

Fiordland National Park Day Walks



FIORDLAND – SOUTHLAND



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area

Fiordland National Park is part of Te Wāhipounamu – *South West New Zealand* World Heritage Area and is the largest National Park in New Zealand – over 1.2 million hectares. Many travellers are drawn to Fiordland because of the spectacular landscapes, the famous icons of Milford Sound and the Milford Track, and the numerous recreational activities that can be experienced. It is a place of extreme isolation and wilderness, yet is supported with several well equipped towns and local infrastructure to cope with seasonal fluctuations of tourists. There are numerous day walks within Fiordland National Park. These range from a short stroll along a lakeshore to a strenuous climb to an alpine saddle. This booklet provides an introduction to these walks. It is advisable that you check on the latest track and weather conditions from the local Department of Conservation office when planning your trip.

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), the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area incorporates Aoraki/ Mt.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 the World Heritage Area.

Resolution Island and Dusky Sound, Fiordland National Park. Photo: DOC



Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre

Situated on the shores of Lake Te Anau on Lakefront Drive, Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre is open seven days a week from 8.30am to 4.30pm (winter) or 6pm (summer).

The centre offers:

- Park and conservation information
- Up-to-date weather and track conditions
- Information on all activities within Fiordland and surrounding area
- 20 min. DVD introducing the Fiordland National Park
- A display area with information on the cultural and natural history of the area



- Range of retail products; eg. maps, brochures, safety equipment, insect repellent, park souvenirs and a wide range of general and specialist books
- An opportunity to leave an intentions form
- A place to purchase hut tickets/passes and obtain relevant permits.

Access to Fiordland National Park

A variety of commercial transport operators provide regular scheduled transport services into the park from the bordering towns. Good roads allow easy access in a private motor



- Protect plants and animals
- Remove rubbish
- Bury toilet waste
- Keep streams and lakes clean
- Take care with fires
- Camp carefully
- Keep to the track
- Consider others
- Respect our cultural heritage
- Enjoy your visit
- Toitu te whenua
(Leave the land undisturbed)

vehicle. Fiordland National Park has no entrance fees. Some parts of the park do have restricted access and some tracks can be unsafe depending on conditions. You need to obtain current track conditions and the latest weather forecast from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre before setting off.

Do not leave valuables in parked cars and if possible arrange alternative transport to and from tracks. Leaving vehicles parked overnight, especially in more isolated carparks, is not recommended.

Weather

Fiordland weather is dominated by westerly airflows, making it extremely unpredictable and often dramatic. Moisture laden air is forced to rise over the barrier of the mountains where it cools quickly creating heavy rain and snow. Clearing weather often reveals thousands of waterfalls streaming from sheer-sided mountains. Rain falls in Fiordland more than 200 days a year. Annual rainfall varies from 1200 mm in Te Anau to 8000 mm in Milford Sound/Piopiota. When walking in the national park you should be prepared for cold temperatures, strong winds and heavy rain at any time of year, and on any track.

Burning sun in the morning can turn to heavy rain in the afternoon or vice versa. It is essential to carry warm and waterproof clothing.

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

Report any safety hazards or conservation emergencies

For fire and search and rescue call 111

Snow and Avalanches

During the winter and spring the alpine areas of Fiordland are often covered in snow or ice. This may mean tracks are hazardous and/or impassable. Check for up to date weather and track conditions before starting your trip.

Water

The quality of water in Fiordland is generally good but cannot be guaranteed. If unsure, treat with chemicals, boil for 5 minutes, or use a filter before drinking.

Dogs and Other Pets

It is an offence under the National Parks Act to bring dogs or any other introduced animals into Fiordland National Park. Please help protect native wildlife by leaving your pets at home.

Essential Equipment

The weather in Fiordland National Park can be highly unpredictable and you will need to be prepared for all conditions, even if you are only going for a few hours. Ensure you have the following:

- Sturdy, comfortable footwear
- Warm clothing (layers help trap warm air against the skin and allow easier temperature control), wind and waterproof outer layers.
- Hat (woollen and cap)
- Gloves
- Sunscreen
- Water
- Food
- Map
- Insect repellent
- First aid kit.

Cotton clothing such as jeans, cotton t-shirts and sweat shirts are not suitable for longer walks as they become very cold when wet and do not dry easily. Polypropylene, which is quick drying, is recommended.

A full range of tramping clothing and equipment can be hired or purchased in Te Anau.

Toilets

Always use the toilets provided. If no toilets are provided bury toilet waste well away from water ways.

Rubbish

No rubbish facilities are provided in the park. All rubbish must be carried out.

Didymo

Didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*) is an unwanted invasive freshwater alga. It has infected many rivers and lakes around the South Island of New Zealand. Didymo cells are invisible until large colonies form (thick growths of whitish brown mats). To ensure that didymo is not spread, people must disinfect and dry all equipment and clothing, including wet socks and footwear, before moving between waterways.

For more information visit www.biosecurity.govt.nz/didymo or call 0800 80 99 66.

How to Use this Guide

Each section of the park has a corresponding map. Be aware of what each of the symbols mean in relation to your fitness and skill level. Do not attempt any walk beyond your capability. Your safety and the decisions you make are your responsibility.

TRACK CATEGORY DESCRIPTIONS



Easy access short walk – wheelchair accessible



Short walk – easy walking for up to an hour



Walking track – gentle walking from a few minutes to a day



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

Walking Tracks in and around Te Anau

See Te Anau map opposite

Te Anau township, nestled on the shores of Lake Te Anau, is the gateway to Fiordland National Park. An ideal place to spend a few days, it offers a wide variety of accommodation, restaurants and services, as well as many commercial operators that can help you explore the park. Some of the walks listed here are not in Fiordland National Park but provide great views of the mountains and lakes which are part of the park.

Visitor Centre to Ivon Wilson Park, 15 min

From Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre walk about one kilometre around the lake edge then cross the road to the park entrance. Ivon Wilson Park is 35 hectares, planted with native and exotic trees. There are several attractive paths leading to picturesque Lake Henry which is stocked with rainbow and brown trout as a children's fishery. Licences are available from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre. Toilets are available near the entrance.

Visitor Centre to Wildlife Park, 10 min

From the long term car park (behind the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre) follow the path around the side of the lake, past the yacht club to the Wildlife Park. The park is open from dawn until dusk and entry is by a gold coin donation. The aviaries and pens that house the birds are set in beautiful grounds with views of the lake. Free flying birds enjoy the trees that have been planted there, and the ducks like the waters edge below the boardwalk by the lake. For more information on the Wildlife Park please see page 13.

Visitor Centre to Control Gates, 50 min

Follow the path to the Wildlife Centre and up the track at the far end through the willow trees. The path then skirts above the lake to the Control Gates. Excellent lake and mountain views are enjoyed as the track crosses open land below the golf course. The Control Gates regulate water flows between lakes Te Anau and Manapouri for the West Arm hydroelectric power station. They mark the start of the Kepler Track, a 3 - 4 day walk. A toilet is sited five minutes from the Control Gates on the track to Dock Bay.



Control Gates to: Dock Bay, 1 hr return (Kepler Track)
Brod Bay, 3 hr return (Kepler Track)
Luxmore Hut, 8 - 10 hr return
(Kepler Track)



From the Control Gates the track follows the lake edge through mountain and red beech forest. In spring the yellow-flowering kowhai and scented orchids are attractive. Dock Bay is suitable for swimming and has toilet facilities.

The track continues around the lake for another hour to Brod Bay. From here the track ascends steeply through mountain and silver beech forest, passes under towering limestone bluffs, and climbs above the bush line to Luxmore Hut. This strenuous, full-day walk provides impressive views of Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri, and the Te Anau basin.

Brod Bay to Te Anau, 3 - 4 hr (Kepler Track)



A local water taxi will take you from Te Anau across the lake to Brod Bay. From Brod Bay a pleasant walk on the Kepler Track beside the lake will lead you back to Te Anau via the Wildlife Park. The visitor centre has departure times and rates of the water taxi.

Luxmore Hut to Te Anau, 4 - 5 hr (Kepler Track)



A helicopter can drop you off at Luxmore Hut so you can walk back down the mountain into Te Anau. There are beautiful views over the Te Anau basin on a nice day. Contact the visitor centre for details on helicopter availability and rates. This trip is weather dependant.

Control Gates to Rainbow Reach, 2 hr 30 min
(Kepler Track)



The track follows the terraces of the Waiau River through red and mountain beech forest. An area of manuka shrubland marks the home of early run holder Jack Beer who during summer drove his sheep onto Mt Luxmore to graze. There is a swingbridge to cross over the Waiau river to get to Rainbow Reach. There is a shuttle bus service back to Te Anau during the summer months.

Rainbow Reach to Shallow Bay or Moturau Hut,
3 hr - 3 hr 30 min return (Kepler Track)



Rainbow Reach is 12 km from Te Anau on the Manapouri/Te Anau Highway. To access this part of the Kepler Track cross the swingbridge beside the car park, then turn left. The track

Above – Kea. Photo: Colin Bishop

Middle – Lake Te Anau. Photo: Odette Singleton

Below – The swingbridge over the Waiau River at Rainbow Reach.

Photo: Pania Dalley

is gently undulating and wanders through mountain beech forest with some great river views. Some scenes in the Lord of the Rings movies were filmed near this part of the river. Further along cross a kettle bog then continue to the shores of Lake Manapouri. The Moturau and Shallow Bay Huts are near the lake shore and offer shelter and toilet facilities.

Visitor Centre to: Rodeo Grounds, 30 min 
Upukerora River, 3 hr return 

Follow the Te Anau lakeshore toward the main shopping centre; continue along the footpath to the boat harbour at Bluegum Point (30 min). For a longer trip (3 hr return) continue round the lake front, past the rodeo grounds to the mouth of the Upukerora River. Return either the same way, or follow the gravel road along side the river to the Milford Sound Highway and back into town. Please be careful as cars travel quickly on this piece of road. Although not in Fiordland National Park both these walks provide pleasant views of the Murchison Mountains and Lake Te Anau.

The Wilderness Lookout, 5 min  

The Wilderness is situated on SH 94, 15-20 minutes drive from Te Anau towards Mossburn. The track is wheelchair accessible, and leads to a viewing platform over ancient, low and slow growing *Halocarpus bidwilli* bog pine forest. Although not in Fiordland National Park, the 360 degree views of the Takitimu Mountains and foothills, Fiordland National Park and farmland are spectacular.

Wilderness Scientific Reserve. Photo: Andy Wards



The Te Anau Wildlife Centre

The Te Anau Wildlife Centre is set on the shores of Lake Te Anau, and is a 10 minute walk from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre. The centre is open from dawn to dusk and can cater for guided tours if booked in advance with the Department of Conservation Area Office. Entry is free, but a gold coin donation is appreciated.

Fiordland is home to a wonderful variety of native birds, whose habitat ranges from the rugged mountain and forest environments to the wild west coast seashore. The Wildlife Centre gives you an opportunity to get close to some of New Zealand's most precious and threatened native birds. Most of the birds at the centre are not easily seen in the wild. Those held here may have been injured and cannot fend for themselves, or they have been involved in captive rearing programmes. The injured birds are rehabilitated, and when they are strong enough released back into the wild.

An added bonus for visitors is the variety of free-flying birds seen around the centre. Many are attracted by the food available from the native trees and shrubs which have been planted around the park. Native pigeons, silver-eyes, grey warblers, starlings, tomtits, bellbirds and pied and black fantails appear from time to time, often feeding in the bush at the lake's edge. Small groups of greenfinches and chaffinches also visit at intervals, while both harriers and, less commonly, falcons make occasional appearances, attracted by other birds. As well as brown teal, mallard, grey and paradise ducks, you may see black-backed gulls, black-billed gulls, little shags and, occasionally, the brilliant blue of the kingfisher.

New Zealand Wood Pigeon (Kereru)

Kereru can be seen around the centre in late winter and spring. They are still common in native forest and home gardens. Bob the Kereru lives in the aviaries and is very friendly. In the spring and summer he will sometimes do a courtship dance, inviting you to make a nest with him!



NZ Wood pigeon. Photo: DOC

Kea

Cheeky, bold and handsome, the kea will investigate anyone and anything in the South Island high country, which is its natural habitat. Kea eat leaves, buds, fruit and insects, as well as nectar when available. They are very inquisitive and are hard to keep entertained. You will notice a range of toys to keep them occupied such as apples hanging on string or maybe an old boot to play with.



Kea. Photo: DOC

Kaka

The kaka is a cousin to the kea and prefers large tracts of forest to the alpine regions. They usually dine on fruit, berries and nectar. Our kaka like to hang out on the side of the cage, and if they poke out their tongue, you can see the brushes on the end of it that they use for collecting nectar.



Kaka. Photo: DOC

Takahe

The takahe were believed to be extinct until 1948 when they were re-discovered in the Murchison Mountains of Fiordland. The takahe are flightless and live in alpine areas, feeding on snow tussock until winter snow forces them down into the nearby sub-alpine scrub or forest where they feed on starchy fern rhizomes. Takahe usually pair and breed from their second or third year. Nesting begins in late October when the snow clears, and continues until late summer. Both birds build the nest (a raised bowl of grasses usually sheltered beneath broad-leaved snow tussock) and incubate the one or two eggs for 30 days. Sadly, takahe chicks have a high mortality rate. Not all eggs hatch and in the first three months of life nearly three-quarters of the chicks die. Starvation and extreme weather conditions are likely to be the main cause, although predation by stoats may take its toll. In the early 1980s rangers at the Wildlife Centre successfully reared several takahe chicks in a pilot programme designed to test methods of artificially rearing eggs collected from the



Takahe. Photo: DOC

wild. These birds were founders of a population of about 70 takahe which are now established on four island sanctuaries – Tiritiri Matangi, Kapiti, Mana and Maud Islands. A specialist rearing unit has since been established. Eggs are collected annually, hatched and reared. About 10 to 15 of the birds raised are released the following spring, which improves the recruitment rate of young birds into the wild population.

Blue Ducks (Whio)

Blue Duck (torrent duck or whio) were once widespread in New Zealand, but due to loss of habitat and predation by introduced species, are in serious decline. The trout hatchery was once used for rearing young trout but has been modified for whio. Up to 20 ducklings are reared each year and may be viewed there from October to February.

To help boost numbers and genetic diversity of whio the Operation Nest Egg (ONE) Programme was instigated in 2005. Eggs are collected from the wild and transported here to be artificially incubated. The hatched ducklings are reared in baths until they are approximately ten days old, then they are introduced to the outside runs during the day. At night the ducklings are brought inside until they are nearly fully feathered (approx. 7 weeks old), then they are left outside 24 hours a day. The rapids and rocks in the enclosure allow the young ducklings to get used to swimming and feeding in fast flowing water. The chicks are released into the valleys in the park where there is predator control when they are approx. 12 weeks old. Often these chicks are given names by the local school children.



Blue Duck. Photo: DOC



Pukeko. Photo: M Soper

Pukeko

Closely related to the takahe, the pukeko is usually seen in pairs on grass verges, pastures and in swampy areas. The birds here are free to come and go as they please. There are a couple here that were hand raised by a ranger so they could be used to trial some transmitters for takahe chicks. The trial was successful and now the takahe chicks

wearing a transmitter can be found and monitored more closely in the wild.

Auckland Island Teal

These birds are very old and very shy so you may not be able to see them.



Auckland Island Teal. Photo: DOC

Parakeets

The orange-fronted parakeet is the rarest parakeet (kakariki) in New Zealand, with only 100-200 birds left in the wild. The birds seen here are a pair that has yet to successfully breed. The male is called Hurunui as his egg was taken from the Hurunui Valley and put under some red-crowned parakeets as foster parents. Unfortunately they died when scared by a falcon at the wildlife centre, so he was hand reared by one of the rangers here.



Red-crowned parakeet. Photo: DOC

Red crowned parakeets are found on Stewart Island and offshore islands. Yellow crowned parakeets are found on the mainland. The red crowned parakeets feed on the ground and so are more vulnerable to predation than the yellow-crowned ones that tend to stay in the tree canopy for feeding.



Canada Goose. Photo: Rod Morris

The Antipodes Island parakeet is the largest of the parakeet species and the only one lacking a distinctively coloured crown. As these birds are restricted to the islands for which it is named, some are kept on mainland New Zealand in case anything happens to the Antipodes Island population.

Waterfowl enclosure

Here you can see mallard ducks, paradise ducks (putaki-taki), brown teal, grey ducks and Canada geese. These are free to come and go as they please.

Walking Tracks at Lake Manapouri

Manapouri township is set on the shores of Lake Manapouri at the mouth of the Waiau River, 20 minutes drive from Te Anau. This is the departure point for the tourist vessels heading across the lake to the West Arm Power Station and Doubtful Sound.



Access

To access these walking tracks in Fiordland National Park, cross the Waiau River at Pearl Harbour to the jetty on the opposite shore. There are water taxis available, or row boats can be hired. Please contact the Manapouri Store for more information on these options.

Circle Track, 3 hr - 3 hr 30 min



From the jetty follow the riverside track for 15 minutes to a track junction. Turn left and head up the hill to the view point overlooking the lake. This part of the track is rather steep and slippery so you will need to take care. The track then descends down the ridgeline to the Hope Arm Track. Turn right to return to Pearl Harbour which takes about one hour. Turn left for Hope Arm or Back Valley Hut options.

Pearl Harbour to Hope Arm, 4 hr - 6 hr return



From the jetty follow the track by the Waiau River for 15 minutes. A signposted junction indicating the Circle Track is to the left – carry on straight ahead. There are good views of the Manapouri boat harbour from the terraces above the river. The track follows close to the lake edge a few times and there are some unofficial tracks that lead to the lake itself. From here the track climbs gently to the spur where the Circle Track rejoins the main track. Continue straight ahead again through the diverse understorey of plants until reaching the Back Valley/Hope Arm Hut junction. Turn right for Hope Arm and proceed through a narrow neck of forest on boardwalk over swampland. Cross the bridge over the Garnock Burn and shortly you will descend on to Hope Arm Beach. The hut is sited at the far end of the beach.

Pearl Harbour to Back Valley Hut, 4 - 5 hr return



Take the left branch at the Hope Arm/Back Valley turnoff as described above. The track passes through beech and podocarp forest and a stand of ribbonwood before emerging in some small clearings, where the hut is situated. After heavy rain this part of the track can be quite muddy. From the hut it is possible to do a side trip up to Lake Rakatu. The trip takes an extra 2 hours return and the track is very muddy as it follows the creek to the lake.



Pearl Harbour return via Hope Arm and Back Valley

Huts, 6 – 7 hr   

This is a loop walk visiting both huts. See above for track description to Hope Arm Hut, then take the track located behind the hut to Back Valley Hut. It is an easy grade to the Garnock Burn which is spanned by a three wire bridge. See above for details on the track from Back Valley Hut to Pearl Harbour.

The Monument Track, 1 hr 30 min – 2 hr return

A water taxi or private boat is required to the start of the track, two kilometres north of the Hope Arm Hut. From here it is a short, but challenging, 290 metre climb to The Monument summit. The track climbs steeply from the beach, through forest onto the ridge before reaching the bushline. Extreme caution is advised as there are exposed sections with crumbling rock and narrow ledges. At one point there is a chain anchored into the rock to help you. From the top there are spectacular views of Lake Manapouri and the surrounding mountains.

Stockyard Cove Track, 45 min – 1 hr return

Travel by water taxi or private boat to Stockyard Cove at the western entrance to Hope Arm.

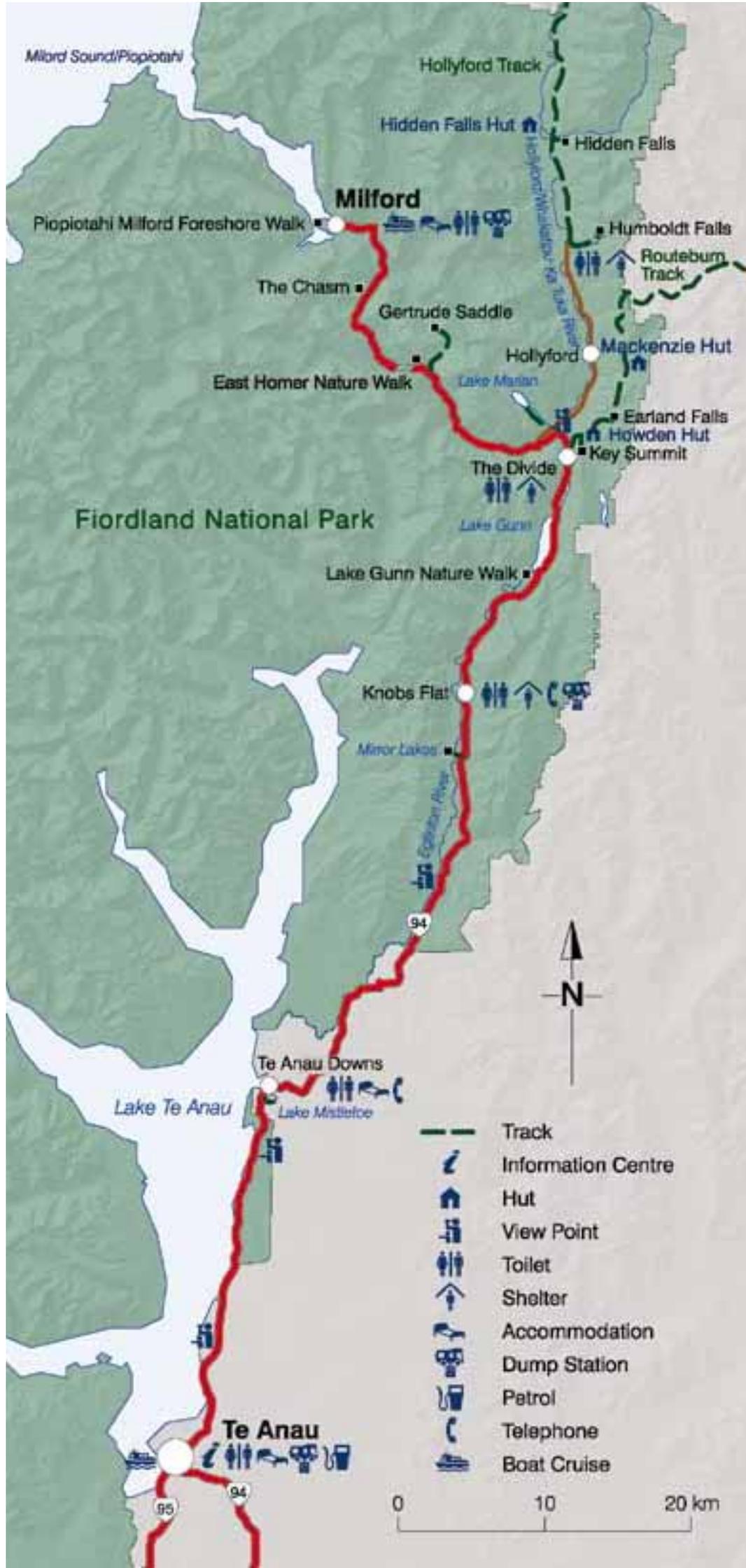
Two tracks lead from this point. The first heads west to West Beach where there are nice views of Lake Manapouri. The second passes through ancient podocarp forest, climbing briefly until reaching the high bluff waterfalls and then descending through mountain beech forest to the lake edge. This track is also known as the Waterfall Track. It is advisable to return to Stockyard Cove following the same track as the foreshore is rocky, slippery and parts of it can be underwater if the lake level is high.

Frasers Beach, 30 mins

The views from the beach of the national park are awe-inspiring, especially at sunset. Walk along the beach, or the track parallel to the beach. The track starts and finishes from Pearl Harbour or at the road entrance just north of Manapouri township.



Climbing to The Monument.
Photo: Beth Masser



Walks From the Milford Road Highway

Tracks from the Milford Road will introduce you to some of the most spectacular alpine and forest scenery in New Zealand. The drive itself is magnificent. Allow yourself the chance to delve deeper into the wilderness than simply seeing it from the inside of your car.

Tips For Travellers on the Milford Road

- There are no petrol stations enroute to Milford Sound.
- To avoid congestion at peak traffic times, early or late morning travel is recommended.
- Allow a minimum of 2 hours to drive from Te Anau to Milford Sound (with no stops).
- Snow chains must be carried during the winter months.
- During the summer traffic lights operate at the Homer Tunnel. Please allow 15 minutes for possible delays.
- The road is steep and windy. Please drive to the conditions.
- There are toilets at the DOC campsites along the way and at Knobs Flat.
- Camping is permitted at the DOC campsites along the Milford Road. Please see page 38 for more details.
- If you have a cruise booked, allow 10 minutes for the walk from the carpark at Milford to the boat terminal.
- Kea, New Zealand's mountain parrot, are present at some of the stops on the way to Milford Sound. Please do not feed the kea as they come to rely on people feeding them and lose the skills necessary to fend for themselves.

Lake Mistletoe, 45 min return

Lake Mistletoe is reached by an attractive forest walk at Te Anau Downs. The entrance is sign posted opposite the Te Anau Downs hotel complex.

Mirror Lakes, 10 min

A good place to stretch your legs during the drive to Milford Sound. Small lakes seen from the wheelchair accessible boardwalk provide outstanding reflective views of the Earl Mountains. Waterfowl and wetland plants can be seen against a backdrop of beech forest. Interpretation panels provide information on local wildlife.

Lake Gunn Nature Walk, 45 min return

This easy 45 minute loop walk is suited to all ages and is wheelchair accessible and provides an introduction to tall

red beech forest and birdlife typical of the Eglinton Valley. Side trips can be made to several lake beaches and sheltered fishing spots.

Key Summit, 3 hr return 

From The Divide carpark follow the Routeburn Track for about an hour until the track branches off on a 20 minute climb to Key Summit. The self guided alpine nature walk passes a range of native vegetation: beech forest, sub-alpine shrublands, as well as alpine tarns and bogs. Birdlife is prolific and tomtits, robins, wood pigeons and bellbirds are commonly seen. Viewpoints provide panoramic views over the Humboldt and Darran Mountains. If you only have time for one walk on your drive to/from Milford Sound, and the weather is fine, do this track as it is well worth the effort!

Lake Howden, 3 hr return 

From The Divide carpark follow the Routeburn Track through silver beech forest to the Key Summit turn off (see above). From here it is a short descent into Lake Howden and the Howden Hut which provides shelter for a snack before the return trip.

Earland Falls, 6 hr return 

From The Divide carpark follow the Routeburn Track to Howden Hut (1.5 hours). From here take the track to Mackenzie Hut – the falls are halfway between Howden and Mackenzie Huts. Clearings give excellent views of the Hollyford Valley. Earland Falls are 174 m high and originate from Lake Roberts.

Lake Marian Falls, 20 min return 

Lake Marian, 3 hr return 

The carpark is a kilometre down the unsealed Hollyford Road. From here cross the swingbridge and continue to the spectacular series of waterfalls which are viewed from the gantry hugging the side of the steep bank. Return to the carpark the way you came.

From the gantry the track becomes steep and sometimes muddy during the 1 hour ascent to Lake Marian. This beautiful alpine lake is situated in a hanging valley surrounded by mountains. You can see magnificent reflections if the weather is calm.

Humboldt Falls, 30 min return 

This walk starts from the end of the unsealed Hollyford Road. A well graded track takes you on a short climb through rainforest to the lookout of the impressive Humboldt Falls.

Hidden Falls, 4 - 6 hr return

Leave your car at the Hollyford Road end and cross the swing bridge over Humboldt Creek onto the Hollyford Track. The track follows the Hollyford river and offers occasional views of the Darran Mountains. At Hidden Falls Creek the track passes Sunshine Hut, run by Hollyford Valley Guided Walks, and continues upstream to the swing bridge. Take the rough track to the right of the bridge to view Hidden Falls. Hidden Falls Hut (12 bunks) is a further 20 minutes along the track over the bridge.

Gertrude Saddle Route, 4 hr return

The carpark is signposted shortly before the eastern portal of the Homer Tunnel. From the car park the marked route meanders up the valley through spectacular alpine vegetation. After rain there are some creek crossings so expect to get wet feet.

There are no markers above bushline, so alpine navigational skills are essential. Unfortunately trampers create misplaced rock cairns – be sure to follow your own judgement and use a topographical map. From the head of the valley the route leads up to the saddle. Cross the base of the waterfall and sidle across the slopes towards Black Lake. From here parts of the track are very steep and not suitable for anyone with limited tramping experience, or a dislike for heights. The track goes up steep rock slabs and is treacherous when wet or frosty. There are steel cables to assist you. From the head of the valley continue up through the boulders to the saddle. Breathtaking views of the valley and part of Milford Sound/Piopiotaahi can be seen. This is an alpine route and is subject to avalanches after snow. Please check with the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre for track conditions before starting, whatever the season.

East Homer Nature Walk, 20 min return

Located beside the eastern portal of the Homer Tunnel this short self-guided nature walk gives you an opportunity to learn more about the alpine landscape and how plants and animals survive here. There are self guiding cards available - please return them for others to use when you have completed your walk. Before the tunnel was completed the postman used to climb over the Homer Saddle here to deliver the mail into Milford Sound.

If kea are present please do not feed them. **Please note this walk cannot be accessed if high avalanche danger closes the carpark.**



The Chasm, 20 min return

This walk on the Milford side of the Homer Tunnel is well signposted and very popular. Two foot bridges over the Cleddau River offer dramatic views of a series of powerful waterfalls. Thousands of years of swirling water have sculpted shapes and basins in the rock. The sheer velocity of water gives an appreciation of how much rainfall the Milford Sound area receives per annum.

Tutuko Valley, 5 hr return

This route is accessed from the Tutuko bridge on the Milford Road and is lightly marked for approximately 2.5 hours. Return to the carpark at this stage, or if you have experience with river crossings and have good navigation skills continue further up the river bed. You may see blue ducks (whio). The views seen from above the bushline are spectacular.

Piopiotahi Milford Foreshore Walk, 30 min

At the entry to the main visitor carpark at Milford Sound you will find the start of this interpretive walk. Relax and enjoy the sea air while watching the boats taking visitors out on cruises on Milford Sound. Some of the best views of Mitre Peak are from this walk. Take sandfly repellent with you!

Left – Hidden Falls, Hollyford Track.. Photo: DOC
Below – Mitre Peak, Milford Sound. Photo: DOC





Walks at Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound

Deep Cove can be complicated to access and transport needs to be booked in advance. From Manapouri take a boat to West Arm on Lake Manapouri and then travel by coach over to Deep Cove. The Deep Cove hostel is mainly used by school groups, although during the summer season it may be available. Please contact the Visitors Centre for more details.

Brassell Point Nature Walk, 1 hr return

This self guided nature walk starts at the Deep Cove Hostel, heads up to the Helena Falls lookout, and returns along the road. There is impressive mixed podocarp forest along the way, and great views over Deep Cove.

Old Doubtful Sound Track, 3 hr return

Follow in the footsteps of the first tourists to walk in this area over a hundred years ago: the track starts at the Lyvia Bridge and heads up the hill following the river before crossing the Stella Burn to join up with the Wilmot Pass Road. From here either walk back down the road (watch for traffic) or return along the same track back to the hostel.

Helena Falls Track, 2 hr return

This track is only accessible by dinghy. Ask the hostel manager for advice before enjoying a 45 minute walk over undulating terrain to the waterfall. Opposite the “busy” side of Deep Cove, admire two different areas of regenerating bush, one at the end of the first power station development (1972) and more recently (2002) when a second exhaust pipe (tailrace) was added to the power station to improve efficiency.

Hanging Valley Track, 2 - 3 hr return

This track heads up the hill behind the hostel. There is a marked side track to see the hostel’s hydro dam, and then the track climbs to the “Kea Cairn”. A further 30 minutes walk takes you up to the end of this hanging valley to the base of the Huntleigh Falls. This track is steep and challenging, but the views are spectacular.



Walks Around Lake Monowai and the Borland Road

Access 

Turn off the Southern Scenic Route between Clifden and Manapouri, just north of the Blackmount School as signposted. Follow the signpost to Lake Monowai or to Borland Lodge and the Borland Road.

The gate just after Borland Lodge marks the beginning of the Borland Road. The Borland Road is maintained by Transpower Ltd. for construction purposes and access is permitted as road conditions allow. The Borland Road can be closed and the gate locked for long periods of time due to slips, washouts or adverse weather conditions that would affect public safety. Before setting out contact the Department of Conservation in Invercargill (ph 03 211 2400) for current road conditions.

The road is unsealed, narrow and steep in places. There are no fuel supplies, no communication (including cell phone coverage) and no emergency services along its length. It is recommended for 4WD vehicles only and is not suitable for campervans, caravans or trailers. Vehicles must remain on the formed road at all times – no off road driving is permitted in this area.

The Peninsula Lookout Track, 30 min return

This pleasant walk begins at the Lake Monowai carpark/boat ramp area. The short track is through attractive, mature beech forest along the shores of Lake Monowai to a seat overlooking the lower reaches of the lake. This lake was one of the first in New Zealand to be controlled for hydro-electric power production – it was raised 2.5 metres in 1926. It is now a popular spot for fishing.

Borland Nature Walk, 40 min return

This track is in close proximity to Borland Lodge and the entrance is adjacent to the Borland Road gate. Enjoy the tranquillity of this easy grade loop track, alongside Pig Creek. A self-guiding brochure, available at the start of the track, gives an insight into forest life. If you are lucky you may see and hear a few of the birds mentioned in the brochure, and if you look up occasionally you might get a glimpse of the rare red - flowered mistletoe making its home on a host beech tree! Please return the self-guiding brochure when you have finished your walk so that others may also enjoy it.



Track to Mt Burns, looking towards the Borland Saddle. Photo: Brian Murphy

Mt Eldrig Peak Track, 3 hr return

Signposted approximately five kilometres from the gate, follow the pylon access road to the beginning of the track. The track climbs steeply through bush to a few lookout points over the surrounding mountains. There are stunning views of the rock formations in the area, and the weathering of the granite has given the dramatic effect of white stony beaches on the mountain tops. At a flat point of the track with big white boulders fringed with beech forest excellent views are seen. It is here that you should turn around and return the way you came up.

Mt Burns Track, 45 min return

A short steep and strenuous track leads from the Borland Saddle carpark through the bush to the tussock covered open tops of Mt Burns where numerous mirror-like tarns and spectacular views await. Please stick to the route to avoid damaging the fragile alpine plants. It is recommended you walk this track during periods of good visibility as it can be difficult to follow the markers when cloud cover is low.

Borland Road to Green Lake, 6 hr return

From the signposted carpark beside the Borland Biv, walk over the remains of New Zealand's largest landslide, through wetland and tussock clearings. Island Lake is about two thirds of the way to Green Lake and makes for a good rest stop. Continue steeply uphill through beech forest before descending to the Green Lake basin and perhaps a refreshing dip in the lake! If you wish to visit the Green Lake Hut, it is a further 15 minutes along the lakeshore. Return to Borland Saddle the way you came.

Walks at Lake Hauroko

At 462 metres Lake Hauroko is New Zealand's deepest lake; its lakebed reaching well below sea level. To Māori Hauroko means "the souging of the wind", and wind can blow up huge waves on the lake in a matter of minutes, funnelled by the steep hills around the lake.

Access 

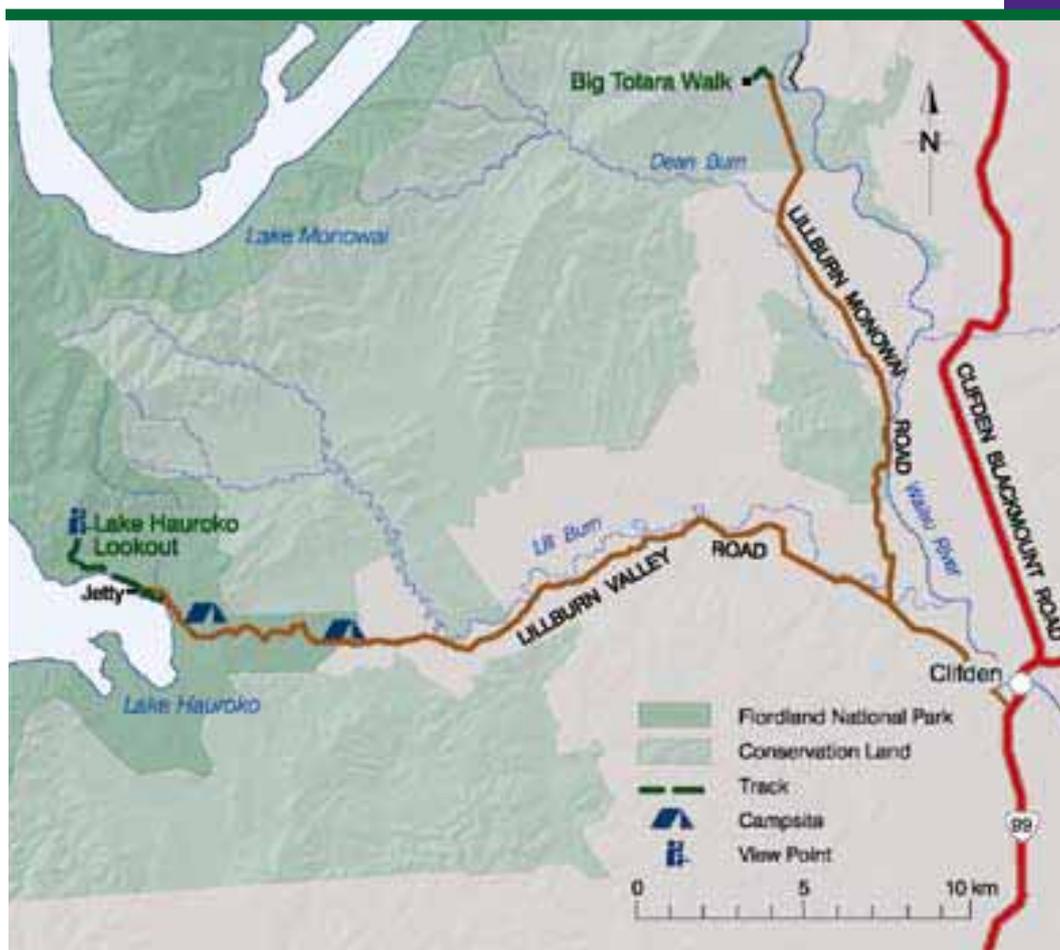
Turn left from the Southern Scenic Route near Clifden onto the Lillburn Valley Road. Lake Hauroko is approximately 30 kilometres from the main highway turnoff, as signposted. The road is unsealed, so please drive carefully. There is limited cellphone coverage along its length. The township of Tuatapere has the closest fuel and emergency services.

Lake Hauroko Track, 40 min return 

From the car park at Lake Hauroko an easy loop walk skirts a swampy area close to the lake. See the trees change from mainly matai, totara and rimu in the wetter area, to mainly mountain beech in the drier areas.

Lake Hauroko Lookout, 4 hr return 

Take the track to the right of the jetty - it follows along the lake edge before climbing steeply to the lookout. On a clear day there are stunning views of Lake Hauroko, Foveaux Strait to the south, the Takitimu Mountains to the east, and the Princess and Kaherekoau Mountains in the northwest. This track is steep and rough, but the views are great.





Lake Hauroko. Photo: Sarah Murray, DOC

Big Tōtara Walk, 30 min return

The Big Tōtara Walk, on the Lillburn Monowai Road in Dean Forest, is signposted from the Lillburn Valley Road. Travel through farmland and native bush along the Lillburn Monowai Road for approximately 12 kilometres, to the signposted carpark for the Big Tōtara Walk. This pleasant short walk winds through forest to an area where there are some of Southland's largest tōtara trees. This small pocket of forest has not been logged and visitors can see these giants of the forest, some of which are over 1000 years old.

Bluecliffs Beach. Photo: Wayne Baxter



Walks in the South Coast Area

Access

At Tuatapere turn onto Papatotara Road and follow the signs to Bluecliffs Beach. The first 21 kilometres are sealed and the remaining seven kilometres are gravel road of a good standard. Cars can be left in the carpark (at the owner's risk), signposted in front of the Rarakau Station homestead, 150 metres past the South Coast Track entrance.

Bluecliffs Beach, 1-2 hr return

From the Rarakau carpark travel 150 metres back along the road to the start of the South Coast Track. The track follows along the top of the escarpment through forest for approx two kilometres before descending to the track along the seashore. The endangered Hector's dolphin may be seen playing in the breakers of Te Waewae Bay. From here you can extend your journey to the Waikau River swingbridge where there are some fishing huts. Waves can come right up to the cliffs so please beware of the incoming tide.



Fiordland National Park

Formation

Fiordland contains some of the oldest rocks in New Zealand, predominantly hard crystalline metamorphic rocks like gneiss and schist and volcanic rocks like granite. Lying close to the alpine fault where two plates of the Earth's crust meet, the area has been folded, faulted, uplifted and submerged many times. Periods of submersion under the sea-bed have created areas of sandstone, mudstone, and limestone such as those seen today at Te Ana-au Caves and on the Hump Ridge. Over the last two million years glaciers have at times covered the area, gouging into the rock creating U-shaped valleys, many of which are now lakes or fiords. Today hundreds of lakes dot the landscape, among them the deepest in New Zealand, Lake Hauroko, at 462 m. Fourteen fiords, reaching up to 40 km inland, extend from Milford Sound in the north to Preservation Inlet in the south. Solander Island, a tiny outlier of the park 25 km to the south, is the eroded skeleton of a volcano about one million years old.

History

Fiordland was well known to the Māori and many legends pertain to its formation and naming. Demi-god Tuterakiwhanoa is said to have carved the rugged landscape from formless rock. Few Māori were permanent residents of the region but seasonal food-gathering camps were linked by well worn trails.

Takiwai, a translucent greenstone, was sought from Anita Bay and elsewhere near the mouth of Milford Sound. Captain Cook and his crew were the first Europeans to visit Fiordland and in 1773 spent five weeks in Dusky Sound. Cook's maps and descriptions soon attracted sealers and whalers who formed the first European settlements of New Zealand. From the middle of the 19th Century surveyors, explorers and prospectors began to penetrate the unexplored interior of Fiordland.

Preservation Inlet boomed briefly in the 1890s after gold was found. But efforts to establish mines, timber mills and farms in Fiordland have generally been short lived. Quintin Mackinnon and Donald Sutherland opened up the Milford Track in 1889 and began guiding tourists through the now world-famous route.

Richard Henry, one of the pioneers of threatened species work transferred kakapo and kiwi to islands in Dusky Sound in the late 1890s and early 1900s.

In 1916 the Marlborough Timber Company recognised the milling potential of the Southern coastal forests now known as Port Craig. A significant settlement existed here up until 1928 when Port Craig was closed as a result of the Great Depression. Every facet of the enterprise, from logging to shipping, present daunting challenges, each overcome by resourcefulness, ingenuity and determination.

An area of 940,000 hectares was first set aside for National Park purposes in 1904. But it was not until 1952 that Fiordland National Park was officially constituted. Today it covers over 1.2 million hectares and has been declared a World Heritage Area.

Vegetation

Much of Fiordland's forest clings to steep faces of hard rock – the rock is only covered by a thin layer of rich, peaty humus and moss. Tree avalanches are common. Beech forest is dominant with red and mountain beech growing around the eastern lakes and in the Eglinton Valley. Silver beech is the most widespread beech species, sometimes growing in association with podocarps such as totara, rimu and miro.

On the wetter west this forest type has luxuriant understorey shrubs, tree ferns, mosses and lichens.

Above the 1000 metre bushline snow tussocks dominate with showy alpine daisies, buttercups and other herbs.

Wildlife

Fiordland is home to several threatened native animals. The Murchison and Stuart Mountains support at least 145 takahe, a flightless, alpine rail thought extinct earlier this century. The birds are carefully monitored in a restricted area of the park and their numbers boosted by an artificial rearing programme.

Fiordland was considered a stronghold for kakapo, now probably extinct on the mainland. Threatened by predators, the last few remaining birds have been transferred to offshore islands. The population has increased from 50 to 86 over the past few years. Kakapo have recently been returned to Chalky Island in Fiordland.



Robin. Photo: DOC

The Eglinton Valley is a stronghold for yellow-crowned parakeets, robins, kaka, long-tailed bats and a recently discovered colony of short-tailed bats. Blue ducks and southern crested grebes are found on Fiordland lakes and streams. South Island saddlebacks, absent from Fiordland for nearly a century, have been reintroduced on Breaksea Island, where Norway rats were eradicated in 1988. The rare Fiordland skink, along with many other species, have also benefited from the removal of rats. Fiordland has many secure predator-free islands and work is on-going to protect more islands.

Visitors are likely to see the common forest birds like tomtits, brown creepers, grey warblers, fantails, tui, bellbirds and native pigeons. Brown kiwi are reasonably common and their calls are often heard by trampers at night. The cheeky mountain parrot, the kea, is a regular entertainer at higher altitudes.

Introduced animals such as mice, rats, stoats, hares, deer, pigs and possums have had a detrimental effect on native animals and plants, and some control programmes are carried out.

Marine Life

The marine environment of Fiordland is as unique as its land areas. Heavy rainfall creates a permanent freshwater layer above the sea water within the fiords. Stained by tannins washed out of the vegetation, this layer cuts down the amount of light restricting almost all of the marine life to the top 40 metres of water depth. This 40 metre band is calm, very clear and relatively warm - home to sponges, corals and fish of sub-tropical, cool water and deep water varieties. The fiords support the world's biggest population of black coral trees - about seven million colonies, some of them up to 200 years old. They are home also to brachiopods: primitive clam-like animals which have been bypassed by evolution, remaining unchanged in over 300 million years.

Bottlenose dolphins, fur seals, Fiordland crested penguins and little blue penguins are resident in the fiords. The fiord underwater environment is not included in the National Park although 10 marine reserves, in which all life is totally protected, have been established in Fiordland.

Around the Southern Coast, New Zealand's endangered Hector's dolphin can often be seen, as can New Zealand fur seals, little blue and Fiordland crested penguins. For some very lucky visitors, there can be rare opportunities to see whales around the coast.

What Else Can I Do In Fiordland National Park?

Hunting and Fishing



In the early 1900s red deer, wapiti, possums and moose were liberated into Fiordland. No moose are thought to have survived but deer and possums have adapted well to the Fiordland environment. The annual wapiti bugle brings hunters from around the world each autumn and a ballot is held annually to hunt wapiti during the 'roar' March-April. Permits to hunt red deer, wapiti and possums can be obtained from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre.

The lakes and rivers of Fiordland offer excellent fishing for brown and rainbow trout. You do need to purchase a fishing licence, and adhere to the regulations. The invasive algae didymo is present in some areas of the Park and require a special additional licence.

Kayaking



Guided sea-kayaking trips are available on both Doubtful Sound/Patea and Milford Sound/Piopiotahi.

For experienced paddlers there are kayaks for hire on Lake Te Anau and Lake Manapouri.

Please help keep invasive weeds such as oxygen weed (lagarosiphon) and didymo out of the lakes and rivers.

Kayaking on Lake Manapouri. Photo: Andy Wards



Mountain Biking



Mountain biking is not permitted on any walking tracks in Fiordland National Park, but they are allowed on formed roads. Enquire at the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre for more information.

Boating



There are a number of boat launching ramps at the lakes in Fiordland National Park. Please note that conditions can change very rapidly with the onset of bad weather. Please help keep invasive weeds such as oxygen weed (lagarosiphon) and didymo out of the lakes and rivers.

Scenic Trips



The park can be experienced via commercial operators, either by boat, flights, or guided walks. For more information on these enquire at the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre or visit the website: www.fiordland.org.nz

Camping



The Department of Conservation administers numerous campsites within Fiordland National Park. There is a small charge and facilities are basic. Information on location, prices and facilities can be obtained from any Department of Conservation office.

Longer Walks



This brochure only covers the day walks in the area. Overnight walks are many and varied and usually have their own brochure. Enquire at the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre or visit the DOC website: www.doc.govt.nz

Contact Us

Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre
Department of Conservation
Lakefront Drive, PO Box 29, Te Anau
Tel (03) 249 7924, Fax (03) 249 0257
Email: fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz
Website: www.doc.govt.nz

Department of Conservation,
33 Don St, Level 7, Invercargill 9840.
Tel (03) 214 4589, Fax (03) 211 2400
Email: Invercargill@doc.govt.nz
Website: www.doc.govt.nz

Tuatapere Information Centre,
31 Orawia Road, Tuatapere.
Tel (03) 226 6739, Fax (03) 226 6074
Email: info@humpridgetrack.co.nz