

Top Christchurch Walk: The Crater Rim

The Crater Rim walk runs the length of the Port Hills from Godley Head to Gebbies Pass, following the curve of hills around the northern side of Lyttelton Harbour, a flooded volcanic crater. On a fine day, the track provides exquisite views of the harbour, peninsula, plains and alps.

Most people choose to walk sections of the track, but it is possible for fit and focused walkers to traverse its entirety in a day.

A typical and interesting section of the track goes from the top of Rapaki Track east to Mt Cavendish Saddle (two hours).

Summit Road east from the car park at the top of the Rapaki Track to the Bridle Path is currently closed to traffic, but open to walkers, runners and cyclists. Summit Road from Bridle Path to the Mt Cavendish saddle is closed to all users due to ongoing rock mitigation work.

From the Rapaki Track car park, the walking track goes above the road through pleasant tussock grasslands under Rapaki Rock, with its impressive rock faces, on to Witch Hill, or Te Upoko o Kuri (the dog's head). Europeans possibly named it Witch Hill because of the tapu associated with the area.

The track drops back to Summit Road, crosses it and picks up a newly formed track on the north side of the road, before crossing again and climbing up under the Tors, another spectacular volcanic rock outcrop.

The new track sidles on the sunny (north) side of the Tors, with splendid views to the north and, once past Castle Rock, views south across Lyttelton Harbour to Mt Herbert.

From the Bridle Path summit, the track leads east through rocks and shrubby vegetation, an ideal habitat for native skinks and geckos, climbing gently on to Mt Cavendish and the gondola, before dropping back to the road at Mt Cavendish saddle.

From the saddle, you can choose to drop down to Lyttelton on the Major Hornbrook Track, continue east on the Crater Rim to Sumner or Godley Head, or buy a ticket to go down on the gondola to Heathcote.

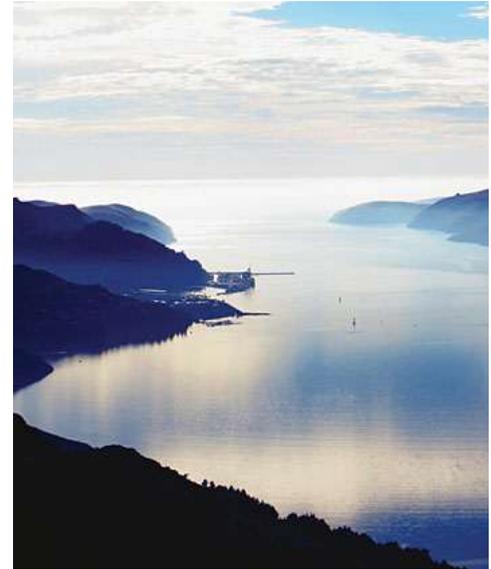
Time: 90 minutes (mid section)

Distance: 4.5km

Starting Point: Rapaki Track car park on Summit Road.

Difficult: Medium

Highlights: City and harbour views, rock tors.



Harbour views from the Crater Rim track.
Photo: Mark Pickering