

## Plan and prepare

Your safety is your responsibility. Before you go, know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 simple rules to help you stay safe:

1. **Plan your trip properly** – Ensure that you have a capable leader
2. **Tell someone** – Leave your trip details with a trusted contact and at [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)
3. **Check the weather** – Including [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz) and the latest information on hazards and facilities before you start
4. **Know your limits** – Physical fitness and good equipment will make all the difference
5. **Take sufficient supplies** – Carry a sleeping bag, cooking utensils, sufficient food, raincoat, over trousers, gloves, hat and several layers of warm clothes

Keep to the track – if you get lost then find shelter, stay calm and try to assist searchers.

For specific warnings relating to the individual Matukituki valley tracks, see the **Warning** notes in the track descriptions.

## 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.



### 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.

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**DOC HOTline**  
**0800 362 468**  
Report any safety hazards  
or conservation emergencies  
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

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.



### Further information:

Visit the DOC website: [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

For recreation and conservation information, visit the DOC visitor centre in the region:

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

New Zealand Government

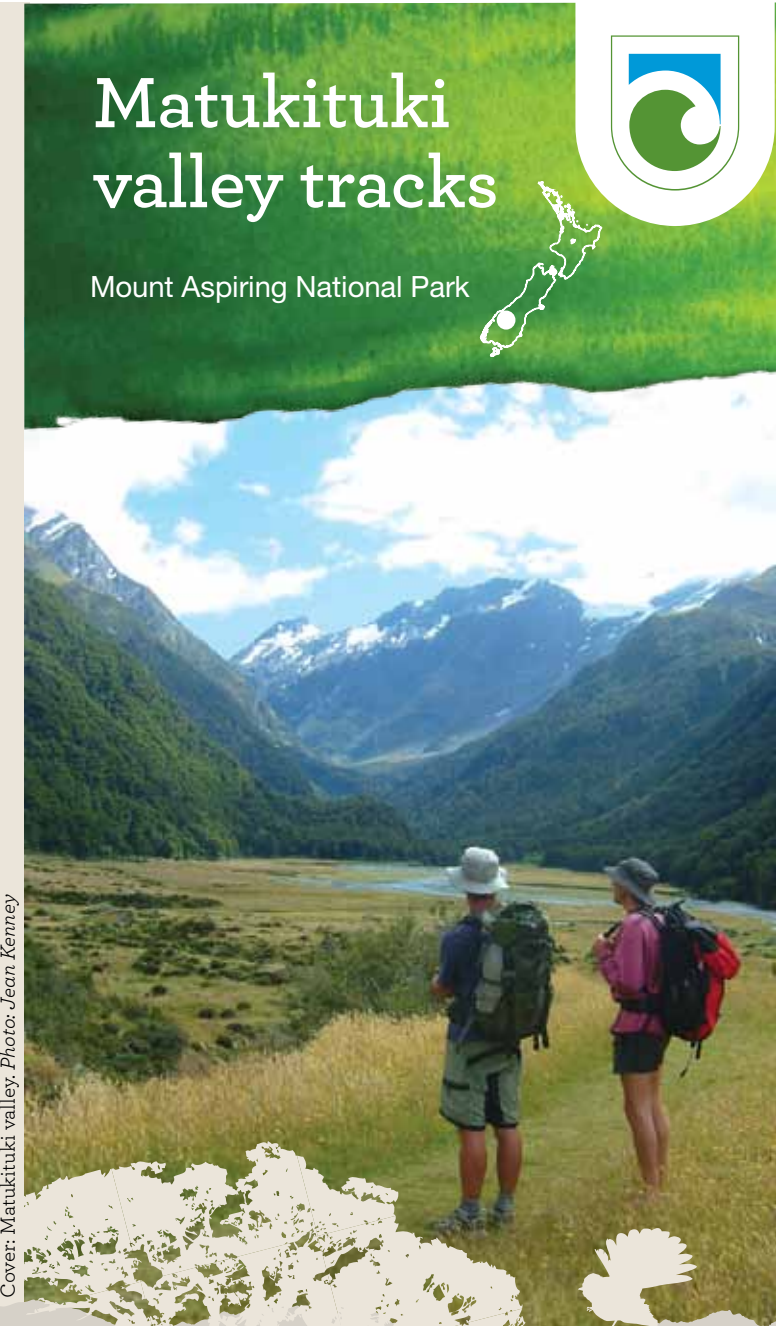


# Matukituki valley tracks

Mount Aspiring National Park



Cover: Matukituki valley. Photo: Jean Kenney



Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai

## The Matukituki valley

The West and East Matukituki valleys are an hour's drive from Wanaka and offer enjoyable day walks, as well as access to a number of demanding tramping and climbing routes in Mount Aspiring National Park. This region's special features were recognised nationally in 1964 when the park was created, and internationally in 1990 with the establishment of Te Wāhipounamu—*South West New Zealand* World Heritage Area.

The valley walks cross farmland and beech forest flats, while the higher altitude routes negotiate alpine tussock grasslands and snowfields. The lower grassy river flats are private farm land – please respect this and do not disturb livestock.

**Warning:** *The last 33 km of the access road is unsealed. Of this, 10 km from the car park is a fine weather road only as it is subject to washouts and flooded creeks. Check road conditions before beginning your drive.*

## Mount Aspiring National Park

The park's boundary runs just beyond Aspiring Hut in the West Matukituki valley and along the bush edge on the true left. In the East Matukituki valley the boundary is along the bush edge, on the true right, up to Junction Flat.

## History

Tititea, the Māori name for Mount Aspiring, means 'steep peak of glistening white'. Throughout the year Māori came from Foveaux Strait and Coastal Otago to the inland lakes to collect kākāpō, kākā, kererū/wood pigeon, and tūī from the forest. For the first 200 years of Māori settlement there would also have been moa along the forest edges.

Kāti Māmoe and Kāi Tahu both had named settlements around the shores of Lakes Wanaka and Hāwea, including Nehenehe (meaning forest), on the north side of the mouth of the Matukituki River. There are several sites on the lake shores with ovens for cooking tī rākau/cabbage tree roots.

The first European to see Mount Aspiring/Tititea was government surveyor John Turnbull Thompson in 1857. The first European to explore the West Matukituki valley was James Hector in 1862. Farming began in the valley in the 1870s.

## Natural history

Most of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana started over 220 million years ago as sediment and rock on top of volcanic rocks on the seafloor. Intense heat and pressure consolidated the rock, which was then uplifted to form the Main Divide. During the Ice Ages huge glaciers filled and scoured out the valleys to give the modern landscape.

Beech is the dominant forest in the Matukituki valley. Red beech/tawhairaunui prefers warm valley sites, and is common just below Aspiring Hut. Mountain beech/tawhairauriki dominates the drier, eastern end of the valley, while silver beech/tawhai increases towards the wetter, western end. Ferns and mosses are a feature of the usually open forest. Above the tree line, at about 1100 metres, stunted subalpine shrub land gives way to alpine tussock grasslands and fell fields.

Insect-eating birds such as fantail/pīwakawaka, tomtit/miromiro and rifleman/tītipounamu thrive in beech forest, and seed-eating kākārīki/parakeet are common in the red beech forest. In 2008, South Island robin/kakaruwia were released into the valley to re-establish the species in this area. The paradise shelduck/pūtakitaki is a conspicuous and noisy feature of the river flats, and in summer spur-winged plover and oystercatcher/tōrea are common on farmland and along the drive from Wanaka.

## Matukituki Valley Protection Project



**Matukituki**  
Charitable Trust

This joint partnership between DOC and Matukituki Charitable Trust is a predator control project to minimise the threat to native flora and fauna and ensure that the valleys original native wildlife is reinstated and thriving.

To find out more about this project or how to get involved, go to [www.mctrust.co.nz](http://www.mctrust.co.nz) or [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz), or visit the Tititea/Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre.

## Hunting and fishing

You must get a permit from DOC before carrying a firearm in the park. There are brown and rainbow trout in the Matukituki River; a current fishing licence is necessary.

## Huts and camping

Aspiring Hut, owned by the NZ Alpine Club (NZAC) and managed by DOC, has a wood burner for heating, mattresses and tank water. From late October to mid-April a hut warden is in residence and cooks are provided. At other times trampers need their own cooks.

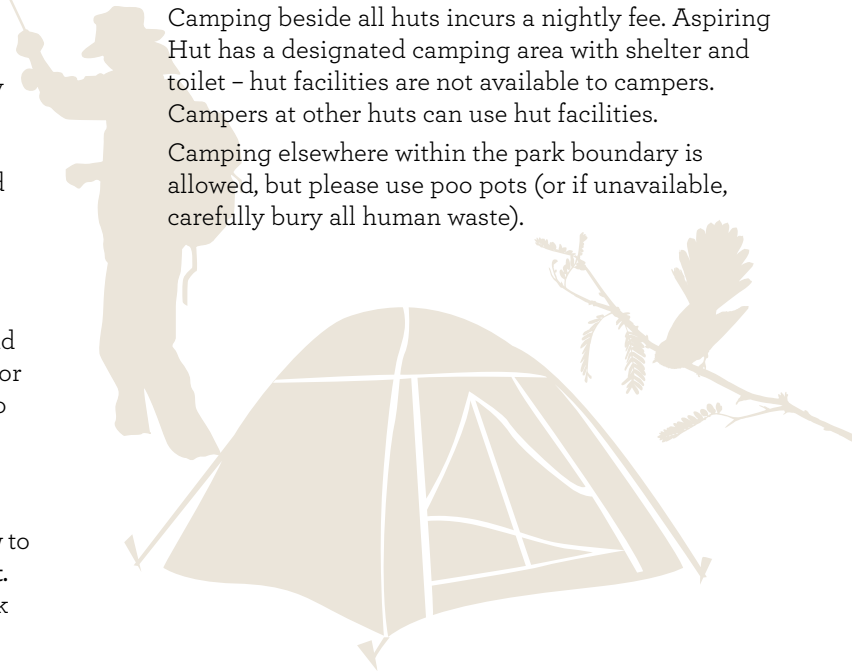
French Ridge Hut (NZAC), Colin Todd Hut (NZAC) and Liverpool Hut (DOC) have mattresses and tank water but no heating. French Ridge and Colin Todd also have VHF radios.

Trampers should leave the huts clean and tidy, and pack out everything that they pack in.

*Note: NZAC hut tickets can only be purchased at the DOC visitor centre in Wanaka or from the Aspiring Hut warden. DOC Backcountry Tickets and Backcountry Hut Passes are only valid for Liverpool Hut, not for the three NZAC huts.*

Camping beside all huts incurs a nightly fee. Aspiring Hut has a designated camping area with shelter and toilet – hut facilities are not available to campers. Campers at other huts can use hut facilities.

Camping elsewhere within the park boundary is allowed, but please use poo pots (or if unavailable, carefully bury all human waste).



## West Matukituki valley

*Note: All times and distances are one-way unless otherwise stated. The true left (or right) of a river/stream is the left (right) bank when looking downstream.*



### Raspberry Creek Car park to Aspiring Hut

2 hr – 2 hr 30 min, 9 km

The tramp to Aspiring Hut (411 m above sea level) is mainly over grassed flats – please leave farm gates as you find them – with a couple of easily negotiated small bluffs that give great views of the valley. The historic Cascade Hut (NZAC, locked) can be seen from the last bluff. The 38-bunk Aspiring Hut is 20 min beyond this hut.



### Rob Roy valley

3–4 hr, 10 km (return)

The valley is a good entry point to an area of spectacular alpine scenery, snowfields, glaciers, sheer rock cliffs, and waterfalls. A swing bridge, 15 min from the Raspberry Creek car park, crosses the West Matukituki River downstream from the Rob Roy Stream junction. After crossing the bridge, the track climbs through a small gorge into beech forest, then into alpine vegetation at the head of the valley with good views of the Rob Roy Glacier.



### Shotover Saddle Route

3 hr, 2 km

From the valley floor, just past the prominent Brides Veil Waterfall, a sign indicates the start of the marked route which follows a leading ridge up towards the Shotover Saddle. The route initially negotiates patches of bracken before reaching higher tussock slopes. Just below the saddle a shelf with a large tarn makes an easier finish to the saddle for magnificent views of the West Matukituki and Rob Roy valleys. Venturing beyond the saddle requires navigational skills as there is no marked route. Prior permission is required from Branches Station to exit via the Shotover River.

The route crosses private land, so please keep to the route and respect the landowner's property.

*Closed for lambing 17 Oct – 7 Nov.*



### Aspiring Hut to Pearl Flat

1 hr 30 min, 5 km

The track enters the bush near Aspiring Hut. After 10 min a bridge crosses Cascade Creek, and a 1 km bush section emerges onto an open terrace leading to Shovel Flat. From the head of Shovel Flat there's 400 m of bush before you reach Pearl Flat.



### Pearl Flat to head of the valley

2 hr, 3.2 km

From the top of Pearl Flat the track enters the bush on the river's true right. Cross the Liverpool swing bridge. After 10 mins the track branches, giving access to another swing bridge across the river for the track to French Ridge Hut. Continue up the river's true right and cross a major avalanche chute from Mount Barff. The track then climbs through the beech forest to emerge from a patch of mountain ribbonwood to open scrubby country. An avalanche in 2013 destroyed the swing bridge across the Matukituki River – river crossing skills are now required.

Marked with a cairn on top, Scotts Rock Biv, a small and not entirely waterproof rock-shelter, is found on the true left towards the head of the valley.

*Note: The route beyond the head of the valley to Bevan Col is for experienced trampers and climbers only.*



### Aspiring Hut to Cascade Saddle

4–5 hr, 6 km

*Warning: Cascade Saddle is an alpine crossing and should not be attempted in bad weather. Multiple fatalities have occurred on this route; make sure you have the right skills and equipment and be prepared to turn back if conditions are unfavorable – failure to make good decisions while attempting this traverse may result in serious injury or death.*

*Steep snowgrass slopes can be very slippery when wet or covered with snow or ice. Sudden storms with snow affect this area, even in summer. In early summer, crampons and an ice axe may be required.*

Signed from Aspiring Hut, the track climbs steadily up through mixed beech forest. Above the bushline the track becomes a route and is marked with orange poles that follow a steep snowgrass and tussock ridge with a few rocky outcrops and ledges to negotiate. It

reaches the pylon at the top of the ridge (1,835 m a.s.l.), via a steep and narrow gully that holds snow for much of the year. After the pylon, follow the poles down to Cascade Creek, cross it to the easy slopes and flats leading to Cascade Saddle (1,524 m a.s.l.). The route to the Dart and Rees Valleys veers off to the left, just before the saddle.

Information on the route to Dart Hut and beyond is available in DOC's *Cascade Saddle Route* brochure



### Aspiring Hut to Liverpool Hut

3–4 hr, 6 km

*Warning: Tussock and rock can be treacherous and slippery when wet or covered in snow.*

From Pearl Flat, cross the swing bridge at Liverpool Stream. The track to Liverpool Hut (1,100 m a.s.l.) is a steep and often slippery climb to the bushline. Above the bush the track initially leads across steep exposed shingle, rock and tussock terrain before bearing left up an easier tussock slope to reach a knoll overlooking the hut. *Note: When the hut is first sighted, do not sidle across to the hut below this knoll.*



### Aspiring Hut to French Ridge Hut

4–5 hr, 7.2 km

*Warning: The upper part of the French Ridge Track is very exposed and can be treacherous in bad weather.*

From Pearl Flat, ford the river to the east bank or cross the Liverpool Stream swing bridge and continue 10 min further up the valley where a second swing bridge provides access across the river. From the Pearl Flat crossing the track enters the bush and climbs steeply all the way to the ridge – with narrow cuttings and creek beds to negotiate in the subalpine zone. Then follow the gentle tussock slopes for about 1 km. The 20-bunk hut (1480 m a.s.l.) is on flattish ground, just below the normal summer snowline of around 1,500 m a.s.l.

### Track grades



Easy tramping track – Well-formed track for comfortable overnight tramping/hiking.



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.



### WARNING

There can be avalanche danger during winter and spring (June–November) on the Rob Roy Track, Cascade Saddle Route and the West Matukituki valley at Shovel Flat and above Pearl Flat. Check [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz) before starting your trip.



### Cameron Flat to Glacier Burn

2 hr, 5 km

Cross the Matukituki River near Cameron Flat. If the river is high use the Otago Boys High Bridge, which is 1 hr walk (2 km) upstream. Cross the grassy flats to the Glacier Burn; deviate left before the bridge. The track leads up the burn's true right. There are spectacular bluffs and waterfalls at the head of the valley, though no formed track beyond the river.



### Cameron Flat to Junction Flat

2 hr 30 min, 9.5km

The first section of this track follows the grassy flats to Glacier Burn. After crossing the bridge at Glacier Burn continue on the East Matukituki's true right through beech forest, crossing a second swing bridge to Junction Flat.



### Junction Flat to Aspiring Flats

1 hr 30 min, 2.5 km

Follow the true right of the Kitchener River. After climbing an old slip, follow through beech forest to the top of the gorge. The Rock of Ages rock biv is 30 min past Aspiring Flat, 20 m into the bush on the true right near the head of the flats; grid ref: NZtopo50 Sheet CA11 651 738.



### Junction Flat to Ruth Flat

4–6 hr, 6 km

Cross the Kitchener River and the East Matukituki River at Junction Flat - both have three-wire bridges. On the true left of the East Matukituki River a marked track by Hester Pinney Creek leads steeply up to the bushline. The route across the tussock slopes is marked by orange snow poles until it re-enters the bush and descends to a large washed out creek. Follow the river's true left until Ruth Flat can be seen on the other side.

Further information on the Wilkin River-East Matukituki Traverse can be found in DOC's *Gillespie Pass & Wilkin valley tracks* brochure. *Note: This route is for experienced trampers only.*