

## What to take

The following gear is essential, no matter how warm it is when you leave. Remember to put everything in your pack inside a plastic pack liner, especially your sleeping bag and clothes.

- At least two complete sets of clothing – one set to walk in and another to change into at the hut if necessary (it is not possible to dry clothes at the huts). *Note: Cotton clothing like jeans, T-shirts and sweatshirts is not suitable; polypropylene, which is quick drying (but can be flammable), is recommended.*
- Boots – comfortable and broken in
- Mittens/gloves – wool or polypropylene
- Woollen hat/balaclava and sunhat
- Raincoat – waterproof and windproof, with hood
- Overtrousers – waterproof and windproof
- Gaiters (optional but recommended)
- Extra socks, underwear, shirt/lightweight jersey (depending on length of trip)
- Food – lightweight and high in energy value; take all you need for the entire trip – once you leave Halfmoon Bay there is nowhere to buy more
- Sleeping bag – good quality down or hollowfil
- Portable stove and fuel
- Cooking, drinking and eating utensils, pot scrub and tea towel
- Drink bottle
- Matches/lighter, in waterproof container
- Candles and torch – include spare batteries and bulb
- Toiletries – including toilet paper
- First aid kit – including insect repellent and sunscreen
- Topographical map and compass or GPS – note that thick forest cover can interfere with GPS signal
- Survival kit – include survival blanket, whistle, paper and pencil, spare food
- Personal locator beacon and/or mountain radio (optional but strongly recommended)



Mud can be thick and knee-deep.



Doughboy Bay. Photo: Gary Cocker

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

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

## Further information

For further information contact:  
Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre  
PO Box 3, Stewart Island/Rakiura  
Phone (03) 219 0009  
Email: [stewartisland@doc.govt.nz](mailto:stewartisland@doc.govt.nz)

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BETWEEN WATERWAYS

### 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.



# North West and Southern Circuit tracks

Rakiura National Park



Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai

## Introduction

Separated from the South Island by Foveaux Strait, Stewart Island/Rakiura is New Zealand's third largest island and southernmost national park.

There are regular air flights from Invercargill and a ferry service from Bluff. Boat, shuttle or plane transport options may be available to the start of the tracks.

The island's only settlement, in Halfmoon Bay, has a general store, postal agency, Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre and a range of accommodation options. There is one ATM on the island, which is only accessible during shop hours and does not accept foreign credit cards. Many places accept Eftpos, Visa and MasterCard.

The North West Circuit and Southern Circuit tracks provide for challenging tramping around the island's northern coast.

*The island's weather is unpredictable, with rain falling on about 275 days of the year. Strong westerly winds are frequent.*



## Plan and prepare



*Stewart Island's weather is extremely changeable and difficult to predict. Strong winds, hail and heavy rain can occur at any time of the year. Earthquakes and associated tsunamis are a possibility. Obtain an up-to-date weather forecast before starting the track and be well equipped for extreme weather conditions. Remember, exposure and hypothermia can affect anyone and can kill.*

Track surfaces are varied and involve long sections of mud that can be knee-deep and thick, regardless of the season. Some sections of track are prone to flooding. Keep to the tracks as valleys are steep and the bush is dense. Beach access can be difficult when tides are high and seas are rough - if necessary, wait for low tide.

Radios are not provided in any of the huts. Cell phone coverage is very limited and should not be relied on. Taking a personal locator beacon and/or mountain radio is strongly recommended. Hunters may also be on Stewart Island/Rakiura at any time of the year - please be aware of their presence.

## 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 your group has someone with backcountry experience, knowledge of bush craft and survival skills
2. Tell someone - Leave your trip details with a trusted contact and at [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz); **sign the hut books**; and at the end of your tramp inform your contact of your safe return
3. Check the weather - Including the latest information on hazards and facilities before you start
4. Know your limits - Physical fitness and good equipment make all the difference
5. Take sufficient supplies - Carry a sleeping bag, cooking utensils, sufficient food, raincoat, overtrousers, gloves, hat, and dry clothes

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

## Huts and Hut Tickets

All backcountry huts on the North West Circuit Track require Backcountry Hut Tickets or an Annual Backcountry Hut Pass.

Trampers planning on staying at any of the Great Walk huts and campsites while walking the North West Circuit Track must make a booking prior to departure. You can complete these online at [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz) or book at the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre in Halfmoon Bay, Stewart Island. Once a booking has been received you will be sent an email confirmation and you can print an electronic confirmation letter. You will need to visit the Rakiura National Park Visitor Centre to collect your tickets before starting the track. Anyone arriving at a Great Walk hut on a date other than the one they booked may still use the hut and facilities, but bunk space is not guaranteed if the hut is already fully booked.

Huts are supplied with mattresses, a wood burning stove for heating, running water and toilets. Cookers and cooking utensils are not supplied - it is essential to carry your own portable stove, fuel and utensils. Please leave all huts and campsites clean and tidy, replace firewood, and pack out (take away) any rubbish. All trampers should tell a trusted contact their plans prior to departure. If this is not feasible register your plans at [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz).

# North West Circuit Track

Allow 9–11 days to walk the full 125 km circuit.

This track is suitable for fit, well equipped and experienced trampers. Track times are an indication only and extra time should be allowed in adverse conditions.

## Halfmoon Bay to Port William Hut

4 hr, 12 km

Follow the road to Horseshoe Bay, then on to Lee Bay, the official entrance to Rakiura National Park. From here the well defined track follows the coast to Little River and Maori Beach, a former sawmill settlement. There is a Great Walk campsite at Maori Beach. A tidal stream is spanned by a bridge at the north end of the beach, after which the track climbs a low hill, passing the Rakiura Track turn-off to North Arm. Port William Hut (24 bunks, Great Walk hut and campsite) is on the prominent headland to the north.

## Port William Hut to Bungaree Hut

3–4 hr, 6 km

The track traverses forested hill country before briefly dropping down to the coast. Cross the headland to reach Big Bungaree Beach, which has a hut (16 bunks) at the northern end.

## Bungaree Hut to Christmas Village Hut

6 hr, 11.5 km

Passing inland from Gull Rock Point, the track descends to Murray Beach and crosses Murray River upstream of the northwest end of the beach. It then follows an old tramline before entering virgin forest. The track continues through forest before reaching Christmas Village Hut (12 bunks).

## Side trip: Christmas Village Hut to Mount Anglem/Hananui

6 hr, 11 km (return)

The track to Mount Anglem/Hananui, Stewart Island's highest point, is a short distance along the track to Yankee River. The track is marked and leads through forest, mānuka, leatherwood scrub and subalpine meadow to the 980 m summit. *Note: This track can be very muddy.*

### TRACK GRADES

 **Great Walk/Easy tramping track** – well formed track for comfortable overnight tramping/hiking

 **Tramping track** – backcountry skills and experience required

 **Route** – navigation and high level backcountry skills and experience required



leave no trace  
NEW ZEALAND

- 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

## Christmas Village Hut to Yankee River Hut

6 hr, 12 km

From the Mount Anglem Track junction the track passes through low, undulating bush country to Lucky Beach where tall rimu trees are prominent. From the west end of Lucky Beach the track climbs steeply through dense areas of fern. Care is needed to locate the track where it enters heavy forest. The track then follows undulating country to Yankee River where the hut (16 bunks) is sited.

## Yankee River Hut to Long Harry Hut

4–5 hr, 8.5 km

Cross the swing bridge over Yankee River, then the track rises steeply over Black Rock Point before descending to Smoky Beach with its distinctive sand hills. A swing bridge spans Smoky River, inland from the western end of the beach, but unless the river is in flood or it is extreme high tide you can easily wade where the river meets the beach. The track then follows broken and forested terrain, drops down onto the coast and then up to Long Harry Hut (12 bunks).



## Long Harry Hut to East Ruggedy Hut

6 hr, 9.5 km

From the hut follow the coastal terrace to Cave Point ridge, then along the ridge before descending to the rocky coastline. The coast is followed for 30 min before the track re-enters the scrub at a signpost. It then climbs fairly steeply to reach a lookout over East Ruggedy Beach. The track descends through scrub to a river crossing, where the sand can be very soft. From here to East Ruggedy Hut (12 bunks) is a further 15 min inland, marked by poles through the sand dunes.

## East Ruggedy Hut to Big Hellfire Hut

7 hr, 14 km

The track drops down to West Ruggedy and follows the beach. At extreme high tide you may need to take the high tide detour up and over a steep rocky outcrop halfway down the beach. The track re-enters the bush at the southern end of the beach, then crosses around to the eastern side of the Ruggedy Range. It then descends to Waituna Bay. From here it is a steady climb up to Hellfire Pass, with a 12-bunk hut.

## Big Hellfire Hut to Mason Bay Hut

7 hr, 15 km

From Hellfire Pass the track follows the main ridge before descending to Little Hellfire beach. At the south end of the beach is a signpost for Mason Bay. The track travels inland over a bush saddle and finally descends near the north end of Mason Bay. At extreme high tide this section can be impassable – there is a high tide route marked through the sand dunes. Follow the beach approximately 4 km to Duck Creek. Flag markers on a pole mark the track turn-off to Mason Bay Hut (20 bunks).

## Mason Bay Hut to Freshwater Hut

3–4 hr, 15.5 km

Follow the track to the Island Hill homestead and then over flat tussock and mānuka country to Freshwater River and the

16-bunk Freshwater Hut. *Note: This track is often flooded during periods of heavy rain.*

## Side trip: Rocky Mountain Track

3 hr, 5 km (return)

A climb from behind the Freshwater Hut, through forest and subalpine scrubland to rock outcrops, gives panoramic views over the Freshwater Flats and Paterson inlet.

## Freshwater Hut to North Arm Hut

6–7 hr, 11 km

This section of track is steep and often slippery. It crosses over Thompson Ridge to the North Arm of Paterson Inlet. North Arm Hut has 24 bunks (this is a Great Walk hut and campsite). *Note: During periods of heavy rain, some creeks on this track may become impassable.*

## North Arm Hut to Halfmoon Bay

5 hr, 12 km

The track traverses above North Arm to Sawdust Bay. From the former sawmill site the track cuts across a low headland to reach Kidney Fern Arm in Prices Inlet, and continues through forest for another hour before emerging at Kaipipi Bay. From there it follows the former Kaipipi Road to Halfmoon Bay.

## Southern Circuit

The Southern Circuit Track can be added to the North West Circuit. Alternatively, you can get a boat through Paterson Inlet to start at Freshwater or Freds Camp Hut. The Southern Circuit is a remote, challenging tramping experience and requires a high level of fitness, good route finding skills, and backcountry experience.

## Freshwater Landing Hut to Freds Camp Hut

5 hr, 10 km

The track starts directly opposite Freshwater Hut and travels

down the swampy Freshwater valley to Tolson River – this area is prone to flooding. After crossing the river by swing bridge the track enters the forest, traversing undulating country to Freds Camp Hut (10 bunks).

## Freds Camp Hut to Rakeahua Hut

5 hr, 12 km

The track follows close to the shore of Paterson Inlet's South West Arm and then the banks of the Rakeahua River. Rakeahua Hut (6 bunks) is about 3 km upstream from the mouth. *Note: After heavy rain the area near Rakeahua Hut is prone to flooding.*

## Side trip: Mount Rakeahua

5 hr, 9 km (return)

The track climbs through forest and subalpine scrubland to a rocky summit with great views. The track is marked by poles above the bush line.

## Rakeahua Hut to Doughboy Bay Hut

8 hr, 16 km

The track climbs gradually up the Rakeahua valley – after heavy rain the early part of this track becomes waist deep in water. The track continues through forest, semi-open scrubland and bog fields, then steeply descends into Doughboy Bay. An 8-bunk hut is at the north end of the beach.

## Doughboy Bay Hut to Mason Bay Hut

7 hr, 18 km

The track climbs steeply up Adams Hill and across the swampy summit before descending through forest to Cavalier Creek on Mason Bay. Walk north along the beach to Duck Creek. The track to Mason Bay Hut (20 bunks) is marked by buoys attached to a pole.

