



Upper Copland valley

WESTLAND TAI POUTINI NATIONAL PARK

track & route guide



Easter Monday (inclusive) annually. All hunters must have a hunting permit.

Dogs are not allowed

Further information

For information, hut tickets, intentions, maps, weather forecasts and track condition updates:

Westland Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre
69 Cron Street,
Franz Josef Glacier
Phone 03 752 0360
Open 7 days
8.30 am – 6.00 pm (summer)
8.30 am – 5.00 pm (winter)
westlandnpvc@doc.govt.nz

Fox Glacier Office
Main Road, Fox Glacier
Phone 03 751 0807
Open weekdays
10 am – 2 pm
Awarua/Haast Visitor Centre
Main Road, Haast
Phone 03 750 0809
haastvc@doc.govt.nz
Open 7 days
Or visit www.doc.govt.nz



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

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

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

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Marked by cairns and poles, the route sidles above the river, with Aoraki/Mount Cook coming into view near Fiddian Creek. The route continues to sidle until directly below Copland Pass, at which point it zigzags its way up the steep slopes into an alpine basin.

 *The route ends at the alpine basin. Do not attempt to climb to and cross Copland Pass unless you have a high level of mountaineering experience and appropriate mountaineering equipment. Over the years a number of climbers have died attempting to cross Copland Pass.*

Access on the eastern side of the divide is difficult due to erosion. It is strongly recommended that you do not attempt to cross Copland Pass from the west. Contact DOC Aoraki/Mount Cook for more information, email: mtcookvc@doc.govt.nz or phone 03 435 1186.

Hut fees

To stay at Architect Creek or Douglas Rock huts, please purchase hut tickets or a backcountry hut pass before using the huts.

Welcome Flat Hut, the Sierra Room and campsites must be booked year round - hut tickets and backcountry hut passes are not valid. Bookings can be made online at www.doc.govt.nz or by post, fax, email, phone or in person at DOC Visitor Centres, i-SITEs or DOC agents. Booking fees may apply. A hut warden may be present at Welcome Flat Hut.

Douglas Rock Hut	8 bunks	Standard
Welcome Flat Hut	31 bunks	Serviced
Welcome Flat Hut -		
Sierra Room	4 bunk sole occupancy	
Welcome Flat campsite	8 tent sites	
Architect Creek Hut	2 bunks	Standard
Standard - 1 ticket per person/night		

Hunting

Tahr, chamois and deer can be found in the Copland valley. Tahr are found on the steep faces mainly in the mid and upper valleys, but are difficult to access. There are good numbers of chamois throughout the valley, and deer are mainly found lower down the valley near the Karangarua confluence. Due to high visitor numbers, no hunting is permitted in the Copland valley from 20 December to 31 January (inclusive) and Good Friday to

Upper Copland valley. Photo: © Andris Apse

Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

General information

Duration: 3 days +



Grade: Tramping track/route

Experience: Suitable for well-equipped and experienced backcountry trampers and mountaineers only; navigation and survival skills required.

Best time to go: Summer and autumn.

Maps: NZTopo50: BX14 Gillespies Beach; BX15 Fox Glacier

Hazards: Flooded rivers, rock fall and avalanche.

Note: true left and true right refer to the side of the valley or river when facing and looking downstream.

Plan and prepare

Your safety is your responsibility. Before heading into the area, check the latest conditions at DOC's Westland Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre in Franz Josef or Fox Glacier office – conditions can change rapidly.

Know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 simple rules to help you stay safe:

1. Plan your trip
2. Tell someone
3. Be aware of the weather
4. Know your limits
5. Take sufficient supplies

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

Leave your trip details with a trusted contact, in the hut Intentions Book, and at www.adventuresmart.org.nz. Carry a personal locator beacon, and at the end of your trip don't forget to let your contact know you are safe.

More information at www.adventuresmart.org.nz.

Getting there

Access to the Upper Copland valley is via the Copland Track to Welcome Flat Hut (7 hours, 18 km). See the *Copland Track to Welcome Flat Hut* track guide for

information about this section of the track.

Road access to the Copland Track is off State Highway 6, 26 km south of Fox Glacier. The turn-off to the car park is well signposted on the northern side of the Karangarua River bridge. Drive approximately 150 m down the gravel road to the car park (please close the gate after you go through). There are no camping facilities at the road end. Buses pass the road end each morning and afternoon and will drop off and pick up pre-booked passengers.



Times given are guides only and will vary greatly with fitness and weather conditions.

Only experienced trampers should proceed beyond Welcome Flat Hut. The area is unsuitable for inexperienced parties. The track beyond Welcome Flat Hut is more difficult as the conditions underfoot are rougher and the majority of creeks are unbridged and may be impassable during and after heavy rain.

Introduction

The tramp up the Copland valley beyond Welcome Flat Hut in Westland Tai Poutini National Park is suitable for experienced trampers, and the upper valley provides opportunities for experienced climbers above Douglas Rock Hut.

The tramp gives a glimpse of Westland's spectacular forest, river and mountain scenery, while natural hot pools at Welcome Flat are an added attraction for weary adventurers.

The forests of the Copland valley are visually dominated by a healthy canopy of southern rātā, a spectacular sight during the summer flowering season. The forest gives way at higher altitudes to the upper montane vegetation of tree daisies and dracophyllums, which in turn give way to the truly alpine habitats of tussock grasslands and native herbs.

Regular possum control has been undertaken since the mid-1980s and as a result the forest damage is significantly less than in the neighbouring Karangarua valley, which has extensive canopy dieback.



This valley is subject to flooding at any time of year. Do not attempt this trip in bad weather or when rain is forecast. If rivers and side streams are in

flood, do not attempt to cross. The Copland River can flood sections of track making it impassable. During severe weather, such as sustained or heavy rainfall, the Copland Track may be closed (often at short notice) due to flooding or other damage. If closed, notices will be placed at the start of the track.

Avalanches are possible in the upper valley – care is required throughout winter and spring, in particular. For more avalanche information visit www.avalanche.net.nz.

Track and route description

Welcome Flat to Douglas Rock Hut

Time: 3 hours, 7 km one way



The suspension bridge near Welcome Flat Hut leads across to the true left of the Copland River and onto a series of extensive grassy river flats. Along the flats there are fine views into the Ruera valley and the Navigator Range beyond, while Mount Sefton and the Footstool rear up behind The Sierra Range, reaching heights of over 2,000 metres above the valley floor.

Occasionally the track wanders into low forest but returns to the grassy flats before crossing the multiple channels of Scott Creek. This creek can be extremely hazardous in wet weather.

Beyond Scott Creek the track enters the forest again and begins to climb gradually above the upper gorge. There are a number of open slips to cross with views up and down the river. Eventually you will reach the swing bridge across Tekano Creek and the views to the upper valley will open out in front of you. Douglas Rock Hut (8 bunks) is nestled in a forest glade just across the bridge. On a clear day the views from the hut are expansive.

Above Douglas Rock Hut



Past Douglas Rock Hut, a marked route continues towards the Copland Pass. Avalanche and flood risk is high on this route. This route should only be attempted by those with alpine experience, mountaineering skills and equipment.

From Douglas Rock Hut, the route ascends through subalpine vegetation with improving views of the high mountain peaks surrounding the upper Copland River.