIBBS  
F8, 1/320 SEC, ISO 125, 62MM



A VIEW TO XENICUS PEAK FROM THE EASTERN END OF COBB LAKE  
 STITCH OF 8 PORTRAIT IMAGES, F8, 1/400 SEC, ISO 125, 24MM

Round Lake sits in a basin surrounded by sometimes steep tussock and shrub-covered walls. There are plenty of good spots to pitch a tent near the lake shore. Just like the larger Cobb Lake below, Round Lake becomes a mirror reflecting these walls in calm weather. And being camped up there positions you well to enjoy some high country magic hour time.

The most gradual way to climb to the surrounding ridge tops is to head west, up towards Pt 1574, but it's fine to also climb more steeply up to a saddle between Xenicus Peak and Mt Gibbs, then walk anticlockwise along the ridge towards Pt 1574. I did this to enjoy evening light from 1,645-metre Mt Gibbs, which offers a stunning 360-degree panoramic vista.

I was less inclined to repeat that strenuous 345-metre climb the next morning before sunrise, though, choosing the more civilised trudge up to Pt 1574. This also offers great views, particularly back down to Round Lake and also to Island Lake in a deep cirque to the north, with Aorere Peak soaring above.

If inclined, you can carry your camping gear above Round Lake to a tarn near Pt 1574 and camp there, positioning you perfectly for ridge-top views with little further effort. That's where I'll camp next time I head in to complete my plan to traverse the Peel Range when Mother Nature grants me a suitable weather window.



DAWN VIEW FROM PT 1574 TO ISLAND LAKE  
F8, 1/25 SEC, ISO 125, 53MM