Domestic animals

**Dogs and other pets 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.

### Camping

Four self-registration campsites are provided along the Haast Highway and all have picnic tables, toilets and shelters. Camping along the highway is restricted to these areas.

Where fireplaces are provided, be aware that during extreme conditions, total fire bans are imposed. Camping fees should be put in the honesty boxes at each camping area or paid at the nearest DOC office.

### Further information

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

For recreation and conservation information, visit the DOC visitor centres in the region.

**Titisea / Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre**
Department of Conservation
Ardmore Street (PO Box 93)
Wanaka 9343
Ph: +64 3 443 8660
Fax: +64 3 443 8777
Email: mtaspiringvc@doc.govt.nz

**Awarua / Haast Visitor Centre**
State Highway 6, Haast
PO Box 50, Haast 7844
Ph: +64 3 750 0859
Fax: +64 3 750 0852
Email: haastvc@doc.govt.nz

For recreation and conservation information, visit the DOC website: [www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

### Historic journeys

**Haast Pass / Tioripatea Highway**

This 140-km section of State Highway 6 is a spectacular and scenic road linking Wanaka and Haast. It reaches beyond wind-whipped Lakes Wanaka and Hāwea, through golden tussock-covered hills, to wind among steep mountains cloaked in bush rainforest and cross tumbling rivers. It then skirts undulating forests that seemingly float between Central Otago and the West Coast. Miromiri from the West Coast, Foveaux Strait and Coastal Otago crossed the pass to trade pounamu (greenstone) and food and named it Tioripatea, meaning ‘the place the way ahead is clear’. They had camps around Lakes Wanaka and Hāwea and in the Makarora Valley, which they called Kākulu Pā, ‘the place of abundant food’. Some journeys seem as peaceful, Te Puhō, a northern chief brought his warriors through the pass in 1856 to raid the southern Kāi Tahu and Kāti Mamoe tribes. Initially, Te Puhō’s raid was successful, winning an early skirmish near Wanaka, but further south all of his party were either killed or taken prisoner and used as slaves.

Charles Cameron, an explorer and gold prospector, is generally acknowledged as the first European to cross the pass, in 1863. A short time later, Julius Haast, Canterbury’s Provincial Geologist, led a party of four over the pass and on to the West Coast where they ‘Stood in the surf giving three hearty cheers’.

By 1876 there was a narrow pack track over Haast Pass/Tioripatea. In the following decade a government grant paid for the first construction work to be carried out on what some hoped would be a railway as well as a road, as it was cleared to as much as 10 metres wide. Prospectors and early settlers at Haast were the first to use the route. Next were our earliest tourists—on horseback—then livestock being moved to and from Haast on the coast.

Most of the work on the Haast Pass/Tioripatea road was carried out during the 1930s depression when up to 400 men were employed. They lived in temporary camps and spent long hard days with pick, shovel and horse-drawn carts. The onset of World War II stopped the road and the road to Haast was finally completed in 1950. The last stretch, north of Haast, that linked the rest of Westland with Otāgo wasn’t finished until 1965.

At 553 metres above sea level, Haast Pass/Tioripatea is virtually an all-weather road and the lowest of the three road passes that link Westland with the east coast.

### A natural journey

Most of the rock along the Haast Pass/Tioripatea road is schist, formed under intense heat and pressure. An important geological feature, the Alpine Fault, which runs the length of the Southern Alps/East Taranaki to Te Moana, crosses the road just east of Haast, though unseen by travellers.

During the Ice Ages huge glaciers scoured and shaped the landscape, including the pass, to leave U-shaped and hanging valleys in their wake, as well as ice-smoothed granite outcrops such as Monosquit Hill near Haast. Silt and gravel spread by rivers in the millennia since, now covers the valley floors, creating the classic wide terrace flats of both the Haast and Makarora valleys.

Rainfall varies considerably in the area: 3800 mm a year at Haast to more than 8300 mm on the low western slopes, to drop to 4500 mm at Haast Pass/Tioripatea itself, and only 2000 mm at the head of Lake Wanaka. Combined with altitude, this has a significant effect on vegetation.

West of the pass, kahikatea is the most common tree, with swamp forests of rimu, kahikatea and silver pine thriving on the boggy lower slopes and terraces. From Thunder Creek to Makarora, silver beech/tawhai dominates, with remnants of matai, miro, kahikatea and rimu in places such as Makarora Bush. At the drier, lower end of the Makarora valley a few pockets of mountain beech/taahauraki survive amongst the scrub and pasture.

Insect-eating birds such as fantail/pīwakawaka, yellow-breasted to/mirrimiro and riffleneck/fitopounamu thrive in the invertebrate-rich forest. Mohua (yellowhead) and kākāpō (yellow-crowned parakeet), are locally common. The striking Australasian paradise shelduck/ pītakākā is a familiar sight on the open river flats.

Introduced brown and rainbow trout are found in the Makarora, Young and Wilkin rivers and provide excellent fishing—with the required licence.

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Image: Haast Highway construction (1930s)
Bush walk: 25 minutes return (1 km)
This gentle walk through a beautiful podocarp and silver beech forest to the Haast River ends with a great view of the Roaring Billy Waterfall. The forest is lush with tree ferns, a special feature of the walk.

Blue Pools Walk: 1 hour return (1.5 km)
An easy walk that starts at the car park just north of Muddy Creek and leads through silver beech to a swing bridge overlooking the pools at the mouth of Blue River. Large brown and rainbow trout can often be seen feeding in the pools.

Blue Valley: 4 hours return (5 km)
The track begins just beyond the swing bridge over the Blue Valley with a stunning vista. Walkers can begin from either Davis Flat or Haast Pass/Tioripatea. It is a well graded track and follows a section of the old Bridle Track, the first link between Otago and Westland. As the distance by road between Davis Flat and Haast Pass/Tioripatea is 5 kilometres we advise that two vehicles be used, so that one car can be left at the other end of the track.

Blue Pools Walk: 1 hour return (1.5 km)
This trip is more suited for experienced trampers with good navigational skills.

Bridle Track: 1 hour 30 min one way (3.5 km)
Walkers can begin from either Davis Flat or Haast Pass/Tioripatea. It is a well graded track and follows a section of the old Bridle Track, the first link between Otago and Westland. As the distance by road between Davis Flat and Haast Pass/Tioripatea is 5 kilometres we advise that two vehicles be used, so that one car can be left at the other end of the track.

Bush walk: 5 minutes return (0.2 km)
This gentle walk along a sealed track that passes through kāmahi and silver beech to the 28-metre, spectacular and aptly named, Thunder Creek Falls.

Haast Pass Lookout Track: 1 hour return (3.5 km)
This track leads to a viewpoint above the bushline with a stunning vista.

Lookout: 20 minutes return (1 km)
The walk takes you up through silver beech forest to a viewing platform overlooking the Makarora valley and surrounding mountain peaks.

Nature walk: 15 minutes (1 km)
A camping area that catches the morning sun, and has imposing views of the Makarora River and the Cameron and Blue valleys. Above the camping area a short track links with the beginning of the Blue Pools Walk.

Nature walk: 15 minutes (1 km)
Starting from the car park, just north of DOC’s Makarora Base, this looped nature walk passes through podocarp and silver beech forest with good specimens of matai, miro, kahikatea and rimu. Another feature is a pit-saw display that illustrates this pioneering timber milling technique.

Nature walk: 15 minutes (1 km)
Starting from the car park this is an enjoyable, short bush walk beside a tranquil mountain stream. Pleasant Flat is an attractive picnic and camping area with impressive views of Mount Hooker. Overnight camping is permitted; a small charge applies.

Picnic area

Nature walk: 10 minutes return (0.8 km)
This walk covers parts of the track that are overgrown and track marking is limited or non-existent.

Key

No fires
Picnic area
Shelter
Camping
Toilets
Dogs on a leash
Short Walk—well formed, easy walking
Wheelchair accessible
Walking Track—well formed easy walk from a few minutes to a day.

Base map image supplied by Geographx (NZ) Ltd

Haast Visitor Centre
Roaring Billy
Blue Pools
Blue Valley
Pleasant Flat
Fantail Falls
Makarora Bush
Kidds Bush
Pics area
Shelter
Toilets
Short Walk—well formed, easy walking
Walking Track—well formed easy walk from a few minutes to a day.

Looking for more information? The centre has an interesting display on South Westland’s natural and human history. There’s also plenty of information available on the many walks between Fox Glacier in the north and Jackson Bay/Dahls in the south.