

Top Christchurch Walk: Bridle Path

Feel like a good workout? This historic 3km walk was the first formed link between Lyttelton and Christchurch.

From the car park near the Lyttelton Tunnel portal in Heathcote Valley, the track climbs steadily for 300m to Summit Road, before dropping into the port of Lyttelton. It is a good workout in either direction or as a there-and-back excursion.

The Bridle Path was washed out in the March storms and still needs some repair work, so be prepared for a rough and slippery surface in places. The track zigzags uphill past some old stone seats, a yet-to-be repaired memorial cross and information panels, to Summit Road.

Castle Rock, a significant geological feature - an exposed volcanic outcrop - looms above the valley. Evidence of the earthquakes can be seen with impressively large rocks strewn down the hill from the shattered crag. The track passes under a rock roll area, marked with "no stopping" signs, advising walkers not to linger.

From the high point at Summit Road, there are great views of the plains, and across Lyttelton Harbour to Mt Herbert, the highest point on the peninsula. Here, too, stands the Pioneer Women's Memorial, a shelter commemorating the courage of female pioneers. This is also awaiting earthquake repairs. The track then drops, sidling on to a spur and then steadily down to Lyttelton.

The Stan Helms Track to the west of the Bridle Path provides an interesting link back up to Summit Road. It starts in a sharp bend of Harmans Road. Turn right off Bridle Path Rd for about 500m to find the signposted track start.

Combine exercise and shopping on a Saturday by walking over and enjoying the Lyttelton Farmers' Market in London Street, 10am to 1pm. Stock up on fresh produce, or treat yourself to a fine lunch and then catch the bus back through the road tunnel to Heathcote. Bus 28 runs regularly to both ends of this walk.

Time: 90 minutes - 2 hours

Distance: 3km

Starting Point: Car park at the base of the gondola.

Difficulty: Hard

Highlights: Great views of Castle Rock. Ends in Lyttelton where you can stop for lunch.



Walkers can stop for lunch at the end of The Bridle Path track in Lyttelton.
Photo: Mark Pickering