

# Routeburn Track winter tramping

*During the winter season (May to October), the Routeburn 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 or the Queenstown Visitor Centre before departure to check the current situation.*

## Safety information

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

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 or two-way satellite communication are optional extras that can be taken for communication.

## Avalanches

The Routeburn Track has challenging and complex avalanche terrain. Avalanches are frequent. There are over 32 avalanche paths, some of which may bring avalanche debris to the valley floor and have the potential to cross the Routeburn Track.

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

- ▶ Have checked the Backcountry Avalanche Advisory at [www.avalanche.net.nz/region/12](http://www.avalanche.net.nz/region/12) 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.
- ▶ Take an avalanche transceiver, a snow shovel and a probe. Know how to use these tools!

## Topo maps

Topographical maps covering the Routeburn Track are strongly recommended for navigation. NZTopo50 map CB09 – Hollyford is available for purchase from the Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre or the Queenstown Visitor Centre.

## 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.

Check the latest weather forecast at [weather.niwa.co.nz/parks](http://weather.niwa.co.nz/parks) before you depart.



## Track information

Bridges between Lake Mackenzie and Harris Saddle may be removed over winter to avoid damage from avalanches, so you must be competent at crossing swift, icy side streams. Snow and ice conditions on the Hollyford face and at the Harris Saddle can be extremely dangerous. Lake Mackenzie is not safe to walk on when frozen.

For up-to-date track information, check the DOC Track Alert at [www.doc.govt.nz/routeburntrack](http://www.doc.govt.nz/routeburntrack) before you depart. The most current information is available from the DOC visitor centre nearest the area where you want to go.

## 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.

### Contact

Te Rua-o-te-moko / Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre  
Lakefront Drive, Te Anau 9600  
Phone: 03 249 7924  
Email: [fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:fiordlandvc@doc.govt.nz)  
[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

Whakatipu-wai-Māori / Queenstown Visitor Centre  
50 Stanley Street, Queenstown 9300  
Phone: 03 442 7935  
Email: [queenstownvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto:queenstownvc@doc.govt.nz)



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 Backcountry Hut Tickets, 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 or satellite messenger (optional)
- **Avalanche safety/rescue equipment: avalanche beacon, snow shovel and avalanche probe.**

The Routeburn Shelter after a heavy snow fall. Photos: DOC

