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Further information:

For recreation and conservation information, visit the DOC Visitor Centre:

Tititea/Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre

1 Ballantyne Road, Wanaka
 PO Box 93, Wanaka 9305

PHONE: 03 443 7660

EMAIL: mtaspiringvc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz

Gillespie Pass, Wilkin Valley Tracks

| Mount Aspiring National Park



Trampers on the Gillespie Pass track.

Photo: Geoff Marks

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New Zealand Government



Department of Conservation
 Te Papa Atawhai



**Nau mai, haere mai,
tauti mai**

Welcome to the
Gillespie Pass,
Wilkin Valley Tracks

The 56-km Gillespie Pass Circuit Track is an excellent 3–4 day circuit, with spectacular mountain scenery, alpine vegetation, and river valleys filled with silver beech/tawhai. It should only be undertaken by experienced parties with river crossing skills. Due to avalanche risk the track is not recommended in winter and spring.

This area's diversity was recognised in 1964 with the creation of Mount Aspiring National Park, and again by the establishment of Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area in 1991 – recognising it as one of the world's remarkable natural landscapes.



History

Māori people from coastal Otago and Southland visited the inland Otago lakes to hunt moa, kākāpō and weka, and to fish. They camped around the shores of lakes Wanaka and Hāwea and in the Makarora valley, which they call Kaika Paekai (place of abundant food).

Haast Pass/Tīoripātea was one of the routes used by groups of Māori travelling to the West Coast in search of pounamu (greenstone).

Natural history

Today's dramatic landscape reflects the power of ice-age glaciers. The rocks of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana began as layers of sand and mud on the sea floor over 220 million years ago. Under intense heat and pressure, they rose to form mountains.

Silver beech/tawhai is the dominant tree. Birdlife, including fantail/pīwakawaka and rifleman/tītītipounamu, thrives in the forest. yellowhead/Mohua are also common in some areas, as are parakeet/kākāriki. Grasshoppers, black butterflies and other invertebrates live among alpine tussocks and large flowering herbs.



Mount Alba from the Crucible Lake Track.
Photo: Jess Simson

Hunting and fishing

You must have a DOC hunting permit to carry firearms in the national park.

There are brown and rainbow trout in the rivers. To fish, you must have a current fishing licence with a backcountry fishing endorsement from Fish & Game New Zealand. For more information, see www.fishandgame.org.nz.

Huts and camping

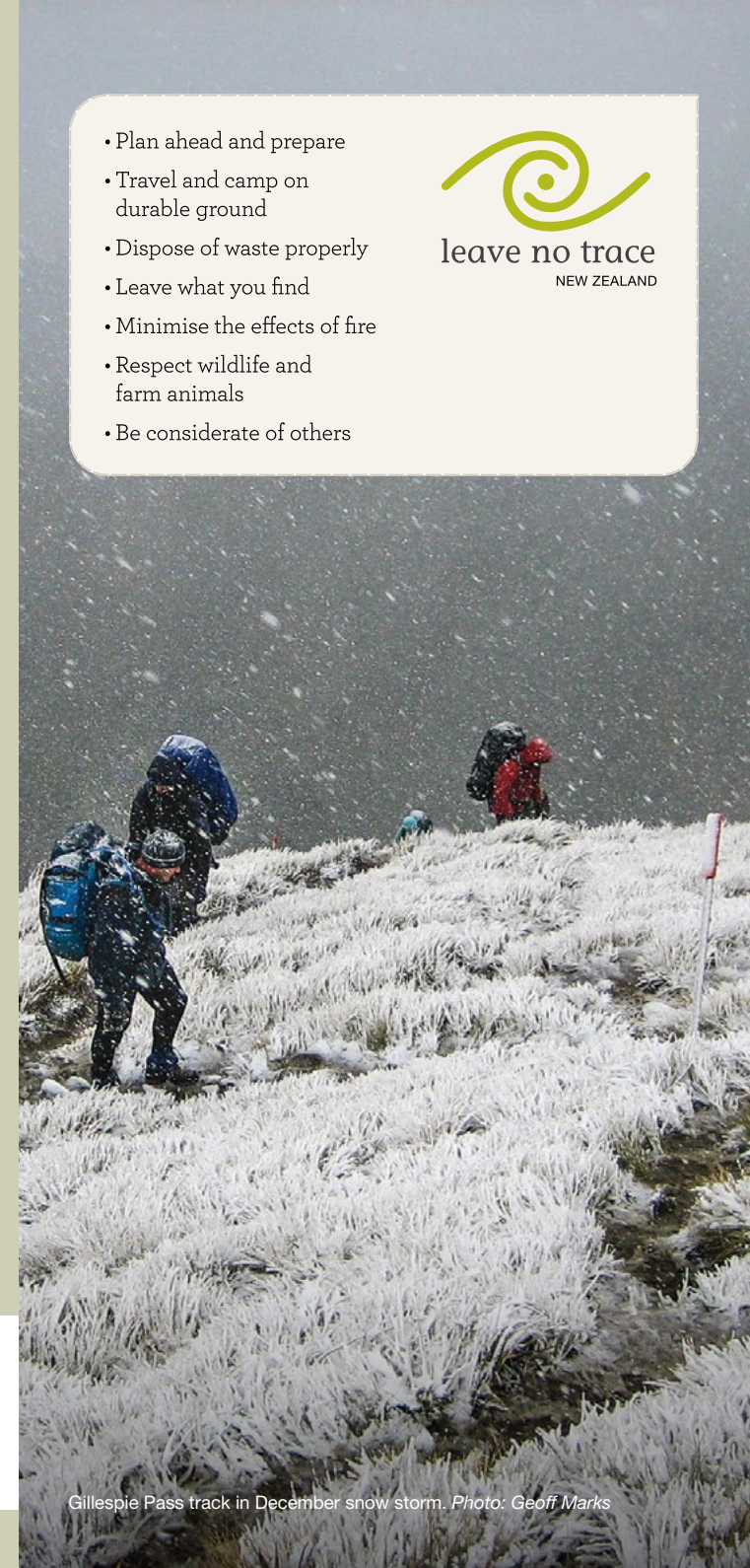
- All huts have mattresses and a multi-fuel burner for heating.
- Leave huts clean and tidy. Replace the firewood and kindling, extinguish the fire, and close all windows and doors securely.
- Please carry your rubbish out with you – huts have no rubbish facilities.
- Siberia Hut requires bookings from December to April – see www.doc.govt.nz or call into a DOC Visitor Centre to book.
- All other huts on this circuit work on a first-come basis – you must buy backcountry hut tickets or passes **before** your trip, from DOC offices or approved outlets.
- Untreated water – Water at huts is not treated or tested, and may not be suitable for drinking, food preparation, tooth brushing or washing dishes. Boil water before use.
- Camping is permitted, but choose your site carefully as rainfall is high in the area. Camping fees apply if camping near huts and using their facilities (note: camping is not possible at Young Hut). If camping elsewhere, bury all human waste carefully. **Alpine track sections are home to fragile ecosystems – camping in these areas is not 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.

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others



Gillespie Pass track in December snow storm. Photo: Geoff Marks

Gillespie Pass Circuit



Blue Pools to Young Hut

7-9 hr, 22 km

From the Blue Pools car park off SH6 the track passes through forest and open country, with bridged crossings of the Makarora and Blue rivers and the Ore and Leven Streams, to the Young River mouth (1.5 - 2 hr from car park). Follow the Young River on the true left to a swing bridge at the junction of the North and South Branches (4-6 hr from car park). The track divides after the bridge: the Young Forks Campsite is 200 m upstream, while the track to Young Hut continues downstream then enters the forest on the true left of South Branch, just beyond the junction. The track climbs steeply for 100 m, then sidles through a series of unstable slips to reach Stag Creek. From here it's a steady climb to the 20-bunk Young Hut (750 m a.s.l.).



Warning: *A dam that formed in the Young River North Branch in 2007 is still a risk to trampers. Avoid Young Valley during heavy rain. Do not camp there in heavy rain (more than 200 mm in a 48 hour period), and move through the valley quickly. Watch for unusual rises in water levels and move to high ground if necessary*



Young Hut to Siberia Hut

6-8 hr, 12 km



The alpine section between Young and Siberia Huts crosses 'complex' avalanche terrain, with multiple avalanche paths. Visit www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip between May and November.

Climb 1 hr to the bushline, cross the bridge over the upper Young River, and follow the valley floor for about 20 min until the start of the climb up Gillespie Pass on your left. This is usually the last water source until well over the pass, so fill your water bottles before

leaving the valley. The track climbs steeply onto a snow grass spur that, after 3-4 hr, veers to the left before the alpine pass and climbs to 1,600 m. The impressive Mount Awful dominates the skyline. This section is snow-covered in winter/spring and should only be attempted during these times by parties with alpine and avalanche experience.

The track descends steeply before sidling down a series of snow grass basins. Take care - snow grass is very slippery when wet. The track enters the forest on a small predominant spur and leads down to Gillespie Stream, a beautiful spot to rest. The track continues down through the forest, sidling above Gillespie Stream before a zigzag descent to Siberia Stream. It's an easy 1hr walk on the valley floor to the 20-bunk Siberia Hut (630 m a.s.l.). Be aware that during high rainfall an unnamed creek two minutes before Siberia Hut can become impassable.



Siberia Hut to Crucible Lake

3-4 hr, 7 km



There is 'complex' avalanche terrain in the Crucible basin: visit www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip between May and November.



Gillespie, Siberia and Crucible Streams can all become impassable after rain

High above Siberia Valley, under Mount Alba, is Crucible Lake, an excellent day trip from Siberia Hut. From the hut, walk up the valley for 2 km then cross both Gillespie and Siberia Streams to their true right. The track then enters the forest on the true left of Crucible Stream, climbs a narrow spur and sidles. Crucible Stream must be crossed before the track emerges onto a snow grass flat on the true right. Follow the pole markers in the upper basin, continue up the flat, then climb the rock moraine to the lake. The tiny rock wren/pīwauwau is often seen among rocks at the lake outlet.

Camping is not allowed in Crucible Basin.



Siberia Hut to Makarora

6-8 hr, 22 km



The Wilkin and Makarora Rivers can become impassable after rain.

About 30 min down from Siberia Hut, on the true left, the track to the Wilkin Valley enters the forest at the southern end of Siberia Flat. It then meanders above Siberia Gorge before a zigzag descent to the Wilkin River at Kerin Forks (2 - 3 hr, 7 km from Siberia Hut).

Kerin Forks Hut (10 bunks, 340 m a.s.l.) can be seen 400 m downstream on the true right of the Wilkin River, at the western end of a large flat on the other side of the valley. To access the hut and/or the upper Wilkin Valley, the river must be crossed - be prepared to wait if water levels are too high. If it has been raining or rain is in the forecast, consider how this will impact your ability to return across the river.

There is no need to cross the Wilkin River if you are walking out to Makarora: the track continues on the true left and enters the forest at the bottom of Dans Flat. The track can be rough in places. Try not to disturb stock on farm flats near the river mouth. Cross the Makarora River if it safe to do so, watching for soft sand; then either tramp up the open river flats, or continue to the main road to Makarora township. Be prepared to wait if the river is too high to cross.



Transport: *It is possible to use transport to avoid crossing the Makarora River on foot. Jet boats operate to/from the Young River mouth and Kerin Forks (either side of the Wilkin River). Fixed-wing planes and helicopters operate to/from Siberia Hut. Please note all transport must be arranged in advance prior to starting the trip. If flying, do not approach the plane or helicopter until given approval by the pilot.*

Wilkin Valley

For directions from Makarora to Kerin Forks Hut, please refer to Siberia Hut to Makarora



Kerin Forks Hut to Top Forks Hut

6–8 hr, 15 km

The track begins behind the hut, passing through beech/tawhai forest beside the Wilkin River and over several slips and steep-sided ravines that require care. It emerges at Wonderland flats, a good lunch stop halfway between the two huts.

At the end of Wonderland flats the track re-enters the forest, then climbs and sidles above the river before descending to the Jumboland flats. From here the route is unmarked; follow the river flats to the junction of the north and south branches. When the river is low, an unmarked river route follows the true right, fording the river several times before reaching flats near the hut. If the river is high, follow track markers leading over a hill. The Top Forks Hut (600 m a.s.l.) is above the junction, on the true right of the river's south branch.



North Branch Wilkin Valley

Top Forks Hut to –
Lake Diana: 1 hr, 2.5 km
Lake Lucidus: 1 hr 30 min, 3.5 km
Lake Castalia: 3–4 hr, 8 km



The track beyond Lake Diana is in 'complex' avalanche terrain; refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip between May and November.



The Wilkin and North Branch Rivers can become impassable after rain.

The North Branch is an excellent day trip. The track crosses South Branch in front of Top Forks Hut and heads up North Branch. Most of this section requires boulder-hopping (slippery if wet) then crosses a small side stream that can be tricky to ford. The track enters the forest and climbs the predominant spur between the stream and North Branch, to emerge at a small lake: Disappearing Tarn. Just south of the track, 5 min further on, Lake Diana lies nestled in sub alpine vegetation.

Lake Lucidus, a spectacular moraine lake, is 20 min away across the grasslands. The track to Lake Castalia branches off the Lake Lucidus track just beyond the boardwalk. It crosses the outlet stream, then North Branch to climb through alpine vegetation, then re-crosses to a snow grass terrace leading to Lake Castalia's outlet. Take care on the last 200 m over loose rock on the true right of the stream.

Track grades



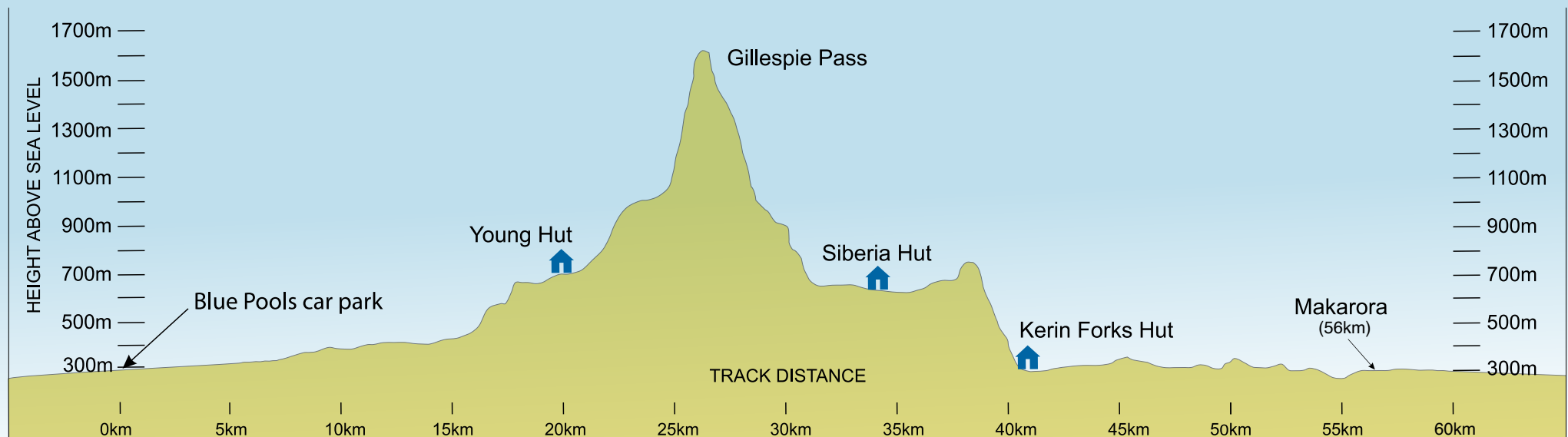
Tramping track

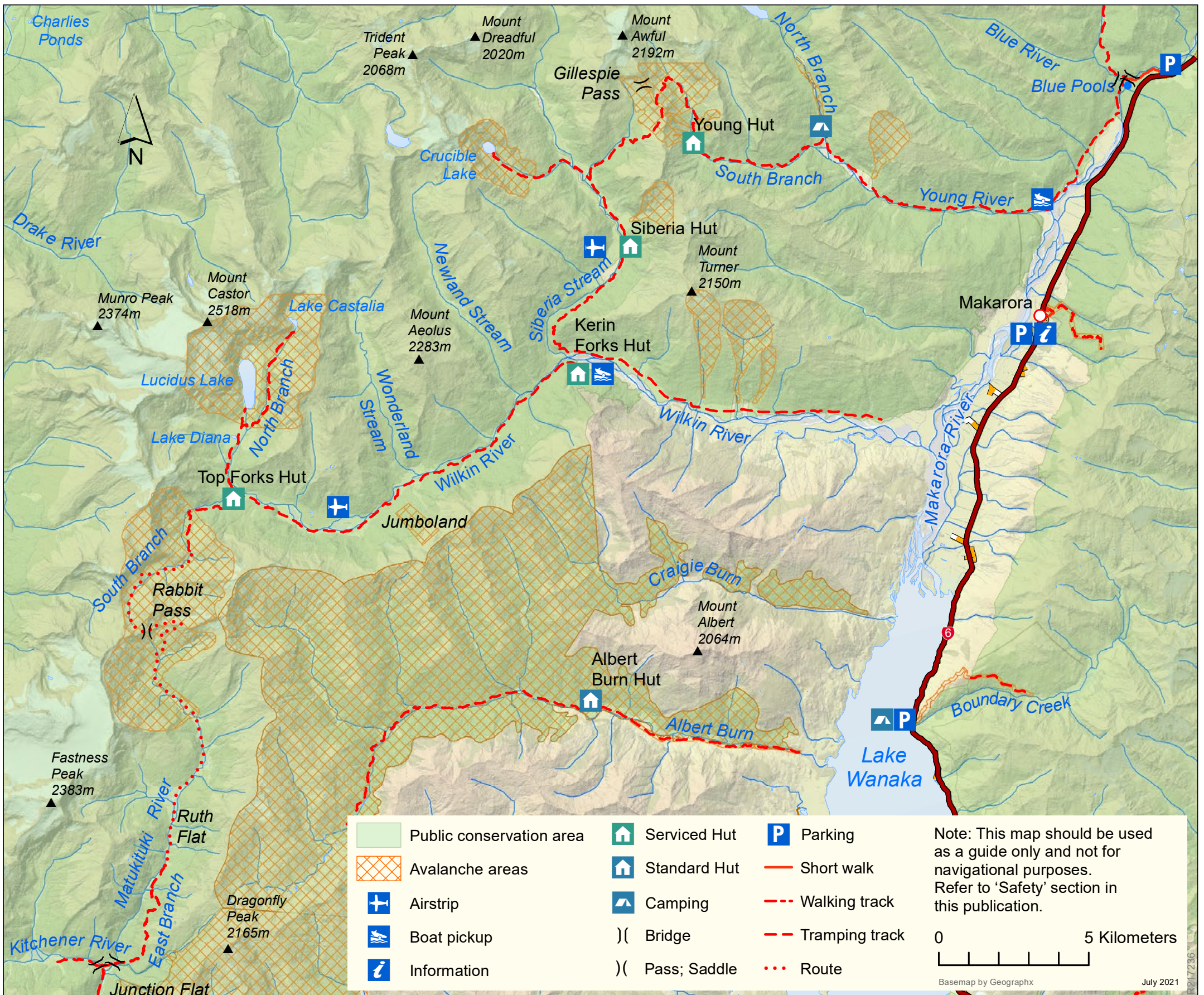
Mostly unformed but with track directional markers, poles or cairns. Backcountry skills and experience required.



Route

Unformed, suitable only for people with high-level backcountry skills and experience.





↓ To Camerons Flat (8 km)

4217236

Wilkin Valley – East Matukituki Traverse



This route is only suitable for experienced alpine trampers – even then extreme care is required. Significant hazards exist all year-round on this route, and on some sections people choose to use mountaineering techniques. Don't hesitate to turn back if conditions are unfavourable, you doubt your ability or you are concerned for your safety.

From Makarora to Top Forks Hut, refer to the Wilkin Valley information.



Top Forks Hut to Ruth Flat

8–10 hr, 20 km



The track between Top Forks Hut and Ruth Flat is in 'complex' avalanche terrain; refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip in this area.

Follow the track behind the hut and climb, before sidling around above a gorge to the open flats of south branch. Follow the flats until you reach the waterfall face 3–4 hr from the hut.



The waterfall face is very steep and exposed, with significant fall hazard; snow grass is slippery even when dry. It is extremely dangerous when wet, windy or under snow: do not attempt it if any of these conditions exist. Take care; hazards exist on this route in all conditions.

The route starts on the western side of the face, well to the right of the falls. Climb a snow grass fan to the ledges above and to the right. Continue until you reach a narrow, sloping ledge. Follow it back across to the left to the ridge above the waterfall. Follow the valley through alpine herb fields for about an hour to Rabbit Pass (1,430 m). Follow the obvious shelf east, climbing towards Lois Peak for about 30 min, until you reach a narrow rockslide leading down through the bluffs. The first 30 m of this slide is steep and dangerous, especially when wet. Beware of falling rocks until clear of the slide, and follow snow grass slopes to the valley floor.

It's an easy 1–2 hr to Ruth Flat, which has a good rock bivvy on the bush edge. This is on the true left halfway down, above a small side stream – grid ref. BZ11 709 823.



Ruth Flat to Cameron Flat

7–9 hr, 18 km



The Matukituki River can be impassable after rain.

The track around Bledisloe Gorge starts on the left at the bottom of the bush spur, about 20 min from Ruth Flat. It climbs to the bushline, sidles through snow grass, and re-enters the bush just before Hester Pinney Creek. It descends to the river and Junction Flat, 4–5 hr from Ruth Flat. Cross the two 3-wire bridges onto the true right of the Matukituki River East Branch, continuing down to Glacier Burn. Then follow the flats to the Matukituki River West Branch, crossing to Cameron Flat. If the river is too high to cross safely, use the bridge 1 hr upstream.



Albert Burn Hut

3–4 hr, 10 km



The upper Albert Burn Valley is within 'complex' avalanche terrain; refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip between May and November.



The Albert Burn can become impassable after rain.

The Albert Burn is a remote valley, with access by boat across Lake Wanaka or via an unmarked 'cattle track' from the Makarora River mouth. From the mouth of the Albert Burn follow the farmed river flats into the gorge; please don't disturb livestock. The first section of track travels through the lower gorge – you will need to cross the river several times.

An old cattle track on the river's true right climbs through beech forest, above part of the lower gorge. It crosses alluvial fans and bracken-covered riverbeds before reaching large open flats; there is no marked track from here. Cross to the true left of the river at the high end of the last flat. The eight-bunk Albert Burn hut is on a small terrace at the western end, well back from the river – don't miss it.

It is 3–4 hr from here to the top flat.

Your safety

Read the DOC publication *Planning a Trip in the Backcountry* before you start and make sure you choose a track that suits your level of fitness and experience.

Follow the Outdoor Safety Code.

- Plan your trip.
www.doc.govt.nz/planning-a-backcountry-trip
- Tell someone your plans.
www.adventuresmart.co.nz
- Be aware of the weather.
- Know your limits.
- Take sufficient supplies.
- Keep to the track.

Visit www.adventuresmart.org.nz for more information.

Your safety is your responsibility. You should carry the 1:50,000 topographical maps: sheet NZTopo50 BZ11 Mount Pollux, BZ12 Makarora, and CA11 Aspiring Flats, available from the DOC Visitor Centre. This pamphlet is a guide only and should not be used for navigation purposes.



All river crossings on this circuit are challenging. Multiple fatalities have occurred in rivers on this track in recent years. Be aware rivers can become impassable after rain. Tents should be carried. The terms 'true left' and 'true right' are defined by looking down the river or water flow.



The circuit is not recommended during winter and spring due to snow, ice and avalanche risk.



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 habitats of threatened species are properly protected.



No unauthorised drones within Mount Aspiring National Park.

Drones can:

- interfere with helicopters for search and rescue, fire, and operational needs
- cause noise, disturbing native birds and visitors.



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 the Aoraki/Mount Cook, Westland/Tai Poutini, Fiordland and Mount Aspiring/Tititea 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 that were once found on the ancient supercontinent Gondwana live in this World Heritage Area.



Siberia Hut. Photo: Vonny Sprey