

## 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](http://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](http://www.adventuresmart.org.nz)

## History

Stafford Bay is south of Jackson Bay/Okahu and is part of Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area.

Part of the route to Stafford Bay follows the line of an old road constructed in 1876. This led from Jackson Bay/Okahu to Smoothwater River, over Stafford Saddle and onto the Cascade Plateau.

In 1875, a major attempt was made to settle the area, resulting in 12 families living on the banks of the Smoothwater River. The settlement failed because of the weather, swampy soils, big rivers, and the lack of a wharf at the river mouth. Just 2 years later, all the families had left. The original Stafford Hut was flown onto the site about 1972 and used as a hunting base until 1981. Carcasses were stored in a freezer beside the hut and flown out regularly by helicopter. The current hut was built in 2009.

## Dogs

Dogs are not permitted in the area without authorisation from DOC. You must have a dog permit from the Awarua/Haast or Franz Josef offices at least one week before your trip.

## Hut fees

**Stafford Hut:** 6 bunks with mattresses, water supply, toilets, heating. Hut tickets are required and must be bought in advance – you can buy them from any DOC office.

**Standard hut** – 1 ticket per person/night

## Further information

### Awarua/Haast Visitor Centre

Main Road, Haast

**PHONE:** 03 750 0809

**EMAIL:** [haastvc@doc.govt.nz](mailto: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](mailto:westlandnpvc@doc.govt.nz)

[www.doc.govt.nz](http://www.doc.govt.nz)

**DOC HOTline**  
**0800 362 468**

Report any safety hazards  
or conservation emergencies  
For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111

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New Zealand Government



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

# Stafford Bay Route

| Jackson Bay – Gorge River area



Department of  
Conservation  
Te Papa Atawhai



## Stafford Bay Route



**Duration:** 2 days, 9.7 km

**Grade:** Route – unformed; 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 BY10, pt BZ10 Jackson Bay

**Hazards:** Flooded rivers, rockfalls, steep grades, rocky coast, tides and rogue waves



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

*Note: 'true left/right' refers to the side of the valley or river when facing downstream.*

## Getting there

The route to Stafford Bay starts at the small car park, about 500 m before Jackson Bay/Okahu. Jackson Bay/Okahu is around 50 km from Haast Junction.

## Track grades



**Tramping track** – mostly unformed, but with track directional markers, poles or carins. Backcountry skills and experience required.



**Route** – unformed, suitable for people who are well equipped, with high-level backcountry skills and experience.

## Route description

The inland track to Smoothwater Bay passes through a mixed forest of beech and podocarp and is well marked with orange plastic markers. Windfall trees are cleared annually and the track is scrub cut every 3 years. The inland route from Smoothwater River to Stafford Hut is also well marked, and windfalls are cleared every 2 years.



**Warning:** *The route to Stafford Bay crosses rivers and numerous creeks, which all flood quickly during rainfall. Do not attempt to cross flooded rivers and side streams – wait until water levels have dropped. This route should not be attempted in poor weather.*



## Jackson Bay to Smoothwater River

45 minutes, 2.7 km

The track climbs steeply away from the road until it joins a historic track, which once formed part of the road. Follow this well-marked tramping track to Smoothwater River.



## Smoothwater River to Stafford Hut – inland route (recommended)

3 hours, 7 km

Beyond Smoothwater River the track becomes a route – backcountry experience and navigation skills are essential. Follow Smoothwater River upstream for about 20 min, crossing as necessary until Kakapo Creek (the first major creek) flows in on the true left. Look for the large orange marker. The marked track goes up Kakapo Creek, crossing it several times as well as using the creek bed as the route.

After about an hour, the track veers away from the creek to the right and starts to climb to Stafford Saddle. From the saddle, the route sidles before dropping (steeply at times) to a creek. Follow the creek downstream; it may be easier to follow the true-left bank in places due to windfall trees in the creek bed.



Stafford Hut. Photo: © Andrew Jolliffe

The ground levels out shortly before the creek meets the Stafford River. Follow the river downstream, crossing where necessary until markers on the true left mark the short track to Stafford Hut, which is 200 m upstream of the beach.

Penguins may be present along the coast. Please give them space.

*Alternative route for experienced trampers only*



## Smoothwater River to Stafford Bay – coastal route

4 hours, 5.8 km



**Warning:** *Due to the steep coastal terrain and numerous rocky and slippery sections, the majority of this route is unmarked and should only be attempted by people with a high level of backcountry experience and navigation skills. This route is only possible starting 2 hours before low tide from Smoothwater Bay and only when the sea conditions are calm.*

Follow the track from the car park to Smoothwater River, which takes about 45 min. Head downstream along the bush track that follows Smoothwater River. Alternatively, if the river is low you can walk down the river, crossing where needed. It should take around 1 hr 30 min to reach Smoothwater Bay.

From Smoothwater Bay the track becomes a route. Head south to Stafford Bay – there is a difficult rocky bluff section (prone to sea surges about 5 min after leaving Smoothwater Bay) which requires fording coastal pools. Further down the coast there are two very steep headlands either side of Homminy Cove that require great care.

Once you have crossed both headlands, continue south along the coast until you reach Stafford River. Stafford Hut is 150 m up the river, on the true left.



**Warning:** *Do not attempt the coastal track in the reverse direction. If the tide or sea conditions are not suitable you are likely to get stranded along the coast.*