

## 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 Wānaka and Hāwea and in the Makarora valley, which they knew as Kaika Paekai – the place of abundant food. Haast Pass/Tioripatea was one of the routes used by groups of Māori to travel to the West Coast in search of pounamu/greenstone, which was highly valued for making tools and ornaments.

Geologist Julius von Haast led a party over Haast Pass/Tioripatea in 1863. He reached the West Coast 30 days after leaving Wānaka and claimed to be the first European over the pass. However, this was rightfully challenged – Charles Cameron, a Scottish prospector, reached the pass 2 days before Haast.

A pack track existed up the Makarora valley and across Haast Pass/Tioripatea from 1876, but it took until 1965 for the road connecting Wānaka to the West Coast to be completed.

### 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), this 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 this World Heritage Area.



Wills Hut. Photo: DOC

### Further information:

#### Tititea / Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre

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[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

Photo: Rochelle Richardson

This information was accurate at the time of printing.  
For the latest information on DOC's policies and facilities,  
visit [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz).

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OTAGO

# Tramping in the Makarora region

| Mount Aspiring National Park



Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai

## Nau mai, haere mai – welcome to the Makarora region

The Makarora region of Mount Aspiring National Park extends from the head of Lake Wānaka to Haast Pass/Tioripatea and offers a number of recreational opportunities, ranging from 1-day walks through to challenging 4-5 day tramps.

Spectacular mountain scenery, alpine vegetation and river valleys of tawhai/silver beech are highlights of the area, which was recognised nationally in 1964 through the creation of Mount Aspiring National Park and internationally in 1990 with the establishment of the Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area. This area's World Heritage status identifies it as one of the world's foremost natural landscapes.

## Geography and native wildlife

The rocks of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana began as layers of sand and mud deposited on the seafloor from 220 to 270 million years ago. They were subjected to intense heat and pressure and 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/Tioripatea.

Insect-eating birds, such as pīwakawaka/fantail, miromiro/tomtit and titipounamu/rifleman, thrive in the invertebrate-rich forest. The kākārīki/yellow-crowned parakeet is also common, and the endangered mohua/yellowhead can be seen in some valleys. The forest is dominated by tawhai/silver beech.

Grasshoppers, weevils and black butterflies are some of the invertebrates found among the tussocks and large herbs (eg mountain daisies and buttercups), which flower in spring and summer.

## Huts and hut tickets

- All huts in this region have mattresses and all except Brewster Hut have a log burner for heating. You should carry cooking equipment.
- Water at the huts is not treated or tested and may not be suitable for drinking, preparing food, brushing teeth or washing dishes. Boil water before use.
- Leave huts clean and tidy. Replace the firewood and kindling, extinguish the fire, and close all windows and doors securely.
- Carry your rubbish out with you – huts have no rubbish facilities.
- Brewster Hut requires bookings from December to April – book at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or a Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai (DOC) visitor centre. Outside the booking season, hut tickets and passes can be used.
- All other huts mentioned in this brochure work on a first-come, first-served basis. You must buy backcountry hut tickets or passes before your trip from a DOC visitor centre or approved outlet – see [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) for a list.

## Camping

Camping is permitted but choose your site carefully as this is a high-rainfall area. Camping beside the huts is free but is not recommended beside Brewster Hut to help protect the fragile alpine environment. If toilets are unavailable, all human waste must be buried away from waterways or packed out.

## Hunting and fishing

You must have a DOC hunting permit to carry a firearm in the park, and hunters must abide by the New Zealand Police Arms Code and the Arms Act 1983.

Brown and rainbow trout are found in the rivers. A current fishing licence is required to fish in any river in the park, and a backcountry licence endorsement is also needed to fish in the Young and Wilkin rivers. Visit [fishandgame.org.nz](http://fishandgame.org.nz).



### 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.

## Care for Aotearoa



### Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



### Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by following the Land Safety Code.

- ▶ Choose the right trip for you.
- ▶ Understand the weather.
- ▶ Pack warm clothes and extra food.
- ▶ Share your plans and take ways to get help.
- ▶ Take care of yourself and each other.



### Keep NZ clean

Take all rubbish with you and use toilets where provided.



### Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai



### Remember – your safety is your responsibility

Visit [adventuresmart.nz](http://adventuresmart.nz) for more information.



### No pets in the national park

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 or Hāwea Conservation Park

Drones can:

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

# Tramping tracks



Please check for track alerts on the DOC website or at the Tititea/Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre.  
 All times and distances are one way unless otherwise specified.  
 The terms 'true left' and 'true right' are defined by looking down the river or direction of water flow.

## Wills Valley Track

To Wills Hut 5–6 hr, 7.5 km



The track from the Wills valley road end to Wills Hut crosses 'simple' avalanche terrain; refer to [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz) if planning a trip in this area between May and November.



Do not attempt to cross the Wills River if there has been heavy rain, the river is high or you are unsure. If rain is forecast, consider how this will affect your ability to return across the river to the car park.

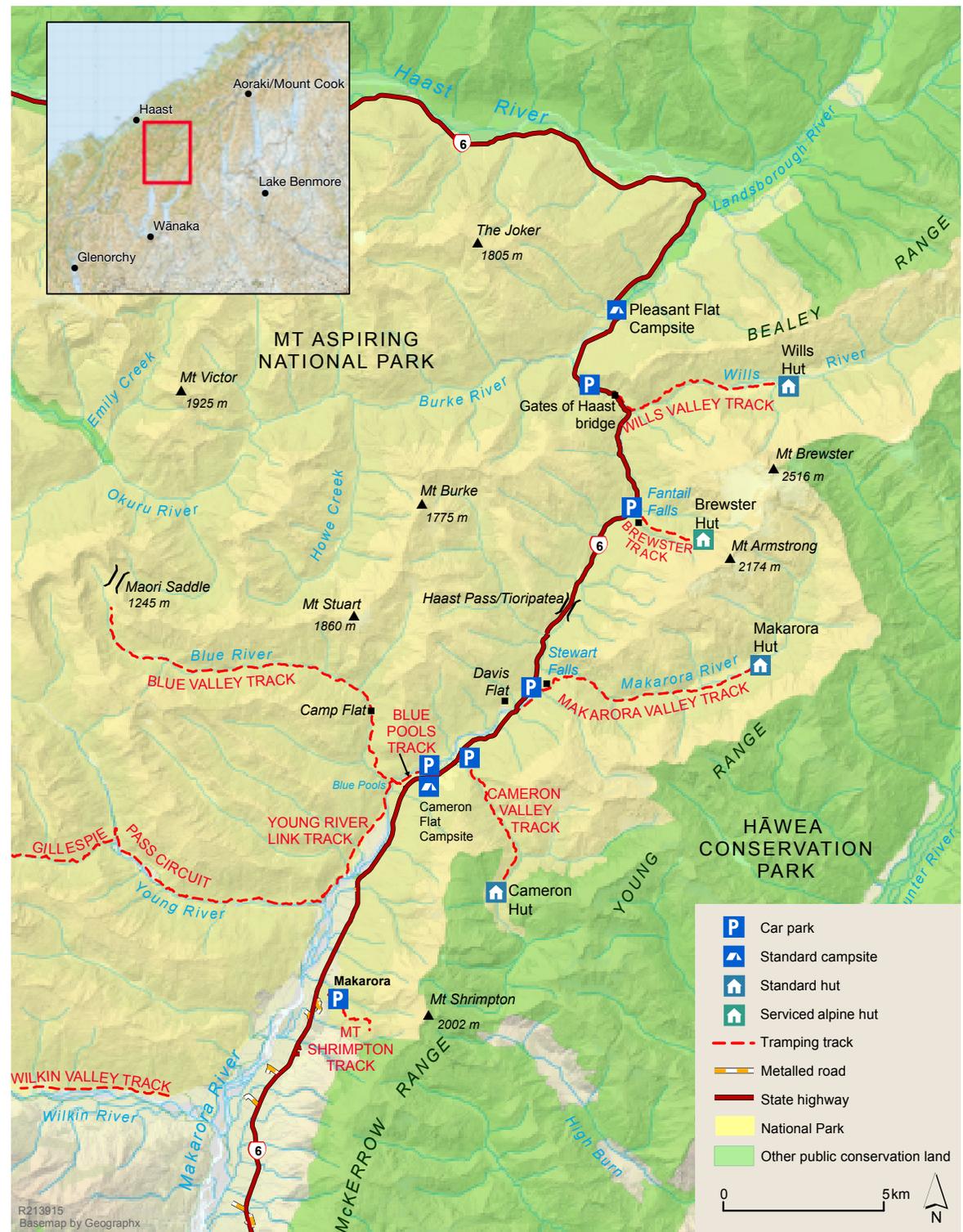
The entry point for this track is located at the Gates of Haast bridge off State Highway 6. A large, unstable, active slip must be crossed to reach the start of the track at the bush edge. Taking care to avoid the sting of native nettle, follow the old bridge trail for about 10 min. The track branches off to climb and then side above the western side of Wills Gorge until it reaches a smaller slip. To continue on the track, stay high on the slip until you reach a steel ladder that climbs a small rock bluff. From the top of this bluff, the track continues climbing steadily through the forest, before dropping down to a large, grassy river flat on the true right of the river where the marked track ends. The four-bunk Wills Hut is about 40 min from the start of this flat on the true left of the river on a small terrace close to the bush edge.

## Track grades



**Tramping track** – Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking on a mostly unformed track with directional markers, poles or cairns. Backcountry skills and experience required.

This map is a guide only and should not be used for navigation purposes. You should carry the NZTopo50 maps BZ12, BZ13, CA12 and CA13.



## Makarora Valley Track

To Makarora Hut 5–7 hr, 10.5 km



The track from the Makarora valley road end to Makarora Hut crosses 'simple' avalanche terrain; refer to [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz) if planning a trip in this area between May and November.



Do not attempt to cross the Makarora River if there has been heavy rain, the river is high or you are unsure. If rain is forecast, consider how this will affect your ability to return.

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 reach the steep climb beside Stewart Falls or enter using the 'high river' track on the true left of the Makarora road bridge. Above the falls, the track sidles high over the gorge (slippery when wet!) before crossing and descending down a large unstable slip to a small river flat. Continue through several small open flats, forest areas and slips before crossing a large side stream (not crossable during or after heavy rain) to reach the main valley flat. From here, travel along the unmarked track for 50 min up the river flats and riverbed to reach the four-bunk Makarora Hut, which can be found close to the bush edge on the true left at the northern end of the flat.



Makarora Hut. Photo: Tony Zimmerman

## Brewster Track

To Brewster Hut 3–4 hr, 2.5 km



Above Brewster Hut there is complex avalanche terrain; refer to [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz) if planning a trip in this area between May and November.



Do not attempt to cross the Haast River if there has been heavy rain, the river is high or you are unsure. If rain is forecast, consider how this will affect your ability to return across the river to the car park.



**Alpine skills are essential in winter**

The track starts from Fantail Falls, crosses the unbridged Haast River and climbs steadily through beech forest to the bushline. From here, the track continues up a face covered in snow grass and on to a narrow ridge leading to the 12-bunk Brewster Hut (no heating), which is located next to a small tarn.

## Cameron Valley Track

To Cameron Hut 4–5 hr, 7 km



Do not attempt to cross Cameron Creek if there has been heavy rain, the river is high or you are unsure. If rain is forecast, consider how this will affect your ability to return.

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 above the gorge (note: some parts are steep and exposed). On exiting the gorge, the track traverses a large, unstable slip to the river – one of several slips in this valley. This is about 2 hr 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.



Cameron Valley Track. Photo: Stef Cotteret

## Blue Valley Track

To Camp Flat 2–3 hr, 2.5 km



Do not attempt to cross the Blue River if there has been heavy rain, the river is high or you are unsure. If rain is forecast, consider how this will affect your ability to return.

The Blue valley is easily accessible and an interesting day or overnight trip. The track starts at the Blue Pools car park. After 20 min, the valley track branches off just after the swing bridge over the Makarora River – the tranquil Blue Pools are a 10 min (return) scenic side trip from this point.

From the junction, the track climbs around and above the Blue River and drops to cross a forested basin of mature tawhai/ silver beech. The track then climbs again, sidles up a gorge and descends to Camp Flat, a grassy and pleasant lunch stop or campsite.

## Camp Flat to head of the valley 6–7 hr, 13 km



Follow the poled track up the true left of the valley. Take care around a semi-active slip and awkward access along the rivers edge. Cross the Blue River about 50 m below its north branch, and stay on the true right for about 6–7 hr to reach the upper grassy flats.

## Mount Shrimpton Track

5 hr, 6 km (return)



The McKerrow and Young ranges have complex avalanche terrain; refer to [www.avalanche.net.nz](http://www.avalanche.net.nz) if planning a trip in this area between May and November.

From the car park just north of the Wonderland Lodge on State Highway 6, follow the Makarora Nature Walk through silver beech and podocarp forest. A sign indicates where the Mount Shrimpton Track branches off. This track climbs steeply to the bushline for great views of the Makarora valley and the Southern Alps/ Kā Tiritiri o te Moana.

## Other tracks in the region

The *Gillespie Pass, Wilkin Valley tracks* brochure will help when planning trips in the Young, Siberia, Wilkin and Albert Burn valleys. It is available at DOC visitor centres or online at [www.doc.govt.nz/gillespie-pass-circuit](http://www.doc.govt.nz/gillespie-pass-circuit).