

Hutt River

Upper, Middle & Lower Reaches



Photo: Andrew Harding



Wellington Region

Harbour to Ewen Bridge

The lower reaches of the Hutt River are defined by slower moving water, a less defined and more open channel, with moderate tidal influence. Although not the most aesthetic part of the river, it is nonetheless very productive with marine fish species following the tide up and down. This provides a very rich food source for trout which congregate in good numbers to make the most of the high-protein diet. Unlike further up in the catchment where fish tend to be more sedentary, remaining in defined pools for most of the year, the trout of the lower reaches are constantly on the move, following the prey with the tide. An understanding of the tidal movements is beneficial, otherwise a bit of experimenting will ultimately result in good catches of small to medium, hard fighting brown trout. A great advantage of the lower section of the river is the added benefit of kahawai bycatch, making it the ideal place to take the family because of the high catch rate and excellent chance of success. From October to mid-December the fishing really heats up in this section amid the whitebait run, as trout and kahawai feast on these large schools of tiny fish which can often be seen breaking the surface in panic as they try to evade hungry predators. Good, well-marked access exists up both sides of the river.

Tackle Tip

Owing to its estuarine nature, spin fishing and streamer flies work best in the lower reaches of the Hutt River. Use silvery or white spinners to emulate bait fish like mullet and small kahawai. Similarly, white streamers (or even green rabbit flies) will look like the prey items in this part of the river. Look to cast into defined current lines, eddies or near submerged structure where baitfish may seek refuge. An erratic retrieve will also imitate a prey item in distress and provoke a predator to strike. If you're having trouble locating trout, keep casting and moving - cast, retrieve, move on 10m or so, then repeat.

What is true left and true right?

'True left' or 'true right' refers to the side of the river when you are facing downstream.

1

📍 Marine Parade

Access to the estuary and river mouth on the true right side.

2

📍 Port Road

Access to the estuary and river mouth on the true left side.

3

📍 Croft Grove

The start of the Hutt River Trail, offers access to the lower reaches on the true left.

4

📍 Shandon Golf Course

Access to the lower reaches on the true right adjacent to the golf course.

5

📍 Bracken Street

Access to lower reaches through Sladden Park. Toilet and playground facilities at this access point.

6

📍 Wakefield Street

Access to the true right side of the river via Ava Park.

7

📍 Market Grove

Access below Ewen Bridge to the true left side.

8

📍 Marsden Street

Entry point to the true right side of the Hutt River Trail provides access upstream and downstream of Ewen Bridge.

Lower - Mid Reaches

Melling Bridge to Taita

This is where the Hutt River starts to take on a more classic rapid/riffle-pool configuration. The river here is highly modified for flood protection and although there is a degree of meander with the odd gravel bank, it is still largely confined to a managed channel. Rock groynes installed to prevent erosion are good places to find trout as the fish use these structures for cover in the absence of natural instream shelter. Other places to fish are deep under overhanging willows and around bridge abutments. Because the river is easily accessible on both sides, trout will tend to shy away from human intrusion and seek cover where they can find it, which even includes

the very shallow riffly water that is difficult to spot fish in. Bear that in mind when angling – don't waste time where people have been swimming or throwing sticks for their dogs. Target the places where trout are less likely to be disturbed. Fly fishing with a dry fly/nymph dropper combination is the most successful method in this reach, though when there is a hint of colour in the water following a fresh a streamer or spinner can be very effective. Good evening hatches occur here too.

9 **Riverbank Market**

Public carpark provides excellent access upstream and downstream of Melling Bridge on true left.

10 **Block Road Carpark**

Look for the Fish & Game sign. Access to true right upstream of Melling Bridge.

11 **Harcourt Werry Drive (Boulcott)**

The Hutt River Trail runs adjacent to this road and provides numerous access and parking options on the true left parallel to this road.

12 **Belmont School**

A short road beside the school leads down to a public parking area beside the river on the true right.

13 **Owen Street**

Parking at end of road provides the last reasonable access to the river on the true right for quite a way upstream.

14 **Harcourt Werry Drive (Avalon)**

The Hutt River Trail runs adjacent to this road and provides numerous access and parking options on the true left.

15 **Taita Drive**

Numerous access points lead off the stopbank that runs parallel to this road.

Mid-Upper Reaches

Manor Park to Totara Park

The most visible reach of the Hutt River because it runs adjacent to

SH2, this stretch is quite similar to the lower/middle section. Don't be put off by the traffic though - Fish & Game consistently counts its highest trout numbers for the Hutt in this reach. There is also excellent access directly off SH2 on the true right downstream of the Moonshine Bridge, with a gravel road following alongside the river for much of its length here. Please take extra care when slowing to turn off the motorway! Because of the continual river engineering there aren't too many pools left but the fish still hold in the shallow riffles, runs at the head of deeper sections, and drift off to the far side of less accessible parts. Also, because of the lack of deep pools and the cooler water they offer, trout will favour any areas where the river narrows, thereby increasing water velocity and oxygenation. Similar tactics apply to that of the downstream reach, with dry fly/nymph dropper rigs working best. Try a Parachute Adams and bead head pheasant tail nymph. It is also worth prospecting around the confluence of the Whakatikei River (near Poets Park- Access point 21).

Tackle Tip

Similar tactics apply to that of the downstream reach, with dry fly/nymph dropper rigs working best in normal flows, and streamers and spinners the preferred methods when the river is up. Try a Parachute Adams and bead head pheasant tail nymph fished upstream and dead-drift back down when low and clear. When there's colour in the water - that brackish tea look - an olive Woolly Bugger with a gold bead head is hard to beat. Fish this streamer pattern across and down with a jerky retrieve; target the rock groyne or areas where the trout can get out of the higher flows when in fresh. Note that the Whakatikei River (near Poets Park- Access point 21) is a good fishery in its own right, offering backcountry-like fishing just minutes from Wellington City and the Hutt locales.

16

📍 Eastern Hutt Road

Access points off the road link up with the Hutt River Trail on the true left. Note: No access on true right through golf course.

17

📍 Silverstream Bridge

Good car park and facilities offering access up and downstream of the bridge.

18

📍 Hutt Trail

From Silverstream Bridge to Moonshine Bridges walk/bike access only along the trail which runs beside the river on the true left.

19

📍 Western Hutt Road

A gravel road runs alongside the river which can be driven most of its length and offers good access to the true right. Turn off SH2 when southbound. Please take great care when slowing to turn off as this is a 100km/h zone.

20

📍 Moonshine Bridge

Heading north on SH2 cross the Moonshine Bridge and the turn off to the reserve is about 600m on the left. Good public reserve upstream and downstream. Can drive almost to the Whakatikei confluence on gravel road beside river. Toilet facilities available.

21

📍 Poets Park

Provides walking and bike access upstream on the true left. Cross the Hutt River to fish the Whakatikei (the Hutt becomes more braided here and can be safely waded in normal low flow).

22

📍 Totara Park Bridge

Access to both sides of the river at bridge.

Mid-Upper Reaches

Totara Park to Twin Lakes

Free from the impact of regional council flood protection work, the Hutt River is natural in character in its upper reaches above Totara Park. It is a delightful waterway from here on upstream – aesthetically pretty and a superb fishery with large browns (5lb average) in a classic river setting. Deep pools, riffles and runs, pocket water... this section has it all, and all so easily accessible.

Tackle Tip

This is more classic nymph and dry fly fishing water here but pay attention to the fast riffles, particularly when the water has warmed

up in high summer. A Royal Wulff dry fly or cicada pattern (when they are about) can be cast through these runs and riffles blind and will draw fish up to rise. Also be sure to work the shadowy margins of pools where rock walls plunge into deeper water.

23

⊙ **Awakairangi Park**

Walking access through the reserve to the true right from Totara Park Bridge.

24

⊙ **River Road (SH2)**

Gravel road runs alongside the river from Totara Park Bridge on the true left. Walking access only at the river bend upstream, near Maoribank.

25

⊙ **Norbert Street**

Footbridge at end of the street links to Hutt River Trail. River access is limited to a select few points on the true left upstream of here.

26

⊙ **Beech Street**

Public walkway to Hutt River Trail at the end of the street. A few informal tracks lead down to the river. Access from here up is in the river during normal low flow.

27

⊙ **Akatarawa Confluence**

Good parking with toilet facilities offering access up the Akatarawa and true left of the Hutt. The Hutt River Trail upstream offers limited fishing access but the river is wadeable in normal low flows.

28

⊙ **Gemstone Drive**

Public walkway to the Hutt River Trail from this street. Offers a few access points to river.

29

⊙ **Mangaroa Confluence**

Access at confluence on true left of Hutt River. Care is needed when parking on side of SH2. This is the last access point until the regional park at Twin Lakes.

30

⊙ **Twin Lakes Road**

Follow the signage on Twin Lakes Road to river access. Fishable from here for a few pools upstream but soon turns to a steep-sided gorge.

Kaitoke Regional Park

The prettiest section of the river as it flows through bush-clad hills and native surrounds, with deep, stable pools and crystal clear emerald green water. Here you'll find backcountry-style angling to large and wily brown trout, right on Wellington's doorstep!

31

📍 Flume Bridge Walkway

Walking access from carpark along road to Strainer House. Several tracks lead down to river from the walkway, then access through the river bed back up to the swingbridge. Blind fish this section as often the trout will hide deep in the rock crevices. Use long leaders and heavy nymphs in the fast water.

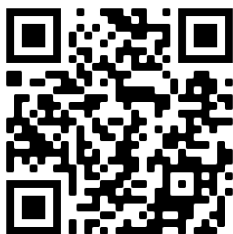
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📍 Swingbridge Carpark

Fishing upstream as far as the weir. Note - access to the river upstream is prohibited as this is the city drinking water intake. There are a couple of hours fishing in this section if anglers take their time and properly search the water for trout. Technical but rewarding fishing to cagey browns.

How Good is the Hutt?

The Hutt River is an amazing fishery and unique in the world in terms of the size and number of large brown trout so accessible to the populations of three major urban centres. How good? Scan the QR code here and check out the short video.



For more access information online visit www.fishandgamezaccess.org/wellington

Access online
by scanning
the QR Code



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