

# Milford Track winter tramping



During the winter season (May to October), the Milford Track remains open but with reduced facilities. Weather, track and avalanche conditions need to be carefully considered, so it is important to contact the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre before departure to check the current situation.

## Safety information

For current daily track conditions, please seek advice from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre.

Always check current weather and avalanche conditions before departure.

You will need to be confident that you and your party have the necessary skills, fitness and equipment for winter tramping. Navigation and alpine skills are essential for your survival. For more information about these visit [www.mountainsafety.org.nz](http://www.mountainsafety.org.nz). When going into the backcountry in winter, remember to leave details of your trip

(return date and time, planned route, party names, vehicle details) with a responsible person. Intention forms are available from the Adventure Smart website [www.adventuresmart.org.nz](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz).

Your safety and the decisions you make while on the track are your responsibility. Know the outdoor safety code. Check out [www.doc.govt.nz/safety](http://www.doc.govt.nz/safety).

It is strongly recommended that you take a personal locator beacon with you. A mountain radio is an optional extra that can be taken for communication.

## Avalanches

The Milford Track is mainly complex avalanche terrain. Avalanches are frequent. There are over 57 avalanche paths, which may bring avalanche debris to the valley floor. Some of these have the potential to cross the Milford Track – their start zones cannot be seen from the track.

If you are going into places avalanches could occur, be sure you:

- Have checked the Backcountry Avalanche Advisory (BAA) and the Avalanche Terrain Exposure scale system (ATES) for the area where you want to go.
- Have the skills for the ATES class you are going into.
- Have checked what avalanche advisory and alert information is available from the DOC visitor centre nearest the area where you want to go.
- Take an avalanche transceiver, a snow shovel and a probe. Know how to use these tools!

## Weather

During the winter months Fiordland can be very wet and cold. Daylight is limited and the high mountains let little sunlight into the valleys. Alpine areas are usually covered in snow. Track conditions during this time can change daily, as can the weather.

## Topo maps

Topographical maps covering the Milford Track are strongly recommended for navigation. NZTopo50 map CBO8 – Homer Saddle is available for purchase from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre.

## Track information

Many of the bridges are removed over winter to avoid damage from avalanches, so you must be competent at crossing large, swift, icy rivers. The track over Mackinnon Pass is not marked and is often covered in deep snow. You will need to have navigation and alpine skills to traverse this section of the track.

## Hut facilities

All huts have bunks, mattresses and a wood burner.

During the winter season (May to October), the hut facilities are reduced.

- ▶ Gas is not provided – you will need to bring your own cooking stove.
- ▶ Flush toilets are replaced with pit toilets.
- ▶ Running water is turned off inside the huts. Water can be obtained from the outside water tank; if this is frozen, then from the nearest water course or by melting snow.
- ▶ There are no rangers based at the huts.

Thick snow blankets the Mackinnon Pass.  
Photo: DOC

### A suggested winter trip ...

#### Day 1

Milford Sound to Dumpling Hut.

#### Day 2

Dumpling Hut to Milford Sound.

Published by:  
Department of Conservation  
PO Box 29 Te Anau 9640  
New Zealand  
May 2014

[newzealand.govt.nz](http://newzealand.govt.nz)

### Contact

Te Rua-o-te-moko / Fiordland  
National Park Visitor Centre  
Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600  
Ph: 03 249 7924

Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai



## Hut tickets

Fees are charged per person per night and hut beds are on a first come, first served basis only. All huts require a Serviced Backcountry Hut Ticket, which must be purchased in advance. Alternatively, a Backcountry Hut Pass (valid for 6 or 12 months) may be used.

## Transport

All transport must be arranged before starting the track. During winter transport operators require minimum numbers and do not always operate a daily service. Transport arrangements can be affected by bad weather. You must discuss an alternative option with transport operators before you begin your walk.

## What to take

You need to be totally self sufficient. Having the correct food, clothing and equipment is essential.

- Food – allow for at least two extra days
- Warm and waterproof clothing
- Warm sleeping bag
- Survival blanket
- Stove and gas for cooking
- Lighter or matches
- Ice axe
- Crampons
- Toilet paper
- Torch
- Sunglasses
- Sunscreen
- First aid kit
- Personal locator beacon
- Mountain radio (optional)
- **Avalanche safety/rescue equipment: avalanche beacon, snow shovel and avalanche probe**

Below and right: Trampers make their way to the Mackinnon Pass.  
Photos: DOC

