

Your safety is your responsibility

- Carry a personal locator beacon, mountain radio or satellite messenger, which save lives.
- Topographical maps are also necessary for navigation – the Topo50 series map covering the George Sound Route is North West Arm CC07.
- Plan properly for your trip and ensure your group has a capable, experienced leader. New Zealand's weather changes rapidly and it can be very cold at any time of the year. Before departing please check current track and weather conditions by contacting the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre in Te Anau.
- Route times vary depending on your fitness, abilities and the weather conditions. The track can be muddy and rough. Take extra food in case you are delayed.
- Always be physically and mentally prepared for all conditions and be ready to change your plans due to weather conditions on this track. During winter the track is often impassable due to snow, ice and avalanches.
- Be aware of the causes and symptoms of hypothermia and know how to treat it.
- You need to be self sufficient and take adequate food, clothing and equipment. Portable stoves, fuel and a tent must be carried.
- When going into the backcountry, remember to leave details of your trip with a responsible person – return date and time, planned route, group names and vehicle details. Make sure you check back in when you return to the track. Find information on the Outdoor Intentions System at www.adventuresmart.co.nz
- Fill in hut books during your trip, even if you do not stay in the hut. This can assist in search and rescue operations and may help save your life.

For more information about current weather conditions and outdoor safety, visit:

- NIWA weather – www.weather.niwa.co.nz
- Mountain Safety Council: Plan My Walk – planmywalk.nz

Emergency Locator Beacon hire

Available from **Caltex Service Station in Te Anau**, and **Bev's Tramping Gear Hire**.

Mountain Radio Hire

Te Anau – Ph (03) 249 8363

Further information

Te Rua-o-te moko/Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre

Department of Conservation
PO Box 29
Te Anau

PHONE: (03) 249 7924

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View into George Sound. Photo: Toni Ellis

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FIORDLAND

George Sound Route

| Fiordland National Park



Introduction

The George Sound Route is a challenging but rewarding track that links stunning Lake Hankinson, Lake Thomson and Lake Katherine with Lake Te Anau on the inland side, and George Sound on the coast.

The route traverses two major valley systems and crosses one mountain range. It takes three to four days to complete one way, and requires transport across Lake Te Anau. Although the route is reasonably well marked, you can expect to encounter tree falls, knee-deep mud, river crossings, tree roots and some rough terrain.

The George Sound Route is only recommended for experienced, well equipped groups with high levels of fitness. River crossing skills are required. Please be prepared for sections to become impassable due to flooding after heavy rain – this is not uncommon and will cause delays. It is recommended that you carry a tent.

Before starting the track, please contact the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre in Te Anau to obtain current track and weather information and to purchase your hut tickets.

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/Mt. 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.

History

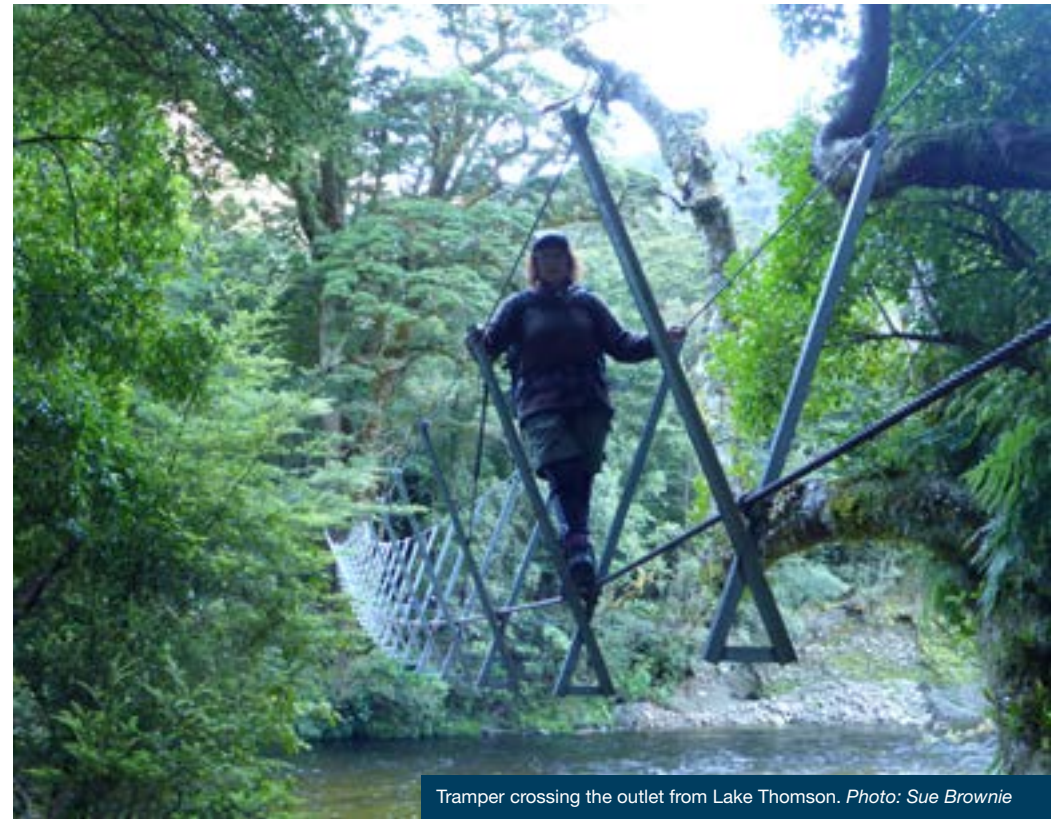
George Sound was visited by Māori as part of seasonal food gathering and other resource collection. It was also a stopping-off point on their journey along the Fiordland coast.

The commonly accepted Māori name for George Sound is Te Houhou. The origin of the English name for George Sound is uncertain. It may have been named between 1809 and 1812 by the famous sealing Captain John Grono, after George Hall, a neighbour. Grono is known to have named Bligh, Milford, Thompson and Nancy Sounds.

When early surveyors on the Acheron, in 1848, visited George Sound they saw Māori disappearing into the bush. Signs of fires used by them were also found. It is thought they could have been members of the 'lost tribe' the Ngāti Māmoe.

In 1889 Richard Henry, a pioneering New Zealand conservationist, traversed a route to George Sound from the Middle Fiord of Lake Te Anau. Henry cleared a track and, although it was the shortest route to the Fiordland sounds on the western coast, the George Sound track never became popular.

The lack of a transport service to the start of the track and the lack of accommodation at George Sound contributed to the failure of the track and the mica mine. Maintenance became erratic before the track was finally abandoned in 1906. The huts on this route are some of the most historic in Fiordland. George Sound Hut was relocated in to the present site in 1983, Lake Hankinson Hut was built in 1928 and Thomson Hut in 1953.

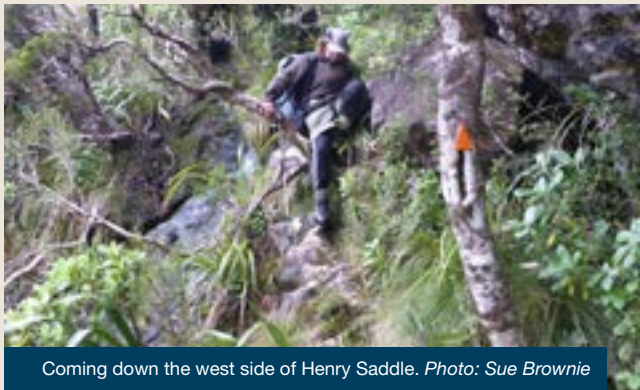


Tramper crossing the outlet from Lake Thomson. Photo: Sue Brownie

Natural history

The track crosses exceptionally mountainous country, rising up to 900 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 silver beech up to 25 metres tall, with a lush sub-canopy of pepper tree, broadleaf, fuchsia, coprosma and soft tree-fern. Ribbonwood, wine berry, fuchsia and crown fern surround the clearings. At about 830 metres altitude, beech forest gives way to subalpine shrub-land, with bog pine, hebe, dracophyllum coprosma and short tussock grassland.

A wide variety of forest birds includes weka, tomtit and robin. Kea (mountain parrots) often visit the huts and kiwi can sometimes be heard calling at dusk.



Coming down the west side of Henry Saddle. Photo: Sue Brownie

Huts and hut tickets

The Department of Conservation (DOC) provides and maintains the huts on the George Sound Route. Each hut is supplied with mattresses and a pit toilet. Fees are charged per person per night. All huts are standard grade, 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 there are no cooking facilities supplied in any of the huts on this route. A tent is also required due to the long distance between George Sound Hut and Thomson Hut.

George Sound Route huts

Hut	Bunks	Heating	Water	Toilet	Fees
George Sound Hut	8 Bunks	Yes	Tank, from roof	Yes	Standard hut
Lake Thomson Hut	8 Bunks	Yes	Tank, from roof	Yes	Standard hut
Lake Hankinson Hut	11 Bunks	Yes	Tank, from roof	Yes	Standard hut

The Fiordland Wapiti Foundation and the Backcountry Trust generously help with hut maintenance.

Access

One operator takes groups to or from the start of the route at the head of the Middle Fiord of Lake Te Anau and

also provides boat transport on Lake Hankinson. Lake Hankinson Hut is also accessible by float plane. George Sound is accessible by boat, float plane and helicopter.

Route guide

Route times are given as a guide only and may vary depending on fitness and weather conditions. For more information refer to the book 'Moires Guide South'.



Challenging overnight tramping/hiking. Track unformed, may be rough and steep. Suitable for people with above-average fitness and high-level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills. Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required.

Middle Fiord to Lake Hankinson Hut

Boat travel across the lake is required – it is not possible to walk around Lake Hankinson. The track from the Middle Fiord of Lake Te Anau to Lake Hankinson is signposted from the beach and takes 15 minutes.

Kayaks can be carried along the track to the lake or boat transport may be arranged with a local operator. As Lake Te Anau has didymo, and Lake Hankinson does not have this invasive algae, any kayaks, packrafts, paddleboards or other vessels that will be used in the area need to be cleaned before being portaged/flown across Lake Te Anau. The lake is 4.5 km long and can be affected by strong winds. Take care as there are few beaches on which to land.

Lake Hankinson Hut (11 bunks) is a 10 minute walk from the head of the lake.

Lake Hankinson Hut to Thomson Hut 2 hr 30 min

It is five minutes from the hut to the first three-wire crossing; then 1 hour to the second three-wire crossing. Watch for the sign pointing to the crossing.

From the second crossing the route follows around the north side of Lake Thomson to its head, taking about one hour through and over boulders; this can be slippery in wet weather. Tramping from the head of the lake to the Wapiti River flats and to the Thomson Hut (8 bunks) takes half an hour.

Thomson Hut to George Sound Hut 10hr 30min

Times will vary on this section of the route depending on fitness, weather conditions and route-finding abilities. We recommend you carry a tent – there are suitable tent sites on the east side of Henry Pass.

From Thomson Hut the route continues up the valley, past the markers showing the route to the mica mine, to Henry Pass (830 m), taking around 4 hr 30 min.

The route around Deadwood Lagoon is very boggy and can be flooded after heavy rain. From Henry Pass the route drops steeply to the valley floor, then follows Katherine Creek to Lake Katherine, taking around 4 hours. Katherine Creek is unbridged and can be impassable after rain. It is necessary to wade into the lake in one place. There are many creek crossings. Safety chains are provided in some areas around Lake Katherine.

The route from Lake Katherine to George Sound Hut (8 bunks) take between 1 and 2 hours.

George Sound offers good fishing from the rocks at various places. Mussels can be also gathered at low tide.



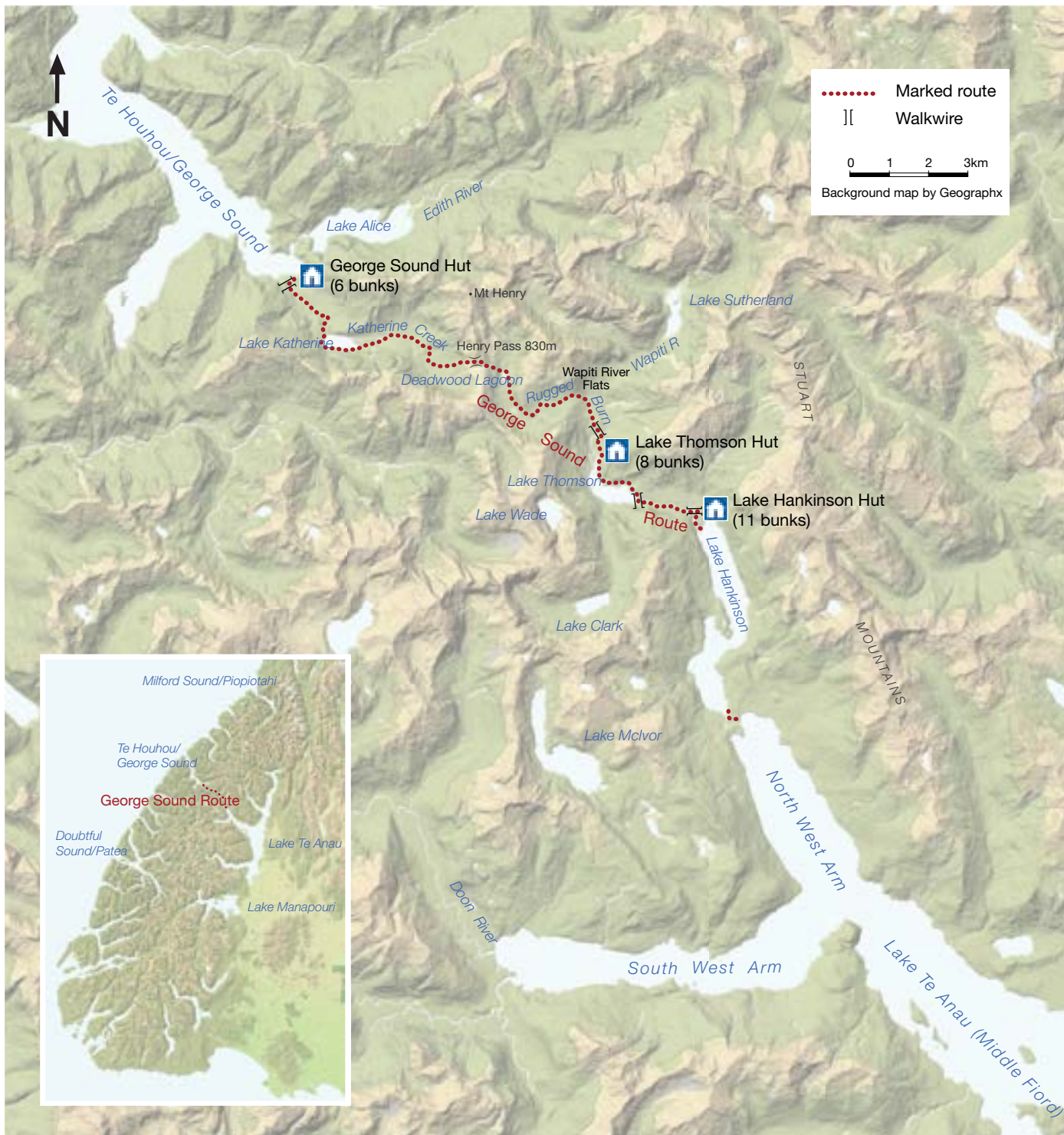
Lake Hankinson Hut. Photo: DOC

Hunting and fishing

The George Sound Route provides good access to the surrounding areas of Fiordland for fishing, deer hunting and climbing.

Blue cod can be caught by hand line at George Sound. Trout fishing is possible in the lakes – a current fishing licence is required.

Lake Te Anau has didymo, but inland lakes and rivers of the George Sound Route do not. You therefore need a Clean Gear Certificate for these inland waterways from an approved Clean Gear Station (such as the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre).



To help prevent the spread of didymo, please ensure that your fishing gear is free of aquatic pests and is cleaned between catchments.

Hunting permits for Fiordland National Park need to be obtained online in advance. This track is located in the Wapiti Blocks. To hunt here during the roar you need to receive a ballot through the Fiordland Wapiti Foundation. Outside the roar period, you need a permit from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre.

CHECK, CLEAN, DRY



BETWEEN WATERWAYS

Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests.

Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

Care for Aotearoa



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by planning and preparing for your trip.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you and use toilets where provided.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



New Zealand Government