



# Photographic locations worth sweating for

Mt Alexander, (on the fringe of) Arthur's Pass National Park

Rising high above the West Coast, Mt Alexander anchors the rugged Kaimata Range with a presence that feels both remote and commanding. From its slopes and surrounding ridgelines, a vast sweep of peaks unfolds across Arthur's Pass National Park, stretching as far as the distant Paparoa Range. This time, Peter Laurenson takes us into this wild alpine terrain, following a demanding route up Camp Creek to a series of secluded tarns beneath Little Mt Alexander, and sharing the striking photographic opportunities shaped by light, elevation, and the raw textures of the high country.

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VIEW ACROSS THE 1510M TARN TO PT1795M, MT ALEXANDER  
STITCH OF 6 PORTRAIT IMAGES, F11, 1/60 SEC, ISO 100, 24MM

Standing at 1958 m, Mt Alexander forms the highest point of the Kaimata Range, which branches westward off the Main Divide. This makes it a striking vantage point from which to view a multitude of peaks, including Mts Rolleston and Murchison within Arthur's Pass National Park, as well as the distant Paparoa Range to the northwest. Reaching the summit demands some mountaineering experience, but you don't have to reach the top of Mt Alexander to still enjoy magnificent panoramic views. To the west of the summit is Pt 1795 m (Little Mt Alexander), which marks the end of a poled route up Camp Creek, beginning at a car park at 180 m, accessed off Lake Brunner Road, about 19 km south of Moana on the northern shore of Lake Brunner.

Be aware, though, that this route is typical of the rugged terrain of the West Coast mountains. While the orange DOC triangles within the bush and poles above the bushline clearly mark the route for the most part, a section of the trail soon after the car park deviates onto the true right of Camp Creek, so forget about trying to keep your boots dry. Don't take this on when the river is up. The climb up a steep rātā-covered spur beyond Camp Creek Hut at 750 m is also relentless until you reach the ridge at 1400 m.

Once on the ridge, a world of photogenic boulders and rocky tors among tussock and shrubs, dotted with gleaming tarns, awaits. You encounter the first tarn, offering a good camp spot at 1420 m, just after reaching the ridge, but there is an even better-placed one another 100 m up. A third camp spot also lies beyond rocky tors on a spur to the southwest, beside Pt 1328.

I chose the highest tarn, which sits at 1510 m on the western side of Pt 1795 m, affording superb vistas to the south, west, and north. It is ideally placed for the magic hours and less than an hour's tramp from Pt 1795 m.

Even if you don't carry on to Pt 1795 m, the rock formations, alpine flora, and tarns in the foreground, complemented by skylines filled with mountain peaks, make the sweat and toil well worth the effort. However, from the tarn it's not difficult to reach Pt 1795 m, and from there the views are even better, particularly of the rocky ridge leading to the intimidating bulk of Mt Alexander.

If you're lucky, another pleasure at this location is listening to the chirping of numerous frogs living around the tarn as you drift off to sleep.



SUNSET VIEW SOUTH ACROSS THE 1510M TARN AND CAMP TO PEAKS IN ARTHUR'S PASS  
F11, 1/100 SEC, ISO 100, 81MM



DAWN VIEW SOUTH, MT ROLLESTON LEFT, THEN RIGHT TO MT GREENLAW AND MT MURCHISON  
F5, 1/25 SEC, ISO 100, 42MM