

Pre Walk Information Booklet

The Classic Walk Milford & Routeburn Tracks

Prior to arrival

Thank you for booking a guided walk with Ultimate Hikes.

Insurance

We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** all guests, **domestic and international**, arrange comprehensive travel insurance. This is essential to protect yourself against unexpected events that could prevent you from starting or completing your walk.

If it is required for you to be removed from the activity due to ability, illness, injury or any other reason, with there being no immediate form of road access, a helicopter is likely required. You will likely be liable for this cost. Last season the average cost of evacuation from the track was NZD\$1500 per person. Please be aware that for emergency medical evacuations (non-injury), charges could be up to or exceeding NZD\$16,000. This must be paid at the time, and while in most cases you can claim it back through your travel insurance, without insurance you will be personally responsible for the full amount.

Travel insurance can also cover disruptions, cancellations, lost luggage, or changes to your travel plans. For peace of mind, we recommend organising cover at the time of booking.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of our walkers and team is at the forefront of our operation. Ultimate Hikes has long been a voluntary member of active adventure programmes and we regularly seek out audits to review our health and safety practices.

Our guides are trained in first aid and go through an extensive pre-season training programme in mountain safety. You are required to adhere to any instructions they give you at all times.

Guides and lodge staff are constantly in touch with each other, the lodges and the Queenstown base by radio.

For the safety and consideration of others, walkers

Please read all the information in this booklet carefully.

The Milford and Routeburn Tracks traverse mountainous and remote terrain and preparation is key to your safety and enjoyment.

If you are the main contact for a group or family, you are responsible for ensuring every person on your booking has read and understood the information below.

must sign a waiver to confirm they are not ill or been in contact with someone who is, within 48 hours of departing and should consult a staff member if they feel unwell on track.

Each person is responsible for their physical capability to complete the walk and should actively commit to fitness training prior to departure.

Each person is responsible for bringing and wearing appropriate clothing while walking. Please see the section below on equipment you must bring and the checklist.

Adventure activity

Before starting a hike with Ultimate Hikes, you should be aware that hiking on New Zealand's Great Walks and tracks involves risks that include natural hazards such as flood, rockfall, landslip, earthquake and avalanche. Unpredictable weather including high winds, snow and heavy rain can occur at any time. The tracks are uneven, rocky and steep in places. Ultimate Hikes takes every reasonable precaution to eliminate or minimise the risks you could be exposed to, but natural hazards can be unpredictable and should they occur, they could result in injury and even death.

You are required to adhere to any instructions given to you at all times. Failure to comply with any instruction could result in you being unable to continue and/or being removed from the activity at your own cost. You are also responsible for all children in your care doing the same.

[You can read our risk management strategy here](#)

Fitness requirements

To enjoy your walk you must be able to carry a medium sized backpack (weighing 7-10kgs) for 6 to 11 hours over 10-21 km of mountain track each day.

The track surface varies from rough terrain broken up by large rocks and tree roots to well-formed paths. Training on uneven ground with poles is strongly recommended along with core strength exercise to support balance on rough terrain. We recommend you wear hiking boots, which provide firm ankle support.

If you are not a regular walker, you should begin walking regularly at least 10-12 weeks before your departure carrying a pack and including hills and/or staircases. You should also be prepared to walk in windy and rainy weather. Walking through surface and even running water is probable in heavy rain.

To maximise your enjoyment we encourage you to set your own pace while walking the track (unless advised otherwise), there is no need to keep up with the fastest walkers. There is always a guide at the back of the group.

[Click here for more information](#)

Cancellation policy

All cancellations must be made in writing and sent to info@ultimatehikes.co.nz or Ultimate Hikes Reservations, PO Box 259 Queenstown NZ, 9348.

Cancellation fees for all Multi Day Walks are charged on the following basis per person:

Outside 90 days from date of walk departure:
NZ\$100 per person

Between 89-60 days from date of walk departure:
NZ\$200 per person

Between 59-31 days from date of walk departure:
50% of full fare

Within 30 days of date of walk departure:
100% of full fare

The date and customer name, for which the walk has been booked, once confirmed by the Operator providing the services and activities described, is non-transferable. Our cancellation policy applies to all walkers and is non-negotiable.

[See Terms and Conditions for more information](#)

Excess luggage

We recommend you leave any excess luggage at your pre and post accommodation.

We can store excess luggage at our centre in Queenstown for an additional fee of \$10 per bag per day. There is no need to book this – just bring it with you on the day of your departure.

Luggage storage and transfers are not available for Te Anau departures. For further information, please contact our Reservations team prior to your arrival.

Please note that because of weight restrictions on our coaches, excess luggage and suitcases cannot be transported.

Vehicle parking

Check with the accommodation you have booked if you can leave it there otherwise there are some options in Queenstown and Te Anau.

[Click here for more information](#)

Solo travellers

Walking is a great opportunity to meet like-minded individuals from around the world. Please note however that we cannot always guarantee same sex shared rooms.

Equipment & what you will carry

You will carry your own pack from lodge to lodge. We do not transport packs.

Clothing requirements:

For your safety and comfort while hiking, you must wear fabrics that are warm and quick drying such as merino wool, polypropylene, thermal, micro fleece and polar fleece. **Cotton, silk, lycra and denim is not recommended for physical activity as when it gets wet, the fabric retains the moisture next to your skin which will make you cold and expose you to the risk of hypothermia.**

Please follow our recommended [equipment list](#) to ensure you are prepared for the unpredictable environment we hike in. A checklist is included in this booklet

Pack & pack liner

You can supply your own or we can provide a 40L backpack for you. This can be collected at the pre-track briefing or from the Ultimate Hikes Centre (no need to reserve). A photo of the pack can be viewed on this link [What to Bring](#). A pack liner can be collected at the briefing. The pack is likely to weigh between 7-10kg (15-22lbs) full, if you follow our recommended [equipment list](#).

Milford Sound & Te Anau You may bring a small overnight bag for your final night on the Milford Track and your night in Te Anau, ideal for items you don't want to carry on the walk. Bring it with you on departure day; it will be delivered to Mitre Peak Lodge and then sent to Queenstown when you're picked up in Te Anau before you start the Routeburn. Due to space and weight limits, suitcases are not allowed. Please use a backpack or duffel bag, or we can provide a bag at our centre.

You can also change your backpack and raincoat if you have borrowed them to clean ones in Te Anau or Milford Sound.

Lodges and accommodation

The maximum number of people per departure is 50 on the Milford Track and 40 on the Routeburn Track.

Power

Power in the lodges is driven by generators. They are turned on in the morning (timings depend on lodges) and all are turned off at 10pm. There is no power from 10pm until the morning. Nightlights operate on small batteries charged during the day.

Electrical devices can be charged in NZ power sockets while the generators are running.

There is no internet access in the lodges or along the track.

CPAP machines: We are able to supply 600W power points to two private rooms for a CPAP Machine at each of our lodges to run machines through the night. You must have booked a private room and contact us in advance of your arrival to be allocated the room – they are subject to availability. There is no power source for CPAP machines in multishare rooms.

Clothes washing/drying: All lodges have facilities for washing clothes by hand, soap and drying rooms.

Bathrooms/toilets: All bathrooms have flush toilets and hot showers, with body wash, shampoo, conditioner, towels and hairdryers provided.

Please flush only toilet paper in the flush toilets – any other products will block and/or contaminate the natural breakdown system in the septic tanks. Covered rubbish bins are provided in all bathrooms for any other products including and specifically for sanitary product and wipes. All other rubbish should be disposed of in bins provided.

Shared rooms: Up to 6 people share bunk rooms with separate shared bathroom facilities. The Routeburn Track lodges sleep four people to a room. A sleep sheet is provided and must be used. Duvets, pillows and blankets are also provided.

Private rooms have a queen bed or two king single beds and ensuite bathroom. All linen is provided.

Lounge and dining

Smoking and vaping is strictly prohibited in all lodges and Ultimate Hikes facilities. Please ask at lodges where the designated smoking area is.

Meals provided

Day 1	Lunch, dinner
Day 2-4	Breakfast, lunch, dinner
Day 5	Breakfast, lunch
Day 6	morning tea, lunch and dinner
Day 7	Breakfast, lunch, dinner
Day 8	Breakfast, lunch.

Dinner on day 5 and breakfast on day 6 is not included.

Breakfast

Selection of cereals, toast, fruit, cooked options, juice, hot drinks.

Lunch

Selection of breads, sandwich fillings, salad, fruit, snacks.

Dinner

Varies between lodges: starter, main course (choice of 3 options), dessert.

Vegetarian options are included in all our menus.

We will notify where no dairy or gluten is added.

If you have specific food allergies or dietary requirements, please contact us to discuss them. We will endeavour to cater for general requirements but we are unable to cater for strict diet plans or specific food requests due to the extremely isolated and challenging environment we operate in. We would suggest you pack some of your own snacks to take with you.

A selection of New Zealand wine, beer and soft drinks are available for purchase at the lodges.

An explanation of meals and timings is provided in the itinerary section.

FOR YOUR SAFETY and comfort while hiking, you must wear fabrics that are warm and quick drying such as merino wool, polypropylene, thermal, micro fleece and polar fleece.

Cotton, silk, lycra and denim is not recommended for physical activity as when it gets wet, the fabric retains the moisture next to your skin which will make you cold and expose you to the risk of hypothermia.

Equipment checklist

Required to walk

Walking boots or sturdy hiking shoes

Base layer - wool, polypropylene, or thermal (top and bottom)

Fleece or merino wool jacket
An ideal outer layer in cold weather

Waterproof raincoat
we can provide, see below.

Long-sleeved wool or polypropylene top

T-shirt. wool or polypropylene

Avoid cotton

Sun hat (with peak or brim) and wool/fleece hat

Warm gloves - wool or polypropylene

Shorts/walking trousers
(not jeans or lycra/cotton leggings)

Three pairs of hiking socks - merino wool or thermal

Sunscreen, insect repellent

Water bottle or bladder (1 litre capacity, can be filled along the way in streams & waterfalls)

Optional but recommended

Walking poles – highly recommended
(you can rent a pair for \$25 from the UHC)

Waterproof over trousers

Gaiters

Swimwear & lightweight towel

Spare laces. Just in case

Sealable plastic bags for electronic items

Reusable lunchbox or plastic container (help us be more sustainable on track by reducing single use plastic)

Essential equipment you need to bring on your multiday guided walk.

In the lodge

Shirt or long sleeved top

Sweater/jersey

Lightweight trousers

Lightweight shoes – with a hard sole
(flip flops or slides)

Nightwear

Personal toiletries
(body wash, shampoo and conditioner are provided)

Change of underwear

Extras/useful items

Credit/debit card *(for purchases in Te Anau and to settle bar bills at the end of your walk).*

Foot fleece/second skin

Strapping tape

Lip balm

Electrolytes

Personal medication, including pain killers

You can collect from us

40L Backpack & Liner
(weighs approx 2kg empty)

PVC Waterproof raincoat with hood
(weighs approx 1kg, these are adult XXL one size fits all)

Sleep sheets are provided in shared rooms in the lodges *(if you prefer to bring your own a jersey, silk or cotton sheet, sleeping bag shape is best)*

Many items can be purchased at the Ultimate Hikes Centre.

On track

Your guides will accompany you every day and will provide current weather and track conditions. There is always a guide at the back of the group, near the front, and in the middle of the groups. They will show you interesting aspects of the track, provide general knowledge and are trained in weather and safety protocols. You must adhere to any requests or instructions made by the guides. Failure to comply with any instruction could result in you being unable to continue and/or being removed from the activity at your own expense.

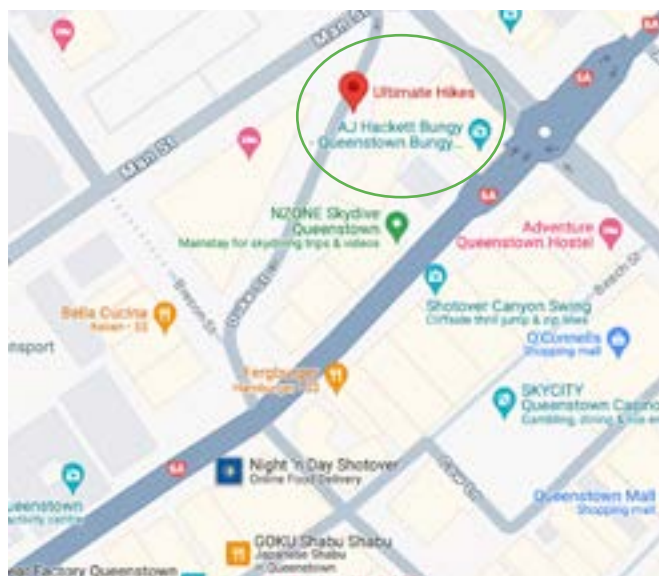
You are encouraged to walk at your own pace in your own time (unless advised otherwise). Parts of the track can be uneven, wet or rocky – take your time.

Please keep all rubbish with you and dispose of it in the lodges.

Sandflies are common along the track. We recommend you wear insect repellent each day and reapply frequently.

All of our lodges have flush toilets. There are flush toilets at the Department of Conservation huts. Toilets along the track and at all our lunch shelters and huts are kiwi long drops. Toilet paper is provided. If you need a toilet stop between these dedicated spaces please leave your pack on the track. Make sure you are 50 metres from any water sources and bury your waste.

The unpredictable nature of the weather in this region means that snow, high winds and heavy rain can occur at any time of the year. It is therefore very important to be prepared for all weather conditions, and carry the appropriate clothing at all times



Ultimate Hikes Centre Location (Queenstown)

The Classic Itinerary

Milford Track

Pre-track briefing

Please check in at **2.45pm** on the day prior to your walk for a group pre-track briefing. The briefing is held at the Ultimate Hikes Centre, Ground Floor, The Station Building, Duke Street Entrance, Queenstown.

If you are unable to make it to the pre track briefing please advise our reservations team closer to the time of your departure, to ensure you have all the up to date information required for your walk.

At check in you will complete your registration form to confirm your dietary and medical information and emergency contact details.

You will be able to pick up any gear you need to borrow from us or purchase any items you may need from our shop. Our guest service staff will also give you an overview of what to expect while you are on track.



On track

Day of departure

Please check in at the Ultimate Hikes Centre at **9.15am** on the day of departure.

There is no collection from accommodation or the airport. We can collect you from the Frankton bus shelter on request.

Please ensure you have breakfast before arrival as food and beverages cannot be consumed on the coach. Lunch will be provided in Te Anau on arrival – at about **12.00pm**.

Te Anau departures

If you are starting the walk in Te Anau please contact Reservations to arrange your registration and receive a briefing. You will meet the group at **12.00pm** at The Ultimate Hikes Te Anau Desk in the Alpine Centre cafe cnr Sandy Brown Rd & Highway 94, Te Anau.

Te Anau on day five

The bus will drop you to check in at your accommodation in Te Anau at approximately **1.00pm**. The afternoon and evening is at your leisure. There are plenty of activities and food options in the town centre. You can find out [more information here](#).

Return time at the end of your walk.

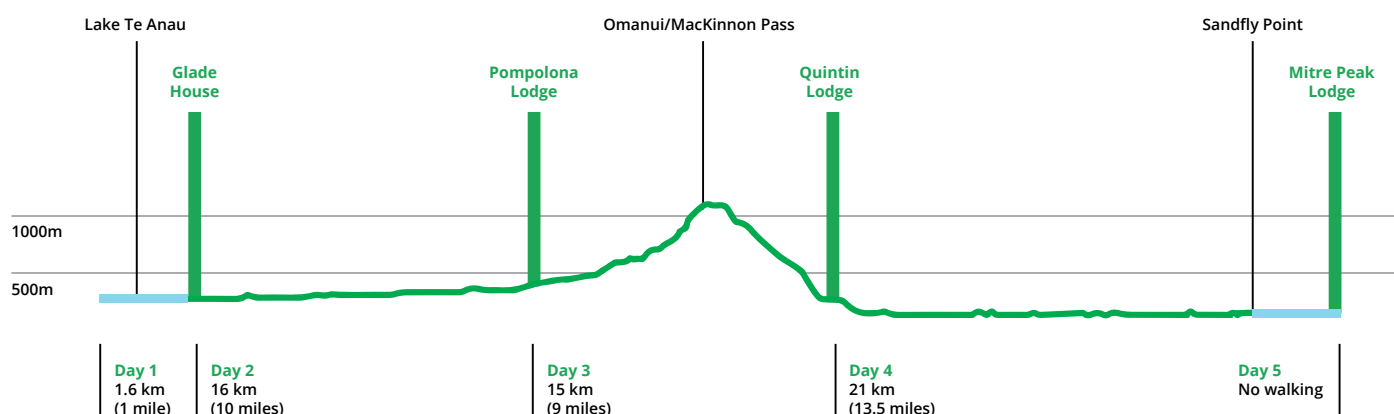
The coach returns to Queenstown on the final day at approximately **4.00pm**. You will be dropped off at the Ultimate Hikes Centre in Queenstown. Arrival times may vary due to weather, road and traffic conditions.

Please Note: The Routeburn Track ends at Glenorchy. The return coach therefore does not pass through Te Anau or Frankton/the airport. Any onward travel should be arranged from the Ultimate Hikes Centre in Queenstown.



Itinerary

Milford Track



Day 1 | Nature walk

Queenstown to Glade House

1.6km/1 mile (30 minutes) walking from wharf to lodge on flat track

2km/1.2miles (over about 1.5 hours) nature walk with some steep and uneven terrain, including tree roots

TRACK TERRAIN: Some rocky sections and uneven ground on the nature walk

The group meets at the Ultimate Hikes Centre in Queenstown ready for departure. Your pack will be put under the bus and not available until you reach the boat, so it's a good idea to keep your water bottle, a warm layer, your phone/camera, and some money with you to take on the bus.

The bus will travel to Te Anau where you will have lunch before travelling on to Te Anau Downs to meet the boat to take you to the start of the Track and the first lodge.

The drive is approximately three hours in total with the stop in Te Anau of about an hour. At the Te Anau Downs carpark you will be asked to carry a pack to the boat to be stored for the one hour ride to Glade Wharf. The boat is a catamaran with outdoor and indoor seating – depending on the weather you will get views across Lake Te Anau and your skipper will point out sites of interest along the way. This is where your warm layer may come in handy.

Glade Wharf marks the start of the Milford Track and once on shore, you will collect your pack and

make your way up the 1.6km/1 mile flat track to Glade House. On arrival, you will be checked in and shown to your room. After a brief refresh and some afternoon tea, the guides will take you on a nature walk up the Glade burn. The walk will introduce you to some of the trickier terrain of the track and some of the natural habitat you will see over the coming days.

Following the nature walk, the bar will be open and you can enjoy a pre-dinner drink and snacks, before sitting down to dinner in the dining room. The menu is set and you will have been asked for your choice of main course.

After dinner, the guides will initiate an introduction to the group and provide a briefing on the day to follow.

The group is then free to enjoy the lounge facility or return to their rooms for the evening. The generator will turn off at 10.00pm – there will be nightlights in the rooms and corridors. There will be no hot water until about 15 minutes after the generators are turned on in the morning.



Itinerary

Day 2 | 16km (10 miles) 6 -8 hours

Glade House to Poppelona Lodge

TRACK TERRAIN: This section is a mostly flat graded track with some uneven and rocky sections and an incline to Poppelona Lodge. The track closely follows the Clinton River and some sections are prone to flooding in heavy rain. Just before Poppelona lodge there is an uphill dry river bed to cross that has large boulders.

Your first day on track sets the schedule for the next three days. Please check the timing in each lodge as it can differ slightly.

Once the generators have turned on, lunch making preparations are set up in the lounge. Each person can choose from a variety of fillings to make sandwiches, wraps or salads.

There is also a selection of snacks, home baking and fruit to choose from. You have 16km of walking so please ensure you pack enough food to sustain you through the day.

A continental breakfast, tea and coffee will also be available in the dining room and a cooked breakfast will follow. Once you have completed lunch making and breakfast, and re-packed your pack, your guides will be waiting for you outside the main entrance to the lodge.

The first guide will lead the group along the front of the Glade and onto the swing bridge, to cross the Clinton River. You will be following the river throughout the day, but do linger and look back at the view of Glade House – a lodge has been on this site since 1895. As the group leaves, the other guides will join them and one guide will always be at the rear of the group. If you have any questions or concerns please ask the nearest guide or stop to wait for the guide behind you.

The track in this section is well graded through Beech Forest. Look out for the mile markers – these are in miles as it was the original measurement of the track (kms are on the other side). You will pass by 33 of them in total. A side walk past the two mile marker leads to a wetlands walk – leave your pack at the turnoff and head up to the boardwalk to view the wetland and read the information panels.

Continue along the track for about half a mile – Clinton Hut is the DOC hut and has flush toilets – the last until you reach the lodge (there are two

long drops further along the track). After Clinton Hut it is about 8.8km/5.5 miles until you reach Hirere Hut where you will stop for lunch. The guides will have a hot drink available and you are welcome to relax here and eat your lunch – you may see a cheeky Weka looking for scraps – please don't feed them!

Soon after Hirere Hut, the track opens up, leaving the beech forest and becoming tall grass and manuka bush. Along here a side track will take you down to Prairie Lake where the brave among you can swim in glacier cold water.

The track then leads back into the Beech Forest to Poppelona lodge. The track winds uphill before reaching Marlene's Creek, a wide usually dry river bed with very large boulders. A guide will be stationed here to show you the way and the orange markers will also indicate the best way to navigate through. On the other side it's a short walk to Poppelona Lodge.

The lodge host will welcome you at the entrance with a cold drink and snack and will show you to your room and point out the lodge facilities. Once you have had a shower, rinsed your hiking clothes, and have them drying in the drying rooms, the lounge will provide welcome comfort with afternoon tea. The bar will open late afternoon followed by dinner and a briefing.



Itinerary

Day 3 | 15km (9 miles) 7 - 11 hours Pompolona Lodge to Quintin Lodge

TRACK TERRAIN: Steep uphill following zig zags to Pass Hut on rocky uneven track. Steep downhill (including steps) to Quintin lodge. This is a very challenging day and can be made more so by the weather. Please listen carefully to the guides briefing and ensure you have dressed and are prepared for the conditions. Take your time and walk at your own pace.

Leaving Pompolona Lodge the track leads behind the lodge and crosses another river bed before winding back into beech forest. The first stop is Mintaro Hut. Refill your water bottle and use the toilets.

The zig zags of Omanui/MacKinnon Pass start shortly after leaving the hut. At the 15 mile marker you will be half way up the zig zags to the memorial. This is the steepest section of the uphill – the track is very rocky with some big step ups. Shortly after the 15 mile marker the track comes out of the beech forest and becomes more exposed. The zig zags lengthen out and you traverse up the side of the pass before coming across to the McKinnon memorial. Much of the uphill for the day is done. Rest here and have a snack. Your guides will provide a warm drink and you can have a wander to see the incredible views from the saddle.

It can get very windy and cold at the Memorial in any weather as it is very exposed to the elements with no shelter. Listen to the advice of your guides who will point out the last section of track to Pass Hut where you will stop for lunch. The track leads over the last bit of steep terrain to the highest point (and most exposed) before dropping down to the shelter of Pass Hut. Rest here, have your lunch, change your clothing if necessary, and fill up your water bottle.

The descent from the Pass Hut is the steepest, rockiest terrain on the track and is the most challenging part. Leaving the hut you will start a sharp descent down to the Arthur Valley. The track

becomes narrow in places and traverses the side of the hill – it is exposed and you may cross running water. There are two tracks down depending on the time of the season – there is some avalanche risk in this section of track so the alternative track may be used. Both tracks require concentration and should be taken slowly. There are very uneven rocky sections and poles are strongly advised to assist balance.

Both tracks reach the Anderson Cascades which is an amazing waterfall with a series of steep steps alongside. They can be slippery so hold on to the railings on your way down. At the Anderson Shelter take a break before the track continues down in a zig zag pattern. The duration of the downhill is longer than you expect, as you descend further than you climbed in the morning. You will pass the 20 mile marker and it is another three quarters of a mile to the turn off to Quintin Lodge.

Turn left at the bottom of the track, and cross the swing bridge over the Roaring burn River and Quintin lodge is in the clearing ahead of you.

Meet your lodge host, have a cold drink and drop your pack in your room. If you have arrived at the lodge with enough time, head out to the right of the lodge entrance to Sutherland Falls. There is a cut off time to walk to the Falls so please check with a guide or lodge member before setting off.

Sutherland Falls - This side walk from Quintin Lodge is an hour and a half return trip. It has two suspension bridges and some steep steps to navigate. From the second bridge you will see the Falls in the distance and this may be enough – but another 15 minutes and you'll reach the base – you'll hear it, and probably feel the spray before you see the thundering water up close. Sutherland Falls is the fifth highest waterfall in the world and well worth the trip!

Quintin Lodge is well appointed and you'll enjoy its warmth and comfort after a very full day of hiking.



Itinerary

Day 4 | 21km (13.5 miles) 6 9 hours Quintin Lodge to Mitre Peak Lodge (Milford Sound)

TRACK TERRAIN: A downhill section from Quintin lodge, then the track follows the Arthur river through lake Ada to the end of the track where the water meets Milford Sound. The track is in a Beech Forest and while it is flat, the ground is uneven with rocks and tree roots. Some sections of the track are prone to flooding in heavy rain.

This is a long day and it's easy to miss a step so keep an eye on the track ahead of you. But stop to enjoy the views - especially the waterfalls, even if it's not raining! You will be walking under the canopy of the beech forest. It appears denser than the Clinton valley side with lush foliage due to higher rainfall on this side of the Pass.

Soon after leaving the lodge, look out for a sight of Sutherland Falls in the distance. About an hour along the track you'll reach Dumpling hut where you can use the toilet. Your morning tea stop is at The Boatshed next to the Arthur River, so called because boats were used to cross the river. Have a hot drink and a snack.

Leaving Boatshed you'll cross the bridge over the river and will shortly reach Mackay Falls and Bell Rock - you get a great view of the waterfall from the platform then duck into the entrance of the rock with a torch to see the inside of the rock - it is hollowed out so you are able to stand up in there.

Continue along the track for another 6.4km/4 miles or so and you'll reach Giants Gate. You can stop here for lunch in the shelter or on the stones by the waterfall.

Soon after leaving Giants Gate you'll walk through an area that was severely affected by the floods in 2020. You will see where a massive slip came through the track and on a rainy day admire the temporary waterfalls. Further on the track follows the water and along a wide flat section of the track until the sight of Sandfly Point signals the end of the Milford Track.

Head into the room on your right, away from the sandflies. Your guides will have a hot drink for you while you wait for the boat to take you to Milford Sound wharf. A member of the Ultimate Hikes team will meet you and take you to Mitre Peak Lodge.

The lodge is on permanent power and each room has an ensuite and a bath. Join your group in the lounge with spectacular views of Mitre Peak from the picture window. Enjoy your final dinner with your group.

Day 5 | No walking Milford Sound to Te Anau

This morning after breakfast, the guides will ensure your belongings are labelled to go in the coach. Please make sure the guides know you are leaving the bus in Te Anau for the Routeburn section of your walk.

The bus will take you to the wharf to board the cruise on the famous Milford Sound. After the cruise, the bus will drop you to check in at your accommodation in Te Anau at approximately 1.00pm. The afternoon and evening is at your leisure. There are plenty of activities and food options in the town centre. You can find out [more information here](#).

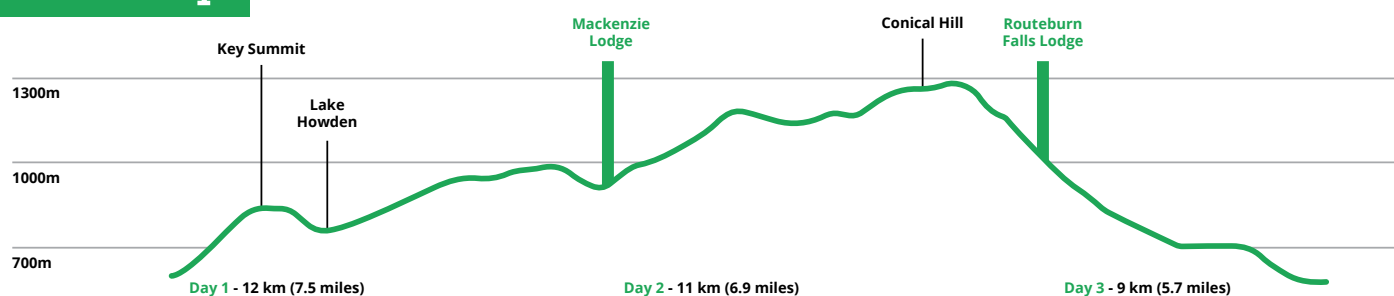


Track Map



Itinerary

Routeburn Track



Day 6 | 12km (7.5 miles) 6 - 8 hours

Te Anau to Mackenzie Lodge

TRACK TERRAIN: The track starts with a steady uphill followed by a downhill section to the lunch stop. In the afternoon the track continues a gradual climb to Earland Falls. There are large rocks to navigate around Earland Falls, and a steep and rocky downhill section before reaching the lodge. Care should be taken.

The bus for your Routeburn Track departure will collect you from your accommodation and take you to the Alpine Café at **9.00am**. A guide will check you in with the group. Please be ready for your hike, as you will not have access to your pack until you arrive at the Divide at approximately **11.00am**. Please also make sure your bag going back to Queenstown is clearly labelled and has been put on the coach.

You will join the group at the Alpine Centre Café cnr Sandy Brown Rd & Highway 94, Te Anau for morning tea. Afterwards, the bus will travel from Te Anau to the start of the walk at the Divide, approximately one hour back down the Milford Road.

At the Divide, you will collect your pack, and the guides will allocate packed lunches – if you have provided a dietary request, be sure to advise them so you collect the right lunch for you.

The guides will give you an update of the track and weather conditions and can check your pack and pole fittings before you start walking. The front guide will then start the group off up the track. The rest of the guides will walk within the middle of the group and there will always be a guide at the rear of the group. If you have any questions or concerns please ask the nearest guide or stop to wait for the guide behind you.

The track begins with a steady climb up through Silver Beech Forest so take your time to find your rhythm. After about an hour you will reach the turn off to Key Summit. A guide will be there and

depending on the weather conditions, will advise you to either go up to the summit or continue to Lake Howden.

Key Summit is an optional return walk (leave your pack at the turnoff) of about one hour return up a zigzag track and back the same way. It is well worth the trip - at the top there is a boardwalk through wetlands and amazing 360-degree views of the surrounding mountains and valleys.

Back at the turn off, collect your pack, and it's a short though steep downhill walk over rocks and tree roots to Lake Howden where you will stop at the shelter for lunch and a hot drink.

After lunch, the track steadily climbs to Earland Falls – about 3.5kms. Stop for a break at the base pool. From the falls it is another 5kms to the lodge. The track traverses around the mountain side to the Orchard. Beyond, you'll climb for a short section before descending to Mackenzie Lodge. The descent is steep with large steps down across rocks and tree roots. At the bottom you will emerge from the trees into the Hebe garden and see Mackenzie Lodge ahead of you.

Take the entrance to the right off the track and a warm welcome will await you at the lodge entrance. Your host will offer a cold drink and a snack before showing you to your room and pointing out the lodge facilities.

If you have time and the inclination, you can walk a few minutes further along the track to Lake Mackenzie to view it in the afternoon light and take a swim in the icy fresh water.

After a hot shower, you can rinse your hiking clothes and hang them in the drying room before relaxing in the lodge for afternoon tea. The bar will open late afternoon with pre dinner snacks followed by a three course meal and a briefing on the following day.

Generators will turn off at 10.00pm. Nightlights will operate in rooms and corridors.

Itinerary

Day 7 | 11km (6.9 miles)

Lake Mackenzie to Routeburn Falls Lodge

TRACK TERRAIN: Uneven and steep ascent from Lake Mackenzie with a series of zig zags up the side of the hill to Ocean Peak Corner. The track then is quite narrow but mostly flat across the mountain side – rising again around the Harris Saddle and Lake Harris before descending into the valley with some boardwalks and steps. This is the most exposed day on the track and can be windy and cold in wet weather.

Generators will turn on to start your day in the morning. Please check the timing in each lodge as it can differ slightly. Hot water in the bathrooms will take about 15 minutes to heat up. Once the generators have turned on, lunch making preparations are set up in the lounge. Each person can choose from a variety of fillings to make sandwiches, wraps or salads. There is also a selection of snacks, home baking and fruit to choose from. Please ensure you pack enough food to sustain you through the day.

A continental breakfast, tea and coffee will also be available in the dining room and a cooked breakfast will follow. Once you have completed lunch making and breakfast, and re-packed your pack, your guides will be waiting for you outside the main entrance to the lodge.

Once everyone is ready the guides will take you down to Lake Mackenzie for a group photo. Bring everything with you because the track continues past Lake Mackenzie and rises up through ancient Beech Forest emerging out of the treeline for stunning views of the lake below. The ascent to the treeline is rocky with tree roots and is steep in places. It is also narrow so please let people behind you go through when you can. At the treeline the track zig zags across the mountain until it rounds the top and spreads out to Ocean Peak Corner.

Take a break here, have a snack and enjoy the view. On a clear day you'll have a full panorama of the Darran Mountains across the Hollyford Valley, to the distant Tasman Sea at Martin's Bay.

When you are ready the track drops down and follow along the mountain face. This is true alpine terrain - ask your guides to point out the native

flora, including mountain daisies, buttercups, gentians and edelweiss.

The track traverses the Hollyford Face for about 4.5km, approximately 2 hours. There are few water sources along this section and none at the lunch stop. Your guides will advise where to fill up with water. The track rounds the corner from the face and crosses a stream. Ahead is a short but steep staircase. At the top you will wind around some alpine tarns and arrive at the Harris Shelter. A welcome sight with hot drinks available.

Relax inside the shelter or on the surrounding deck and enjoy your lunch. Weather permitting there is an option to take a side walk behind the shelter to Conical Hill (no accessible early season). This is a scramble up a steep front. There is a plateau overlooking Lake Harris two thirds of the way up – stop here or continue up to the panorama views out to Martins Bay on the West Coast. This walk takes about an hour and a half to two hours round trip and is a very steep scramble up and down. Check with a guide if you are unsure about going up.

After lunch, the track continues around Lake Harris and reaches the highest point. This section of track is narrow with some drop offs, keep to the hillside and wait for a guide if you are nervous of heights. From the highpoint the track descends into the upper basins of the Routeburn Valley skirting the Routeburn Falls. The track is graded with boardwalks and some wide steps. As the Routeburn river reaches the Falls, the track will wind down a rocky section that can be slippery in the rain. Hold on to the handrails and make your way down to the lodge nestled in the trees. A host will be waiting to greet you at the entrance and the schedule for the afternoon/ evening will be similar to the previous one.

Routeburn Falls Lodge has a tree hut quality with external walkways and a water source running underneath. followed by a three course meal and a briefing on the following day.

Generators will turn off at 10.00pm. Nightlights will operate in rooms and corridors.

Itinerary

Day 8 | 9km (5.7 miles) 3 -4 hours

Routeburn Falls to Queenstown

TRACK TERRAIN: Starts with a rocky descent then mostly wide and smooth with some rocky patches.

When you are ready to leave the lodge, meet at the front entrance. The track descends a steep rocky section with some big steps down before widening out to a broad track. You'll cross some small bridges and an open section formed by a tree avalanche in 1994 that affords an amazing view of Routeburn Flats below.

Steep downhills are over when you reach the valley floor. A guide will be at the junction and will encourage you to leave your pack there and turn left along the track for about 5 mins to Routeburn Flats and the DOC hut. Use the bathroom here and wander out to the pasture of the Flats where you'll pick up the Routeburn River again.

Returning to your pack, the track continues through Red Beech Forest shadowing the river. About 4kms along the track you will reach Forge Flat – head down to the river and if the weather is in your favour stop for lunch. Check with your guide for the river conditions if you are keen to brave the icy fresh turquoise water.

It is an easy walk from here to the end of the track so take your time, listen for native birds in the valley and enjoy this last part of your journey through native forest with the beauty of the river flowing down the ravine below. Take the detour loop track to a nature walk that has panels about the natural history of this vast forest. Shortly afterwards you cross a large suspension bridge and arrive at the Routeburn Shelter and the end of the Routeburn Track.

The coach will be waiting and the driver will assist the guides in collecting the equipment you may have borrowed – change your shoes if you want to and keep things you'll want with you for the drive back to Queenstown. Once everyone has arrived the bus will take the group to the village of Glenorchy – about 30 mins where you can purchase a celebratory drink at the pub. The drive from Glenorchy to Queenstown is another hour along the side of Lake Wakatipu and arrives back at the Ultimate Hikes Centre.

The bus route into Queenstown comes from the opposite direction to the way you went out so we are unable to do any drop offs in Frankton or the airport.



Track Map

