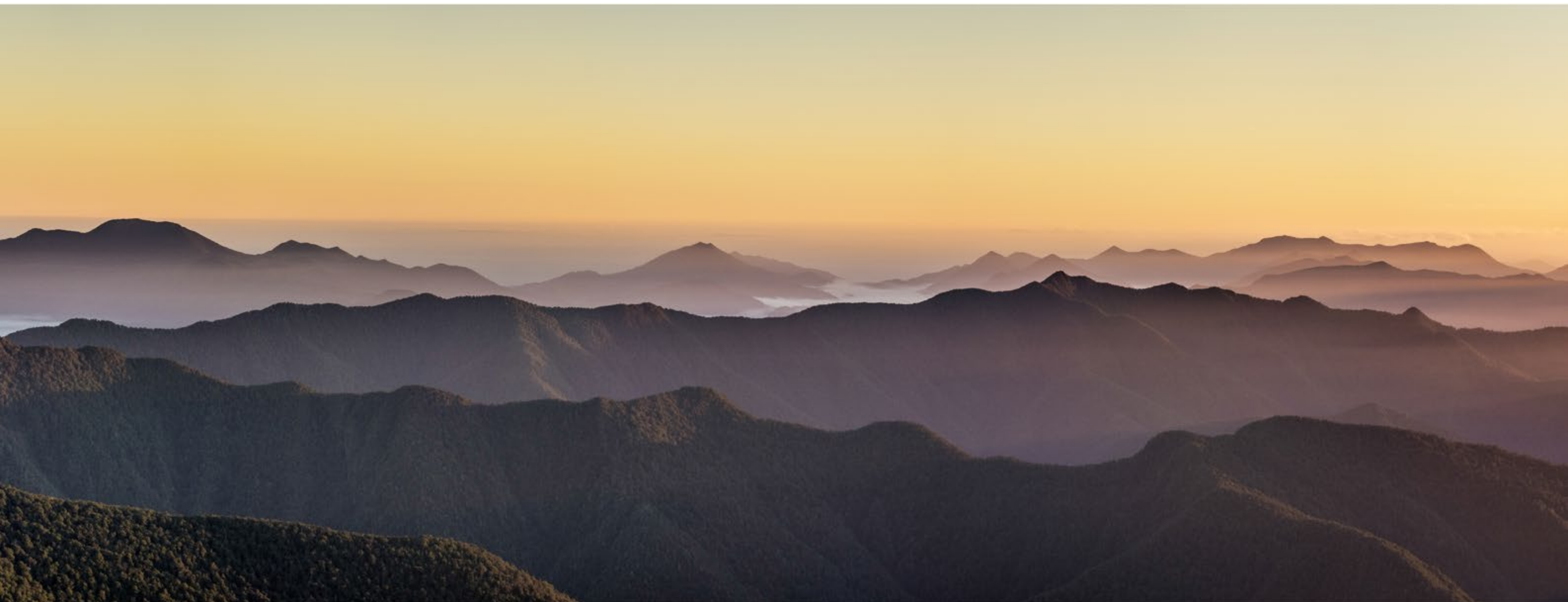




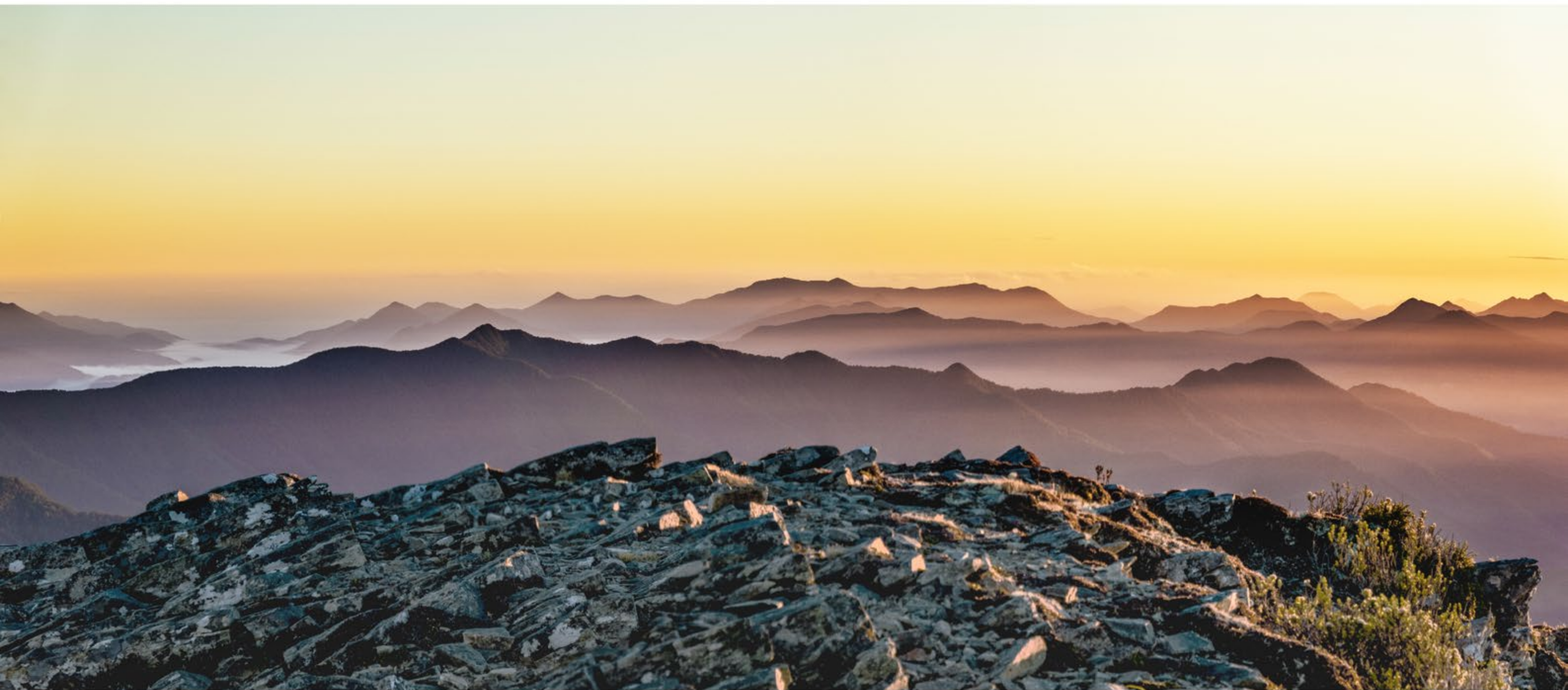
Photographic locations worth sweating for

Mt Royal, Richmond Forest Park

Some mountain summits reward photographers with spectacular views, but reaching them often demands determination, careful planning, and plenty of hard work. In this issue, Peter Laurenson takes us to Mt Royal in the Richmond Range, where a steep climb through native bush leads to sweeping alpine vistas, a night under canvas, and a memorable sunrise above layers of ridges and valleys stretching to the horizon. Battling relentless gradients and fierce winds, Peter shares another inspiring backcountry adventure, proving that some of the best photographic opportunities are earned one step at a time.

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A VIEW OVER MT ROYAL'S ROCKY SUMMIT TO THE NORTH
STITCH OF 2 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F7.1, 1/60 SEC, ISO 100, 109MM

I'm happy to report that since my last article, where I described being forced to resort to my OPPO Reno15 F5G smart phone after dunking myself and my Sony RX100 VII in Diamond Lake Stream on my approach to Mt Lockett, after a spell of R&R at a camera repair resort in Palmerston North, I'm \$700 poorer but my Sony is now back in business.

In June I took it for a climb of Mt Royal in Richmond Forest Park.

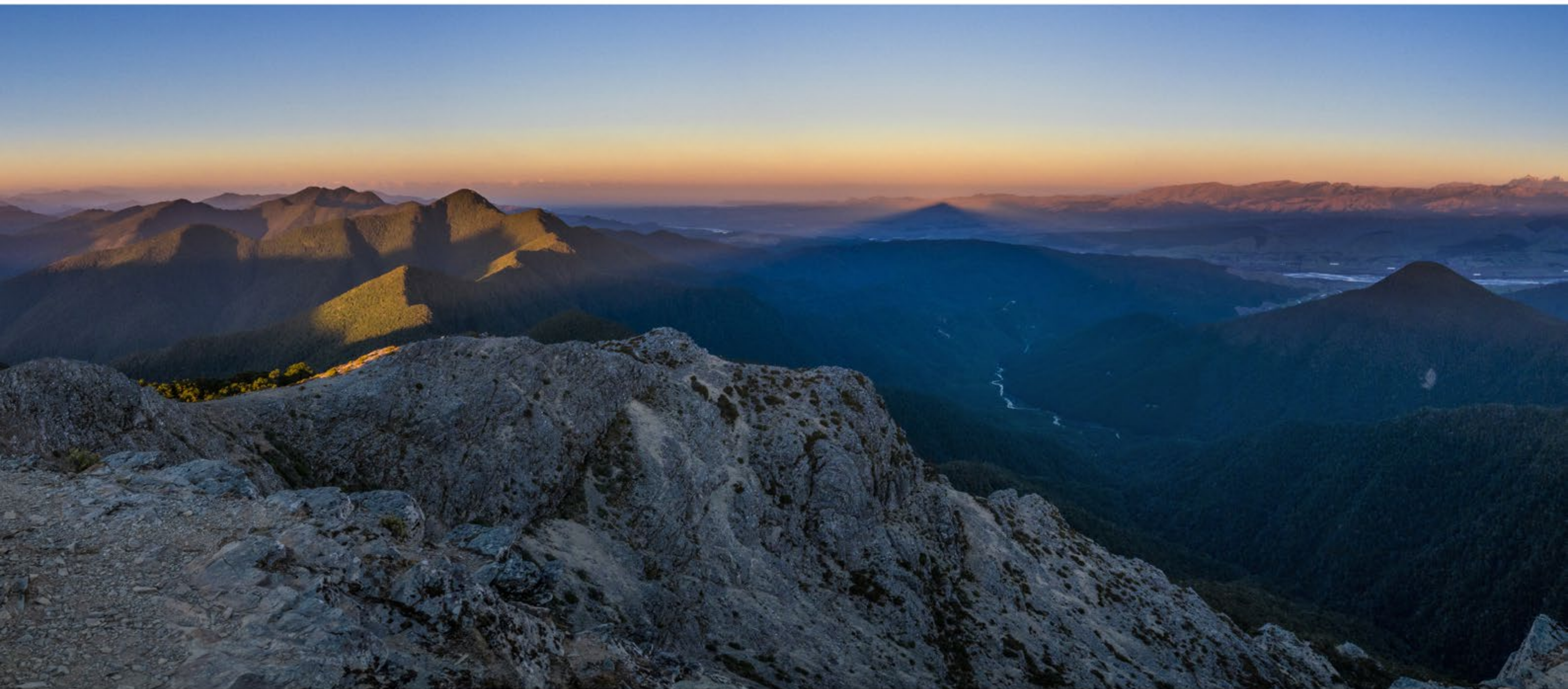
Mt Royal is located at the eastern end of the Richmond Range. At 1365 metres it's dwarfed by the range's namesake 1760-metre Mt Richmond to the west, only just breaching the bush line for its last 70 metres or so. Nevertheless, this smaller peak still demands some sweat to reach, and because it still does breach the bush line, its rocky open top offers wonderful unimpeded panoramic views in all directions.

There are two main options for reaching Mt Royal. To the south the Quartz Creek Route climbs from 200 metres at Bartlett's Creek Road. I chose the other option, approaching from the north via Wakamarina Road to near Butchers Flat Campsite, then swapping to foot power along the trail to Devils Creek Hut. This section takes less than two hours and only gains 100 metres to reach the hut. The real work begins from there.

A trail drops 60 metres steeply to a narrow gorge where Devils Creek joins the Wakamarina River. You need to take off your boots to cross it if you want dry feet for the rest of the climb. Immediately on the far side the route up to Mt Royal, four kilometres and over 1200 metres above, begins. Though a route rather than an official trail, it's easy to follow, but the gradient is relentless. Allow at least three hours to reach the top.



A VIEW WEST FROM MY 1,300M CAMP SPOT ON THE TREE LINE AT SUNSET
STITCH OF 2 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F6.3, 1/80 SEC, ISO 100, 109MM



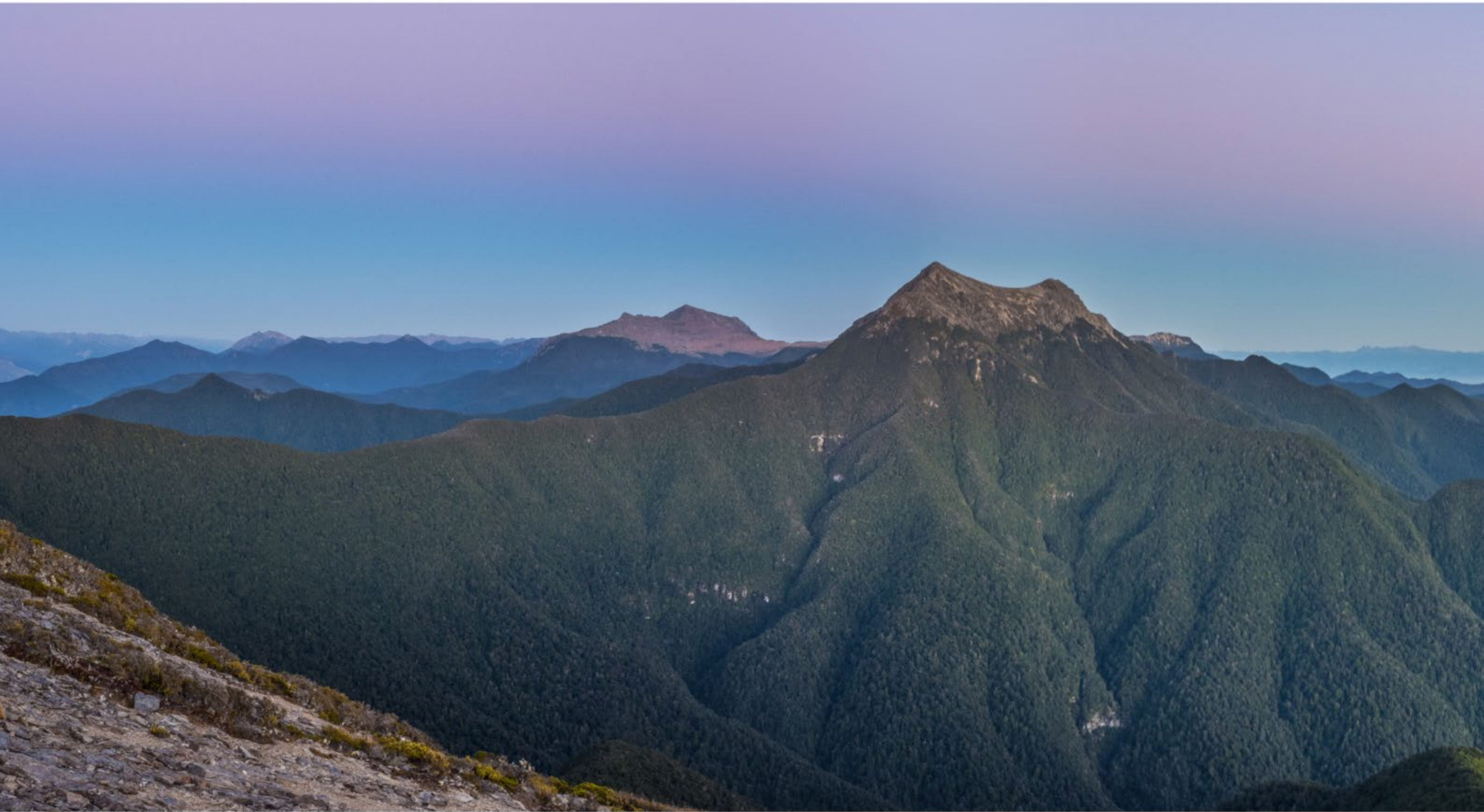
DUSK SUMMIT VIEW FROM MT ROYAL, LOOKING OVER PT1329 NORTH AND EAST
STITCH OF 4 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F11, 1/50 SEC, ISO 100, 24MM

The day I made this climb was clear but very windy. While in the bush the wind provided some nice 'air conditioning' to keep my sweating under control. It would be very hot work in summer and aside from a rain collection drum at the bush line, there is no water source beyond the Wakamarina River.

As I approached the bush line I kept an eye out for possible places to pitch my tent in case it was too windy on top, noting a good little flat space very near the bush line. I reached the bush line just as the magic hour was getting started. Stepping out of the shelter of the trees into the stiff wind quickly confirmed that there was no way I could pitch my lightweight tent up on the summit as planned. I dropped my pack and quickly climbed to the summit to enjoy my first course of Mt Royal magic. Darkness and a freezing

wind chill drove me off under head torch light, giving me plenty of motivation to get my tent up and a brew on.

After a cosy night, a chilly 10-minute climb saw me back on top for sunrise. A standout feature of the Richmond Range I've noticed is the layering effect of countless ridges, peaks and deep valleys. In magic hour light they form a magnificent landscape for photographers. Beyond the range itself are more distant landscape features too, Tasman Bay to the north and Ragland Range and the Inland Kaikōura Range to the south. Obvious focal points to the west along the Richmond Range are nearby Mt Fell and more distant Mt Richmond and Johnston Peak, a landscape photographer's feast well worth sweating for!



DAWN VIEW FROM THE SUMMIT OF MT ROYAL TO MT FISHTAIL AND MT RICHMOND DISTANT CENTRE
STITCH OF 2 LANDSCAPE IMAGES, F9, 1/8 SEC, ISO 100, 34MM