

Kepler Track winter tramping

During the winter season (May to October), the Kepler Track remains open but with reduced facilities. Weather, track and avalanche conditions need to be carefully considered, so it is important to contact the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre before departure to check the current situation. Bookings are required at Luxmore Hut during the winter season.

Safety information

For current track conditions, please seek advice from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre.

You will need to be confident that you and your party have the necessary skills, fitness and equipment for winter tramping. Navigation and alpine skills are essential for your survival. For more information about these, visit www.mountainsafety.org.nz. When going into the backcountry in winter, remember to leave details of your trip (return date and time, planned route, party names, vehicle details) with a responsible person. Intention forms are available from the Adventure Smart website: www.adventuresmart.org.nz.

Your safety and the decisions you make while on the track are your responsibility. Know the outdoor safety code. Check out www.doc.govt.nz/safety.

It is strongly recommended that you take a personal locator beacon with you. A two-way satellite communication could be an optional extra.

Avalanches

The Kepler Track has challenging and complex avalanche terrain. Avalanches are frequent. There are nine avalanche paths that have the potential to cross the Kepler Track.

If you are going into places avalanches could occur, be sure you:

- ▶ Have checked the Backcountry Avalanche Advisory at www.avalanche.net.nz/region/12 and the Avalanche Terrain Exposure scale system (ATES) for the area where you want to go.
- ▶ Have the skills for the ATES class you are going into.
- ▶ Take an avalanche transceiver, a snow shovel and a probe. Know how to use these tools!

Weather

During the winter months Fiordland can be very wet and cold. Daylight is limited and the high mountains let little sunlight into the valleys. Alpine areas are usually covered in snow. Track conditions during this time can change daily, as can the weather. Check the latest weather forecast at weather.niwa.co.nz/parks before you depart.



Luxmore Hut. Photo: DOC

Track information

The track over the alpine section of the Kepler Track is not marked and is often blanketed in thick snow. The side track to the Luxmore Caves can also be very slippery and icy.

For up-to-date track information, check the DOC Track Alert at www.doc.govt.nz/keplertrack. The most current information is available from the DOC visitor centre nearest the area where you want to go.

Hut facilities

All huts have bunks, mattresses and a wood burner.

During the winter season (May to October), the hut facilities are reduced.

- ▶ Gas is not provided – you will need to bring your own cooking stove.
- ▶ Flush toilets are replaced with pit toilets.
- ▶ Running water is turned off inside the huts. Water can be obtained from the outside water tank; if this is frozen, then from the nearest water course or by melting snow.
- ▶ There are no rangers based at the huts.

Topo maps

Topographical maps covering the Kepler Track are strongly recommended for navigation. NZTopo50 maps CD07 – Manapouri and CD08 – Te Anau are available for purchase from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre.



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Contact

Te Rua-o-te-moko / Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre
1 Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600
Phone: 03 249 7924
Email: fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz
www.doc.govt.nz

Paying for your stay

Bookings are required at Luxmore Hut during the winter season. Backcountry Hut Passes can be used to pay for your booking. Hut tickets cannot be used to pay for a booking.

All other huts require Backcountry Hut Tickets, which must be purchased in advance, and hut beds are on a first come, first served basis only. Backcountry Hut Passes may also be used.

Transport

All transport must be arranged before starting the track. During winter transport operators require minimum numbers and do not always operate a daily service. Transport arrangements can be affected by bad weather. You must discuss an alternative option with transport operators before you begin your walk.

What to take

You need to be totally self sufficient. Having the correct food, clothing and equipment is essential.

- Food – allow for at least two extra days
- Warm and waterproof clothing
- Warm sleeping bag
- Survival blanket
- Stove and gas for cooking
- Lighter or matches
- Ice axe
- Crampons
- Toilet paper
- Torch
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- First aid kit
- Personal locator beacon (optional)
- **Avalanche safety/rescue equipment: avalanche beacon, snow shovel and avalanche probe.**

Thick snow blankets the alpine section of the Kepler Track.
Photo: DOC

