

Plan and prepare

KEPLER TRACK



Duration: **3–4 days**
Distance: **60km (loop)**



Great Walks season:
29 October 2019 – 30 April 2020



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

KEPLER TRACK

Set out on a wilderness adventure above the clouds, high in the mountains above Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri in Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area.

The drama of these vast tussock-covered ridgelines and spectacular alpine vistas contrasts with the peaceful lakes and the beech forest of the Iris Burn valley.

The Kepler Track is circular and can be walked in either direction. The track is well marked and signposted, but some sections are steep and rough and may be muddy and slippery. Poor weather conditions can make this walk challenging, even in the Great Walks season.

This brochure describes a 4-day hike for independent, non-guided walkers during the Great Walks season (29 October 2019 – 30 April 2020).



Outside the Great Walks season (May to October) walking conditions are more hazardous – see the safety information.

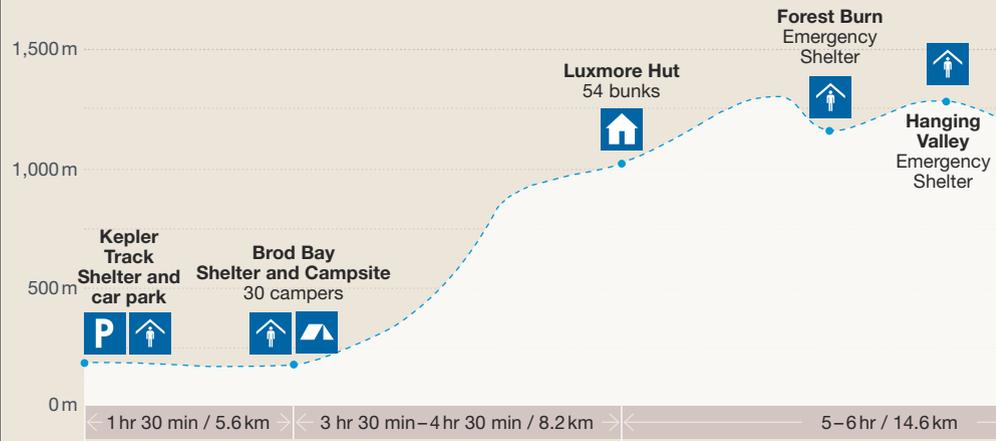


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Elevation profile & track guide



Day 1: Kepler Track car park to Luxmore Hut



Day 2: Luxmore Hut to Iris Burn Hut

➤ 5–6 hours, 13.8 km

Your journey begins with a stroll through the beech forest along the shore of Lake Te Anau, the largest body of fresh water by volume in Australasia, to Brod Bay. A challenging climb under impressive limestone bluffs takes you above the bushline to panoramic views of the Te Anau basin and surrounding mountains. Luxmore Hut is a 45 min walk from the bushline.

➤ 5–6 hours, 14.6 km

Start your day on top of the world. From the hut, you'll climb to a ridge just below Mount Luxmore. In good weather there are stunning views across the south fiord of Lake Te Anau to the Murchison Mountains. After a wonderful day on the tops, you'll arrive at Iris Burn Hut, situated in a large tussock clearing.



COVER: Descending from Hanging Valley Shelter, John Strother (www.panafoot.com)

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Limestone bluffs, Daniel Deans; stunning mountain views from the Kepler Track, Daniel Deans; walking through lowland beech forest, Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz); boardwalk through the wetland, DOC

MAIN PHOTO: View from Luxmore, Tyler Ray Photography (tylermilesray.com)



hut



campsite



shelter and toilet



car park

Iris Burn Hut and Campsite
50 bunks
30 campers



Rocky Point Shelter



Moturau Hut
40 bunks



Rainbow Reach Shelter and car park



Kepler Track Shelter and car park



5–6 hr / 16.2 km

1 hr 30 min–2 hr / 6 km

2 hr 30 min–3 hr 30 min / 9.5 km



Day 3: Iris Burn Hut to Moturau Hut

↗ 5–6 hours, 16.2 km

Experience ever-changing scenery as the track takes you over a low saddle, then down to Rocky Point, past a large slip caused by heavy rain. You'll then wind through a gorge and lowland beech and podocarp forest, before reaching the shore of beautiful Lake Manapouri. The beach-side Moturau Hut has stunning views of the lake.



Day 4: Moturau Hut to the Kepler Track car park

↗ 4 hours – 5 hours 30 minutes, 15.5 km

The last day starts in the forest, then the track emerges into a wetland area. The track through the wetland is on a boardwalk, to protect the unique and fragile ecosystem. The track then returns to the forest to follow the Waiau River terrace to the swing bridge at Rainbow Reach. You can leave the track here and catch a shuttle bus to Te Anau, or continue alongside the Waiau River to the Kepler Track car park.





Photo: Andrew Walmsley (andrewwalmsleyphotography.com)

Air New Zealand partners with the Department of Conservation to help bring native birds back to the beautiful Great Walks.



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atahuri



AIR NEW ZEALAND



Photo: stokedforsaturday.com



Photo: Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)



Photo: Michelle Crouchley



Photo: Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)



Photo: Andrew Maloney

- 1 Watch out for cheeky **kea** – the world’s only alpine parrot. The kea is found in the South Island high country and is known for its inquisitive nature.
- 2 Explore the fascinating **Luxmore Caves**, a 10-minute walk from Luxmore Hut.
- 3 A 20-minute walk from Iris Burn Hut leads to the isolated **Iris Burn Falls**, perfect for a refreshing dip after the day’s walk.

Conservation story

- 4 Students from Fiordland’s five centres of learning are helping restore the unique environment of the Kepler Track and bring back its birdsong in the award-winning community conservation education-based **‘Kids Restore the Kepler’** project. With funding from major sponsor Kids Restore NZ, Community Trust of Southland and Distinction Hotels NZ, the project is led by the Fiordland Conservation Trust in partnership with DOC and the learning centres. kidsrestorethekepler.co.nz
- 5 **Tussock** is a spectacular feature of the alpine areas of the Kepler Track, providing a stunning foreground to the expansive views.
- 6 Look for the **New Zealand falcon/kārearea**. It can fly at over 100 km/hr when chasing prey.



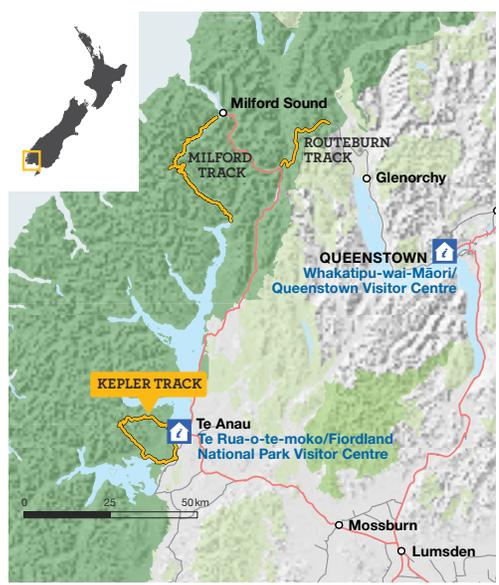
The map in this brochure is a guide only and should not be used for navigational purposes.

Getting there

You can access the track from the:

- **Kepler Track car park:**
a 5-km drive from Te Anau township.
- **Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre:** a 50-minute walk along the lakefront to the entrance of the track.
- **Rainbow Reach car park:**
a 12-km drive from Te Anau.

Shuttle buses provide a daily service to the entry and exit points on the track during the Great Walks season. A scheduled boat service also offers transport to Brod Bay.



Places to stay

DOC operates 3 huts and 2 campsites along the Kepler Track, which **must be booked in advance** during the Great Walks season (29 October 2019 – 30 April 2020) to avoid disappointment.

Great Walks huts

New Zealand rate
\$65 per adult per night; 17 years and under free (booking required).

International rate
\$130 per person per night for all ages (booking required).

During the Great Walks season the huts have bunks, mattresses, heating, toilets, basic cooking facilities, solar-powered lighting, and cold running water. A DOC ranger is in residence. The huts do not provide food, cooking utensils or showers.

Outside the Great Walks season, facilities are greatly reduced and there are no DOC rangers. Booking is not required, huts and campsites are first come, first served and fees are reduced. See the website for details.

Great Walks campsites

New Zealand rate
\$20 per adult per night; 17 years and under free (booking required).

International rate
\$40 per person per night for all ages (booking required).

Great Walks campsites offer basic facilities including toilets, sinks and a water supply. Campers are not permitted to use hut facilities.



Photo: John Strother (panafoot.com)

What do I do next?



Start off at greatwalks.co.nz/kepler for more information.



Book your huts and campsites online at bookings.doc.govt.nz.



Book your transport to and from the track.



Buy your food and pack your bags – download the Great Walks packing list and make sure you have everything you need for a 4-day independent unguided walk.



Read up on safety and make sure you're well prepared for your journey and changeable weather at greatwalks.co.nz/kepler.



Visit the closest DOC Visitor Centre (Te Anau) to pick up your tickets and official track guide, and chat with the friendly staff for the latest weather forecast and track conditions.



All set! Lace up your boots and get hiking. Don't forget to share your experience on [facebook.com/GreatWalks](https://www.facebook.com/GreatWalks).

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:
Fiordland National Park
Visitor Centre
Phone: +64 3 249 7924
Email: greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz
greatwalks.co.nz

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Know before you go

It is **important** to plan your trip thoroughly to make sure you stay safe. Before you go, know the **Outdoor Safety Code** – 5 Simple rules to help you #MakeltHomeNZ.

- 1. Plan your trip.** Choose a trip that fits your abilities. Make sure you have enough time to do your walk, plus extra time. Book accommodation, transport and transfers to the start/end of the track early.
- 2. Tell someone your plans.** Tell someone where you are going and when you'll be back. Ask them to call emergency services if you haven't returned on time. Consider carrying a personal locator beacon, as there is no cellphone reception on most tracks.
- 3. Be aware of the weather.** New Zealand weather is very changeable. Even if it's summer or the forecast is good, you should always carry a rain jacket and warm clothing. Check metservice.com for the most up-to-date forecast.

- 4. Know your limits.** A good level of fitness is needed to walk the track. Read about the track carefully to make sure it suits your abilities. Always follow the track markers and signposted tracks – going off-track can be hazardous, even for experienced walkers. Don't be afraid to turn back.
- 5. Take sufficient supplies.** Take the right gear, including extra food, clothing and equipment in case something goes wrong. You'll have to carry everything you need, as you can't buy food or equipment at Great Walks huts or campsites.

You can find more information on safety at www.doc.govt.nz/safety or www.adventuresmart.nz.

Safety on the Kepler Track

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- The alpine sections of the Kepler Track are not recommended for children under the age of 10, due to the exposed mountain environment and weather that can change very quickly. An overnight stay at Moturau Hut is a better option for the whole family.
- Fiordland National Park is in an area with high rainfall and changeable weather. Cold temperatures, snow, strong winds and heavy rain can happen at any time of the year. Be prepared for all conditions.

- The Kepler Track has complex avalanche terrain and the risk of avalanche can extend into December. During the Great Walks season, DOC manages this risk to a low level. DOC may close the alpine section of the track between Luxmore Hut and Iris Burn Hut if avalanche conditions exist.
- Go to greatwalks.co.nz/kepler 'Know before you go' section for detailed safety information, and 'What to take' section for a full gear list.

Remember – your safety is your responsibility



You are strongly recommended **NOT** to attempt this track between early May and late October (outside the Great Walks season).

The winter environment in Fiordland is very cold and wet, with ice, snow, avalanches and short daylight hours.

DOC is unable to manage any hazards outside the Great Walks season. Bridges are removed, as floods and avalanches occur on these tracks during winter.

To attempt the track in winter conditions, you need to be very experienced in backcountry winter navigation, have river crossing expertise and appropriate alpine skills and equipment. **Hut facilities are greatly reduced** – with no cooking gas, limited water and no hut wardens or emergency hut radios.

For more information, see 'Outside the Great Walks season' at greatwalks.co.nz/kepler.