

Milford  
TRACK GUIDEDuration: 4 days  
Distance: 53.5 km (one way)Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai

## For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre  
Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600

Phone: +64 3 249 7924

Email: greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz

[www.doc.govt.nz/great-walks](http://www.doc.govt.nz/great-walks)f Share your experience – [facebook.com/docgovtnz](https://facebook.com/docgovtnz)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).Published by: Department of Conservation, Customer and Brand Team  
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## Care for the Milford Track



## Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Feeding wildlife is harmful to them. Follow any rules restricting fires, vehicles or boats. No dogs or unpermitted drones allowed.



## Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you. Use toilets where provided. You can find them at all huts, campsites and shelters.



## Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by planning and preparing for your trip. Share your plans and take a distress beacon.



## Show respect

Respect others, respect culture. Minimise noise when others are sleeping.

Welcome to the famous Milford Track,  
one of ten unforgettable journeys.

Retrace the steps of early explorers on the Milford Track, through steep-sided valleys created by repeated glacial action over the past 2 million years. The 'finest walk in the world' is through two of these U-shaped valleys and over the dramatic Mackinnon Pass, ending at beautiful Milford Sound/Piopiotahi.

Mackinnon Pass. Photo: John Strother (paratoot.com)



## Plants and wildlife

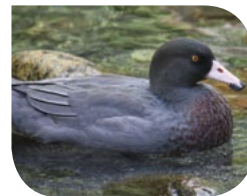
The **blue duck/whio** is a unique and endangered species, found only in New Zealand. They can be seen in cold, fast-flowing streams, such as the Clinton and Arthur rivers along the Milford Track. The male whistles a call of 'fee-o', which gives the duck its Māori name.

Photo: Andrew Smart

**Sundews** are carnivorous plants that like sunny, wet places with nutrient-poor soil. They are common in alpine and wetland areas of the Milford Track. Look for a tiny bright red star-shaped plant with leaves covered in sticky hairs. Think of them as your friend – their main diet in these parts is sandflies!

Photo: James T Reardon

The **kea** is a unique and endangered parrot that is found only in the South Island of New Zealand. Considered to be one of the most intelligent birds in the world, the cheeky kea will often put on a show to distract you while his friends raid your pack! If lucky enough to encounter kea, please don't feed them.

Photo: Herb Christophers

In the alpine section of the Milford Track you will be in for a special treat between the months of November and February. Flowering plants such as the **mountain buttercup**, **mountain daisy** and **gentian** (pictured) almost steal the show from the expansive vistas.

Photo: Sue Brownie

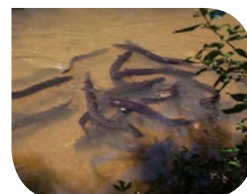
The **longfin eel/tuna** is one of the largest eels in the world and is found only in New Zealand. During the day, eels are secretive, hiding under logs and boulders or under riverbanks. Occasionally, they may be seen out hunting for food but most of their hunting takes place at night.

Photo: James T Reardon

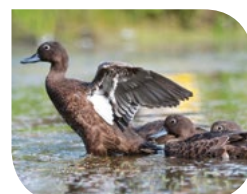








**Brown teal/pāteke** are a small dabbling duck, mainly brown in colour with a distinctive white eye ring. They were once widespread throughout New Zealand but are now found only in select sites. Around 70 have been released into Arthur valley and it is hoped they will become an established population.

Photo: Graham Dainty



 Great Walk hut  
 Shelter  
 Toilet (toilets are also available at all huts)  
 Mile marker  
 Great Walk  
 Tramping track  
 Boat transport  
 State highway

0 1 km

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### See on the track

- 1 Glade House, a site with history that extends back to 1896.
- 2 Wetland Walkway.
- 3 Hirere Falls.
- 4 Look out for blue duck/whio here.
- 5 Mountain buttercup can be seen in this area.
- 6 Historic Beech Hut near Quintin Shelter.
- 7 Sutherland Falls drop 580m from Lake Quill.
- 8 Native eels/tuna can often be seen in the river here.
- 9 Bell Rock and Mackay Falls.
- 10 Look for brown teal/pāteke here.

### Side trips – details overleaf

- A Wetland Walkway
- B Sutherland Falls



33 As a tribute to the long history of the Milford Track, distances are often still referred to in miles rather than kilometres. Markers positioned every mile are a handy reference to track your progress.

The map in this brochure is a guide only and should not be used for navigational purposes.



## TRACK GUIDE

*This 53.5 km (33.5 mile) track travels through two glacial valleys and over the impressive Mackinnon Pass finishing at spectacular Milford Sound/Piopiotahi. The following notes describe the track and what you can expect to see on your journey.*

The Milford Track can only be walked in one direction. Times are approximate and will vary according to your fitness and the weather.

### Glade Wharf to Clinton Hut

1–1 hr 30min, 5km

The boat to the start of the track departs from Te Anau Downs (25km from Te Anau). After a 1 hr 15min cruise up the lake, there is an easy 1 km walk to Glade House, the first overnight stop for guided walkers.

Just past Glade House is the first and longest of several suspension bridges encountered on your hike. The well-graded track continues for approximately 1 hr through attractive beech forest along the banks of the beautiful Clinton River. Clinton Hut is reached just before the 3 mile marker. There are good swimming holes near the hut and an impressive glow-worm grotto just a short walk away. Listen for kiwi calling after dark.

### A Side trip – Wetland Walkway

15min return

A short side trip to the wetland area is signposted 10 minutes before Clinton Hut. Guided walks with the DOC ranger may be available during the late afternoon.



Photo: Kendall DeLyser

### Clinton Hut to Mintaro Hut

6hr, 17.5km

It's a gradual climb from Clinton Hut as the track follows the Clinton River. After 1 hr you arrive at Clinton Forks where there is a view of the north branch of the Clinton River.

Just before the 7 mile marker, you cross a large open area formed by a landslide that occurred in 1982. This created a small lake, known as Dead Lake because of the dead beech trees seen here.



*Between here and Hirere Falls (about 20min) the track can be prone to flooding during heavy rain.*

Soon you'll get your first view of the Mackinnon Pass and the impressive Pampolona ice field. Cross the open 'prairie' area and climb a small hill to the Bus Stop Shelter just before Marlenes Creek.

This shelter can be used during heavy rain if the bridges over Marlenes Creek are impassable. Past the Pampolona Lodge turn off you'll reach a steel truss bridge; it is approximately 1 hr 30min from here to Mintaro Hut. You will notice the vegetation starting to change, reflecting the higher altitude and heavier rainfall.

### Mintaro Hut to Dumlpling Hut

6–7hr, 13km

From Mintaro Hut there is a well-graded, zigzag climb of about 2hr to the Mackinnon Memorial. On the way there are excellent views of Lake Mintaro and the Clinton valley.

It takes a further 30 min to reach the Mackinnon Pass Shelter from the memorial, crossing the highest point on the track at 1154 m. The shelter is supplied with a gas cooker during summer and has the toilet with the best view in Fiordland!

The 8 km hike from Mackinnon Pass to Dumlpling Hut provides spectacular views, dropping 970m steadily over rocky terrain. Take care, as the track is uneven and may be slippery when wet.



*During extreme weather conditions, hikers may be directed down a steep emergency track, which will require extra care and time.*

Shortly before the Moraine Creek Bridge, the track passes the 18 mile marker. It then follows a boardwalk and staircase beside the Roaring Burn River, with its numerous waterfalls, before arriving at Andersons Cascade Shelter. A set of zigzags leads to the bottom of the pass and Quintin Shelter. From here you can take a side track to the magnificent Sutherland Falls. There is an excellent view of the falls about 20 min past the junction, along the main track to Dumlpling Hut.

### B Side trip – Sutherland Falls

1 hr 30min return

The side trip to Sutherland Falls is a definite highlight that is highly recommended and well worth the effort. Leave your pack at the shelter (but take your raincoat, as the power of the falls generates a lot of spray) and follow the track to the falls. The impressive falls drop 580 m (1904 feet) in three leaps from Lake Quill.



Photo: Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)

### Dumlpling Hut to Sandfly Point

5hr 30min–6hr, 18km

From Dumlpling Hut the track follows the Arthur River to the historic Boatshed. After crossing the swing bridge, it is about 20 min to beautiful MacKay Falls and Bell Rock.

Admire the rock cuttings alongside the Arthur River and Lake Ada, which were blasted and hand-cut by labourers when the track was first constructed.

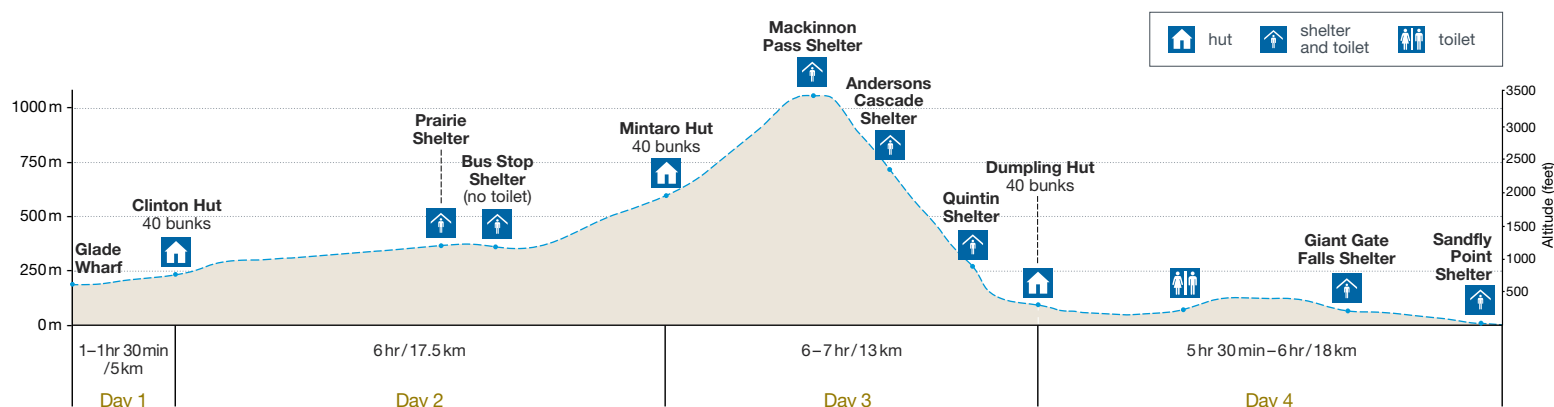


*This section of track can flood during heavy rain, which may cause delays.*

Giant Gate Falls, just after the 30.5 mile marker, is a good place to rest before the final 1 hr 45min walk to Sandfly Point and the end of the Milford Track.

The final 2 miles of smooth, wide track was built by a prison labour gang in the late 19th century. To connect with the 2.00 p.m. boat departing from Sandfly Point for Milford Sound/Piopiotahi, you should aim to leave Dumlpling Hut by 8.00 a.m.

## Elevation profile





## Track history

In 1888 the Government funded the first track-making expeditions in the Arthur and Clinton valleys as an incentive to find an accessible route to Milford Sound. Quintin McKinnon and Earnest Mitchell found the Mackinnon Pass the same year, and McKinnon quickly established himself as the first guide on the Milford Track.

Toward the end of the 19th century many visitors were walking the new track and there was an increasing demand to upgrade it. A failed experiment to have prisoners cut a road from Sandfly Point to Sutherland Falls resulted in only 2 km of road being completed in nearly 2 years. It was decided to replace the prisoners with contract labourers who completed the difficult rock-blasting around Lake Ada by 1898.

Bridge over Arthur River. Photo: Kendall DeLyser



## Staying safe on the Milford Track

### STAY ON THE MARKED TRACKS

The track is well marked but if you become lost you should stop, find shelter and stay calm. Put on extra clothing to keep warm and assist rescuers should you hear them searching for you. There is no cellphone coverage on the Milford Track.

### BE PREPARED FOR ALL CONDITIONS

Fiordland National Park experiences very high rainfall (up to 9000 mm per year) and weather conditions can change quickly in any season. Cold temperatures, snow, strong winds and heavy rain can occur at any time of the year. You must be well prepared to deal with any situation and good equipment is vital.

#### Hypothermia (too cold)

During cold, wet and windy conditions, hypothermia (a drop in core body temperature) can become a serious problem. From initial stages to unconsciousness can take as little as 30 minutes.

- **Prevention:** wear warm and weatherproof gear. Eat and drink regularly during your walk.
- **Watch for symptoms:** people may shiver, be clumsy, confused, have slurred speech, and deny they have a problem.
- **Treatment:** immediately make or find shelter; get the person into warm, dry clothing, put them into a sleeping bag, give them warm, sweet drinks, monitor them and seek immediate medical help.

#### Heat exhaustion

This can be serious and is usually caused by physical activity in a hot environment and not drinking enough water.

- **Prevention:** carry and drink water regularly throughout your walk.
- **Watch for symptoms:** headaches, thirst, weakness, dizziness, nausea or vomiting.
- **Treatment:** move to a cool shaded area to rest, remove excess clothing and give water to drink.

#### Strong winds

Strong winds are possible in exposed areas on Mackinnon Pass and during the descent to Arthur valley.

### River safety and track flooding

Flooding is common after heavy rain on sections of the track. However, stream and river levels will drop quickly once the rain stops. If you are caught between streams in flood, do not attempt to cross. Seek higher ground and wait for water levels to drop.

### Avalanches

The Milford Track contains complex avalanche terrain and the risk of avalanche can extend into December. Whenever snow rests on the slope there is an avalanche risk. There are over 57 avalanche paths, some of which may bring avalanche debris to the valley floor. These have the potential to cross the Milford Track – their start zones cannot be seen from the track. During the Great Walks season DOC manages this risk to a low level and walkers may be flown (at their cost) over dangerous sections.



### Tracks are sometimes closed for safety reasons

Sometimes Great Walks tracks need to be closed for safety reasons (e.g. avalanche danger, flooding or high winds). If walkers are not able to proceed, options are available. You may be eligible for a refund, or you could spend an extra night at a hut or be transferred by helicopter across hazard areas. DOC staff will keep you informed of all issues and options. Please refer to the 'terms and conditions' for any extra transport and accommodation costs this may involve. Hut rangers are stationed at each hut along the track during the Great Walks season and have radio contact in case of emergency.

### YOU can help to keep the Milford Track free of didymo

Didymo (sometimes called rock snot) is an invasive alga that chokes our waterways. It is found in many waterways, including Lake Te Anau. It only takes ONE drop of contaminated water on your shoes or equipment to transfer it into a new area. **Check** your shoes for obvious pieces, **Clean** anything which has been in contact with the water or **Dry** your gear thoroughly 48 hours before walking the track. For more information, visit [www.doc.govt.nz/didymo](http://www.doc.govt.nz/didymo).

