

MOUNT CLIMIE TRACK

PAKURATAHI FOREST



Tunnel Gully Recreation Area nestles at the foot of Mount Climie (860m) in the Pakuratahi Forest north of Upper Hutt.

Tunnel Gully is named for its link with the famous Rimutaka Incline Railway. An interesting feature is the 221m long Mangaroa Tunnel which was built between 1875 and 1877. Its working life ended in November 1955 when the new Rimutaka Tunnel was opened. The area is popular for picnics, mountain biking and walking. Toilets and parking are provided.

The Mt Climie ridge provides the southern and eastern backdrop (and windbreak) to Upper Hutt. It is also part of the long northern skyline of the Rimutaka Range seen across the harbour from Wellington City.

The track to Mt Climie starts from the upper picnic area. Look out for service vehicles at all times. Along the summit ridge the vegetation opens out to give magnificent views of the Hutt Valley. Allow 3-4 hours return.

How to Get There

To get to Tunnel Gully, catch the train from Wellington to Upper Hutt Station. This meets the No 12 bus departing for Plateau. From the end of Plateau Road it is a 2km walk to Tunnel Gully. By car from Wellington, take SH 2 and turn right at Te Marua (7.5km north of Upper Hutt). Follow Plateau Road to its end to reach Tunnel Gully.

Tunnel Gully Vegetation

The sheltered Tunnel Gully valley contains a variety of trees and shrubs. The production forest, planted from 1946 - 1984, is mainly *Pinus radiata*. Early plantings follow fire scars from the former railway.

The two picnic areas are shaded by stands of eucalyptus trees. The lower area is surrounded by mature podocarp/tawa forest. The soil here is damp and reasonably fertile, providing an ideal habitat for emergent rimu, miro, northern rata and particularly pukatea and kahikatea. These species form a canopy layer over hinau, tawa, rewarewa and mahoe. As altitude increases, the soil becomes less fertile. The dominant vegetation changes to kamahi and hard beech forest then red and silver beech, better suited to the more exposed environment.

The variety in vegetation offers a habitat for many insects and birds. The bellbird, fantail, tui, kereru and even the occasional North Island kaka are attracted to the rich food source. The kereru is particularly fond of large fruit from the miro and tawa. With the decline of fruit eating birds such as the kokako and kaka, the kereru is the only species remaining to spread the larger seeds.

Walk Description

The Mount Climie Track gives you the opportunity to see the changes in vegetation in the northern Rimutaka Range with increase in altitude and exposure to wind. Five interpretive sites along the track are described below. The map on the back indicates the approximate position of the sites.

1. *Regenerating Forest*

This lower forest is regenerating after past logging and fire damage. Most of the canopy consists of tree ferns and broadleaved trees, such as rewarewa (*Knightia excelsa*) and broadleaf (*Griselinia littoralis*). There are some miro (*Prumnopitys ferruginea*), while rimu (*Dacrydium cupressinum*) and skeletons of dead rata can be seen emerging above the canopy.



2. *Ecotone Area*

The forest canopy now contains more beech, along with other trees capable of withstanding the colder, moister conditions - pepper tree (*Pseudowintera colorata*), stinkwood (*Coprosma foetidissima*), kamahi (*Weinmannia racemosa*), and fuchsia (*Fuchsia extorticata*).



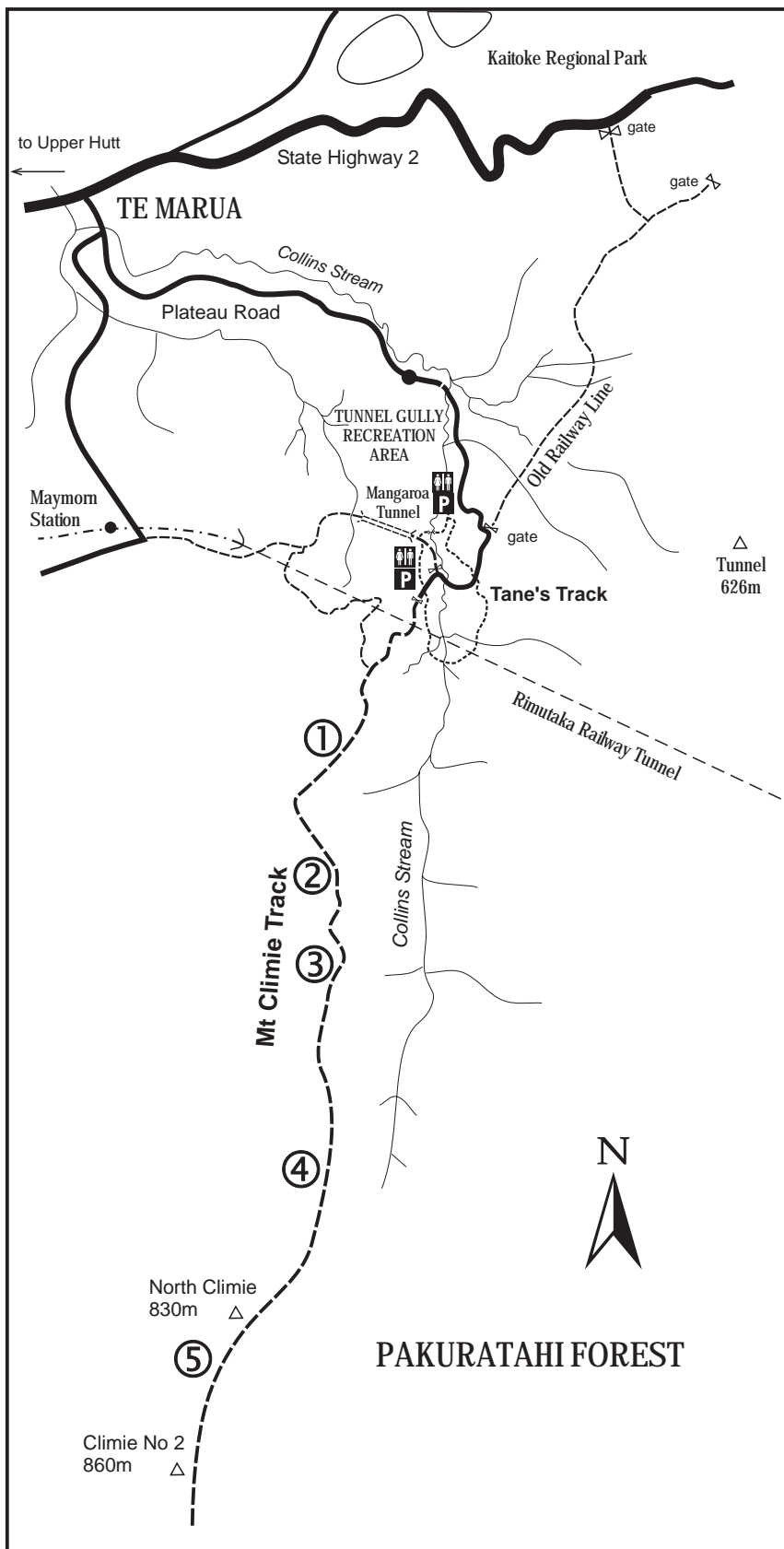
Kamahi
(*Weinmannia racemosa*)



Pepper tree
(*Pseudowintera colorata*)

3. *Red/Silver Beech*

This is a colder, wetter area which is often under cloud (and snow for short periods). Silver beech (*Nothofagus menziesii*) is the most common canopy tree but there are appreciable numbers of red beech (*N. fusca*), hard beech (*N. truncata*), and kamahi especially where the soils are deeper. A few Hall's totara (*Podocarpus hallii*) can be found. The understory consists of pepper tree and stinkwood, and the mountain cabbage tree (*Cordyline indivisa*) becomes a more obvious component of the forest. *Astelia* species become more common in the ground cover.



Silver Beech
(*Nothofagus menziesii*)



Mountain Cabbage Tree
(*Cordyline indivisa*)

4. Silver Beech

The forest canopy is now almost completely silver beech. The old trees are stunted and gnarled, their trunks and branches often covered in mosses and lichens. Occasional broadleaf and mountain three finger (*Raukahu simplex*) appear, and one of the forest 'snow grasses' (*Chionochloa conspicua*) is common in the openings in the forest. Pepper tree (*Pseudowintera colorata*) is still the most common understorey shrub. Some tree ferns and many other ferns are plentiful.



Woolly leaved Astelia
(*Astelia nervosa*)



Snowgrass
(*Chionochloa conspicua*)

5. Open Ridgetops around Mt Climie

Scattered beech can still be seen but most of the vegetation has been induced by fires in the early 20th century. Most of the groundcover is a dense thicket of divaricating shrubs, *Astelia* species and *Chionochloa conspicua*. South of Mt Climie No. 2 trig (860 m) there is an area of true snow tussock the only snow tussock on the Rimutaka Range.

Safety Outdoors

Mt Climie is prone to strong winds and an occasional snowfall in winter. As our weather is notoriously changeable and winds chill very quickly, a wind and waterproof jacket is essential. It is a good idea to wear layers of clothing which you can peel off as you get hot and put on again as you cool. Take high energy snacks and drinking water with you. Always advise someone of your intended route and when to expect you back.

More Information

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!The information in this publication is correct at the date of printing.

!To help us keep these information sheets up to date, please advise us of any discrepancies in the information given.

Protect plants and animals.
Remove rubbish.
Bury toilet waste.
Keep streams and lakes clean.
Take care with fires.
Camp carefully.
Keep to the track.
Consider others.
Respect our cultural heritage.
Enjoy your visit.

Toitu te whenua (Leave the land undisturbed)



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