



Photographic locations worth sweating for

Gomorrah biv, Kahurangi National Park

Peter Laurenson takes us deep into the rugged beauty of Kahurangi National Park, sharing his journey to Gomorrah Biv along the remote Wharepapa / Arthur Range. With steep climbs, goblin forests, and summit sunsets, this is a photographic adventure that rewards every step — but only if you're willing to sweat for the shot.

WORDS AND IMAGES
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DUSK VIEW NORTH FROM MT GOMORRAH. MT SODOM IN THE CENTRE
STITCH OF 3 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F8, 1/40 SEC, ISO 125, 25MM

When I shifted south to my new home in Richmond in 2022, which looks across to the Wharepapa / Arthur Range, I set myself the goal of walking as much of that skyline as possible — stretching from Abel Tasman in the north all the way to Mt Owen in the south. I've made good progress, now only needing one or two more trips to plug a gap south of the Twins. My last trip covered a good stretch further south, beginning above John Reid Hut.

Some sections of the Wharepapa / Arthur Range, such as the Mt Arthur Track, are pleasant strolls. But the terrain can suddenly morph into steep, rugged, and challenging toil. South of Mt Arthur provides a good example. From there, only rough routes — rather than well-trodden trails — pick their way along the ridgeline, often pushed off the most jagged, sheer portions and

forced to sidle beneath the ridge until the going eases again. Another challenge in this porous karst country is water, or the lack of it on the tops. Large stretches of the range offer no water source unless you plunge hundreds of metres down from the ridge to reach tarns nestled in the basins below. This is terrain that demands plenty of sweating to traverse.

My friend Bruce and I accessed the section I'm writing about here via Whangapeka River Road. At a car park about 8 km before the road end (Courthouse Flat Campsite), we crossed the unbridged Whangapeka River (not possible when the water level is high) to connect with Chummies Track. This climbs relentlessly from under 300 metres to John Reid Hut, perched on the treeline at 1,240 metres.

The six-bunk hut offers one option as a base for exploring the ridge 160 metres higher up. However, once on the ridge, a little more climbing south leads to a good camp spot, which I've used on a previous trip to cover the southern skyline. It takes five or six hours to reach the camp from the car park. That time, we were treated to a magnificent sunset and an even better sunrise, so my advice is to forego the comforts of the hut in favour of the magic hour vistas above. Just remember to bring plenty of water!

On this trip, from John Reid Hut we climbed to the ridge, then followed it north. Above 1,300 metres, the terrain opens up, but the ridge occasionally dips below the bushline, requiring

navigational care and a fair bit of grovelling through dense goblin forest.

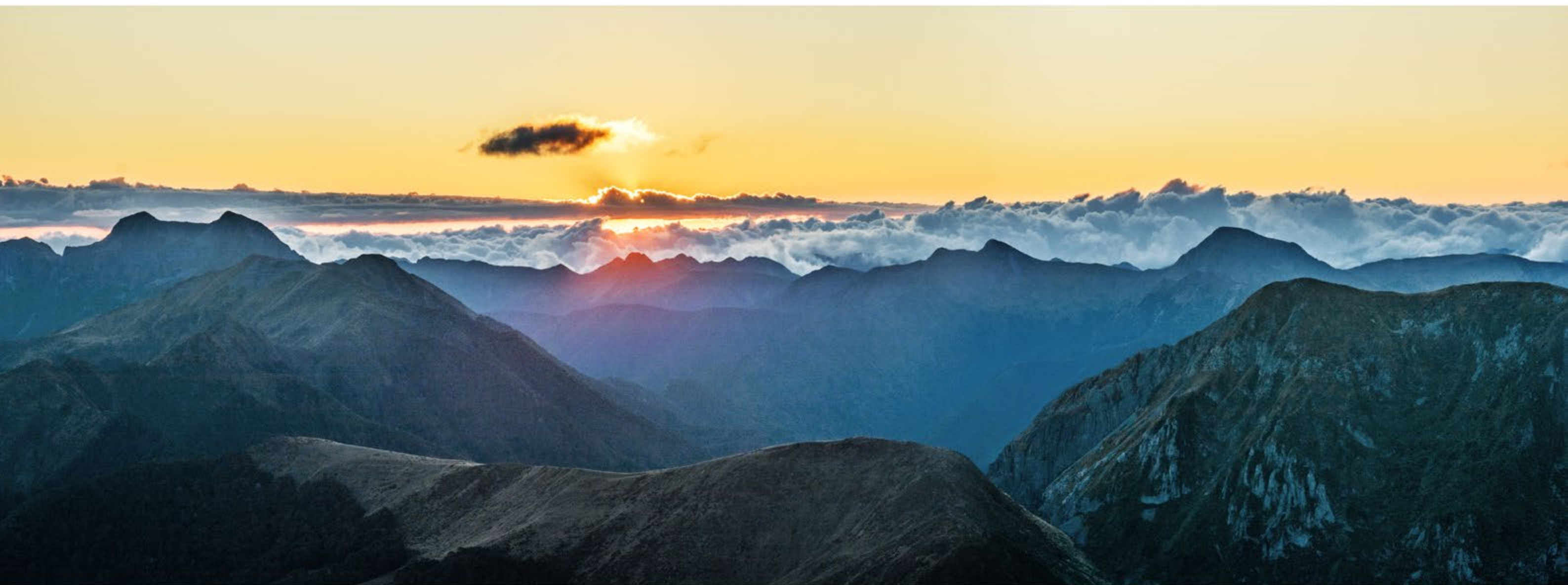
The ridge also undulates upward, at times enough for the high points to qualify as mountains. In the late afternoon we passed one on our left — Mt Baldy — which sits just off the main ridge, guarding its 1,542-metre summit with steep cliffs. Our destination was Mt Gomorrah to the east. After another goblin forest grovel and a 300-metre climb, we reached its 1,592-metre summit. Having been tramping for over eight hours, we were delighted to find the top to be open and relatively flat, with shallow hollows well suited for sheltered bivvying.



DUSK VIEW NORTH FROM MT GOMORRAH
F6.4, 1/80 SEC, ISO 125, 300MM



DAWN VIEW SOUTH FROM MT GOMORRAH. MT OWEN GROUP ON THE LEFT SKYLINE
F3.3, 1/13 SEC, ISO 400, 80MM



SUNSET VIEW SOUTHWEST TO MT PATRIARCH (FAR LEFT) AND LUNA RIDGE
STITCH OF 3 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F8, 1/125 SEC, ISO 125, 101MM

We set up camp just in time for sunset. The views from Gomorrah in every direction were spectacular, and our memory cards filled quickly. The same continued at sunrise — always my favourite time. We weren't disappointed.

A return trip to Gomorrah is certainly worth the effort. But on this occasion, Bruce and I resumed our northward journey the next morning. We climbed Mt Sodom and several other high points, eventually reaching a tarn at 1,530 metres where

we camped for a second night and replenished our water supplies. On the third morning, we headed north again to Point 1497, where we began our descent via Cowin Spur. The section between Point 1497 and the south Twin remains the last untrodden portion of the Wharepapa / Arthur Range for me.

So, watch this space...