

# Ruamahunga River

## Upper, Middle & Lower Reaches

CHECK  CLEAN  DRY

Photo: Hamish Camachan



Wellington Region

# Ruamahanga River

The Ruamahanga River is the principal trout fishery in the Wairarapa. It offers a range of fishing experiences from classic backcountry fishing in the Tararuas, to trolling for sea-run browns in the tidal zone near it's outlet to Lake Onoke. Access to most parts of the river is easy, due to the close proximity of roads. While brown trout predominate, there is a growing rainbow fishery.

## **ATTENTION ANGLERS**

Sections of riverbed covered by this pamphlet may be in private ownership, which means anglers do not necessarily have a right of access. Some landowners may have agreed to anglers having access along the riverbed without having to obtain permission first.

Please respect the privilege of access. Once you are on the river, stay within the riverbed and do not wander on to adjacent farmland without the express permission of the landowner. If you require clarification around where you are legally entitled to go, please visit the Walking Access Commission website - [www.wams.org.nz](http://www.wams.org.nz) - and use the public access layers.

### **Conditions of access are:**

- NO dogs. NO camping. NO fires. NO vehicles on the riverbed.
- Leave gates as you find them.

### **Please Note:**

Fish & Game has endeavoured to show where legal public access exists to and along this river. Because of a variety of factors beyond our control, this is a guideline only. The onus of avoiding trespassing on private land rests with the angler and, where doubt arises, landowner permission should be sought. If any difficulty occurs through the use of this information, please contact Wellington Fish & Game.

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## **Upper Reaches**

Within the Tararua Forest Park, classic wilderness fishing is available. A relatively small number of large fish are present in gin clear water. This section of river

is best fished mid-summer when wading conditions are comfortable and trout are actively feeding.

Downstream of the Tararua Forest Park fishing is patchy until close to Masterton. From Masterton the river is bigger, and both pools and trout are more numerous. Spinning and bait fishing are best early and late in the season or during higher flows following a fresh. Fly-fishing is most effective during summer as temperatures rise and hatches of mayfly become prolific.

## 1 SH2 Mount Bruce Bridge

Just over 20km north of Masterton on SH2, turn left onto an unnamed gravel road 100m before the bridge over the Ruamahanga River. Drive 700m up this gravel road to the Department of Conservation signage and park. Walking access is through private land upstream to the Tararua Forest Park. Stay on the track and follow the markers.

It is a little over 4km to the Forest Park boundary, and although a paper road runs along both sides of the river through the farmland, there are only a few access points down to the river which can be difficult to locate. Further up into the conservation estate, and as the gorge opens, access becomes easier but requires a long walk. It is best to overnight if planning fishing this backcountry section. Be prepared for the elements.

## 2 Double Bridges - Mel Parkinson Reserve

About 7km north of Masterton turn off SH2 onto the Opaki Kaiparoro Road. Drive just over 1 km, cross the bridge over the Ruamahanga and turn right onto Bluff Rangitumau Road. Just a few metres down this road is the entrance to the reserve. Drive down the gravel track and park, The river is no more than 20m away. Fish up or downstream from this point.

## 3 Henley Lake

Henley Lake is adjacent to the Ruamahanga River on the eastern side of Masterton. It provides excellent parking and easy walking access to the river. A large public reserve runs from the Te Ore Ore Bridge downstream to the Waipoua confluence. This provides comfortable walking access to a lot of excellent fishing water.

You have a choice of two car parks. The first is on Masterton-Castlepoint Road, 400m before the Te Ore Ore Bridge. The second is the Columbo Road entrance to the lake, which is the first road on the right after the hospital when travelling out of Masterton on Masterton-Castlepoint Road. From both car parks the river is 400m walk away on the eastern side of the lake.

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#### 📍 Te Ore Ore Bridge - Percy Reserve

This reserve provides excellent access directly to the river, with lots of parking. Travelling east out of Masterton, turn left off Masterton-Castlepoint Road 50m before the Te Ore Ore Bridge.

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#### 📍 Wardells Bridge

When travelling south through Masterton along SH2, turn left at the Caltex Service Station onto South Belt Road just before you reach the Copthorne Hotel. Continue on into Manaia Road and then onto Te Whiti Road. After 1.8km you will cross the Ruamahanga River at Wardells Bridge. Park at the roadside on the eastern side of the bridge. Walking access is over the stile in the fence and down to the river. This is private land so stay on the track once over the stile, and walk directly to the river.

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## Middle Reaches

From the Waingawa confluence downstream the river is bigger, with larger pools, long runs, and higher numbers of fish. Spinning and bait fishing are best early and late in the season. Fly-fishing comes into its own during summer as temperatures rise and hatches of mayfly become prolific. After floods, large backwaters can form, and trout can be found cruising around in these feeding. They are a test for anglers attempting to intercept them with small nymph patterns.

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#### 📍 The Cliffs

Travelling south from Masterton on SH2, turn left onto East Taratahi Road 2.6km past the Waingawa River Bridge. If you are travelling north, East Taratahi Road lies 5.5km from the Taratahi Hotel on the northern side of Carterton. Drive along East Taratahi Road and then onto Dakins Road. At the road end you will find ample parking

among the totara trees. In summer the area is very popular with campers and swimmers. As a result, it pays to move a few pools upstream or downstream before you start fishing. From the Cliffs it is about a day's fishing up to Wardells Bridge. Downstream of the campground is half a day's angling to Gladstone access #7. Excellent evening rises occur at any time of day.

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### 📍 **Gladstone Bridge**

When travelling north through Carterton, turn right into Park Road when you reach the round-about. At the end of Park Road turn left onto Carter's Line then right onto Gladstone Road. The Bridge is 12.5km from the SH2 turn-off in Carterton. Before the bridge on the left is a public reserve which provides excellent parking and a basic campground. From the parking area you can travel upstream on foot. Please note that for a distance of 1.1km downstream from the Gladstone Bridge the riverbed is in private ownership and you cannot fish through this reach without the owner's permission.

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### 📍 **Kokotau Bridge**

When travelling north through Carterton, turn right into Moreton Road. At the end of Moreton Road turn right then veer left around the sweeping bend onto Kokotau Road. Follow this all the way until immediately before the bridge crossing the Ruamahanga River where a gravel track leads to a small parking area. There is ample fishing both up and downstream.

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### 📍 **Forman Jury Road**

Forman Jury Road is 3km south of the Kokotau Bridge on Ponatahi Road. Continue travelling south from the Kokotau Bridge and turn right into Forman Jury Road (gravel). After about 1.4km you will reach what looks like a fork in the road and a fence with a Fish & Game 'Angler Access' sign - take the right branch. Continue for approximately another 1km and you will reach a gate and cattle stop with a sign advising of private property. However, there is legal public access to the river where the Fish & Game sign is positioned another 50m past this point.

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### 📍 **Tilsons Road**

Access through the Gliding Club is no longer available to anglers after it was closed off by Great Wellington Regional Council and South Wairarapa District Council. As a result, the new route to the

Ruamahanga at this site is a little more arduous.

Turn off SH2 onto Papawai Road when you reach the Challenge Service Station in Greytown. About 2.8km along Papawai Road veer left past the Pah Road turn-off and continue along Papawai Road, which becomes Tilsons Road. Head all the way to the end. Cross the concrete ford and you will arrive at a gate with an access sign and information from South Wairarapa District Council. Drive through the gate, leaving it as you find it, and the gravel track will lead to the Waiohine River where there is space to park vehicles around 1.2km upstream of the confluence with the Ruamahanga. During summer low-flows, it is easy walking and wading - knee deep - all the way to the confluence. There is excellent fishing at the confluence and for some distance downstream and upstream.

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### **Morison's Bush**

At the southern end of Greytown turn off SH2 onto Bidwells Cutting. Travel for 6km and turn left into Glenmorvan road. This is a gravel road that you can follow (3.5km) directly to the river. The Morison's Bush Picnic and Camping area is on private property; permission to camp must be obtained first. Mr Bryan Tucker is the landowner and can be contacted on 025-570 616, or drop into his home which is the first house on the left, 400m down Glenmorvan Road. Morison's Bush is very popular in the summer months with campers and family picnickers. This should be considered when looking for peace and tranquillity. Excellent fly and spin fishing is available both upstream and downstream.

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### **Martinborough Bridge**

The Martinborough Bridge is the last bridge you go over when travelling along SH53 to Martinborough from Featherston. It is 15km from Featherston, or just 2km west of Martinborough. This access point provides excellent parking on the gravel beach next to the river. Around 5.25km downstream from the Martinborough Bridge you require landowner permission to fish the next 250m of river on the western (true right) side of the riverbed. The river down here is difficult to cross in winter. During summer, expect to get wet when crossing. Summer evening rises are well worth travelling for. A further 7km downstream from the Martinborough Bridge you require landowner permission to fish the next 1 km of river on the true right side of the riverbed.

## Lower Reaches

Below the Tuhitarata Bridge trolling is popular, especially in autumn when sea-run brown trout move into the river. Some of the best perch fishing in our region is found here with fish up to 2kg caught. Bait fishing is an excellent way to catch fish here.

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### 📍 Pahautea Road Access

When travelling south along Kahutara Road, turn left onto Pahautea Road (this is sign posted as 'Kahutara Canoes'). Follow Pahautea Road for 3.3km until you see a Fish & Game 'Angler Access' sign on your left. This sign marks the turn off onto a track that runs about 300m along the top of a stopbank and then down to the river. There is good parking on the gravel beach. From the point marked by the 'Angler Access' sign the river can also be accessed by driving south along Pahautea Road. From a point 200m past the 'Angler Access' sign the road follows the river for about 4km. All that is required is to park on the roadside and walk over the stopbank to the river at any particular point. Take care when parking as the road is very narrow.

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### 📍 Diversion Stopbank Access / Tuhitarata Bridge

When travelling along Kahutara Road south to Lake Ferry, 500m before the Tuhitarata Bridge on the right is the East West Access Road. Immediately on the left you will see the EC Holmes memorial scenic reserve. From here south, the road follows the stopbank and river on the left for 4km. There is a gravel track on the top of the stopbank, which looks down onto the river. Please leave the gates closed and do not disturb the stock.

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### 📍 Ruamahanga River Boat Club / Barrage Gates

When travelling south along Kahutara Road, 500m before the Tuhitarata Bridge on the right is the East West Access Road, follow this road for 7.6km. Turn left into the reserve where there is an 'Angler Access' sign and drive 200m to the car park. Here you will find a toilet block, running water, and ample room for camping. This site has the best boat launching facilities for those wishing to try their luck at trolling. 400m past the boat club are the Geoffrey Blundell barrage gates. From the barrage gates you can walk downstream on the eastern side of the channel to reach the Ruamahanga River.

# Ruamahanga River

Photo: Andrew Harding



## Please Note:

For more information on fishing the lower Ruamahanga River, Wairarapa Moana and Lake Onoke, please see our Wairarapa Moana Angling Guide.

Access information online: [www.fishandgame.nz/access.org/wellington](http://www.fishandgame.nz/access.org/wellington)

Access online  
by scanning  
the QR Code



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