

*Plan and prepare*

# MILFORD TRACK



Duration: **4 days**  
Distance: **53.5 km (one way)**



Great Walks season:  
**29 October 2019 – 30 April 2020**



Department of  
Conservation  
*Te Papa Atawhai*



# MILFORD TRACK

Experience the 'finest walk in the world' as you retrace the steps of early explorers on the world-renowned Milford Track.

Take a journey along valleys carved by glaciers, wander through ancient rainforests and admire cascading waterfalls. You'll follow a historic route through Fiordland National Park, part of Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area, before reaching your final destination, the spectacular Milford Sound/Piopiotahi.

The Milford Track can only be walked in one direction. The track is well marked and signposted, but some sections are steep and rough and the track 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 from the head of Lake Te Anau to Sandfly Point in Milford Sound/Piopiotahi 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.

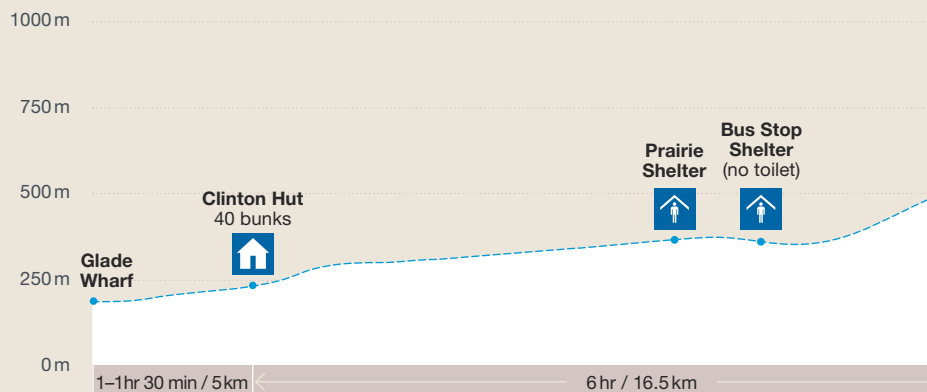


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## Elevation profile & track guide



**Day 1: Glade Wharf to Clinton Hut**



**Day 2: Clinton Hut to Mintaro Hut**

**➤ 1 hour – 1 hour 30 minutes, 5 km**

After a boat cruise from Te Anau Downs (1 hour 15 minutes), take a leisurely walk through beautiful beech forest along the banks of the Clinton River to Clinton Hut, where all hikers spend the first night. There is an impressive glow-worm grotto near the hut and if you're lucky, you might hear kiwi calling after dark.

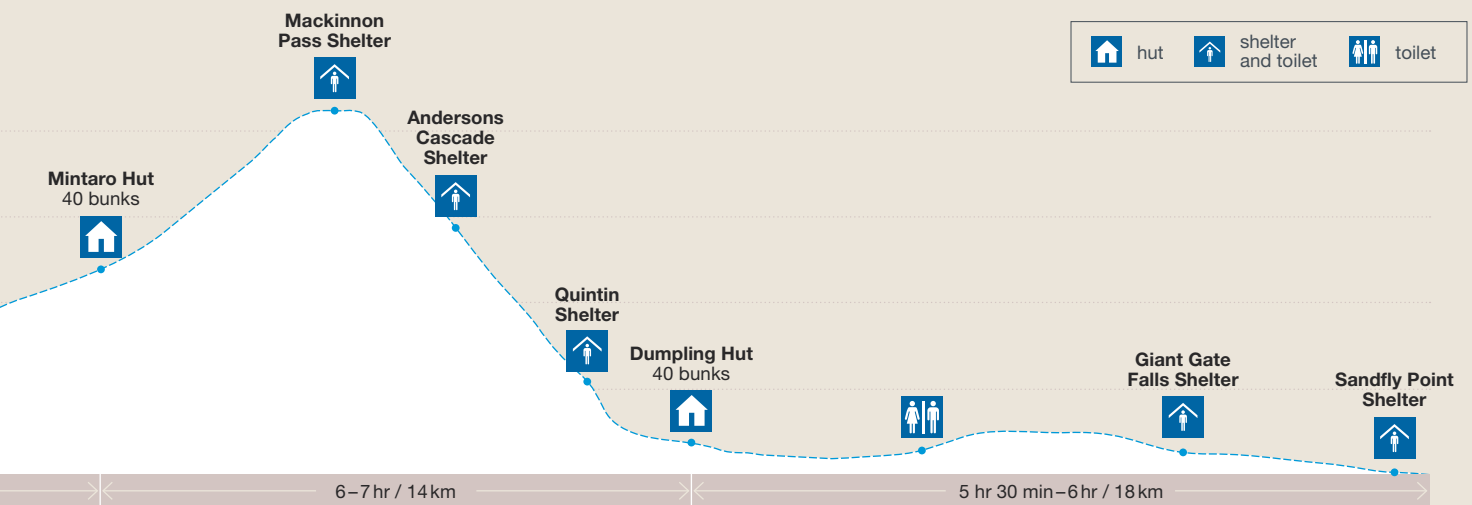
**➤ 6 hours, 16.5 km**

A gradual climb follows the Clinton River to its source, Lake Mintaro, at the base of the renowned Mackinnon Pass. Past Hirere Falls you will get your first view of Mackinnon Pass and the impressive Pompolona ice field. You'll be dwarfed by the sheer scale of the rock walls towering above on either side as you walk up the Clinton valley, and you'll pass through changing vegetation as you climb higher towards Mintaro Hut.

COVER: Giant Gate Falls, *Graham Dainty*

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Beech forest, *Graham Dainty*;  
Clinton Valley, *Daniel Deans*;  
Mackinnon Pass, *stokedforsaturday.com*;  
Mackay Falls, *Rob Suisted*

MAIN PHOTO: Mackinnon Pass, *John Strother (panafoot.com)*



**Day 3: Mintaro Hut to Dumpling Hut**

**↗ 6–7 hours, 14 km**

Climb to Mackinnon Pass and the memorial to explorer Quintin McKinnon, with exceptional views of Lake Mintaro and the Clinton Canyon along the way. The memorial is a great place to take in the awe-inspiring panoramas, before reaching the highest point of the track and Mackinnon Pass Shelter (1154 metres).

From here, you'll drop steadily through an attractive alpine garden to the valley floor, passing several waterfalls along the Roaring Burn River before arriving at Quintin Shelter. On the way to Dumpling Hut, if the weather is clear, take a moment to admire Sutherland Falls in the distance. From Quintin Shelter you can take a side trip to visit the falls up close.



**Day 4: Dumpling Hut to Sandfly Point**

**↗ 5 hours 30 minutes – 6 hours, 18 km**

From Dumpling Hut, you'll follow the Arthur River to the historic Boatshed. Further along the track, you reach the dramatic Mackay Falls and intriguing Bell Rock. Admire the man-made rock cuttings alongside the Arthur River and Lake Ada, before spending the last 3 km on a smooth, wide track constructed by a prison labour gang between 1890 and 1892. A short boat ride from Sandfly Point will take you to your journey's end, with world-famous views of Milford Sound/Piopirotahi along the way.







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



Department of Conservation  
i te ahuporangi



Photo: Sabine Bernert



2

Photo: John Strother (panafoot.com)



3

Photo: John Strother (panafoot.com)



4

Photo: Shellie Evans



5

Photo: Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)

## Conservation story

- 1 Keep an eye out for the rare **blue duck/whio**. Once widespread around New Zealand, the introduction of predators drastically reduced their numbers and they are now only found in a few locations. Predator control programmes supported by Air New Zealand and Genesis have doubled the number of stoat traps and increased possum and rat control over an extra 8500 hectares around the Milford Track. This has allowed whio to return to the area, along with other native birds.
- 2 Take your camera to capture the stunning panoramas from **Mackinnon Pass** across ancient valleys carved by glaciers.
- 3 Fiordland's many streams, rivers and waterfalls are especially spectacular after rainfall. Take a side trip from Quintin Shelter to see **Sutherland Falls**, which drop 580 metres (1904 feet) from Lake Quill.
- 4 In the alpine section of the Milford Track you will be in for a special treat between November and February. Flowering plants such as the **Mount Cook buttercup**, mountain daisy and the dainty gentian almost steal the show from the expansive vistas.
- 5 Enjoy the emerald waters of the **Clinton River**. Even when it is metres deep, the crystal-clear water allows you to see every stone on the bottom and admire trout or native longfin eel/tuna cruising the deep pools.

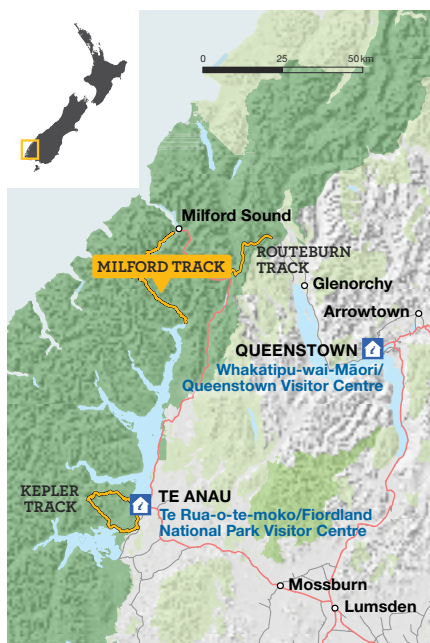


## Getting there

The Milford Track is accessed by boat from Te Anau Downs, 27 km from Te Anau on SH94.

- The track starts at **Glade Wharf** at the head of Lake Te Anau. Take a bus or private transport to Te Anau Downs (30 minutes), then a boat trip to the head of Lake Te Anau (1 hour 15 minutes).
- The track finishes at **Sandfly Point**. Take a boat trip (20 minutes) to Milford Sound/Piopiotahi, where there are bus services back to Te Anau and on to Queenstown.

During the Great Walks season (29 October 2019 – 30 April 2020), there are regular transport services to and from the track, which must be booked in advance – you can use the link in your hut booking confirmation to book your transport.



## Places to stay

DOC operates 3 huts on the Milford Track. These **must be booked well in advance** during the Great Walks season (29 October 2019 – 30 April 2020) to avoid disappointment. **Camping is not permitted on the Milford Track.**

### Milford Track Great Walk huts

**New Zealand rate**  
\$70 per adult per night; 17 years and under free (booking required).

**International rate**  
\$140 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 cooking utensils or showers. Outside the Great Walks season facilities are greatly reduced and there are no DOC rangers. Booking is not required, huts are first come, first served and fees are reduced. See the DOC website for details.



Photo: Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)

## What do I do next?



Start off at **greatwalks.co.nz/milford** for more information.



**Book your huts** 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/milford**.



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**.

**For in-depth local knowledge, visit:**  
Fiordland National Park  
Visitor Centre  
Phone: +64 3 249 7924  
Email: [greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz](mailto: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 #MakeItHomeNZ.

- 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 Milford Track

Great Walks season: 29 October 2019 – 30 April 2020

- This track is not recommended for children under the age of 10, due to the exposed mountain environment and weather that can change very quickly.
- Fiordland National Park lies in an area with high rainfall and changeable weather. Cold temperatures, snow, strong winds and heavy rain can occur at any time of the year. Be prepared for all conditions.
- The Milford Track is 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. Walkers may be flown (at their cost) over dangerous sections.
- Parts of the Milford Track are exposed, steep, slippery, rough and muddy. On the third day you will climb over 500 m to Mackinnon Pass and then descend 1000 m to Dumpling Hut. On the fourth day you must walk 18 km, reaching Sandfly Point in time to meet the early afternoon boat. The track will not be suitable for all walkers.
- Go to **greatwalks.co.nz/milford** '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/milford**.