Angelus Hut
Tracks & Routes

NELSON LAKES NATIONAL PARK
Introduction

Angelus Hut, superbly sited in a grand landscape adjacent to Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus in Nelson Lakes National Park, is a comfortable refuge in any season. At 1650 metres altitude though, the weather can change very quickly. Snow, frost and freezing winds can occur even in midsummer. In winter, the lake is frozen and snow blankets all four routes to Angelus and you are likely to have to dig your way to the hut.

Can I do it?

All visitors to Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus should be well-equipped with warm and waterproof clothing, a map, and adequate food and fuel. Winter visitors should carry, and know how to use: ice axe, crampons and snow shovel; also an avalanche transceiver and probe.

You must be fit enough to walk for 2–3 days, up to 12.2 km for 6 hours per day and climb to 1800 metres. You must be comfortable on rough terrain and without a fear of heights.

Ensure weather and track conditions are suitable.

Your safety is your responsibility. Before you go into the outdoors, tell someone your plans and leave a date to raise the alarm if you haven’t returned. To do this, use the New Zealand Outdoor Intentions process on the AdventureSmart website www.adventuresmart.org.nz/outdoors-intentions. It is endorsed by New Zealand’s search and rescue agencies and provides three simple options to tell someone you trust the details of your trip.
Pinchgut Track, Robert Ridge Route
The most popular route in fine weather. There is no water along the track/route. Expect ice and snow during winter and spring. A very exposed ridge subject to high wind and poor visibility.

Speargrass Track, Speargrass Creek Route
Unbridged stream crossings, route navigation is required via poles. Muddy sections below the bush edge. This route is often used to exit Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus in bad weather.

Travers–Cascade Track/Route
Expect ice and snow during winter and spring. Above the bush edge requires route navigation via poles and cairns.

Mt Cedric Track/Route
This route would only be used by trampers accessing Angelus Hut via the Travers–Sabine Circuit. There is no water along the track/route. Expect ice and snow during winter and spring. The track is a steep climb to the bush edge. Route navigation is required above the bush edge via poles and cairns. A very exposed ridge, subject to high winds and poor visibility.

Location
Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus is in Nelson Lakes National Park and St Arnaud village is the gateway to the Park. The Department of Conservation operates a comprehensive visitor centre there. Hotel, motel, backpacker, campground, and bach accommodation is available. A shop with a postal agency sells groceries and petrol. Lake Rotoroa has a backpacker hostel and campground. Water taxis operate on both lakes.

Getting there
St Arnaud is easily accessible from both Nelson and Blenheim. From each location it is a 1 hour 30 minute drive on good roads. It is a five-hour drive from Christchurch.
Angelus Hut is open all year with two distinct seasons.

**Late November to 30 April**
In the peak season the hut and campsites **must be booked.** Bookings can be made online at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or print a booking form from the Angelus web page and book by post, fax, email, phone or in person at DOC visitor centres, i-SITEs, or DOC agents. Booking fees may apply. There is a warden at the hut.

**1 May to late November**
In the off peak season bookings are not required and trampers must pay by Backcountry Hut Pass or Backcountry Hut Tickets. For an adult (18+ years) to stay in the hut it’s three blue (standard) hut tickets or one green (serviced) ticket per night, youth (11–17 years) it’s three yellow (standard) tickets or one orange (serviced) ticket per night, infant/child (0–10 years) free.

For an adult (18+ years) to stay in the campsite it’s one blue (standard) hut ticket per night, youth (11–17 years) it’s one yellow (standard) ticket per night, infant/child (0–10 years) free.

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**Hut**
Angelus Hut is well-insulated with a wood burning stove for heating (not suitable for cooking on), toilets, bunks, mattresses and water supply. The hut does **not** have lighting, gas cookers or pots and pans.

The hut must be booked from late November to 30 April. From 1 May to late November the hut is managed as a serviced hut and Backcountry Hut Tickets or a Backcountry Hut Pass must be used. Overnight stays are limited to two consecutive nights. School groups, guided walking groups and independent walkers can stay in the hut. Please be considerate of other visitors. Hut users are expected to use firewood sparingly, leave hut clean and tidy and take their rubbish out with them.

**Campsite**
A campsite must be booked from late November to 30 April. From 1 May to late November the campsites are managed as backcountry campsites, you must use Backcountry Hut Tickets or a Backcountry Hut Pass. Ideal campsites are below the hut near the lake. Campers can use the hut to prepare and eat meals and must use the toilet facilities at the hut. School groups, guided walking groups and independent walkers can stay at the campsites. Please be considerate to other visitors. Campers are expected to leave their campsite clean and tidy and take their rubbish out with them. The Angelus Basin is a fragile area and camping away from the hut toileting facilities is discouraged.
Planning, preparation and equipment

Plan, prepare and equip yourself well. Have the right gear and skills required for the trip and always check the latest information about facilities you plan to use and local weather conditions. The DOC website has the latest information. Go to www.doc.govt.nz and follow these headings: parks and recreation/plan and prepare/alerts/Nelson/Tasman. This information is also displayed on visitor centre notice boards.

What to take
To cope with the varied conditions you need a range of equipment for warm, cold, windy or wet conditions. You will need at least one set of clothes to walk in and another dry set to change into at night. Cotton clothing, such as jeans, T-shirts and sweatshirts, is not suitable. Wool and modern synthetics are better as they dry quickly and give more warmth. Winter visitors should carry, and know how to use: ice axe, crampons and snow shovel; also an avalanche transceiver and probe. Take a spare day’s food in case of delay due to weather conditions.

Weather
Hospitable and welcoming on a fine day, Angelus Basin and the alpine access routes are prone to sudden weather changes bringing freezing winds and snow at any time of the year. Even small streams are dangerous in flood. Winter conditions or bad weather could slow or stop your progress to or from the hut. If the snow is hard or icy, the consequences of a fall could be lethal. Snow avalanches are a possibility.

Trip intentions
Leave details of your trip (return date and time, planned route, party members names and vehicle license plate numbers) with a trusted contact, and don’t forget to let them know when you return. You can also use the New Zealand Outdoor Intentions process on the AdventureSmart website www.adventuresmart.org.nz/outdoors-intentions to do this. Remember to fill in hut books during your trip, even if you do not stay in the hut. They can assist in search and rescue operations, and may help save your life.

Safety
Be ready and have the right equipment for heavy rain, flooded streams, snow and cold winds. Remember your safety is your responsibility.

Sandflies
Sandflies are tiny black insects which cause itchy bites. Cover up and use insect repellent.

Wasps
There are high numbers of wasps particularly between January and April. Consider carrying an antihistamine product and, if you are allergic to their stings, ensure you bring your medication.

Giardia
Giardia has not been found in waters along the track but its presence cannot be dismissed. To avoid giardia, water should be boiled, chemically treated or filtered.

Rubbish
No rubbish facilities are provided. Carry out all your rubbish from the park. Do not put plastic or foil bags in the fireplace because they do not burn cleanly. Do not deposit rubbish in toilets.
**Pinchgut Track, Robert Ridge Route**

12.2 km, 6 hr

From Mt Robert Car Park, a steep zigzag track (the Pinchgut Track) climbs up to the junction with Paddys Track (Bushline Hut 30 minutes from junction). The Pinchgut Track ends and the route along the ridge is marked with poles. The route follows a broad ridge to Julius Summit (1794 m). From here the route has some sharp and rocky sections. Care must be taken here in icy or winter conditions as accidents have occurred on this section with those not properly equipped and experienced. Continue past the junction with the Speargrass Creek Route (30 minutes from Angelus Hut) onto the ridge overlooking Angelus Basin. Follow the poles down to the lake and hut. There is no water along the track/route so remember to carry your own. Be prepared for snow and ice during winter and spring. Robert Ridge is very exposed and is subject to high winds and poor visibility at any time of year.

**Speargrass Track, Speargrass Creek Route**

11.2 km, 6 hr

From Mt Robert Car Park follow Speargrass Track to the Speargrass Creek Route junction approximately 5 minutes before Speargrass Hut (1060 m, serviced 12 bunk hut). From the car park to the track junction takes approximately 2 hours and 30 minutes. From the track junction it is a poled route with many unbridged stream crossings up Te Horowai/Speargrass Creek to intersect with the Mt Robert Ridge Route 10 minutes short of the view overlooking Angelus Basin. Follow the poles to the lake and hut. Expect muddy sections below the bush edge. This way is often used in bad weather.
Ways to Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus

Travers–Cascade Track/Route
9.4 km, 6 hr
From St Arnaud the options are to walk to either Lakehead Hut (9 km, 3 h) or Coldwater Hut (12 km, 4 h).

From Coldwater Hut to the Cascade Track junction it is 1 hour 30 minutes. From Lakehead Hut it is also 1 hour 30 minutes to the Cascade Track junction. Note this includes crossing the unbridged Travers River. If the Travers River is in flood a swingbridge is located 1 hour 30 minutes upstream. From the Cascade Track junction it’s a steady climb for 4 hours 30 minutes alongside the Hukere Stream. The track ends at the bush edge. Climb steeply following the poled route to Angelus Hut. Snow and ice can create hazards requiring suitable experience and equipment to safely negotiate this route.

Mt Cedric Track/Route (from Sabine Hut)
6.8 km, 6 hr
This is a very steep route to Angelus Basin which is exposed above the bush edge. The track begins behind Sabine Hut (serviced hut, 32 bunks) and climbs very steeply and steadily to the bush edge. Poles and cairns mark the route from here, which eventually drops off the eastern side of a high ridge of Mt Cedric (1532 m) and onto Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus. There is no water along the track/route. Snow and ice can create hazards requiring suitable experience and equipment to safely negotiate this route.
History

Perched high on the ranges between Lakes Rotoiti and Rotoroa in Nelson Lakes National Park is Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus. It is really a large alpine pond or tarn, a legacy of recent ice advances and typical of the many tarns in the park. During successive major ice advances, which ended about 10,000 years ago, glaciers and permanent snowfields covered much of the Southern Alps. Erosion by ice has left its characteristic mark: steep valley walls, bluff-ringed side creeks, sharp ridges and peaks, and round, lake-filled basins.

The trip along Robert Ridge to Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus is one way to enjoy the alpine environment in the park. The first recorded person to scramble along Robert Ridge was Julius von Haast in 1860 but it is unlikely he was the first.

The lake was previously known as Rangimārie (a Māori name given by a European meaning peaceful). Later a group climbing the obvious peak to the south named the peak and by association the lake ‘Angelus’ after a devotional prayer. They also named nearby Hinapōuri Tarn (dark waters), and Hukere Stream (cascading waters).

Above: Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus and Maniniaro/Angelus Peak.
Right: Hukere Stream.
Photos: Markus Baumann
Other activities

Climbing
In summer the best side trip from the hut is the climb of Maniniaro/Mt Angelus (2075 m). If the mountain is clear of snow no special equipment or experience is required. The less energetic could climb to Sunset Saddle and then traverse west for ten minutes to the Travers Range. This provides spectacular views of the D’Urville and Sabine rivers twisting lazily to the head of Lake Rotoroa.

Hunting
Speargrass Valley is a popular hunting area. A hunting permit is required and you can get one yourself from the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz or from the Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre or any DOC office in Nelson or Marlborough.

Ski touring/snowshoeing
The Robert Ridge in winter is good for both of these activities with skiing possible through to Angelus Hut in ideal conditions.

Botanising
The alpine basins in the area offer good botanising with habitats ranging from screes and bluffs to stream beds, small bogs and open tussock slopes.

Transport
Contact the Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre or the DOC Nelson Visitor Centre for information on the local land and water transport operators.

Please remember

Safety
Remember your safety is your responsibility. To report any safety hazards in the outdoors call DOC HOTline: 0800 362 468.

Environmental care
The alpine environment, although apparently harsh, is very fragile.
Do not wash utensils or use soap in the lake, use the hut facilities.
Use the toilet facilities provided.
Use firewood sparingly, the stove is only for heating.

Water
There is no natural water on the Pinchgut Track, Robert Ridge Route and Mt Cedric Track/Route.

Rubbish
There are no rubbish facilities. Please pack out what you pack in.

Domestic animals
No domestic animals are permitted in the national park.

Buttercups—Ranunculus
To find out more

For more information contact:

**Department of Conservation**
**Rotoiti/Nelson Lakes Visitor Centre**
PO Box 55, St Arnaud 7053
Ph: (03) 521 1806  Fax: (03) 521 1896
Email: nelsonlakesvc@doc.govt.nz

For booking huts or campsites contact:

**Nelson Marlborough Bookings Helpdesk**
**Department of Conservation**
PO Box 375
Nelson 7040
New Zealand
Ph: (03) 546 8210  International: +64 3 546 8210
Fax: (03) 546 9612  International: +64 3 546 9612
Email: nmbookings@doc.govt.nz
Open: Mon–Sun  8:30 AM–12 PM and 1 PM–4:30 PM
Bookings can be made in person at selected DOC offices, i-SITEs and visitor centres. A booking fee may apply.
Online bookings can be made at www.doc.govt.nz/angelushuttracks where you will also find terms and conditions.
For hunting permits go online to www.doc.govt.nz or contact your nearest DOC office.

doc.govt.nz

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