

Safety

Safety is your responsibility. Before you depart leave your intentions with someone responsible.

Be appropriately clothed and equipped. Snow can be encountered at any time of the year. On the tops fog can roll in within seconds, causing disorientation. It is unwise to travel away from the hut without a means of navigation such as map and compass. The tops are rolling and relatively featureless. Add whiteout, particularly in the winter, and there is good cause for this precautionary advice. People have been known to be within a few metres of the hut and not see it. Gale force winds are normal.

There is variable cell phone reception on the upper slopes of the range including from the hut.

The Trust advises that: "in the unlikely event of an emergency" the quickest escape is eastwards down the pole-line from the hut, then down the marked route or fence-line.

Hut Rules and Fees

Use by members of the public is subject to –

- the payment of hut fees, and
- recording visitor names in the hut book.

Rules are posted inside the hut to ensure the protection of guests and the hut. **The main risks are fire and snow entry.** Please keep in mind at all times that this unique building would never be replaced if destroyed. A hut warden may be in residence.

- **Overnight accommodation is limited to 10 (it is planned to increase to 40).**
- No bookings are required for casual individual use.
- **Groups of six or more, or commercial or fund-raising ventures, are required to seek prior approval** to use the hut (special rates may apply). Contacts: (03) 447 3554 0274 358 311 (text), bighut@middlemarch.co.nz
- **Hut fees:** \$10 per night per person. Gold coin for day use. Please pay at the hut or post to:

Rock and Pillar Hut Trust
RD 1 Omakau 9376 Central Otago

Facilities

There is a tank water supply, kitchen, bunkroom (mattresses for 10), large common room, wash room, outside toilet.

Table tennis table, bats etc. Skifield history display panels.

What to bring

Bring sleeping bag, food, cooker, fuel, torch, and toilet paper.

Restoration plan

The Trust is in the final stages of a four-year restoration programme. Solar lighting and heating being investigated. Second bunkroom to be available by prior arrangement with the Trust.

The future

On completion of restoration the hut will be ideally suited for use by organised groups. The large common room has the potential to be a venue for educational and environmental studies and for special events related to the outdoors.

The natural history of the Rock and Pillars will be displayed on further information panels. This will encourage public appreciation of the qualities of the range while adding to the distinctive visitor experience.

Become a 'Friend of Big Hut'

Support in a practical way the restoration of the hut by becoming a 'Friend of Big Hut'. There are three levels of contribution:

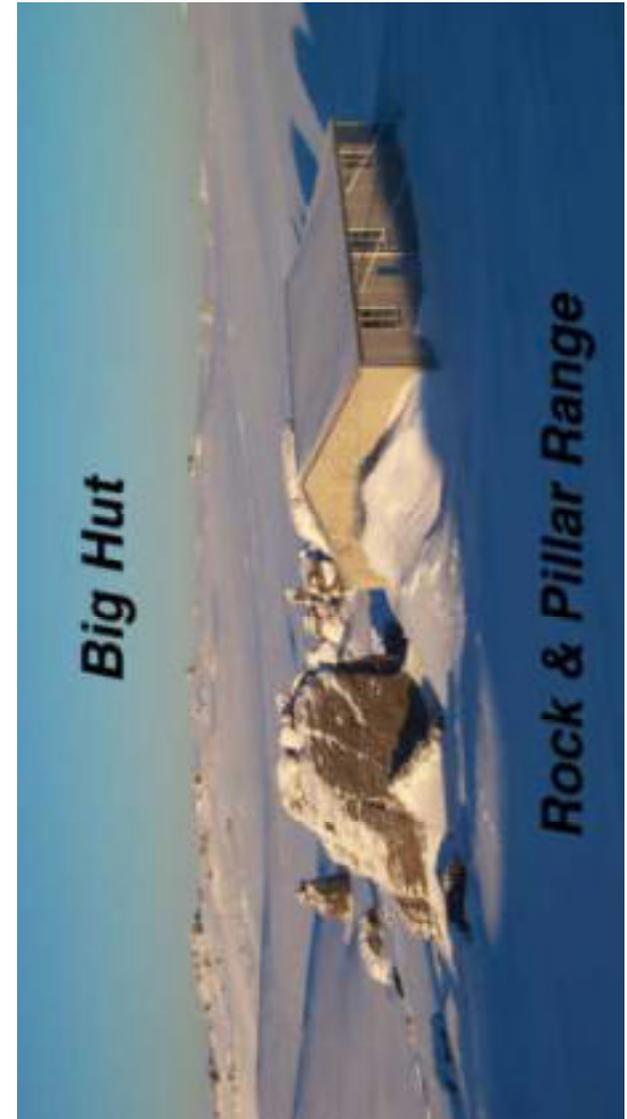
Bronze:	\$100 to \$499
Silver:	\$500 to \$999
Gold:	\$1000 or more

Donor individuals, groups, or businesses will receive laminated colour certificates, and will be acknowledged on an engraved plaque to be installed in the hut. Equivalent donations of materials will be similarly acknowledged.

Donations are tax deductible

www.middlemarch.co.nz

Rock and Pillar Hut Trust Inc December 2007



Big Hut – an ideal base for exploring the Rock & Pillars

In 1946 the Otago Ski Club opened a spacious 70-bunk ski lodge near the summit of the Rock and Pillar Range.

For many years this 'Big Hut', as it became known, provided the venue for large weekend parties of enthusiasts who engaged in all forms of skiing - downhill, slalom, jumping, and langlauf. They climbed on foot to their ski grounds most weekends until finally the attractions of easier access and better downhill slopes on Coronet Peak became irresistible.

Big Hut is a unique structure. It was built to withstand gale force winds and snow cover for several months of the year. It has withstood 60 years of alpine conditions and today provides welcome shelter and accommodation for year-round recreational activities - tramping, rock climbing, botanising, landscape photography, as well as cross-country skiing.

The hut is within the Rock and Pillar Conservation Area.

There is no comparable hut on Otago's many mountain range tops. It is a unique part of New Zealand's recreation heritage. At 4350 feet above sea level Big Hut is also the highest habitation within the limits of Dunedin City.

Today Big Hut is owned by the Rock and Pillar Hut Trust – a charitable trust set up to restore the hut to its former glory and ensure its continuing availability to the public.

The hut provides an ideal base for exploring the natural and recreational wonders of the Rock and Pillar Range.

Location

Big Hut is located at 1300m or 4350ft asl, 1.2km SE of the Summit Rock.

Topomap Middlemarch 260 H43 812261

NZMG 2281103.9,5526158.9

NZTM E1371247, N4964468

WGS84 45 26.15149, 170 04 51989

Access

There are two principal means of reaching Big Hut – by foot or mountain bike, and three main routes.

Route 1

This climbs 3300 feet up the eastern face from Glencreag Station, up a leading ridge south of Six Mile Creek. This is the most direct approach (**foot only**). Tall tussock, some scrub, and alpine herbfields are traversed. The route is marked the whole way.

5.8km north of the Middlemarch store there is a Department of Conservation signpost at the intersection of McKinnon Road and SH 87. There is vehicle access to a car park. Then a foot easement (crossing two stiles) to the sign-posted Rock and Pillar Conservation Area near Six Mile Creek. The marked route heads left and climbs steeply close to the boundary fence. Approximately 1200 feet up the marked route veers to the right and heads directly up-hill for another 1000 feet to 'The Gut' (an incised gully). A continuous line of snow poles then leads to the right, and away from the fence, to reach the hut just over the lip of the summit plateau.

If unfamiliar with the route it is inadvisable to tackle it in adverse conditions. Gale force winds are common, especially in the upper section – it is not unknown to have to crawl the last few hundred metres to the hut.

Average time 2 - 3+ hours. This is an energetic 'grunt' at the best of times. The ski club advice to members was: "start out slow, then ease up".

Route 2

This climbs 3000 feet up the eastern face on a vehicle track up a leading spur south of Lug Creek (**foot, mountain bike**).

9.5km north of the Middlemarch store on State Highway 87 is a farm entrance (RAPID 7219). A short way up the driveway is a Department of Conservation car park.

There is access up a vehicle track (recreation reserve administered by DOC) to the conservation area boundary. There is no lawful basis for the adjoining landowner to request that the access not be used. The track leads on to 'Leaning Lodge', a small hut owned by the Leaning Lodge Trust (Topomap Middlemarch 260 H43 820280).

This is located south of and below the prominent 'Castle Rock' – when the vehicle track forks below Castle Rock bear left across a shelf below the range crest until the hut can be seen. This route is well defined and provides easier walking but over a longer distance than Route 1.

Access across a gully to the hut can be difficult if there is frozen snow.

Average time to Leaning Lodge 3 hours on foot. Then another 45 minutes climbing then sidling southwards on foot to reach Big Hut (good visibility essential).

Bike access is available by following the other fork in the vehicle track past Castle Rock, over the summit (1450m), then down to Big Hut.

Route 3

This is a rough vehicle track from the Old Dunstan Road, northwards along the crest of the range (**foot or mountain bike recommended**). The route has become badly damaged by inappropriate vehicle use.

From the summit of the Dunstan Road (sign-posted) the track climbs to near McPhees Rock then veers right to follow the crest of the range to a kilometer before the summit. An unformed route descends to Big Hut. **DOC has closed this to vehicles at the boundary fence.** It is only a short walk to the hut.

As no major climbs are involved this is a good mountain bike route, however vehicle ruts are a hazard. These are very exposed tops with very limited shelter.

Time: 3.5 hrs on foot.

Dunstan Road is closed to motor vehicles 1 June to 30 September each year.