This dual use track runs North and South along the ridge between Old Coach Road in Johnsonville and Makara Saddle in Karori.

Allow up to five hours to traverse either side of Wellington’s ridge tops following the Outer Green Belt onto Mt Kaukau, the Crow’s Nest, Kilmister Tops and Johnston Hill. Take time to indulge in the stunning rural, city and coastal views along the way. On a clear day, waves of the Kaitakura ranges, the Harboursounds, Wellington city and harbour, and the Tasman and Greengrocer ranges will take your breath away.

Please be aware that the route is challenging in areas and weather conditions can be extreme on this very exposed ridge. This track can be completed in stages as there are many entry and exit points along the way to plan a safe and enjoyable experience.

This route is well-preserved. The purchase of land for the Skyline Track guides you from Old Coach Road in Johnsonville and Makara Saddle to Mt Kaukau, the Crow’s Nest, Kilmister Tops and Johnston Hill. The area surrounding the television tower and transmitter is privately owned. Please respect the landowners and their wishes.

This walk up the hill will take you to the Johnsonville Reservoir on the west side of the track. Take a two minute walk west and you will arrive at a tunnel in the bank that was used to accommodate the (now disused) aqueduct supply from the Aranui.

In 1988 the Johnsonville Town Board purchased land on the Northern and Eastern slopes of Mount Kaukau to build a high-pressure water supply to all properties in their area. Water was pumped up from a dam in the Ohariu Valley and entered 314 metres above sea level. It flowed under considerable pressure to the township below.

Follow the yellow directional markers along the track.

This track was formed road that connected Johnsonville with Ohariu Valley. Built between 1856 and 1858, its popular name is known as no coaches ever used the road.

However, it is recognized as one of the first horse-voiced roads in New Zealand and has a Category I Historic Places Act registration. The road was altered bycheidometers at the Johnsonville end but is otherwise well-preserved. The purchase of an either side of Old Coach Road has allowed Wellington City Council to protect and manage this area.

Leaving from here you will find several natural and historic sites in the area.

1 Old Coach Road Heritage Trail

This is the route that connected Johnsonville with Ohariu Valley. Built between 1856 and 1858, its popular name is known as no coaches ever used the road.

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2 Johnstonville Bavarian

3 Kilmister Tops

Climb onto the chimney-like structure that still stands an impressive 122 metres tall. This is the site that replaced the old-fashioned television transmitter on Mt Kaukau (see picture below) on the South Island, the first significant peak climbed by New Zealand’s first famous mountaineer Sir Edmund Hillary. From Mt Kaukau, you can see the outer range of Mount Tapuaenuku (2885m) and along the Skyline edge to the Aoraki top. (Photo: View of Chilandarin from Mt Kaukau via Alexander Turnbull Library, Wellington, New Zealand). The twin transmission towers and transmitter phone line are visible from a great distance.

4 Kilmister Tops

John and Henry Kilmister, sons of the early settler John Kilmister, bought Mt Kaukau in 1866. He divided the property into 20 allotments and named it Henry’s Land. The Kilmisters were granted a new lease of the property in 1885.

5 John Sims Dr

In 1910 the Johnsonville Town Board was granted public access over their Otari property and shared the costs with more than forty translators and son of Frederick) built the house (which still stood in 1920-1930s) for shelter from the wind. Lawrence Kilmister (grandson of John Kilmister and son of Frederick) built the chimney the structure that still stands today for enclosing in the 1930s.

6 Wilkinson’s Tops

The first set of pines, approximately 50 years old, were planted on the Crow’s Nest, were on the Hill of Kilmister run. An old rail line ran here.

7 Skyline Track

By 1938, the number of tracks had increased to seven and the number of users had increased accordingly. The first set of pines, approximately 50 years old, were planted on the Crow’s Nest, were on the Hill of Kilmister run. An old rail line ran here.

8 Play Area

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Kilmister Tops is a peneplain remnant which is high, broad and largely clear of tall vegetation. This area is often seared with fires that can be very destructive. The Wilton’s cleared and farmed most of their land that stretched almost to the top of Frankland Hill before weeding out of forests to farm their land for several hundred years. This became a popular grazing area for sheep and cattle from the city. The Wilton’s land was put together with other farmed areas purchased in 1905 by Wellington City Council and is still operated today as a renowned restoration destination known as Wilton’s Bush.

The only true botanical garden in New Zealand completely devoted to native plants, is the canopy and indoor plant collection. The forest seeds in the steep valley formed by the Te Pahurawhara Stream drain into the Kaiwharawhara Stream flowing North-East towards Ngāoro Gorge. The long, north-westward facing steep valley is scraping up to the top of the Whakairi Ridge on the Skyline.

Photo: Waugh Family Collection in 1993, this old school!

Walking through dense bush and passing the Wilton’s Bush Fortification, you would see a scattering of small logs indicating low forest once existed in the area, cleared for farming purposes and for grazing purposes.

Photo: Haflidi Foss

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