

Mt Vernon Traverse

The Mt Vernon traverse loop is around 20km long and offers a scenic cross country circuit route in Blenheim.

One can begin at the Wither Hills mountain bike park and either climb up the park and into the Wither Hills Farm park, or follow the Stockyard Track and Rifle Range single tracks round to Redwood Street. From Redwood Street head up to the street's Farm Park entrance and follow the 4x4 Mapp Track for around 4km before turning hard right and up a grunty climb on Cobb Cottage Track. The route is well signposted.

While the Stockyard and Rifle Range tracks are fairly easy going Map Track offers some challenging climbs, while the main climb up to Mount Vernon is a real low gear affair. Loose gravel on the track can make traction a problem and some bike pushing may be needed in places.

The 3km long climb is well worth the sweeping views over the Wairau Plains and out over the sea to Wellington. The descent is also good fun along the farm track, with some great narrow single track thrown in for good measure.

There is one short but sharp climb along the way, but the majority is downhill before crossing over into the mountain bike park around 4km later. It's more downhill from there on the purpose made single tracks, with several options available for the downhill leg.

Alternatively one can climb up through the mountain bike park and cross over into the farm park before continuing gradually up. The descent off Mt Vernon in this direction is quicker and can be quite sketchy on the loose gravel. It also lacks the fun factor that the track gives in the other direction.

The wind on the upper slopes can be far stronger than down the bottom, and can get strong enough to make staying upright along the narrow sections of track a real effort.

There are two exits off the upper slopes via Mt Vernon Track and Reservoir Ridge Track, that are sign posted and take you down to Mapp Track and Rifle Range track respectively.

With the exception of the Rifle Range track, which is for mountain bikers only, the other tracks are shared and priority is to be given to walker and runners.