



Middle Head Hut to Middle Head Basin route

4 hours return

The side trip into Middle Head Basin from the hut is worthwhile. The route continues from just above the hut, and descends to the Moeraki River. Cross the river (impassable during and after rain) to the true right, and follow a marked route uphill through beech forest. Continuing past a rock biv, the route eventually drops down and emerges into the scrub and tussock of Middle Head Basin. The route ends here.



Moeraki Valley Track. Photo: © Geoff Spearpoint



Dogs by permit only

Dogs are prohibited except when authorisation has been granted by DOC. People wishing to take a dog into this area must obtain a dog permit from the Franz Josef or Haast office at least 1 week prior to their trip.

Red deer are found in moderate numbers in the catchment and brown trout inhabit the river.

All those hunting or fishing must have the appropriate licences.

Hut fees

Please purchase hut tickets before using the huts.

Horseshoe Flat Hut 6 bunks Standard
Has mattresses, water supply, toilets, heating.

Middle Head Hut 6 bunks Basic
Has mattresses, water supply, toilets, heating.

Standard - 1 ticket per person/night

Basic - free

Further information

Awarua/Haast Visitor Centre

Main Road, Haast

PHONE: 03 750 0809

EMAIL: haastvc@doc.govt.nz

Westland Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre

69 Cron Street

Franz Josef Glacier

Open 7 days

PHONE: 03 752 0360

EMAIL: westlandnpvc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz



leave no trace
NEW ZEALAND

- Plan ahead and prepare
- Travel and camp on durable ground
- Dispose of waste properly
- Leave what you find
- Minimise the effects of fire
Check before you light a fire - a ban may be in place
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others

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WEST COAST

Moeraki Valley Track

Haast, Paringa and
Moeraki rivers area



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Introduction

The Moeraki valley is one of the smaller South Westland river valleys and is comparatively less rugged than the heavily glaciated valleys further north; however, it still offers trampers challenging opportunities within the rugged backcountry environment of South Westland.

The Moeraki has the characteristic U-shape of a valley carved by glaciers during repeated glacial periods, the most recent of which was around 14,000 years ago.

Middle Head Basin (where the track ends) is a spectacular steep-sided cirque whose rock walls show the impact of continual glacial scouring. The predominant rock type is schist, which in places has broken off cleanly along its bedding planes, leaving boulder fields and smooth rock walls.

The vegetation in the lower reaches of the valley is an attractive mix of beech, podocarp and hardwood species. This gives way to silver-beech-dominated forests higher up the valley. Middle Head Basin is an easily accessible mix of subalpine scrub, alpine grasslands and fell-fields. Kea inhabit the alpine areas, and blue duck/whio can sometimes be seen in the middle reaches of the valley.

The tramping track is well marked with orange plastic markers – windfalls are cleared annually and the track is scrub cut every 3 years.

Getting there

Access to the track is signposted approximately 40 km north of Haast on State Highway 6 at the Windbag Saddle. There is a small parking area on the side of the road (the sign is labelled Haast – Paringa Cattle Track).

Moeraki Valley Track



Duration: 2 days +

Grade: Tramping track and route

Experience: Suitable for people who are well equipped, with high-level backcountry skills and experience; navigation and survival skills required. Tramping/hiking boots required.

Best time to go: Summer and autumn

Map: NZTopo50 BY13 Lake Paringa

Hazards: Flooded rivers, rockfall, steep grades



Times given are guides only and will vary greatly with fitness and weather conditions. Tramping in this area is demanding and you should allow plenty of time to reach your planned destination.

Note: true left and true right refer to the side of the valley or river when facing and looking downstream.

Your safety is your responsibility

Before heading into the area, check the latest conditions at DOC's Awarua/Haast Visitor Centre or Westland Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre in Franz Josef – conditions can change rapidly.

Know the *Outdoor Safety Code* – 5 simple rules to help you stay safe:

1. Plan your trip
2. Tell someone
3. Be aware of the weather
4. Know your limits
5. Take sufficient supplies

Keep to the track – if you get lost, find shelter, stay calm and try to assist searchers.

Leave your trip details with a trusted contact, in the hut Intentions Book, and at www.adventuresmart.co.nz. Carry a personal locator beacon, and at the end of your trip don't forget to let your contact know you are safe. More information at www.adventuresmart.org.nz

Route description



This track crosses numerous small creeks and the main Moeraki River, which all flood quickly during rainfall. Do not attempt to cross flooded rivers and side streams – wait until water levels have dropped before proceeding.



State Highway 6 to Horseshoe Flat Hut

4 hours 30 mins

The track up the Moeraki valley initially follows the Haast – Paringa Cattle Track. The initial section of track detours from the original Cattle Track to avoid the lowland swampy landscape around Windbag Creek, but soon picks up the original track line. The flat, well-benched track then follows the Moeraki (Blue) River to the Moeraki Valley Track junction, just before the swing bridge to Blowfly (Blue River) Hut. Turn left at the junction, following the sign for Horseshoe Flat Hut. The track meanders through mixed beech and podocarp forest on the true right of the river. The track then follows a branch of the Moeraki River before emerging onto the first of a series of swampy clearings with groves of ribbonwood and scrub.

Be careful to follow the track markers through this area. In general the track leads along the base of the hill and doesn't follow the meandering course of the river.

Shortly before the hut, the track comes out onto the gravel river bed. Horseshoe Flat Hut (6 bunks) will soon come into view on a grassy flat.



Horseshoe Flat Hut to Middle Head Hut

3 hours

Follow the markers through the bush until the track emerges onto grassy flats. Follow the flats upstream until a suitable crossing of the river can be found.



The river will be impassable during and after moderate to heavy rainfall. Do not attempt to cross in these conditions or if rain is forecast while you are further up the valley, as you will be unable to return to Horseshoe Flat Hut.

If it is safe to do so, cross the river and continue upstream over the gravel flats until markers indicate the beginning of the track through the bush again. From here the track climbs through open beech forest. There is a short section of scrub before you cross a creek flowing from Zeilian saddle.

Middle Head Hut (6 bunks) is located near the confluence of this creek and the Middle Head branch of the Moeraki River.