

Denniston Plateau MTB Tracks

Route Guide for the Whareatea Circuit

For important safety and background information refer also to pamphlet "Denniston Plateau Mountain Bike Tracks" - available via www.cyclebuller.co.nz

Whareatea Circuit

Approximate Riding Time = 1 hour
 Approximate Distance = 11.3 km
 Total Ascent = 200 m
 Grade = 3

-  Sealed road (1 km)
-  Gravel road (7 km)
-  MTB track (3.3 km)
-  Walking track (0 km)

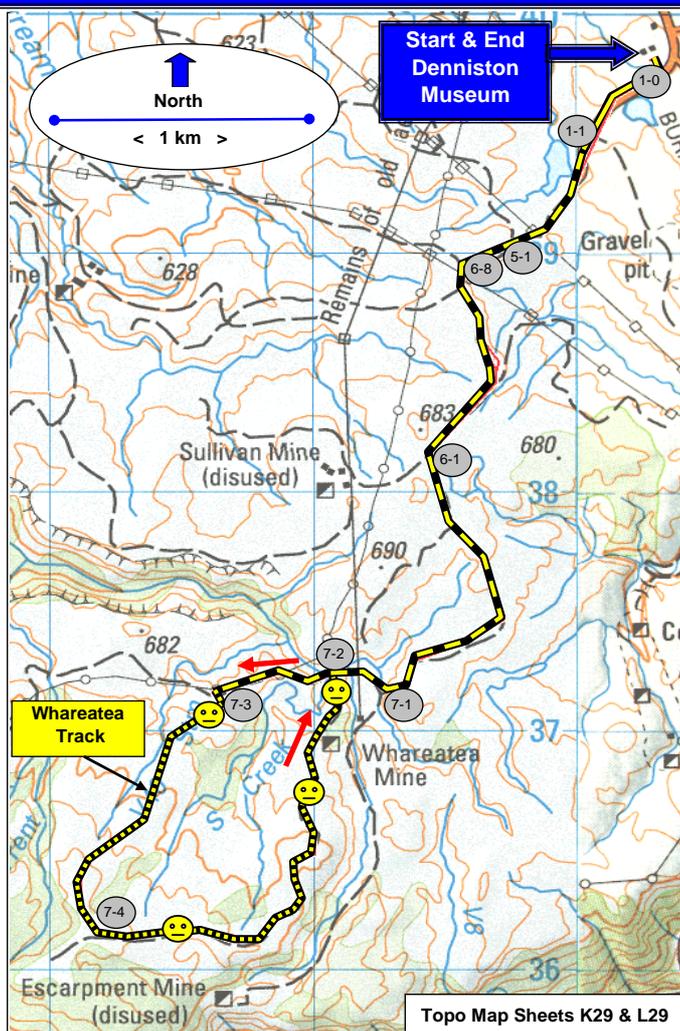
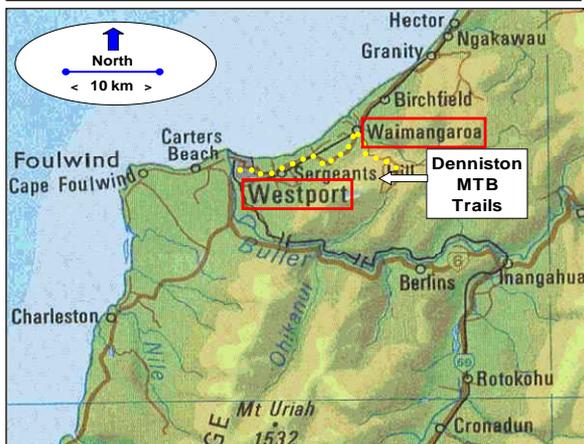
 Predominant travel direction

 River crossings (0)

 Technical sections (4)

 Way point & Track markers

 Power line



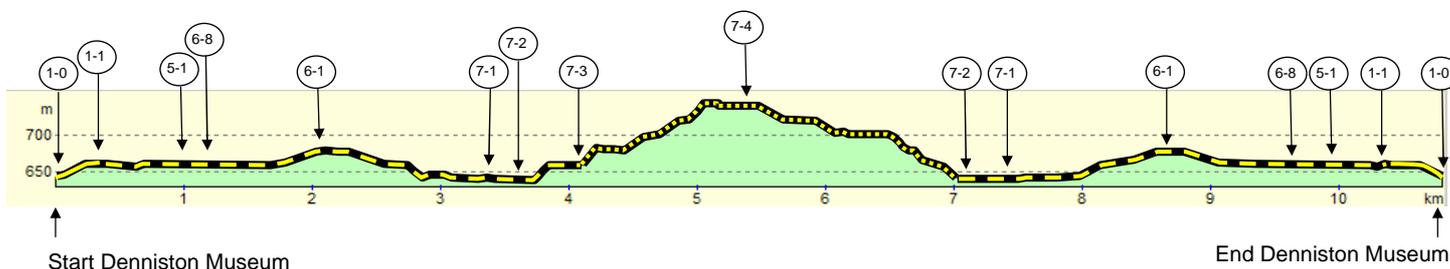
WHAREATEA CIRCUIT -

This circuit was named after the Whareatea coal mine, which lies underground deep below this MTB track. The track was originally built for exploration drill rigs to prospect the coal seam below.

Starting at the museum, the first section of the Whareatea circuit is straightforward. The short section of sealed road quickly turns into an undulating gravel road. Although this road is usually quiet, be aware that occasionally you will encounter other vehicles, especially on fine weekends. Turn right at marker 7-1. There is a short, sharp climb after marker 7-2. Then turn left off the main gravel road at marker 7-3. (The main road continues up to the TV tower on top of Mt. Rochfort). The Whareatea MTB track then climbs persistently for about 1 km and some sections require skill plus energy to negotiate the rougher ground. However, this effort is soon rewarded at marker 7-4 with a fantastic view (on a fine day!) across the whole plateau, followed by a pleasurable 2 km downhill ride with 2 short technical sections. These are both rideable if you are bold enough (or they will require only a short walk). The last technical section is a short, steep rock slope back onto the main gravel road (above marker 7-2). This is fun to ride down if you get it right (but painful if you don't!).

If you still have time to spare on your way back to the Museum, you can make an interesting excursion to the Whareatea mine. To visit this area head south at marker 7-1 and ride a short distance along the gravel road. This mine is now closed and abandoned, but you can still see the sites of the old tunnel portals, concrete coal dewatering bins, aerial ropeway tower foundations and numerous other artefacts. This road also continues past the Whareatea mine to the entrances of the Escarpment coal mine (abandoned in the early 1980's). This section of road is becoming overgrown with gorse, but if you persevere you will end up amongst the remains of the historic Escarpment mine perched on the edge of the plateau, overlooking the Cascade valley 400m below. (NB the 1 hour riding time for the Whareatea circuit does NOT include any time spent visiting old mine sites. Time spent sightseeing will need to be added onto the riding time). Remember to leave all historic artefacts for others to enjoy and do not enter underground tunnels.

The Whareatea Track is also often ridden in the reverse direction to that described above. It has a different "flavour" when ridden in the opposite direction, and is fun either way.



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