



WEST COAST

WILDERNESS TRAIL

# ACCESSIBLE RIDE GUIDE

Updated November 2024

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## WILDERNESS TRAIL



- Trail section
- Road section
- Vehicle access to trail
- Emergency helicopter landing
- Accessible Toilet
- Portaloo or Non-accessible Toilet



## Introduction

For many people with physical disabilities the thought of being able to get out and enjoy the wilderness may seem like something as remote as the West Coast Wilderness Trail itself. This trail is Grade 2 easy in most places with some Grade 3 on road (intermediate) sections. With careful planning and a little help, it can be enjoyed by riders with a wide range of physical disabilities and on a variety of chairs and bikes or towing buggies with children. It has also been ridden by a visually impaired rider on a tandem bike. Because of the opportunity the trail presents, we want to encourage and help riders with special mobility needs to enjoy the trail and the wonderful scenery and landscapes of the West Coast.

This Accessible Ride Guide has been prepared by the West Coast Wilderness Trail Trust in conjunction with Ross Ormsby and others with different mobility needs including Bernard Mahuika, Greg Mooney, and Natalie Gauld. It is targeted to assist people who may require additional help and guidance to help make your ride enjoyable and safe. This guide is viewed as a continual work in progress and we welcome people sharing your experiences and any barriers you find along the way.

## General Description

The West Coast Wilderness Trail is a stunning ride between the towns of Ross and Greymouth taking in Hokitika and Kumara. The trail can be equally enjoyed whichever direction you choose to ride. For people with wheelchairs and adaptive bikes the trail may be better ridden from south to north. This is because the Kawhaka section may be easier as it is more downhill riding from the south.

Many of the sections can be ridden separately as short rides or walks. The access points are highlighted on the trail map on page 2.

The ride takes you along coastal and former gold mining areas, heading inland to forest, lakes and rivers with the lush West Coast bush of the Southern Alps ever present. This trail is not just about the ride and its wonderful scenery, history and nature, but also the wonderful West Coast hospitality and warmth of the people. A smile and support is never far away.



## Distances and sections

Total Distance: 133km Now 115km

Ride Days: 1 to 4

Sections:

Ross – Tree Top Walk: 18km

*Please note the current closure of the Totara Bridge. We encourage riders to start or finish at the West Coast Treetop Walkway and Zipline.*

Tree Top Walk – Hokitika: 16km

Hokitika – Milltown\*: 31km

Milltown\* – Kumara: 40km

Kumara – Greymouth: 28km

\* Milltown is not a physical town. It is the location of a former town with no buildings. It contains a trail shelter, interpretation panels and parking area.

## Contacts and Safety

The overall ownership of the trail sits with the Westland District Council. The Grey and Westland District Councils manage all the construction and maintenance of the trail within their respective districts. The trail also traverses land managed by the Department of Conservation, Manawa Energy and private farm land.

The West Coast Wilderness Trail Trust undertakes the majority of the management and communications outside things relating to building and maintenance. The Trust is supported by a Trail Manager who is very willing to help plan your ride. The Trail Trust also has a growing list of people with disabilities who have ridden the trail and are only too happy to assist.

While this trail is mostly grade 2, there are many areas on weak or no cell coverage and several areas where slight inattention, breakdown or accident might require outside assistance. For vulnerable riders it is advised you ride with no less than three people and for many sections difficult to access that PLB and Sat Phone be hired for safety assistance. It is suggested to plan your ride to leave earlier in the day should you need assistance. The map provided at the start of this guide has all the vehicle entry points and emergency helicopter landing locations.

## Contact Details and Information

- Trail Alerts: Are notified on the Facebook Page @westcoastwildernesstrail and notifications are placed on the homepage of the website just below the banner [www.westcoastwildernesstrail.co.nz](http://www.westcoastwildernesstrail.co.nz)
- Trail Manager: [manager@westcoastwildernesstrail.co.nz](mailto:manager@westcoastwildernesstrail.co.nz)
- Personal Locator Beacons (PLB):
  - Hokitika i-SITE, 03 755 6166, [enquiries@hokitikainfo.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@hokitikainfo.co.nz)
  - Greymouth i-SITE: 037685101, [info@westcoasttravel.co.nz](mailto:info@westcoasttravel.co.nz)\$30.00 for up to 3 days, \$40 for up to 7 days. In both cases a form is required to be filled out.
- A PLB is your first medical emergency should you need it to alert a rescue team
- Sat Phone: This is recommended for any other non emergency assistance from the riding contact list
- Medical Support: The main hospital is based in Greymouth and we suggest this be the first contact point for anything medical.
  - Te Nikau Grey Hospital: P: 03 7697400. Emergency Department: Open 24 hours/7 days P:037680499
  - Private medical centres are based in Greymouth and Hokitika if required.
- Reporting Trail Maintenance: Download the Snap Send Solve app (available from the App Store/ Google Play Store) and report the issue to the Westland or Grey District Council.
- Reporting Possible Accessible Upgrades: Contact [manager@westcoastwildernesstrail.co.nz](mailto:manager@westcoastwildernesstrail.co.nz)



## Mobility Chair Hire

There are two Attendant-Pushed All-Terrain ViMo wheelchairs for hire at Hokitika I-site. 03 755 6166, enquiries@hokitikainfo.co.nz

Cost: \$20 per day

These chairs were purchased by Hokitika Lions and Hokitika Rotary Clubs as legacy of local, the late Merle Bradley, whose drive and passion was to promote wheelchair accessibility in forests after completing the West Coast Wilderness Trail in 2016 in her Attendant-Propelled wheelchair.

Hokitika Occupational Therapist Terry Gee suggests that the person or persons who are pushing need to be fit and strong to accommodate the undulating tracks etc.

Terry sees these All Terrains as an excellent tool for raising people's mental health as Merle herself identified.



**“It has absolutely revolutionised my life. My mental health is very good because of this wheelchair. It is allowing me to get to places like the bush and the sea and that is helping my attitude to life.**

**I have been able to explore places around the West Coast that I've always wanted to go to. It is so comfortable.**

**My husband Neil loves pushing the chair and we've completed the West Coast Wilderness Trail from Greymouth to Ross.” Merle Bradley**



Merle Bradley being helped across the weirs



## Using this guide


This guide has been written to ride from south to north which is the recommended direction for those using accessibility aids.

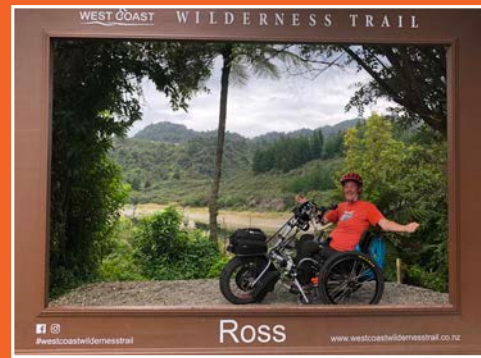
Please note that all distance markers in this guide match those on the trail at the time of writing and are numbered from the northern end of the trail. Distances are approximate to the nearest trail marker.

### Ross to the Tree Top Walkway

Length: 18km

The trail historically had a start/finish in Ross where there is a photo framed to record your ride behind the Ross Goldfields Information Centre. With the current closure of the Totara Bridge we encourage riders with special accessibility needs to begin either at the West Coast Treetop Walkway and Zipline or the entry point to the Mahinapua section on Woodstock-Rimu Road as per the description below.

 No cellphone coverage outside of Ross.



### West Coast Tree Top Walkway and Café to Hokitika, including Mahinapua Creek Length: 16km

The trail is on road for the first kilometre before entering the trail to Mahinapua Creek. The road is sealed, and of a quiet nature. It does, however, have increased tourist traffic so care must be taken. Once into the trail this ride has a “gnarly” section around the 111km mark. Here there are some narrow (over 1m) stony sections.

The trail leads down to the Mahinapua boardwalk (108km). This area is stunning. This boardwalk is 1.1m wide and has no barrier, except for a small rail in the middle. Extreme care is required. The boards are uneven in places giving a slightly bumpy ride. The creek is tidal and, in periods of high rainfall, the trail can submerge the boardwalk. When this happens riders are directed adjacent the main road to the entry adjacent the Mananui Sawmill or the West Coast Scenic Waterway. If heavy rain is being experienced please check the weather and trail status on the home page of the website, or the trail Facebook page.

From this point there is an option of crossing the small bridge at Mananui over the Mahinapua Creek (107km) and exiting via the Mananui carpark adjacent to the main highway. Please note the exit here is only 760mm wide as per image at right.



Mahinapua Creek bridge




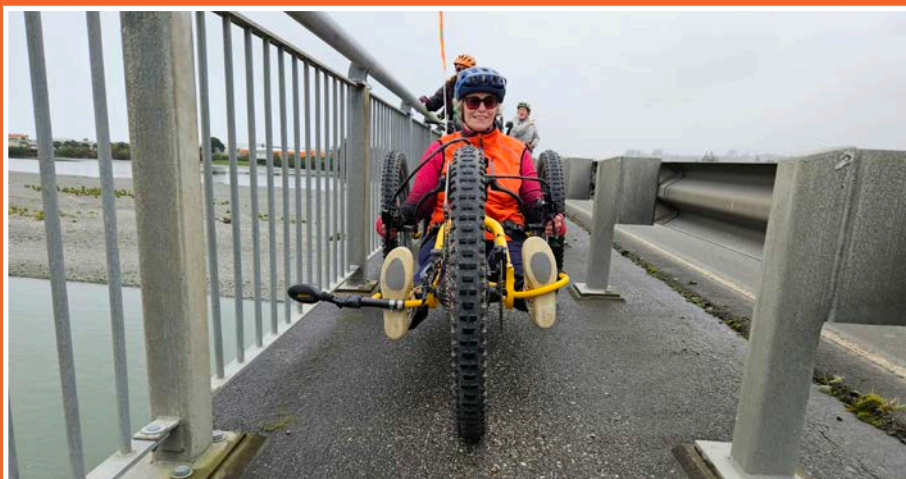
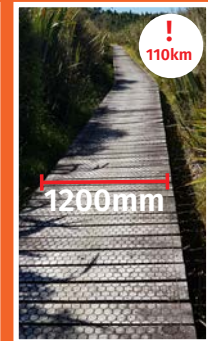
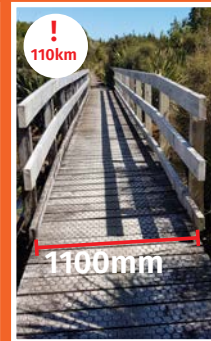
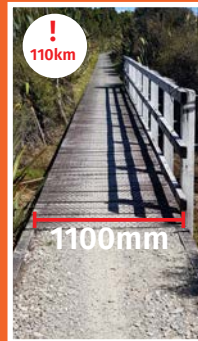
Mahinapua carpark exit to State Highway 6

After the Mananui Sawmill site there is a short climb up to the Mahinapua Lookout. This has two switchbacks (107km) where help is likely to be required for some riders. There is also one more sharp corner as the trail drops down onto the Tarlton Bridge at around the 106km mark. For those travelling in a southern direction help may be required to get up and around this corner.

The ride is then straight forward to Hokitika. Riders are advised to take extreme care as the trail crosses the Hokitika River via the Hokitika Bridge on the state highway. There is no clip-on or alternative route.

The West Coast Scenic Waterways and Tree Top Walk and cafe attractions on this section are both wheelchair accessible. See p8-9 for further info.

 No cellphone coverage south of Mahinapua Creek.



Hokitika Bridge

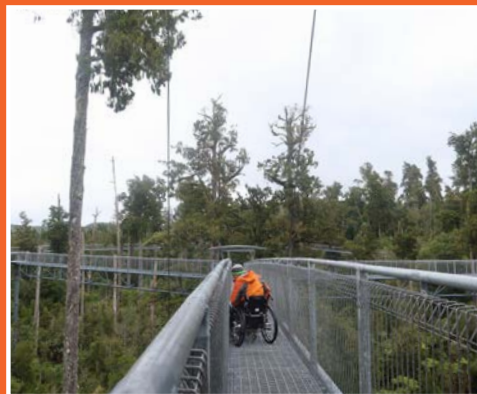
# Accessible Attractions on the Trail

## West Coast Treetop Walkway and Cafe and Zipline

**Accessibility:** Wheelchair accessible cafe and walk. Shuttle with loading ramps available to start of walk. The zipline requires climbing the tower and is unlikely to be accessible pending the disability.

For a different perspective on the amazing wetland wilderness, head to the West Coast Tree Top Walk and Zipline where you can survey the surroundings from on high. At 20 metres high and 450 metres long, this striking steel platform offers impressive views of rainforest giants including ancient rimu and kamahi. To increase the fun factor, experience the Tower Zipline – a 425-metre ride, 15 storeys above the ground, reaching speeds in excess of 60 kilometres per hour. Then catch your breath at the onsite café set in tranquil surrounds.

1128 Woodstock-Rimu Road, Hokitika  
P: 03 755 5052 E: [bookings@treetopnz.com](mailto:bookings@treetopnz.com)



## Precision Helicopters

**Accessibility:** Booking in advance and discussing access needs is essential and will enable the team at Precision Helicopters to cater for you. They are happy to remove the door and assist with getting into the helicopter.

Enjoy a breathtaking tour to New Zealand's most beautiful untouched destinations. View numerous glaciers, virgin native bush, alpine terrain, historic huts and more. A tour that will leave you wanting more, it has to be seen to be believed. They also offer custom-made tours to suit your requirements. Their aircraft are based at Hokitika Airport, West Coast Tree Top Walkway and Hokitika Gorge.

535 Whitcombe Valley Road, Kokatahi, Hokitika  
P: 0800246 359; E: [sales@precisionhelicopters.com](mailto:sales@precisionhelicopters.com)



## West Coast Scenic Waterways

**Accessibility** – The ramp into the boat is 1m wide.

Māhinapua Creek/Tuwharewhare was once serviced by a paddle steamer that transported early gold diggers and other pioneers between Hokitika and Ruatapu, the location of West Coast Scenic Waterways. Their eco-tour takes you on a cruise through this remarkable wetland, complete with mountain views, unique ecology and birdlife. You may even get to see the kōtuku/white heron, a truly majestic wetland bird that roosts in tall kahikatea trees.

Phone: 027 4301 777  
Email: [wscenicwaterways@gmail.com](mailto:wscenicwaterways@gmail.com)





# Accessible Attractions on the Trail

## Shantytown

**Accessibility** - The majority of Shantytown Heritage Park is accessible to people in wheelchairs, although some challenges may exist. The maximum width of the carriage doors and ramp onto the train is 680mm, and there is no ramp off the platform at the far station of the journey. Ramps exist for the final train stop back at the sawmill experience. Staff will assist with getting on and off. Further to this, the historic church door is 870mm wide with ramps available and there is no access to the 1st floor of Ross Hall.



A recreated 1860s goldmining village, Shantytown is home to a mix of more than 30 replica and relocated historic buildings in a lush rainforest setting. Enjoyed by generations of locals and visitors, it is jam-packed with stories, sights and hands-on activities – from heritage train rides to the sluice cannon experience, and opportunity to dress up for an old time photo. You can even turn your hand to a spot of gold-panning, just like the old prospectors did! Allow a couple of hours or more to explore the buildings and attractions, and enjoy refreshments in King Dick's Café.

316 Rutherglen Road, Paroa – just 10km south of Greymouth (on a 4km detour off the trail at Paroa)  
P: 03 752 6634 / 0800742689 (NZ Only) E: office@shantytown.co.nz

## Pounamu Pathway Māwhera

**Accessibility** - Wheelchair Accessible.

Journey through the stories of the people of Poutini Ngai Tahu and the Māwhera Pā settlement in this immersive storytelling experience. Encounter ancestral legends, like Tūhuru the Warrior Chief and Tuterangiwhānoa, who carved these great landscapes. Listen as the stories of giants and fearless warriors unfold around you, and experience tales of conquest, travel, conflict and kinship through the trade of Pounamu.

45 Tainui Street, Greymouth 7832  
Call: 0800 224 414, Email: info@pounamupathway.kiwi  
Open: 9am - 9pm Monday - Sunday



## Westland Industrial Heritage Park

**Accessibility** - The majority of the park is wheelchair accessible. No significant barriers have been identified.

View the acclaimed sound and light show in the Big Engine Shed where restored engines tell their fascinating story. Ride the Mudfish Bush railway that meanders through forest and wetland. This community park is run by volunteers. It contains large collections of restored historic machinery and equipment. Visit the steam shed that features the oldest steam engine in New Zealand, the Museum of Fire, the livery - with so much equipment being maintained and restored by willing volunteers. Wooden boats from the Hokitika port days, tractors, trucks and dozers and so much more. Take a look at the creative heritage hub, with restored sewing machines, looms galore and an impressive display of colonial costumes expertly crafted by members. A great place for the family to visit with newly developed gardens and walks.



9 Brian Waugh Lane, up by the Hokitika Airport | E: wihpark@gmail.com  
Open on Saturdays and Wednesdays and by appointment for school and group visits

## Hokitika to Milltown Valley

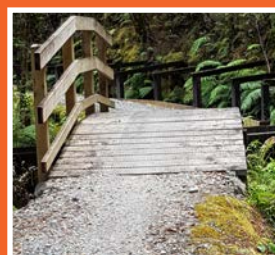
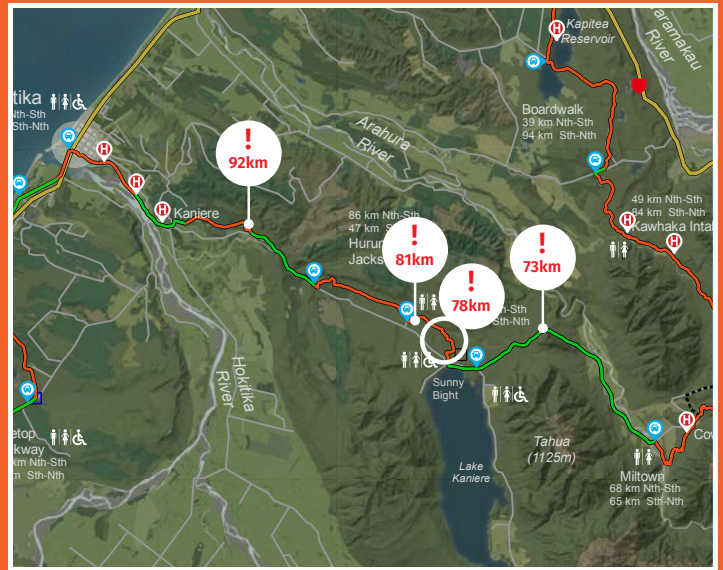
Length: 31km

The ride out to Hurunui Jacks should not pose any problems, however assistance may be required going up the Kaniere Spiral at 92km. This section does have several kms on a narrow, windy road that often has vehicles towing boats so care is required and high vis recommended. There should be no real issues from Hurunui Jack's to Wards Road.

The section between Wards Road and Lake Kaniere begins with a short steep gravel hill climb where help is likely to be required. This section along the water race has a number of narrow areas around the 78km that contain drop-offs. Riders on wider chairs may choose to get picked up at Wards Road and dropped out at Lake Kaniere or Milltown. The Landing (where the trail emerges at Lake Kaniere) has a car park and is a good pick up and drop off location.

The ride from here out to Milltown is then relatively straight forward, however it is on a narrow gravel road. High vis is recommended. For those riding in a southern direction, the climb up Pyramid Hill (73km) will be challenging on gravel and help is likely to be needed.

 Cellphone coverage at Lake Kaniere



## Milltown to Kumara

Length: 40km

This section of the trail is not as challenging for riders with mobility issues as would be expected.

There is a cattle stop to enter the paddock (68km) before the ride up the zig-zags to Cowboy Paradise. There is also an alternative gate option. This is heavy to lift off and open and really needs to be done by someone able bodied. The zig-zags on the road up from Milltown Valley are relatively wide and easy uphill riding. The two cattle-stops will be the main challenge. These are 85cm in width and have metal pipes at ground level.


The main issue to be aware of in this section is the weirs (59km). If there is heavy rain and the rivers in the Kawhaka Pass are in flood, and riders will be best to drive to the Old Christchurch Road or choose another section and ride this once the water in the weirs has resided (potentially the next day).

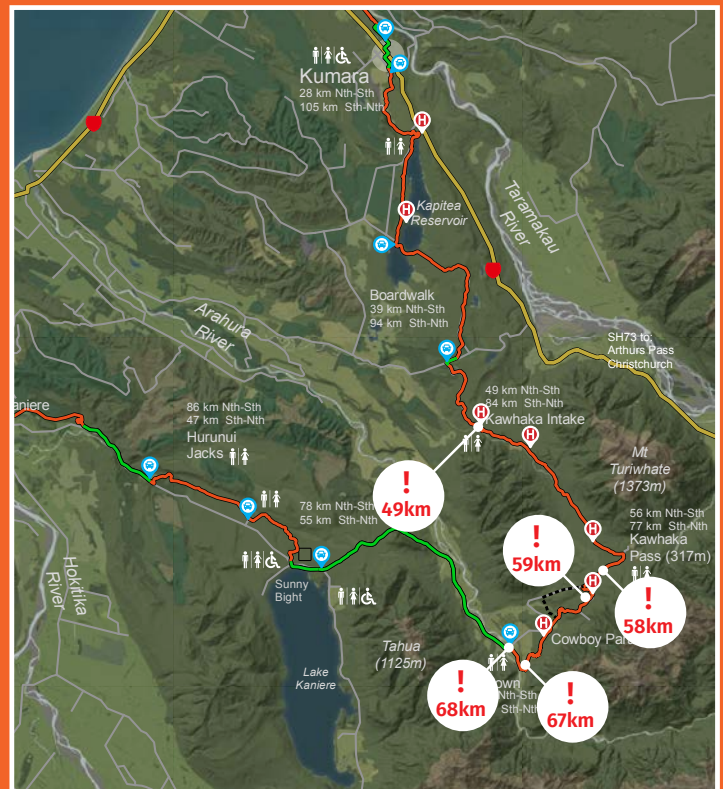
North of McPherson Bridge the trail has three steep switchbacks (58km) followed by two more higher up. These are likely to be difficult to negotiate by longer bikes. Help is very likely to be required here. If traversing in a southern direction, extreme care will be needed going down and, again, help is very likely needed. It is then a straight-forward ride through the bush to the Summit (56km) at 317 metres.

For those who are unable to ride this section please contact the trail manager as the option of road transport could be available to the Summit, however, gates have to be unlocked to the road up to this point. This may not always be possible.

The trail is then relatively straight riding downhill. Bridges along the way are 1.4m wide. The boardwalk before the Kapitea Reservoir is 1.4m wide and much of it is without rails.

After Dillman's Dam the trail may be extremely potholed before riders drop down on Larrikins Road. At the bottom are bollards that are 1.03 and 1.1m wide. For those riding south the entry to the trail behind Kumara has a short steep hill where help may be required.

 No cellphone coverage throughout this section until nearing Dillman's Dam



## Kumara to Greymouth


Length 28km

This section of the trail is relatively flat riding for the entire journey, however there are some bollards in places along the way. The new Taramakau Bridge is completely accessible and off the main road. The journey along the coast following the sea is relaxing.

The option exists for a detour of 4km on a sealed road to Shantytown. This attraction (p9) is wheelchair accessible.

When you reach Blaketown take the short detour to the breakwater and infamous Greymouth bar. Enjoy the ride down the floodwall and around the fishing wharf as it weaves around to the town centre and start/finish kiosk. Make sure you get your photo taken in the photoframe to remember your ride. For those in wheelchairs there is easy ramp access down from the start/finish line at the Greymouth floodwall. Those in longer adaptive bikes will not be able to turn the corner on the ramp here as it is too tight. Please continue along the floodwall under the Cobden Bridge to where the trail drops down into an area where safe parking exists.

The Pounamu Pathway Māwhera Pa experience in Greymouth is completely accessible - see page 9.

 Cellphone coverage throughout



## Our Team of Accessible Riders

We extend our thanks to these people who have helped prepare the guide and are willing to give advice to other riders.

### Ross Ormsby

C5/6 tetraplegic – Electric, Front wheel drive Handcycle – able to be contacted on 021 665 627. E: thatguyrossormsby@gmail.com

I am an active tetraplegic with a powerful e-bike. Its limitation is skidding as it is front wheel drive so I had some need for pushing in the forest.

Plan your trip well for safety. I suggest riders hire a Sat Phone and carry EPERB/Locator and call local contacts to be aware of support and progress.

I would do it again in two longer days.

### Bernard Mahuika

E: bushyblues@xtra.co.nz

I'm a complete T5 paraplegic and have used a free wheel on my wheelchair and a handcycle on the trail.

The whole trail is accessible with a free wheel attachment on a wheelchair. Some of the hills between Kumara and Kaniere can be a challenge in either direction, so I would probably recommend a helper for some not so confident people in that section.

Between Greymouth and Kumara is easily ridden on a recreational handcycle or even a road racing cycle as there are no sharp corners but the narrow tyres could be a problem on the loose gravel, so I'd recommend a helper.

The best part is probably from the Summit heading south down through Cowboy Paradise to Milltown Road. There is lots of freewheeling especially down though the switch-backs above and below Cowboy Paradise. Some pretty cool scenery, just a very cool trail.

### Natalie Gauld

I have motor neurone disease which causes muscle weakness and eventually paralysis. I'd not manage an e-bike so I have a Motom, an electric three-wheeler with pedals and rear wheel drive. It is about 940mm wide and shorter than some three-wheelers.

I had a wonderful time riding most of the trail in January 2023 with my husband and a friend. There were multiple barriers requiring a lift over, and a couple of areas I couldn't ride because they were too narrow (e.g. Kaniere Water Race). The switchbacks going up from Milltown were manageable because the Motom is not too long, and the boardwalks were fine for width. The trails were generally wide and a pleasure to ride with areas of beautiful forest and the sound of birds and cicadas around.

I am so pleased the West Coast Wilderness Trail Trust have written this guide, it is great to know in advance the best areas to make the riding a pleasure and not a frustration when my time to ride is limited. The West Coast Wilderness Trail is my favourite of all the trails we have ridden around NZ in the last year.

