

## Safety

*Your safety is your responsibility*

Plan your trip properly and be prepared for all conditions. All trampers need to carry a sleeping bag, cooking utensils, sufficient food, wet weather gear and warm clothing.

Leave your intentions with a trusted contact. Information on the Outdoor Intentions system can be found at [www.adventuresmart.co.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.co.nz)



We recommend that you carry the appropriate topographical maps. This pamphlet is a guide only and should not be used for navigation purposes.

Treat all river crossings with great care and *wait* if the river is too high.

Remember that the terms 'true left' and 'true right' are defined by looking down the river or water flow.

Locator beacons can be hired from the Makarora Visitor Centre (November to mid-April only; bookings recommended).



### Check, Clean, Dry

Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

### Further information:

Mt Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre  
Ardmore Street, Wanaka  
PO Box 93, Wanaka 9343  
Phone: (03) 443 7660 fax: (03) 443 8777  
Email: [mtaspiringvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:mtaspiringvc@doc.govt.nz)

Makarora Visitor Centre  
State Highway 6, Makarora  
P O Box 9, via Wanaka 9346  
Ph: (03) 443 8365 Fax: (03) 443 8374  
Email: [makaroravc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:makaroravc@doc.govt.nz)

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**DOC HOTline**  
**0800 362 468**

Report any safety hazards  
or conservation emergencies  
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

## Scenic Flights & Track Connections in Mt Aspiring National Park

- Siberia Valley
- Albert Burn
- Hunter Valley
- Siberia Valley back flights \$50 pp standby
- Top forks
- Upper Makarora
- other areas by request

**Southern Alps Air**  
State Highway 6, Makarora  
Ph: 03 443 4385  
[www.southernalpsair.co.nz](http://www.southernalpsair.co.nz)



## Explore our World Heritage Area



Wilkin River Jets and  
Backcountry Helicopters  
**Day walkers**  
Great Kiwi Walks half/full day options  
**Trampers and hunters**  
Helicopter and river taxi access in and  
out of the Park - competitive rates.

Freephone 0800 JET WILKIN (538 945)  
Makarora, Haast Pass Highway SH6

Cover: Cameron Hut

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Published by  
Department of Conservation  
Mt Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre  
PO Box 93, Wanaka,  
New Zealand  
June 2013

Editing and design  
Publishing Team, DOC National Office

[newzealand.govt.nz](http://newzealand.govt.nz)



# Tramping in the Makarora region

From beech forest to alpine vistas  
Mount Aspiring National Park  
Hāwea Conservation Park



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*

The Makarora region of Mount Aspiring National Park, from the head of Lake Wanaka to Haast Pass/Tioripātea, offers a number of tramping opportunities. Many of the tracks follow the river valleys that branch off the Makarora River and range from one-day walks to challenging four-to five-day tramps.

Spectacular mountain scenery, alpine vegetation and river valleys of silver beech are highlights of this area; recognised nationally in 1964, when Mt Aspiring National Park was created, and internationally in 1990, with the establishment of the Te Wāhipounamu – *South West New Zealand* World Heritage Area. World Heritage status means this part of New Zealand has one of the world's foremost natural landscapes.

## Natural history

The rocks of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana began as layers of sand and mud deposited on the sea floor about 220 to 270 million years ago. They were subjected to intense heat and pressure, then uplifted to form mountains. Today's landscape reflects the powerful force of glaciers, which at the height of the Ice Ages filled all the river valleys and flowed over Haast Pass/Tioripātea.

Insect-eating birds such as fantail/pīwakawaka, tomtit/miromiro and rifleman/tītipounamu thrive in the invertebrate-rich forest, dominated by silver beech/tawhai. The endangered mohūa/yellowhead can be seen in some valleys in this region, and kākārīki/yellow-crowned parakeet are locally common.

Grasshoppers, weevils and black butterflies are among the many invertebrates seen in the alpine zone among the tussocks and large herbs, such as mountain daisies and buttercups, which flower in spring and summer.



## History

Māori from coastal Otago and Southland visited Otago's inland lakes to hunt moa, kākāpō and weka, and to fish. They had camps around the shores of Lakes Wanaka and Hawea and in the Makarora valley, which they knew of as Kaika Paekai—the place of abundant food. Haast Pass/Tioripātea was one of the routes used by groups of Māori as they travelled to the West Coast in search of pounamu/greenstone, highly valued for making tools and ornaments.

Geologist Julius von Haast led a party over Haast Pass/Tioripātea in 1863. He reached the West Coast 30 days out from Wanaka, and claimed to be the first European over the pass, but this was rightfully challenged. Charles Cameron, a Scots prospector, reached the pass two days before Haast.

A pack track existed up the Makarora valley and across the Haast Pass/Tioripātea from 1876, but it wasn't until 1965 that the road connecting Wanaka to all of the West Coast was completed.

## Huts and hut tickets

All huts have mattresses and (except for Brewster Hut) a log burner for heating. You should carry cooking equipment.

Trampers are expected to leave huts clean and tidy, replace firewood, ensure the fire is out, and securely fasten windows and doors.



Mountain daisy. Photo: R Colbourne

None of the huts have rubbish disposal facilities—carry out what you carried in.

A backcountry hut pass or tickets must be purchased in advance from DOC offices.

## Camping

Camping is permitted, though this is a high rainfall area, so choose your site with care. Campers who use hut facilities at Brewster Hut need to pay a \$5 fee per night; camping beside the other huts is free. If toilet facilities are unavailable, please dispose of human waste carefully.

## Hunting and fishing

You must have a DOC hunting permit to carry a firearm in the park. Brown and rainbow trout are found in the Makarora area's rivers, and a current fishing licence is required.

## Domestic animals

*Dogs and other domestic animals are not permitted in national parks.*



Our national parks have been preserved for their recreation values and to protect significant native flora and fauna. It is vital that the habitat of threatened species is properly protected.

Te Wāhipounamu –  
South West New Zealand  
World Heritage Area



South West New Zealand is one of the great wilderness areas of the Southern Hemisphere. Known to Māori as Te Wāhipounamu (the place of greenstone), the *South West New Zealand* World Heritage Area incorporates Aoraki/Mount Cook, Westland/Tai Poutini, Fiordland and Mount Aspiring National Parks, covering 2.6 million hectares.

World Heritage is a global concept that identifies natural and cultural sites of world significance—places so special that protecting them is of concern for all people.

Some of the best examples of animals and plants once found on the ancient supercontinent Gondwana live in the World Heritage Area.

## Tramping tracks



**Tramping track**—mostly unformed but with track directional markers, poles or cairns. Backcountry skills and experience required.

### Wills Valley Track

#### Wills Hut 5–6 hr, 7.5 km

Like most of the smaller valleys in this area, the Wills is gorged in its lower reaches, and then opens out to flats further up.

This track is for experienced trampers and starts at the Gates of Haast Bridge. From State Highway 6 the track drops down under the Gates of Haast Bridge then traverses across a large slip before climbing back up into forest. Avoiding the sting of native nettle, follow the old bridle trail for about 10 minutes. At this point the track branches off to climb, then sidle, above the western side of the Wills Gorge, until reaching a smaller slip. To keep on the track, stay high on the slip to reach a steel ladder and climb the small rock bluff. Continue through the forest, cross several small slips, and then descend to a large, grassy river flat where the marked track ends.

The four-bunk Wills Hut is on the true left, on a small river terrace close to the bush edge; about 40 minutes from the start of the flat.

There is an impressive narrow gorge, an hour beyond the hut and well worth a visit. If going to the head of the valley, you can easily by-pass the gorge by climbing up and sidling around to the east.

A climb up onto the Bealey Range, at 980 metres, starts directly opposite the hut. This is an interesting day trip that offers panoramic views. A three- to four-day tramp over Wilson Pass to the Hunter valley is also possible.

### Makarora Valley Track

#### Makarora Hut 5–7 hr, 10.5 km

The upper Makarora valley opens out into long grassy flats that lead to an impressive basin at the foot of Mount Brewster. Cross the river at Davis Flat to the steep climb beside Stewart Falls or gain access via the

‘high river’ track on the true left of the road bridge.

Above the falls, the track sidles above the gorge—slippery when wet—before traversing and descending a large unstable slip to a small river flat. Continue through small open flats, forest and slips to the main valley flat. From here the track is unmarked to the four-bunk Makarora Hut, about 50 minutes away; on the true left at the northern end of the flat, close to the bush edge.

A three-hour day trip, from the hut to the basin at the head of the valley, is recommended. It’s an unmarked track leading to Mount Brewster’s upper slopes, which are normally partially covered in ice. Access is along the river, which means that two gorges must be by-passed. Take the true right to sidle around the first gorge, and the true left for the second.

### Mount Brewster Track

#### Brewster Hut 3–4 hr, 2.5 km



*In winter, alpine skills are essential.*

The track starts from Fantail Falls, crosses the Haast River and climbs steadily through beech forest to the bushline. From here the track continues up a snow-grass face and on to the predominant ridge leading up towards Mt Armstrong.

The twelve-bunk Brewster Hut (no heating) is next to a small tarn, just off the ridge to the right. It is possible to continue up the ridge and on to the top of Mt Armstrong, which is about two hours from the hut. A rock bluff halfway up can be by-passed by sidling around to the left.



Brewster Hut

### Cameron Valley Track

#### Cameron Hut 4–5 hr, 7 km

The entrance to the Cameron valley is a spectacular gorge with towering bluffs and a cascading waterfall. The track starts from the Cameron Creek car park and climbs up through a series of small bluffs before sidling around above the gorge; some parts are steep and exposed. After the gorge, the track traverses across a large unstable slip to the river—one of several slips in this valley. This is about two hours from the car park. After crossing the river the track re-enters the forest and continues to the south branch before coming out on a grassy river flat. The four-bunk Cameron Hut is on the true left at the southern end of the flat.

### Blue Valley Track

#### Camp Flat 2–3 hr, 2.5 km

The Blue valley is easily accessible and an interesting day or overnight trip. The track starts at the Blue Pools car park. After 10 minutes the valley track branches off just after the swing bridge. It then climbs round and above the Blue River and drops to cross a forested basin of mature silver beech/tawhai. The track then climbs again, sidles up a gorge and descends to Camp Flat, a grassy and pleasant lunch stop or camp site.

#### Head of the Valley 6–7 hr, 13 km (from Camp Flat)

Follow the poled route up the true left of the valley. Take care around a semi active slip and awkward access round the river’s edge. About 50 metres below the north branch cross the Blue River and stay on the true right to the upper grassy flats some six to seven hours away. From here access to the Okuru River, via Māori Saddle, is possible.

## Hunter valley

The grassy river flats of the Hunter valley are leasehold farmland. Please respect this and don't disturb the stock. Western side access to the Hunter valley via Meads Road requires permission in advance from Hunter Valley Station. Eastern side access is via Dingle Burn Road.

A permit from DOC is required to land aircraft on public conservation land in the Hunter valley. *Hāwea Conservation Park* brochure is available at DOC visitor centres. This will help to plan trips from the lower sections of the Hunter valley.

### Ferguson to Forbes Hut 2–3 hr, 8 km

This is a two- to three-hour trip. From the four-bunk Ferguson Hut, follow the 4WD track to cross Ferguson Creek and carry on to the end of the main, grassy flat. From here on there's no marked track. Follow and cross the Hunter River.

The track then leads through a narrow neck of forest on to Joes Flat. After the flat it re-enters the forest and emerges on a terrace at the bottom of Forbes Flat. The six-bunk Forbes Hut is halfway up the flat.

Beyond Forbes Hut there are several other routes. From the hut to the West Branch bushline (3 hours), follow the flat up and cross the Hunter River below the forks—take care as it can be dangerous after heavy rain. Then cross the West Branch to the start of the track, on a ridge between the East and West branches. About an hour from the forks, the track crosses the river and continues on the true right to the bush line. From this point, experienced trampers can reach the Wills valley.

## Other tracks in the region

*Gillespie Pass and Wilkin valley tracks* brochure is available at DOC visitor centres. This will help to plan trips in the Young, Siberia, Wilkin and Albert Burn valleys.

