

## Safety

Your safety is your responsibility – it is important to plan, prepare and equip yourself well. Have the latest information about facilities you plan to use and ensure you check the weather before you go.

### 1. Plan your trip

It is strongly recommended that you carry a personal locator beacon and/or mountain radio. Topographical maps covering the Dusky Track are recommended for navigation (CE05 Cooper Island, CE06 Lake Roe, CD06 Deep Cove). Before departing, please check current track and weather conditions by contacting the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre in Te Anau or the Department of Conservation Office in Invercargill.

### 2. Tell someone

Safety is your responsibility so remember to leave details of your trip (return date and time, planned route, names of party members, and vehicle licence plates) with a trusted contact, and don't forget to let them know when you return. Information on the Outdoor Intentions System can be found at [www.adventuresmart.co.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.co.nz). Remember to fill in hut books during your trip, even if you do not stay in the hut. They can assist in search and rescue operations, and may help save your life.

### 3. Be aware of the weather

Fiordland National Park lies in an area with high rainfall and changeable weather patterns. Cold temperatures, snow, strong winds and heavy rain can occur at any time of the year. The track traverses two alpine passes and during winter is often impassable due to snow, ice and avalanches.

For more information on current weather conditions and outdoor safety, visit NZ Weather Service: [www.metservice.co.nz](http://www.metservice.co.nz) and Mountain Safety Council: [www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz).

### 4. Know your limits

Plan properly for your trip and ensure your party has a capable, experienced leader. Always be physically and mentally prepared for the worst. Be aware of the causes and symptoms of hypothermia and know how to treat it.

### 5. Take sufficient supplies

You need to be self-sufficient with extra food, adequate clothing and equipment. Portable stoves and fuel must be carried. Be ready to change your plans due to weather conditions and flooding, which can frequently cause delays on this track.

## Emergency locator beacon hire

Available from Mobil Service Station at Te Anau, Tuatapere Service Station, Borland Lodge, Riverton Super Value supermarket and Bev's Tramping Hire.

## Mountain radio hire

Invercargill – Ph. +64 3 216 3751

Te Anau – Ph. +64 3 249 8363



Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to check, clean dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

## Further information

Te Rua-o-te-moko/Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre  
Department of Conservation  
Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600  
Phone: +64 3 249 7924  
Email: [fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz)  
[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

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

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

## Behind the Scenes

Conservation in Fiordland newsletter

[www.doc.govt.nz/behind-the-scenes](http://www.doc.govt.nz/behind-the-scenes)



[www.facebook.com/docfiordland](http://www.facebook.com/docfiordland)

Cover: Climbing to Centre Pass

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# Dusky Track

Fiordland National Park



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



## History

Dusky Sound, one of the largest fiords in New Zealand, was named by Captain James Cook on his first voyage to New Zealand in 1770. He did not enter the fiord because it was getting dark and named it Dusky Bay. The Māori name for the fiord is Tamatea after the legendary explorer who travelled the full length of the North and South Islands in his waka (canoe), the *Takitimu*.

On Cook's second voyage in 1773, when he spent several weeks exploring the fiord, he met several Māori family groups. They were Ngāti Mamoe iwi who lived in Dusky Sound and other remote fiords as fugitives of northern tribal battles and formed the basis for romantic and exaggerated legends of a 'lost tribe'.

The first explorer to try and map an overland route to Dusky Sound was Sir Thomas MacKenzie in 1894 and 1896. In 1903, when jobs were scarce, about 50 West Coast miners were set to work building a track from Supper Cove to Lake Manapouri. Living in tent camps, the men endured the sandflies and rain for a reward of twelve and sixpence a day plus food.



### 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/Mount 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.

The track, still clearly evident for much of its length, was cut six feet wide with a drain on one side. It extended to a point just past where the Loch Maree hut stands today. Picks, crowbars and a hefty anvil still lie at the side of the track, just above Loch Maree, where the men left them when work came to a halt.

In 1909 10 moose were brought from Canada for liberation at Supper Cove. The harsh environment and competition from red deer have made it unlikely that any moose survive today, although unconfirmed reports of moose sightings have been made over the years.

## Natural history

The track crosses exceptionally mountainous country rising to 1600 metres. The U-shaped valleys were carved by deep glaciers during the ice ages, the last of which ended some 14,000 years ago. The glaciers and sheet ice have left behind hanging side valleys, horned peaks and high basins now filled by lakes.

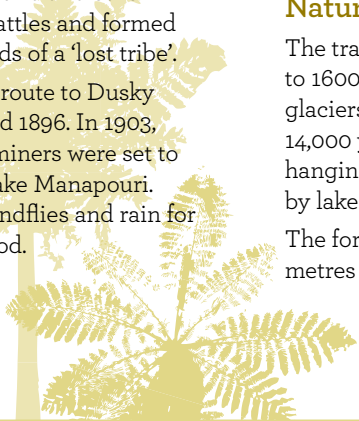
The forest is predominantly tawhai/silver beech up to 25 metres tall with a lush sub-canopy of horopito/pepper

tree, kāpuka/broadleaf, kōtukutuku/fuchsia, coprosmas and mamaku/soft tree-fern. Mānatu/ribbonwood, makomako/wineberry, fuchsia and crown fern surround the clearings. At about 900 metres beech forest gives way to subalpine shrubland with bog pine, hebe, dracophyllum and coprosmas, and short tussock grassland.

A wide variety of forest birds may be encountered, including yellowheads/mohua and yellow-crowned parakeets/kākāriki. Weka and kea usually visit the huts and kiwi can be heard calling at dusk. The Seaforth and Spey valleys are good habitat for waterfowl, including the native grey duck/pārerā, introduced mallards and the rare blue duck/whio, found in the fast-flowing headwaters.

Introduced animals include red deer, stoats, rats and mice and Australian possums in the Spey valley. Blue cod/kopukopu and groper are often caught by hand line at aptly named Supper Cove. Trout fishing is possible in the Hauroko Burn, Spey River and Seaforth River below Loch Maree. A fishing licence and clean-gear certificate is required.

Dusky Track bush: © Graham Dainty



The Dusky Track is a challenging but rewarding 84 km tramping track through Fiordland National Park. It takes 8 to 10 days to complete and links stunning Lake Hauroko with Lake Manapouri. It also offers a 2-day optional detour to Supper Cove in Dusky Sound.

The track traverses three major valley systems and crosses two mountain ranges. There are 21 three-wire bridges to cross. Although the track is reasonably well marked, you can expect to encounter tree falls, knee-deep mud, river crossings, tree roots and some rough terrain. Please be prepared for sections to become impassable due to flooding after heavy rain – this is not uncommon and **will cause delays**.

The Dusky Track is recommended only for **experienced, well-equipped groups with high levels of fitness**.

Before starting the track, please contact the Te Rua-o-te-Moko/Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre in Te Anau or the Department of Conservation Murihiku/Invercargill Office to obtain current track and weather information and to purchase your hut tickets.

### Huts and hut tickets

The Department of Conservation provides and maintains the huts on the Dusky Track. Each hut is supplied with mattresses and a pit toilet. Fees are charged per person per night. All huts (apart from West Arm Hut, which is free) are standard huts, requiring one backcountry hut ticket per night, or a backcountry hut pass (valid for 6 or 12 months). Tickets should be purchased in advance from a DOC office. Users are expected to leave the huts clean and tidy.

Portable stoves for cooking must be carried, as no cooking facilities are supplied in any of the huts on the Dusky Track.

***The Dusky Track is not suitable for camping.***

### Access

The Dusky Track can be walked starting from either Lake Manapouri or Lake Hauroko. The following description is from Lake Hauroko to Lake Manapouri. From the south, a scheduled boat service on Lake Hauroko leads to the start of the track at the head of the lake. It is also possible to fly to the start of the track or to Supper Cove by float plane or helicopter. From the north, access to the track is across Lake Manapouri – a launch service operates daily.

## LAKE HAUROKO TO LAKE MANAPOURI

*All times are one way.*

### Lake Hauroko to Halfway Hut

4–6 hours

Lake Hauroko is the deepest lake in New Zealand (462 m) and the boat journey across it provides a spectacular start to the trip. The first 40 minutes from Hauroko Burn Hut (10 bunks) is flat, with attractive views of the river. If there has been heavy rain, there is a three-wire crossing about 100 m downstream from the track. This is signposted as an emergency crossing. The track climbs at a gentle grade to a gorge, then descends to a walkwire over the Hauroko Burn before it meets the Gardner Burn. The track gets steeper then descends to the river, with flat terrain to Halfway Hut (12 bunks).

### Halfway Hut to Lake Roe Hut

3–5 hours

The track follows an easy grade crossing the Hauroko Burn just before the top forks. Keep an eye open for yellowheads/mohua and kākā in this section. From the forks, the track climbs steeply to above the bushline. Snow poles show the direction to Lake Roe Hut (12 bunks), sited at the northern end of Lake Laffy on Furkert Pass. Lake Roe, set among massive granite outcrops, is 20 minutes due east, above the hut.

### Lake Roe Hut to Loch Maree Hut

5–7 hours

***Caution: If there has been continual rain it is recommended that you wait for more favourable conditions before completing this section, as the Seaforth River can be impassable due to flooding.***

Snow poles mark the track in a westerly direction around the outlet of Lake Horizon and along the open tops of the Pleasant Range. This section is the scenic highlight of the track, with spectacular views of Dusky Sound and the surrounding mountains. From the end of the Pleasant Range the track descends very steeply to Loch Maree.

Trampers can usually cross the Seaforth River just downstream of the walkwire, which is provided for use only when the river is running high. Loch Maree Hut (12 bunks) is a few minutes from the walkwire. If river levels restrict access to the walkwire, there is an open shelter adjacent to the track where trampers can wait until the crossing can be safely made.

### Loch Maree Hut to Supper Cove Hut

6–8 hours

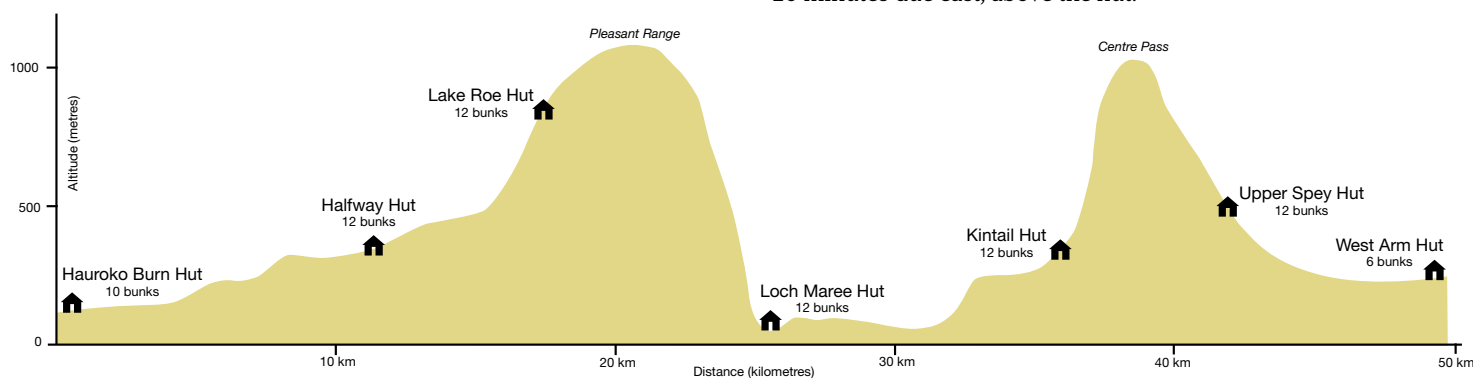
The track climbs around Loch Maree and then descends to the Bishop Burn. After heavy rain, low-lying parts of this section can flood. The section from the Bishop Burn to the Henry Burn is flat and follows the track cut by West Coast miners in 1903. From the Henry Burn the track gets rougher as it sidles the slopes overlooking the Supper Cove. Supper Cove Hut (12 bunks) is visible on a small terrace just south of the Hilda Burn. Check the tide times before you go as the high tide route is scrubby and unpleasant.

### Loch Maree Hut to Kintail Hut

6–8 hours

From Loch Maree Hut the track heads along the Seaforth River to Deadwood Creek. ***This section is rough underfoot and prone to flooding. It can be very difficult in wet weather.*** Between Deadwood Creek and the Kenneth Burn the track gets easier as it passes through several clearings. Watch out for track markers on the opposite forest edge of the clearings. This section also crosses several deep guts which can fill with water and are difficult to cross if river levels are high.

After crossing the Kenneth Burn walkwire, the track becomes rough as it climbs through the gorge to the outlet of Gair Loch. From here the track leads up river to a walkwire across the Seaforth River. This section is relatively easy apart from a swampy area at the top of Gair Loch. Kintail Hut (12 bunks) is 5 minutes away along a side-track, signposted just before the walkwire.







## Kintail Hut to Upper Spey Hut

5-7 hours

From the hut backtrack 5 minutes to the walkwire over the Seaforth River. From here the track crosses a large slip which destroyed several hundred metres of track in 2008. Orange markers indicate a new route up the true right of the Kintail Stream to the walkwire.

The steep climb to Centre Pass (1051 m) traverses forest then herbfields and provides breathtaking views of Gair Loch, Tripod Hill and the Seaforth valley. If the weather is fine it is worth leaving packs at the pass and climbing to the summit of Mt Memphis for some spectacular views (2 hrs return).

From Centre Pass the track is marked by snow poles as it descends steeply through tussockland and alpine shrubland to the head of the Warren Burn. It is a short steep descent from here to Upper Spey Hut (12 bunks).

## Upper Spey Hut to Wilmot Pass Road

4-5 hours

The track crosses a large swampy clearing and descends to a walkwire over the Spey River, about 40 minutes from the hut. It then follows the true left of the river through beech and ribbonwood forest to the Dashwood Stream. Two walkwires span the stream. From here it is a short walk to the Wilmot Pass Road.

## Wilmot Pass Road to West Arm, Lake Manapouri

45 minutes

From the track end (sign posted on the left-hand side of the road, 20 minutes past the Mica Burn) follow the Wilmot Pass Road to West Arm, Lake Manapouri. West Arm Hut (6 bunks) is sited half an hour along the road.

