



Belmont Dress Circle

NEARBY TOWN/CITY: Lower Hutt

DISTANCE FROM TOWN CENTRE: 5 kms

EXACT LOCATION: Belmont Regional Park, Wellington. From SH2 turn into Stratton St via Dowse Drive. The run starts 1km from the beginning of Stratton Street at the first car park on the left, not at the end of the road.

TOTAL ROUTE DISTANCE: 13km

TIME TO RUN: Novice: 2h 45m; Elite: 1h 15m

TOTAL ASCENT/DESCENT 1200m/1200m cumulative

TYPE OF TRAIL RUN: Loop

DIFFICULTY: Moderate

DEFINING CHARACTERISTICS: Exposed farm trails, ascents & descents.

FEATURES OF INTEREST: The park butts onto 3 cities; Wellington, Porirua and Lower Hutt. Breathtaking views from Marlborough Sounds to the Tararuas and Rimutakas. This route features World War II ammunition bunkers and the original Main Coach 'Road' out of Wellington.

Much of the dress circle is closed during lambing (Aug-Oct).

START/FINISH GPS: -41.1790377, 174.8916596

ONLINE REFERENCE: [Map my run](#)

BEST MAP/S: [Greater Wellington Regional Council map](#)

RUN IT: If you like hills run this route clockwise, if you don't, try lawn bowls.

From the car park run down the 4x4 track, veer left, cross a small footbridge and pass a waterfall. Climb 373m in 4.8 km up the main farm track to Belmont Trig, the highest point in the Park.

Note: The park is a working farm so mind where you step.

From the trig, take your bearings north along Dress Circle ridge. Run down the NW trail from the peak closing the gate as you re-join the 4x4 track - turn left. After about 100m take the obscure foot track on your right, run 300m, cross the 4x4 track and vault the stile.

Orange trail markers make navigation easy to 'Cannons Head' which you'll recognise by the signpost.

Escape route: To bail out at Cannons Head, cross the stile on your right and drop down a steep ridge track back to the car.

Continue along the well-marked trail toward the creatively named 'Round Knob' where the track crosses another stile and skirts the base of this dome-shaped hill. Lawn-bowlers pick your way daintily around the dome, trail runners bomb to the top.

From the trig scan the Tasman Sea from whence it was feared Japanese sailors would invade during World War II. The 62 concrete bunkers scattered to the east stored ammunition to be hurled in retaliation.

While descending the knob, pause and look for a stile with an orange marker on the hillside ahead, aim for that. Sheep love this section and your next stile is mired in sheep shit. Leap it, veer right and follow track markers to another vehicle track. This is 'Old Coach Road' Wellington's historic main highway built in 1872 and not named after Graeme Henry.

Turn right and pass 2 locked gates (stiles provided). 200m past the 2nd gate drop through pines down an unmarked trail on your right. This is the famous 'Danzig' mountain bike trail built by the local bikers you may 'run into' as you descend.

On the valley floor pause at the drinking fountain just passed the park buildings. Your car is parked 300m down the tar seal.

Light runners beware: On windy days pack extra water - as ballast; this is windy Wellington at its fiercest.

POST RUN GOODNESS: Scoot down Dowse Drive to the [Maungaraki Café](#); a relaxed, informal neighbourhood café attached to a dairy. Everyone knows everyone else, prices are relaxed and the coffee hits the mark.