



Photographic locations worth sweating for

Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus
Nelson Lakes National Park

Tucked high in the northern reaches of Nelson Lakes National Park, Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus has become one of the most sought-after alpine destinations in Aotearoa. Its combination of dramatic ridgelines, crystal-clear tarns and far-reaching views draws thousands of hikers each year, all keen to experience the quiet beauty of this elevated basin. What follows is a guide to reaching the lake, exploring the surrounding terrain and making the most of one of the most rewarding high-country journeys in the region.

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MANINIARO ANGELUS PEAK SUMMIT VIEW NORTH, OVER HINAPOURI TARN TO ROTOMANINITUA LAKE ANGELUS AND WEST TO LAKE ROTOROA
STITCH OF 3 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F8, 1/500 SEC, ISO 125, 24MM

Located at 1650 metres in the northern part of Nelson Lakes National Park, Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus and its serviced 28-bunk hut now attract around 5000 overnights per year. Although visitor numbers are higher in summer months, a booking is required year-round – for both the hut and adjacent campsite.

There is good reason for this alpine destination's popularity. It is quickly accessed from the alpine village of St Arnaud, not much more than an hour's drive from Nelson. Approaches to the tops are through beautiful beech forest following clear rivers and sparkling streams. The tops, while sometimes very exposed to

harsh weather, offer magnificent vistas in every direction taking in countless peaks, valleys, lakes and tarns. Lake Angelus lies in the heart of this country in a spectacular basin surrounded by steep walls and 2075-metre Maniniaro/Angelus Peak to the south.

The most popular access route to Lake Angelus is up Pinchgut Track onto Robert Ridge, but there are five options in all. By choosing any two of them as entry and exit routes means completing a circuit with new terrain and views throughout, rather than retracing your steps on Robert Ridge.

The Robert Ridge route begins just south of St Arnaud with a steep zigzag climb on a well formed track, gaining 600 metres quickly. This puts you on the tops with ever expanding views for the rest of the route – a major reason for its popularity. But good weather is required, because being on the tops means exposure to whatever weather is present. The Pinchgut Track becomes the poled Robert Ridge Route soon after passing Relax Shelter and beyond 1690-metre Flagtop, becomes more challenging. A small amount of moderate scrambling (where terrain demands the use of both hands) is even required as you near Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus and the junction of the

Speargrass Creek Route. It takes 5-7 hours to reach the lake and there is no water along the route.

The views from Angelus Hut and the lake shore are worth the effort to reach in themselves. But it's possible to explore the terrain surrounding the lake to enjoy even better vantage points. Allowing several hours in calm weather, it's possible to walk and scramble right around the lake along the ridge tops surrounding it. A great spot for sunset is the northern ridge at 1780 metres, looking across the lake to the hut and Maniniaro/Angelus Peak. Allow half an hour from the hut to get into position.



HINAPOURI TARN (1590M) VIEWED FROM THE WEST, BENEATH SUNSET SADDLE
F8 1/320 SEC. ISO 125, 25MM



A MOODY DAWN VIEW FROM ANGELUS HUT
F6.3, 1/25 SEC, ISO 125, 24MM



VIEW NORTH FROM SUNSET SADDLE (1900M) TO ROTOMANINITUA LAKE ANGELUS (1650M)
STITCH OF 4 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F8, 1/400 SEC, ISO 125, 112MM

A great half-day walk is across and up the tussock and scree slopes, passing picturesque Hinapouri Tarn (1600m), to Sunset Saddle (1900m). On the saddle soak up the views north over Rotomaninitua/Lake Angelus to Lake Rotoroa. And if you have the time and energy, a 175-metre steep scramble up Maniniaro/Angelus Peak will reward you with even more outstanding vistas. If the hut and campsite are very busy down at the lake, there's also the option of camping beside a tarn at 1720 metres, just north of Sunset Saddle – a lovely spot from which to enjoy the magic hours.