

Glacier region walks

West Coast Tai Poutini



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

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Front cover photo: Lake Matheson. Photo: © Katrina Henderson

Photo this page: Gillespies Lagoon. Photo: © Katrina Henderson

Back cover photo: Lake Mapourika. Photo: © Petr Hlavacek

All map backgrounds © Geographx

Mountains to the sea: welcome to the glacier region!

*This is not just somewhere to see,
It is somewhere you will feel.*

*This is not just somewhere to visit,
It is somewhere you will carry away with you.*

Big ice, big seas, tall trees and a vast expanse of wilderness... the glacier region presents a picture that overwhelms at first glance. There is an intensity about this place of extremes, and change is constant. Nowhere between Ross and Fox Glacier (also known as Weheka) is the sea further than 50 km from the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana. The strip of land between is narrow, but its stories are many. Tales of effort and failure, hardship and triumph, harvest and development and conservation tell us about the relationship between this landscape and its people. There is more here than glaciers.

You are about to experience the northern part of Te Wāhipounamu, the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area, recognised for its outstanding natural values.

You'll find single-lane bridges on the road south. They are part of the charm of the place. Let them remind you to take it slow. Make the most of each opportunity to get out of your vehicle and learn more about this spectacular part of the world.

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Protection and preservation



Westland Tai Poutini National Park

Suggestions that the snowfields and glaciers of the region should be added to Aoraki/Mount Cook National Park united West Coast support for a national park in Westland. Representations from the Forest & Bird, Federated Mountain Clubs and locals were favourably received by the government and as a prelude to the Westland provincial celebrations, Westland National Park was proclaimed by Order in Council on 29 March 1960.

During the 1970s the focus of conservation concerns shifted to the lowland forests of the West Coast. A highly significant and controversial proposal was promoted – the southern part of Ōkārito State Forest and Waikukupa State Forest were added to the park in early 1982. This addition incorporated a sizeable tract of lowland forest and the park therefore became a cross-section of Westland, extending from the some of the highest mountain peaks in the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana to the Tasman Sea. The park was further extended in 1983 to incorporate the complete catchment of the upper Karangarua valley, thus establishing more natural boundaries and securing an area with distinctive ecological and scenic values.

The park name was amended on 1 October 1998 to Westland National park/Tai Poutini National Park in



Wairoa River mouth.
Photo: © Andris Apse

Te Wahipounamu 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 Wahipounamu (the place of greenstone), the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area incorporates Aoraki/Mount 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 this World Heritage Area.

accordance with the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998. In April 2002 the park was further extended, adding the northern part of Ōkārito State Forest and Saltwater State Forest, and in March 2010 several small areas of land adjoining the park were added.

Look after yourself... wherever you choose to walk

Choose a walk that matches the weather and your own experience – and interests you

Know what the weather is doing: it can change dramatically in a short time. Call at Department of Conservation (DOC) offices or Visitor Centres to check current weather and track conditions.

Remember times given are a guide only, and will vary depending on fitness, weather and track conditions.

Have the right gear

On sunny days

Sturdy footwear is recommended on all but the shortest walks.



Check the forecast and carry the right gear



Insect repellent is recommended to ward off sandflies and mosquitoes.

On any walks longer than an hour

On rainy days

If it is raining, or rain is forecast, it is best to keep to forest or coastal tracks. During or after rain, streams and side creeks can rise quickly on all tracks, especially on those that take you close to the glaciers. Do not cross flooded or discoloured streams.

The rocks in the glacier region can be slippery, especially during winter or after rain or frosts.

Always remember that the weather here changes rapidly. A sunny day can become wet and miserable in a flash.



Above the bushline

If you plan to go above the bushline you must have warm weatherproof clothing. You must have a compass and map and know how to use them. Conditions can change rapidly, and you will need this gear if the weather or visibility deteriorates unexpectedly.



Tell someone

Safety is your responsibility. Tell someone your plans, it may save your life.

Visit www.adventuresmart.org.nz to learn more and to log your outdoor intentions with your trusted contact.

Track grades

Choose the type of track that matches your skills, fitness and the experience you want – be realistic. **Safety is your responsibility.**

Easy access short walk

- Easy walking for up to an hour.
- Track is well formed, with an even surface.
- Few or no steps or slopes.
- Suitable for people of all abilities and fitness.
- Stream and river crossings are bridged.
- Walking shoes required.



Short walk

- Easy walking for up to an hour.
- Track is well formed, with an even surface. There may be steps or slopes.
- Suitable for people of most abilities and fitness.
- Stream and river crossings are bridged.
- Walking shoes required.



Walking track

- Easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day.
- Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy.
- Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities.
- Clearly signposted. Stream and river crossings are bridged.
- Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required.



Tramping track

- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.
- Track is mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections.
- Suitable for people with good fitness. Moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience required, including navigation and survival skills.
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns.
- Expect unbridged stream and river crossings.
- Tramping/hiking boots required.



Route

- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking.
- Track unformed and natural, rough, muddy or very steep.
- Suitable for people with above-average fitness. High-level backcountry skills and experience required, including navigation and survival skills.
- Complete self-sufficiency required.
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns.
- Expect unbridged stream and river crossings.
- Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required.



Glacier safety information

Are you prepared for walking up the glacier valleys? Viewing the glaciers is an exciting experience, but it can also be dangerous. Follow these guidelines to have a safe and enjoyable visit.

Be informed – conditions are always changing, tracks and roads may be closed, and viewpoints may be hundreds of metres from the glacier.

Be prepared to turn back if conditions are not favourable or you are outside your comfort zone. The weather can change at any time – carry wet-weather clothes and wear suitable footwear.

Read the signs and stay behind the barriers –

they are there to explain the dangers and keep you safe.



Ice and rocks fall from the terminal face continuously – some pieces are twice the size of a campervan. These ice falls can dam the glacial rivers and a huge **surge of water and ice** can flood the valley within minutes when the dam bursts.

Downpours can create **flooding** within minutes. Follow the marked track, obey all signs and never cross barriers. Do not attempt to cross swollen streams.

Heavy rain can destabilise steep valley walls, causing **rock fall**. Do not stop in marked rock-fall areas.

Don't make a fatal mistake! People have died or been seriously injured after ignoring signs and going over the barriers – you are taking a serious personal risk to get closer to the glacier. **Your safety and that of your family is your responsibility at all times.**

Unless you have the correct equipment and ice-climbing experience you should not walk or climb on or near the glacier. You can touch the ice by going with an experienced glacier-guiding company from Franz Josef or Fox townships – visit the DOC website (doc.govt.nz/visittheglacierssafely) or pick up a free brochure for more information.

State highway

Sealed road

Gravel road

Symbols used on maps

Car park

Toilets

Camping

Shelter

Viewpoint

Telephone

Petrol

Food

Accommodation

Church

ATM Automatic teller machine



0 4
kilometres



For further exploration topographic maps are recommended – to cover the glacier region you will need the following NZTopo50 maps:

BX14 Gillespies Beach

BX15 Fox Glacier

BX16 Mount Elie De Beaumont

BW15 Ōkārito

BW16 Whataroa

BW17 Harihari

BW18 Whitcombe Pass

BV16 Mount Oneone

BV17 Kakapotahi

Maps can be purchased at local DOC offices and other retailers.

For more details see www.linz.govt.nz.

Harihari and Whataroa

The farming communities of Harihari and Whataroa provide a wonderful introduction to the glacier region from the north, with expansive views of the mountains, glacial rivers and lakes across farmland fringed with native forest.

Harihari Coastal Walk

Time: 2 hr 45 min, 7.6 km loop track

A 20 km, 10-minute drive off State Highway 6 – from Harihari take Wanganui Flat Road and turn left onto La Fontaine Road.

 *The beach and Wanganui river estuary sections of track are only suitable within two hours of low tide. Check the tide times posted at the start of the walk.*

Spectacular views of forest, rivers, mountains and coastline make this one of the most scenic half-day walks on the West Coast. Start by following the logging tramway, built in the 1930s to haul logs from the forest for two early sawmills.

Make your way through regenerating forest to join an old pack track – once part of the coastal highway – over a lateral moraine to reach the Poerua River and the distinctive whitebaiters' baches. Where the river meets the sea, the path across the sand is constantly shifting according to the tides and the weather. Like all West Coast river mouths, this is a treacherous place.

Do not attempt to cross.



Photo: © Katrina Henderson

The track skirts the headland at the south of the Wanganui River (known as the Doughboy or Mount Oneone), giving glimpses up and down the coast, then winds across boardwalks through a wetland back to the car park.



Willberg Walk

Time: 30 min, 1.4 km return

Willberg Walk is located in Harihari. There are two track entrances, both visible on the side of State Highway 6 near the centre of town. The track climbs gently through rimu forest and wanders along a terrace behind the township, with occasional views through the forest to the farmland below. Return to your starting point via the footpath or retrace your steps along the track.

Waitangitaona Wetland Walk

Time: 20 min, 214 m loop

This easy, fully-accessible walk through regenerating kahikatea forest and flax wetland provides spectacular views of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana.

To reach the track, drive along Whataroa Flat Road until it meets Waitangitaona Road (gravel road). Follow this road to the track start opposite the White Heron Sanctuary Tours jetty (approximately 20-minute drive).

Ōkārito

Stunning and diverse scenery dominates this small coastal settlement: ocean, tidal estuary, imposing sea cliffs, lush forest and (on a fine day) unsurpassed views of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana. Ōkārito remained the main service town for south Westland for many years, until the inland road through Harihari and Whataroa meant that a port was no longer required.

Be sure to visit Donovan's store and the Ōkārito wharf to learn more about this town, which almost reverted into the wilderness. *There are no shops at Ōkārito so make sure you are prepared.*



Ōkārito Wetland Walk

Time: 20 min, 1 km return

From the car park by the Ōkārito School House, the track winds though bush before crossing the estuary on a curving boardwalk. The track then climbs gently to a viewpoint overlooking the estuary.

Three Mile Pack Track – Ōkārito Coastal Walk

Time: 3 hr 30 min, 9.8 km return



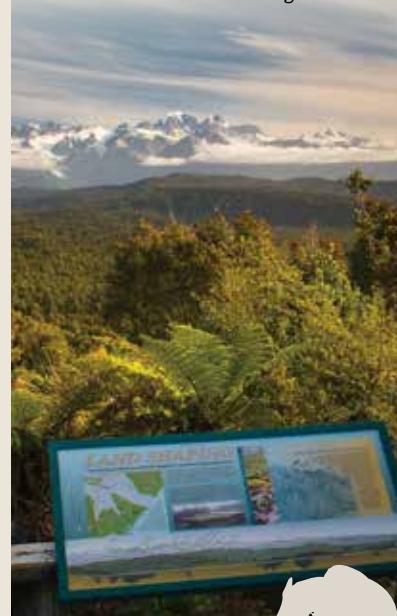
The coastal route is only suitable within 2 hr either side of low tide. Check the tide times posted at the start of the walk.

Follow the Ōkārito Wetland Walk before continuing through coastal forest to climb over Kohuamarua Bluff. The track meanders through wind-sheared rimu, rātā and silver pine forest before dropping down to Three Mile Lagoon – a sheltered estuary fringed with rimu forest. A bridge crosses the lagoon but there is no track beyond this point. You can return to Ōkārito via the pack track, or at low tide follow the coastline back along the beach.

Ōkārito Trig Walk

Time: 1 hr 30 min, 4.2 km return

Ōkārito Trig Walk initially follows the Ōkārito Wetland Walk and Three Mile Pack Track before branching off to the left after around fifteen min walking. The walk winds steadily uphill on a well-graded track, before reaching the Ōkārito Trig viewpoint (right). On a clear day the view is unbeatable overlooking Westland/Tai Poutini National Park from the snow-capped Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, across extensive native forest to the lagoons and beaches of the coast.



Pakihi Walk

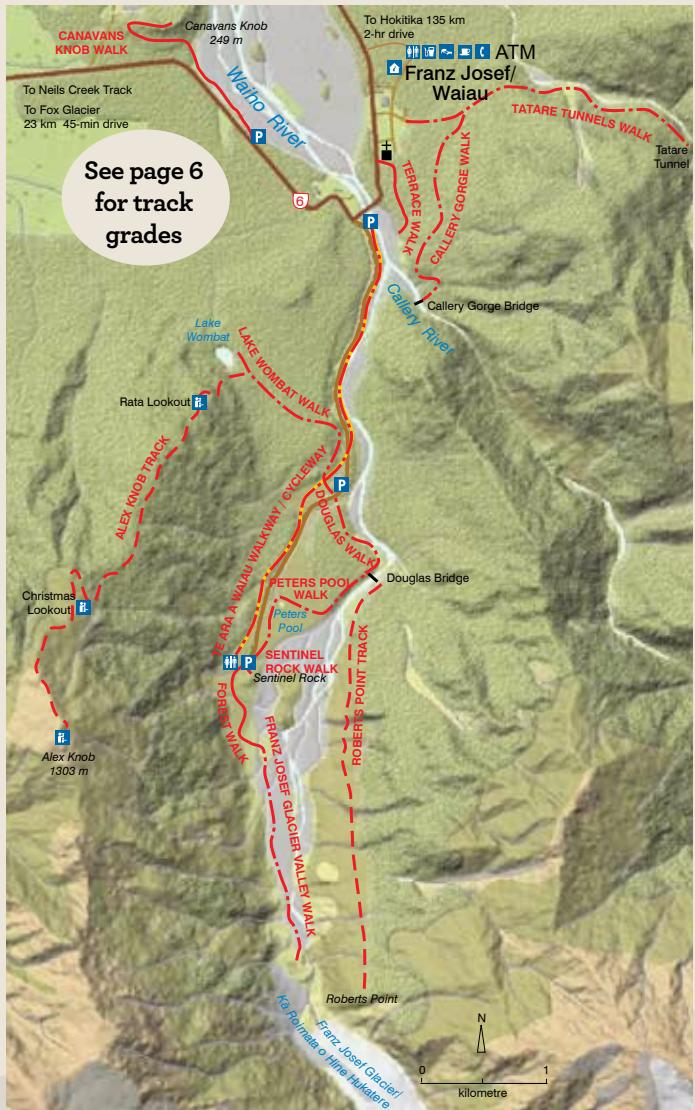
Time: 30 min, 1 km return

Pakihi' refers to the fire-induced plant community growing here on poorly-drained infertile soils.

Mānuka, sedges and ferns are common on the pakihi and you may hear the snip-snip sound of the fernbird calling. Climb gently through a forest of kāmahi and rimu to a lookout platform. At the top you will be rewarded with views of surrounding rainforest and the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, including Aoraki/Mount Cook, Mount Tasman (Horo Koau), the Fritz Range and a glimpse of the Franz Josef Glacier/ Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere.

Franz Josef/Waiau

Built on the grit and determination of the pioneering gold miners, explorers, farmers and tourism operators, Franz Josef/Waiau is a small yet bustling village surrounded by high snow-capped mountains and lush rainforest. Opportunities to explore the environment abound so make the most of your time here and immerse yourself in nature.



To reach the glacier car park:

Driving

Drive south from Franz Josef/Waiau village over the Waiho River bridge. Turn left after the bridge. The glacier access road is not suitable for trailers or caravans. The road winds its way alongside the Waiho River before entering Rātā Grove which can be awash with the glowing red flowers of rātā during summer. Watch for cyclists and walkers crossing the road through here. The road continues to the car park, with increasing views of the glacier valley and surrounding mountains.

Walking or cycling –

Te Ara a Waiau Walkway/Cycleway



Time: Walk – 2 hr return,

Cycle – 1 hr return, 8.7 km return

The track begins on the right-hand side of the road just south of the Catholic church, before crossing and then going under the Waiho River bridge. The track then runs along the left-hand edge of the glacier access road on a sealed lane marked for walkers and cyclists.

The track heads into the forest on the left-hand side of the road for a short time, before re-emerging from the forest and crossing the glacier valley access road. Take care to give way to all traffic and cross carefully.

Once across the road the track winds its way easily up the valley through lush rainforest with abundant birdlife. The track crosses Lake Wombat Walk just minutes from the road crossing – take care at this intersection also, cyclists watch for walkers crossing!

Bikes are not permitted on any other tracks in the glacier valley. Bikers please obey the bike code of conduct.



Franz Josef Glacier valley walks

Sentinel Rock Walk

Time: 20 min, 900 m return

This short steady climb up a now bush-covered ice-scraped rock offers the most impressive views of the glacier valley and the Waiho River.

In 1865, Sentinel Rock had just emerged from beneath the glacial ice. Until 1909, ice pressed against Harper Rock, just in front of Sentinel Rock. Since then, plants have progressively colonised the rock in a process called plant succession (see page 40 for more on plant succession). Information panels at the viewpoint show dramatic photos of the glacial retreat. This is one of the best places to appreciate the power of the glacier.

Forest Walk to Glacier View

Time: 30 min, 1.4 km return

This easy forest walk leads to a riverbank view of the glacier, river valley and surrounding mountains.

Franz Josef Glacier Valley Walk

 *This track is sometimes closed due to ice collapse, flooding or landslides – please check the latest information on the safety panels.*

Time: 1 hour 30 min, 5.4 km return from the car park

Continuing from the end of Forest Walk, follow the markers past Trident Falls to a point with a view of the terminal face of the glacier. This is not a track but a route over the shingle and rock of the riverbed and it can be quite rough underfoot – make sure you have suitable footwear.

This is a beautiful yet volatile place – do not let the serene scene fool you. The glacier is constantly moving. Ice and rock fall from the terminal face without warning. Creeks may rise up to a metre in even moderate rain. Water levels rise in as little as 15 minutes.

DOC constantly monitors conditions here. Protect yourself by staying behind barriers and observing signs. *Please read the advice on page 7 before starting on this track.*

Peters Pool

Time: 25 min, 1.1 km return from the car park

This fully-accessible walk winds through the rainforest to a small kettle lake, which was formed by ice melting amongst glacial moraine about two hundred years ago. Enjoy the reflective views of the glacier and mountain peaks in this tranquil setting.

Douglas Walk

Time: 1 hr (including 15-min loop back via Te Ara a Waiau Walkway), 3.9 km loop

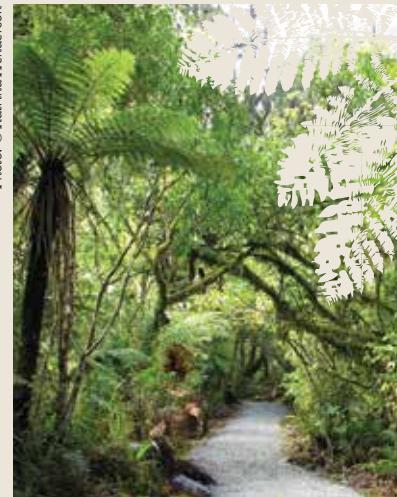
This easy forest walk crosses glacial landforms created between AD 1600 and AD 1750 by glacier advances. Walk through a succession of vegetation types, each representing a different stage of regrowth behind retreating ice and/or different soil types. Visit Peters Pool, a reflective kettle lake, and the historic Douglas suspension bridge.

Lake Wombat Walk

Time: 1 hr 30 min, 3.8 km return

Lake Wombat Walk starts from a small car park on the right side of the road, approximately half way to the glacier car park. Alternatively it can be accessed on foot via Te Ara a Waiau. The fern-lined track climbs steadily from the road through rimu forest to a peaceful lake. Termed a kettle lake, it was formed by the melting of a huge piece of ice left amidst glacial debris about 9,000 years ago. This walk offers good opportunities for bird watching if you stop quietly along the way.

Photo: © Katrina Henderson



Tramping tracks in

Franz Josef Glacier valley

Roberts Point Track



For experienced and well-equipped trampers only. Check with the DOC Visitor Centre before starting this track.

Time: 5 hr, 11 km return – from Glacier Road/Wombat car park to Roberts Point

5 hr 20 min, 12.3 km return – from glacier car park to Roberts Point

- This track does not provide access onto the glacier.
- Fording the streams on this track can be dangerous during and after rain – be careful, and turn back if you are unsure.
- The track requires a good level of fitness and it is slippery in places. Good boots are essential.
- Stay on the marked track – do not attempt to climb down to the main river from any point on the track.
- Never attempt to cross the Waiho River.

Starting from Douglas Bridge, Roberts Point Track winds up the true right of the Waiho (Franz Josef Glacier) valley, over ice-carved rock and across many side streams to a viewpoint high above the glacial ice. In around an hour the track opens out onto ice-smoothed rock outcrops at Henes Hut. This hut is unsuitable for overnight accommodation, but it does provide a sheltered lunch spot.

The track climbs on through open scrubland to a suspension bridge crossing Rope Creek and continues steadily upwards to Roberts Point. The views from here are well worth the effort with the glacier, sheer rock walls, waterfalls and mountain peaks all visible.

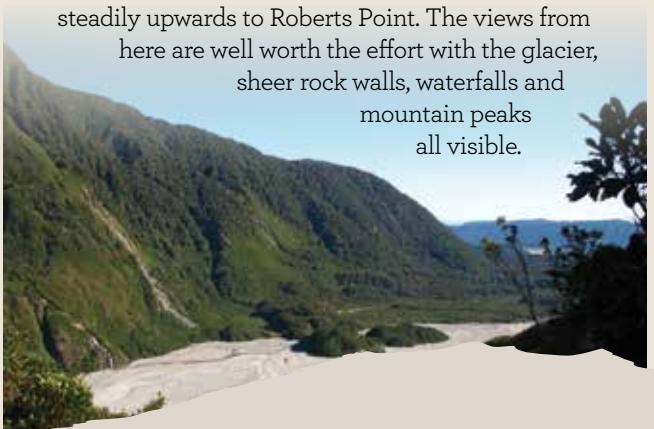


Photo: © Ian Singleton

Alex Knob Track



For experienced and well-equipped trampers only. Check with the DOC Visitor Centre before starting this track.

Time: 8 hr, 17.2 km return

Alex Knob Track is a steady well-graded climb which branches off Lake Wombat Walk. The vegetation changes visibly with increasing altitude from lowland rimu forest, through rātā and kāmahi forest, subalpine New Zealand cedar and tree daisies to alpine meadows. Rātā Lookout, Christmas Lookout and Alex Knob give excellent views of the glacier and the ancient glacial landforms across the coastal plain, which date from the last ice age.

Start early in the morning to be on the mountain top before afternoon cloud obscures the view.



In the winter months, snow is likely above Christmas Lookout. Do not go beyond the snowline if you are inexperienced in walking in alpine areas in winter conditions. Boots are essential. Take drinking water with you.



Photo: © Cornelia Vroon

Walks near Franz Josef/Waiau village

Callery Gorge Walk

Time: 1 hr 20 min, 5.2 km return

Callery Gorge Walk begins approximately 5 min along the Tatare Tunnels Track with a short, gentle climb to a high terrace behind Franz Josef/Waiau township, passing the town water-supply pipes and tanks.

The track narrows through the rainforest, and follows alongside an old gold mining water race. The water race and some rusty relics are among the last visual reminders of the gold mining era.

The track then descends to the historic Callery Gorge bridge site. From here there are views of the narrow Callery Gorge, which has changed dramatically over the years due to gravel deposits filling in the gorge and raising the level of the riverbed.

Tatare Tunnels Walk

Time: 1 hr 20 min, 3.6 km return

After 10 minutes walk on a four-wheel-drive road the track climbs gently then drops to a view of the scenic Tatare Gorge. The track becomes steep and narrow for the short climb to the Tatare Tunnels.

If you wish to explore the tunnels you will need a torch and a raincoat, and you will get wet feet. You may see glow-worms and cave wētā. The track stops at the old wooden flume at the end of the first tunnel.

Terrace Walk

Time: 30 minutes, 1.8 km return

This easy walk winds a short way along the bush-clad terraces at the south end of the village. The walk provides a good introduction to the rainforest of the glacier region.

Take a torch and explore this walk at night to see glow-worms in the forest, especially under and around large fallen trees alongside the track.

Canavans Knob Walk

Time: 1 hr, 3.2 km return from car park; 1 hr 40 min, 6.3 km return from Franz Josef/Waiau township

Start from a small car park 1.2 km on State Highway 6 south of Franz Josef/Waiau village, or walk from the village across the Waiho River Bridge and turn sharp right onto a stop bank. Halfway along the stop bank follow the track marker pegs off the stop bank, across the creek and onto the next section of stop bank where the track starts. The first 800 m of track from the car park is along the river stopbank. A short but steady climb then takes you through rainforest to the top of this granite outcrop, where you will get commanding views of the coast and lowlands to one side, and up the Waiho River to the glacier and Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana from the other.

The granite of Canavans Knob is much older than the schist rocks of the glacier valley across the Alpine Fault Line, and therefore it survived the scraping of glacier ice 9,000 years ago.



Photo: © Katrina Henderson

Neils Creek Track



Time: from 2WD car park at Docherty Creek

Walk – 4 hr, 14.2 km return,

Cycle – 2 hr, 14.2 km return

Time: from 4WD car park

Walk – 2 hr, 7.4 km return

Cycle – 1 hr, 7.4 km return



Docherty Creek is flood-prone and dangerous to cross. Even on a clear day at the coast, rain in the mountains can quickly flood this crossing. Do not take 2WD vehicles or campervans across the creek. Do not cross if it is raining or rain is forecast.

Neils Creek Track is located in the Waiho Forest Scenic Reserve approximately 20 min drive from Franz Josef/Waiau township. Follow State Highway 6 south before turning right down Waiho Flat Road.

From the car park at Docherty Creek, cross the creek before travelling along the road through open farmland towards the coast. 4WD vehicles are able to continue for a further 3.4 km (if creek conditions are safe) to a car park at the start of the track. From the 4WD car park, walk or cycle along the old forestry road towards Neils Creek. As you reach the creek the track turns to the right and follows the meandering waters through the kahikatea forest towards the coast. The final section of track passes through a stand of well-established flax before reaching the beach.

It is likely that you will get wet feet crossing the creek outlet to reach the beach, but it is normally not difficult to cross. On a clear day the views of the glacier and mountains are unbeatable. Return the way you came. This is a shared-use track so if biking please obey the bike code of conduct.



Photo: © Petr Hlavacek

Fox Glacier

Fox Glacier village, like its neighbour Franz Josef/Waiau, was built on the blood, sweat and tears of the determined pioneers who saw the potential for development and a new life on the edge of wilderness. With a backdrop of forested lower slopes and ice-capped mountain peaks, the village provides a laid-back base for your glacier region adventures.



To reach the glacier car park:

Driving

Drive south from Fox Glacier village. Turn left just before the Fox River bridge. The road winds its way through the forest before emerging alongside Fox River. From here there are increasing views of the mountains and glacier valley. Watch for cyclists and walkers alongside the road particularly on the causeway (the narrow gravel section of road leading to the car park).

Walking or cycling –

Te Weheka Walkway/Cycleway



Time: Walk: 2 hr 20 min return

Cycle: 1 hr return, 8.4 km return

Pick up the track on the left-hand side of State Highway 6 south of Bella Vista Motel. The track enters the forest and follows State Highway 6 before turning east and heading into the Fox Glacier valley. Along this first section of track

the Minnehaha Track leaves and then re-joins Te Weheka Walkway/Cycleway. Take care at the intersections with the Minnehaha Track – cyclists please watch for walkers crossing.

As the track heads up valley it climbs steadily but easily. It joins and then



leaves the Fox Glacier Access Road in two places, running along the left-hand edge of the road for short distances on a sealed lane marked for walkers and cyclists. Please keep off the vehicle lanes.

The track continues on the sealed lane for 500 m, before re-entering the forest and then re-joining the road for the last section to the glacier valley car park. This section of road (known as the causeway) is unsealed, and walkers and cyclists must share the road with vehicles. Take care. Those on bikes must leave their bikes at the bike rack at the end of Te Weheka – there is no bike access on any other tracks in the area. Bikers please obey the bike code of conduct.

Fox Glacier/Te Moeka o Tuawe Valley Walk



Time: 1 hr, 2.6 km return



This track is sometimes closed due to ice collapse, flooding or landslides—please check the latest information on the safety panels and observe all signs and stay behind barriers.

You will see your first view of the glacier after about five minutes walking. The track continues towards the glacier and crosses several small creeks. The walk will take you to within about 500 m of the glacier terminal face.

This is a beautiful yet volatile place – do not let the serene scene fool you. The glacier is constantly moving. Ice and rock fall from the terminal face without warning. Creeks may rise up to a metre in even moderate rain. Water levels rise in as little as 15 min.

DOC constantly monitors conditions here. Protect yourself by staying behind barriers and observing signs. Refer to advice on page 7 to keep yourself safe near the glaciers.

From Glacier View Road

Drive south from the Fox Glacier village. Cross the Fox River bridge then turn left. This road is narrow and windy and is not suitable for trailers, caravans or large vehicles. Part way along the road there is a small siding with a view of the glacier.

Moraine Walk

Time: 30 min, 1.4 km return

Moraines are the debris of rocks and stones left when a glacier retreats. This easy walk, from Glacier View Road, takes you over old moraine surfaces and dramatically reveals how quickly plants establish here, and how the age of the bush reflects the various ages of the glacial moraines it has colonised. The walk begins on a surface several thousand years old and crosses the AD 1600 and AD 1750 moraines.

River Walk

Time: 40 min, 1.8 km return

Take this pleasant short walk for a view of the glacier and the opportunity to cross a historic suspension bridge.

Starting from the car park at the end of Glacier View Road, follow the River Walk Lookout track as it winds down towards the river. About 200 m from the car park, the River Walk walking track branches off and continues downhill, passing a great viewpoint of Fox Glacier/Te Moeka o Tuawe along the way. The track then continues through the forest before crossing Fox River by a 70-metre-long suspension bridge, built in 1929 at a cost of 1,200 pounds.

River Walk Lookout Track

Time: 20 min, 800 m return

Starting from the car park at the end of Glacier View Road, the fully-accessible River Walk Lookout track winds its way gently downhill through the rainforest to a great view point of Fox Glacier/Te Moeka o Tuawe. The River Walk walking track branches off providing access to the north side of the valley but it is not fully accessible.



Fox Glacier valley. Photo: © Katrina Henderson

Walks near Fox Glacier township

Minnehaha Walk

Time: 20 min, 1.2 km return

This delightful short walk follows a small stream through the lush rainforest, and loops back to the start point via Te Weheka Walkway/Cycleway. The walk is a great introduction to the forest for children and is suitable for wheelchairs and buggies.

Glow-worms may be seen in the forest after dark – take a torch to find your way. Bikes are not permitted on Minnehaha Walk.

Lake Matheson Walk

Time: Lake circuit –

1 hr 30 min, 2.6 km return



Car park to jetty viewpoint –

40 min, 1 km return



The unsurpassed views and mountain reflections from the forested shores of Lake Matheson make this easy walk one of the most popular on the West Coast. Dawn and dusk are recommended viewing times. The first part of the track, to the jetty viewpoint, is suitable for assisted wheelchairs.

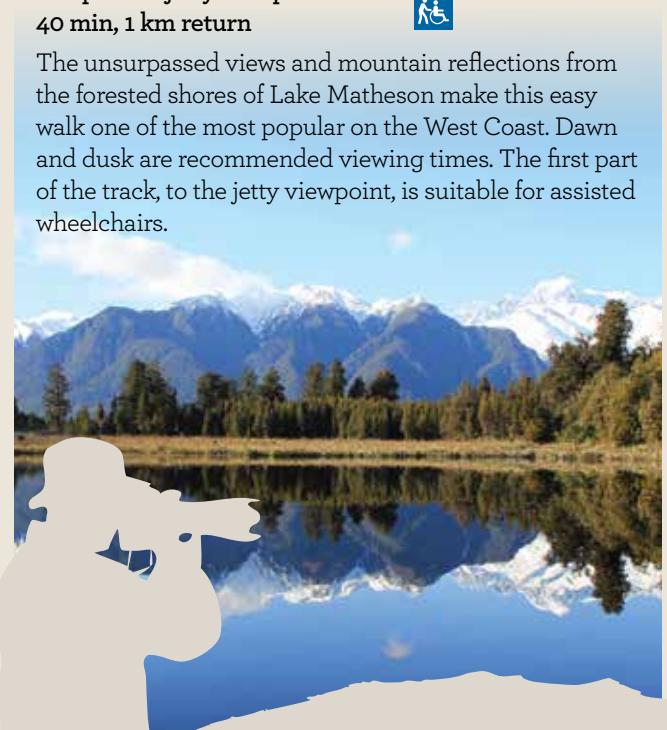


Photo: © Katrina Henderson

Lake Matheson was formed when Fox Glacier/Te Moeka o Tuawe retreated from its last significant advance about 14,000 years ago. During the last major ice age, the glacier spread across the coastal plains towards the sea, dumping huge piles of rock. The glacier ground a depression which later filled with water, forming the lake.

Lake Matheson's excellent mirror-like reflecting properties are due to the dark brown colour of the water, the result of organic matter leached from the humus of the forest floor.

If you are lucky you may see an eel break the surface of the lake. The species most likely to be seen here is the long-finned eel, which made this an important food-gathering site (*mahinga kai*) for Māori travelling along the coast.

Overnight camping is not permitted in or near the car park.

Tramping routes near Fox Glacier

Mount Fox Track

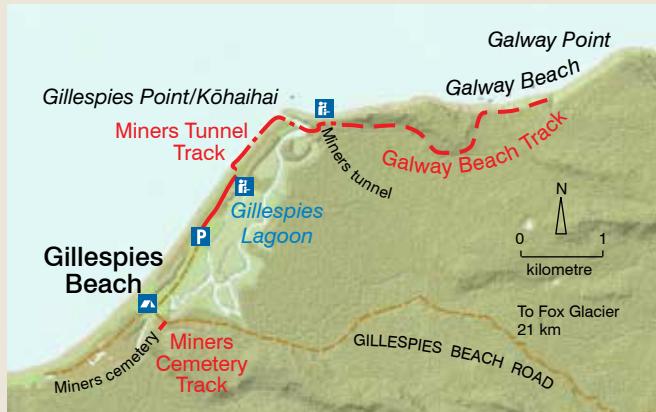
 *This route is for experienced and well-equipped trampers only. Check with the DOC Visitor Centre before starting this walk.*

Time: 8 hr, 7.4 km return

This rough route climbs steeply through the bush up a spur to a trig point at 1,021 m. The route then follows blue/orange markers through alpine grassland to 1,345 m. From here your efforts will be well rewarded with fantastic views of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana, Fox Glacier/Te Moeka o Tuawe in one direction and across the coastal forests and farmland to the coast in the other. Take care above the bushline as you can easily lose the track if conditions are misty or the cloud descends. Start early in the morning to be on the mountain top before cloud obscures the view. This is a regular event in the summer months.

To access Mount Fox drive south for approximately 3 km from Fox Glacier township, until you reach Thirsty Culvert. There is a small parking area on the right-hand side of the road while the route starts on the left.

Gillespies Beach



A visit to Gillespies Beach offers a scenic drive, lovely views of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o Te Moana, a historic cemetery and coastal walks. Half the road from Fox Glacier to the beach is narrow and unsealed – keep your speed down and drive carefully. Towards the beach it passes through some of the best lowland rimu forest in Westland Tai Poutini National Park. Approximately 10 km from Fox Glacier you will reach the peak viewpoint which offers an amazing view of the glacier and high mountain peaks.

Miners Cemetery Walk

Time: 5 min, 270 m return

Just before the signposted turnoff to the Gillespies Beach Campsite and car park there is a short walk to the historic miners' cemetery. The cemetery is a reminder of the harsh environment the early gold prospectors lived and worked in.

Suction Dredge Walk

Time: 15 min, 400 m return

A short 15-min loop track, the Gillespies Suction Dredge Walk is located directly off the main Gillespies Beach car park. Wander past historic remains of the suction dredge used by the miners in the late 19th century. Interpretation panels take you back to when Gillespies Beach was a bustling gold mining town.

Gillespies Bucket Dredge Walk

Time: 30 min, 1.6 km return

Follow the Miners Tunnel Track from the main Gillespies Beach car park and camping area, through gorse-covered dredge tailings to the remains of an old 1930s gold dredge. On a clear day the mountain tops will peak above the gorse. Continue to the miners tunnel, return the way you came or return via the beach.

Miners Tunnel Track

Time: 1 hr 40 min, 3.6 km return

Continue past the bucket dredge and out onto the beach. Walk north along the beach until you reach Gillespies Lagoon. The lagoon is crossed by a bridge 5 min inland. Enjoy spectacular views from here on a fine day. From the lagoon the track follows the line of a gold miners' pack track, climbing up an old glacier moraine before entering a tunnel built to provide an all-tide access route for miners. The track emerges to a viewing point above the beach – there is no access to the beach from this point.

Galway Beach Tramping Track

Time: 3 hr 30 min, 6.8 km return

Follow the Miners Tunnel Track from Gillespies Beach car park and campsite. Turn off at the Galway Beach sign, just before the miner's tunnel. The track weaves through rimu forest and leads to a remote beach. The seal colony at Galway Beach is a haul-out (resting) colony for seals in the winter. Take care not to disturb the seals and never get between them and the sea. Do not try and walk through the colony to Gillespies Lagoon – you must return to the car park via the track.



Looking back: A varied history

Ngāi Tahu of the glacier region

Ngāi Tahu and their predecessors have lived throughout South Westland for hundreds of years. Today, local hapū - Kāti Māhaki (a sub-tribe of Ngāi Tahu) are centred at their marae in Bruce Bay (also known as Mahitahi), Te Tauraka Waka a Māui.

Ngāi Tahu settlements comprised a fortified pā, Kohuamaru, at Ōkārito, Ōkahu pā at Arawhata River and Kōtuku Whakaoho (Martins Bay), and large kāinga (villages) at Jacobs River (Makaawhio) and Bruce Bay, with other kāinga at intervals along the coast. The people of Kāti Māhaki moved easily amongst their kāinga according to the season, making the most of the abundant sources of kai (food) in these coastal regions.

Westland Tai Poutini is an area rich in resources. One of the most precious is pounamu (jade). Tribal wars were fought for approximately 100 years for the control of this taonga (treasure). In 1997 the Ngāi Tahu Pounamu Vesting Act confirmed Ngāi Tahu ownership of the largest pounamu reserves in New Zealand, with Kāti Māhaki retaining kaitiakitanga or guardianship.

There are a number of sites of importance within the glacier region, two of which are recognised in the Ngāi Tahu Claims Settlement Act 1998. One of these is Ōkārito, where there is a nohoanga (a seasonal occupation site set aside for cultural purposes). The site provides an area where Ngāi Tahu can camp during a set period of the year. The other site of importance is Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere (Franz Josef Glacier). Its story is told in legend.

Hine Hukatere, an adventurous Māori maiden who loved mountaineering above all other pastimes, frequently persuaded her lover, Waue, to accompany her on escapades into the hills. On one such expedition the unfortunate Waue, who had never been as fond of climbing as his sweetheart, slipped and plunged to an early death. Heartbroken, Hine Hukatere cried, and her tears were frozen by the gods as a memorial to her grief, thus forming Franz Josef Glacier/Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere.

Boom and bust

In 1865 miners flocked to coastal beaches of Ōkārito and Gillespies in search of gold. Prospectors had been here before, searching the rivers, but now the precious metal had been discovered in the black sand beaches and the rush was on.

By Christmas, Ōkārito was a township of 800 people and 33 stores; and just three months later, the population was 1,500. Another 2,500 people sought their fortunes just south, at Three Mile and Five Mile beaches, both of which had their own stores and hotels.

At Gillespies Beach a settlement of several hundred people was established.

By the end of 1867, the miners had worked out the black sands and Ōkārito, Three Mile and Five

Mile were virtual ghost towns. Those who stayed in Ōkārito moved back from the beaches and built massive water races to aid sluicing, and later, to run dredges.

The population also moved away from Gillespies and it was a ghost town by the 1920s, but was briefly revived from 1933 to 1946 when a large bucket-dredge mined the beach sands and the old town site.

Little remains now. If you take the track to Three Mile Lagoon or explore the walks at Gillespies Beach, you may see some relics of the gold days – reminders of the human industry once here.



The Strand, Ōkārito, early 1900s.
Photo: A C Graham, A C Graham collection



Five Mile main street, 1867.
Photo: A C Graham, A C Graham collection

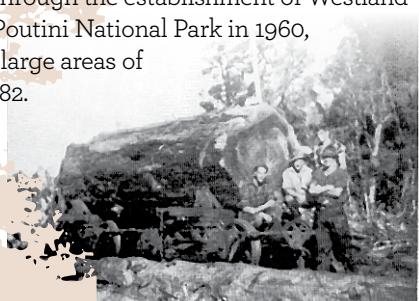
Forests and farms

After they exhausted the promise of the coastal gold rushes, settlers turned towards the forested river flats under the mountains. Picturing homesteads on the fertile alluvial soil, they began months of difficult bush-felling. The lone tōtara and kahikatea that you pass today, tall and ancient in paddocks beside the road, survived the clearances and stood through the continual burning of regenerating scrub. Later they provided shelter for the cattle and sheep which stocked these farms, cut from the wilderness.

The sawmilling industry grew from the immediate needs of miners and farmers. At first, millers used simple pitsaws to supply wood for pipelines and yards, bridges and huts. As settlement increased, milling developed into a major industry.

For many 20th-century residents of Ross, Harihari and Whataroa, milling was a way of life. The supply of timber seemed unlimited, and there was enough water to power as many waterwheels and saws as could be put to use. For 20 years, loggers at the mouth of the Wanganui River found all the timber they needed within 3 kilometres of the mill. Hundreds of massive kahikatea trunks were made into boxes and used to export butter to Britain and Australia.

A century after the first European settler felled the first mighty podocarp, the voice of the conservation movement grew too loud to ignore. The forests – those that remained – became the focus of many bitter battles about Westland's economic future. Did success lie in extractive industry, as in the past? Or was progress about protecting the natural landscape for its own sake, valuing its dynamic landforms and ecosystems? Public debate raged for decades, through the establishment of Westland National Park/Tai Poutini National Park in 1960, and the addition of large areas of lowland forest in 1982.



The lure of the spectacular

When European surveyors and explorers spread word of the stunning attractions in the west, visitors overcame difficult access to see these things for themselves. Sir William Fox, Prime Minister of New Zealand, visited and painted Franz Josef Glacier in 1872. By the 1890s, the area was receiving a steady stream of tourists. Pioneers who had braved dense bush and isolation to settle here enjoyed hosting visitors, at first in their guestrooms and then in guesthouses. The spirit of West Coast hospitality was born.

By the start of the 1900s, so many tourists were visiting the glaciers that the Government began making annual grants to hoteliers for tracks and huts. Charlie Douglas, one of New Zealand's great explorers, supervised the building of huts and some of the tracks around Franz Josef/Waiau you still enjoy today.

The Graham family, originally from Three Mile Beach, became the backbone of early tourism. Brothers Peter and Alec were outstanding guides, leading parties up onto the ice and into the mountains. Both contributed to the success of the Franz Josef Glacier Hotel, which served the village as accommodation, post office, community gathering-place and first-aid centre.

Guides also took climbers further afield, into the high mountains. The early 20th century saw western attempts on numerous major peaks. By the 1930s, climbers were searching for virgin routes. Many glacier-trained Westland guides led the way. These young men knew the mountains. They knew how to cut steps and tie ropes, and understood the weather patterns and challenges of the coast. Under their expert care, hundreds of pioneer tourists experienced the thrill of walking on the glaciers – many in ankle-length skirts

and plus fours.



Photo: M C Lyons, A C Graham collection

The landscape around you

The voice of many waters

Is it raining? If so, you are experiencing nature in action. This is the real Westland, where annual rainfall ranges from around three metres at sea level to almost five metres at the glacier villages.

The weather patterns here are due to a combination of features that create something special – and very wet. There are the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana – the spectacular range of mountains forced up along the line where the Pacific and Indo-Australian plates of the Earth's crust collide. There's the westerly air that flows across the Tasman Sea, gathering moisture as it travels. There are the clouds that form when the airflow butts up against the barrier of the mountains and is forced to rise. And the clouds, unable to carry the weight of water over the Alps, let the rain fall.

Rain is part of everything you see here. Without it, there would be no ice. There would be no ancient rainforest, no milky glacial rivers, no tea-brown lakes filled with nutrients washed from the soils. Westland would not be home to the most extensive remaining freshwater wetlands in the country, and their many plants and animals.

There are other pluses. Because this place is so close to the sea, the temperature is moderate enough even during a true West Coast downpour for you to enjoy what's on offer. And the weather will clear. From the south-west, most likely. Sometime before the next cloudburst. A true visit to the glacier region wouldn't be complete without experiencing the rain.



Photo: © Brent Barrett

A land divided

The most striking feature of the local geology is the contrast between the coastal lowlands, made up of alternating wide river flats and undulating forested moraine deposits, and the mountain areas of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana.

The westward side of the alps is separated from the lowlands by a giant fault, the Alpine Fault, which is a large fracture zone running for hundreds of kilometres through the South Island. East of the fault, the land rises steeply to the ice-clad peaks culminating in Mount Tasman (3,498 m), while west of the fault lie the coastal lowlands largely consisting of glacial moraines and alluvial flood plains.

The rocks of the western side of the alps are mostly schists, ancient sedimentary rocks which have been altered (metamorphosed) by heat and pressure deep within the Earth. The three grades of schist found are chlorite schist (a grey-green colour), biotite schist (a brown colour) and garnet schist, often studded with red garnets. Greywackes and argillites along the crest of the main divide are the least-heavily metamorphosed rocks, in which sand and mud layers (bedding) originally formed on the sea floor can still be recognised.

The rocks of the coastal lowlands, apart from the recent alluvial and glacial deposits, are much older greywackes and granites, both seen in road cuttings on the Omoeroa Range near Franz Josef. They are fragments of the ancient Gondwana supercontinent that comprised Antarctica, Australia and small parts of New Zealand.



Hot mineral seepages are common in most valleys adjacent to the Alpine Fault, the best known being the hot springs at Welcome Flat.

“... turrets, needles and fantastic forms”

(JULIUS VON HAAST)

There is more to the glacier than the spectacular blue-white tongue stretching into the valley. Clues are all around you, in the landforms and the forest, in the natural features that exist because of the advance and retreat of the ice.

Franz Josef Glacier/Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere fanned out across the lowlands and beyond the coastline 18 000 years ago. It has become a shadow of its former self, responding to warmer temperatures and less snow. But short chapters of advance have interrupted its overall retreat, and each advance has left its mark.

Moraines

A glacier transports vast amounts of debris, ranging from the rock flour it grinds as it moves to the huge boulders that fall onto its surface from the valley walls. Beside and in front, it deposits this debris in piles called moraines. When it retreats, it leaves behind the piles of rock rubbish as evidence of its movement down the valley.



Diagram: © Bathgate Design

Trimlines

As it grinds forward, the ice destroys vegetation in its path. When it retreats, plants begin to colonise the open spaces left behind. Levels of growth show as distinct lines – trimlines – in the vegetation on the valley walls.

Roche moutonnée

Rock sheep, rounded knobs of hard schist bedrock, have survived the formidable power of advancing ice. Sentinel Rock is a fine example. This survivor had just emerged from beneath the retreating glacier when explorer Julius von Haast visited the valley in 1865.

Kettles

During retreats, the glacier drops massive blocks of ice in the valley. These blocks, covered with sediment, melt into their steep-sided basin-shaped holes, forming ponds, lakes and bogs. Lake Wombat was a block of ice 9,000 years ago. Peters Pool, just a few minutes from the road, was ice just 200 years ago.



Franz Josef Glacier terminal moraine formed approximately 12,000 years ago. Photo: © J Taylor



Background photo: © B Postill

Plants and animals

The growth of a forest

From west to east, beach to mountain peak, fern to vine to rimu, the natural story of Te Wāhipounamu is written in its plants.

Fourteen thousand years ago, when the glaciers stretched into the sea, very little survived. But as the ice receded, determined lichens and mosses appeared, and then willowherbs, grasses and scabweeds.

Small colonising plants enriched the soil, setting the stage for taller shrubs and then forest stalwarts like kāmahi and broadleaf. This pattern of plant succession repeated across the moraines and river flats of South Westland as the ice retreated. Now, it is displayed in miniature in the glacier valleys.



Illustration: Trevor Dodd

Pioneer plants

8 years glacial retreat

1. willowherb

2. scabweed/tutuhuna

3. moss

4. lichen

5. *Poa novae-zelandiae*

6. native broom

Pioneer shrubs

14 years glacial retreat

1. tree daisy/akeake

2. toetoe

3. koromiko

4. tree tutu

Low forest

50 years glacial retreat

1. tree daisy/akeake

2. tree tutu

3. kāmahi (seedlings)

4. rātā (seedlings)

Rātā and

kāmahi forest

120–200 years
after glacial
retreat

1. rātā

2. kāmahi

3. tree ferns

Podocarp forest

500 years after
glacial retreat

1. rimu (canopy)

2. kahikatea (canopy)

3. mataī (canopy)

4. miro (canopy)

5. tōtara (canopy)

6. rātā (sub-canopy)

7. kāmahi (sub-canopy)

8. tree ferns (understorey)

9. moss (understorey)

10. ferns (understorey)



Shades of green with splashes of colour

When you first look at the West Coast forest it looks like swathes of green upon green upon green. But if you look a little closer you will soon start to notice differences between some of the most common trees, and at the right time of year you might be lucky enough to witness bright splashes of colour as various natives burst into flower.

Kahikatea (white pine) are very tall, straight-trunked trees growing close to or in a swamp or wetland. The glacier region still supports stands of pure kahikatea, uncommon in other parts of New Zealand.

Rimu (red pine) are rainforest trees and the crowns of mature trees are common above the bush canopy. Fine examples have survived extensive felling and can be seen in open clearings and paddocks.

Tōtara can often be seen standing alone in farmland towering above the cleared pasture. Young tōtara are bushy, while older trees are more open and often die out at the top.

Kāmahi grow up to 25 m high and are common throughout the lowland forests. In spring and summer, look for the showy white flowers with reddish stalks on kāmahi.

Kiekie gives a tropical feel to the forests of the glacier region. Clinging to other trees, this vine grows several stems and climbs the trunk of its host. It is easy to identify with slender leaves up to a metre long, arranged in tightly-packed tufts.

Tree ferns (mamaku, ponga, wheki) are abundant and found mainly in shady places beneath the forest canopy – their large fronds lifted up by sinewy brown trunks. New fronds grow amongst the older fronds, tight little spirals (*koru*) uncurling as they grow (right).



Photo: © Katrina Henderson

Southern rātā (below) still grow across much of New Zealand, but it are particularly noticeable in summer throughout the glacier region when trees burst into deep red flower.

Kōwhai and **clematis** (right), with their yellow and white flowers respectively, provide blocks of colour through the spring, while flax/harakeke flowers from the mountains to the sea providing abundant nectar for tūī and bellbirds.



Photo: © Katrina Henderson

Higher up, the vegetation moves through subalpine kaikawaka and primitive dracophyllums, before reaching the small hardy scrub beyond the bushline. This then gives way to snow tussock grasslands and alpine fields of mountain daisies, speargrasses and hebes.

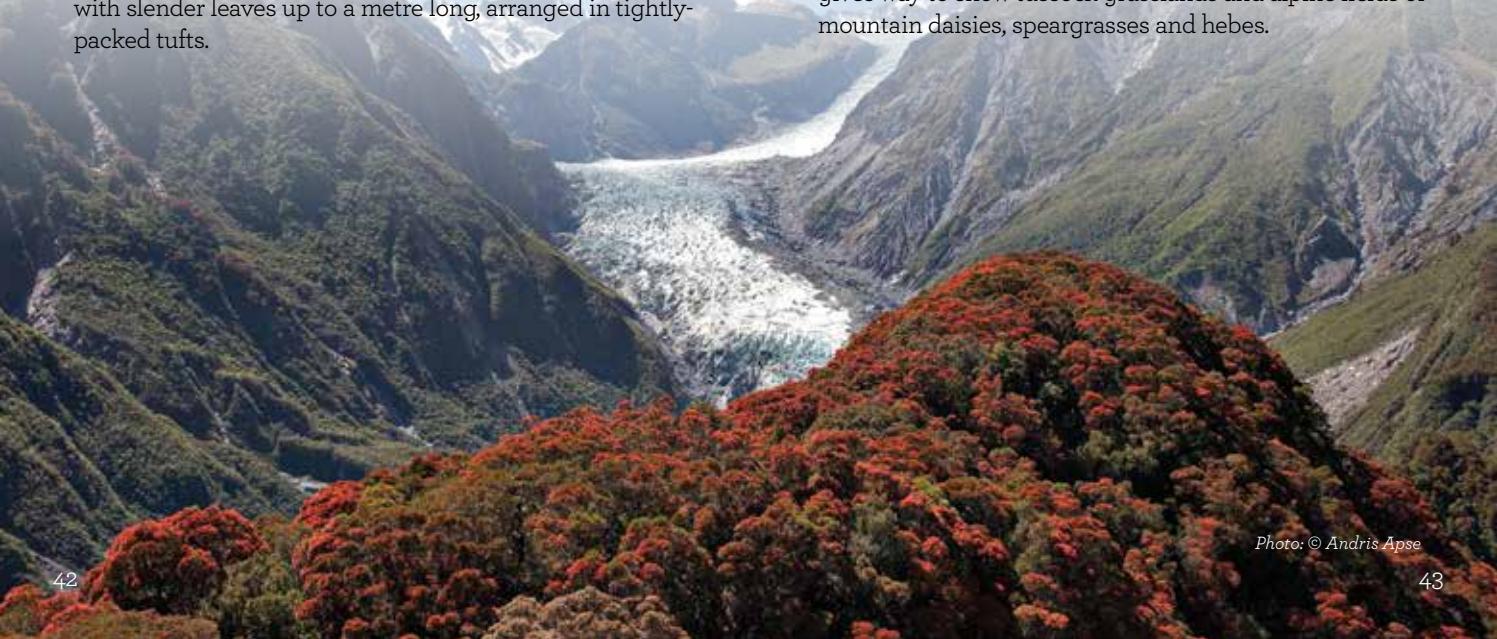


Photo: © Andris Apse

On the wing

Where the sea meets the land, Westland's estuaries and salt marshes create food-rich habitat for more than 70 bird species, including the pied and black oystercatchers, the tern and gull, white heron and the Australian black swan. Around the margins of lagoons like those at Ōkārito and Gillespies Beach, tūī and bellbird/korimako feed on flowering plants such as flax/harakeke and kōwhai. At Ōkārito, you may be lucky to see the uncommon New Zealand dotterel/tūturiwhatu scurrying along the beach.

Most common forest birds have been recorded in the area although they are often quiet and difficult to see. Take the Douglas Walk at Franz Josef to give yourself the best chance of seeing some of our most common natives – the wood pigeon/kererū and bellbird/korimako, the South Island tomtit/miromiro and the hungry fantail/pīwakawaka, which sometimes hovers close to pick up the tiny insects that you displace as you walk. Lake Wombat is another fine spot for birdwatchers. Here, you may be lucky enough to hear the screech of a kākā, or a parakeet/kākāriki chattering high in the treetops.

On your way to the glaciers, or above the bushline on Alex Knob and Mount Fox, watch for the kea (right), that

Kererū. Photo: © Liz Brown



Photo: © Katrina Henderson

glossy green alpine parrot with vivid red colouring under its wings and mischief in its eyes. Kea are a threatened species – **do not feed them**.

You may also spot other birds in the area – blue duck/whio on faster-flowing rivers, Australasian crested grebe/kāmāna on Lake Mapourika and New Zealand falcon/kārearea soaring overhead. Along the road, don't forget to look out for pūkeko, the swamp hen that saunters red-legged and blue-feathered across the paddocks.

Rowi road signs

Yes, there may be a kiwi on the road. Drive carefully between the state highway and Ōkārito. This is the home of the rowi – the Ōkārito brown kiwi – the rarest kiwi in the country. Like the other four species of New Zealand's national bird, the rowi is fighting to survive the threat of introduced predators like possums, cats and stoats.

Realistically, you are unlikely to encounter an Ōkārito brown kiwi. These birds are Critically Endangered – there are only a few hundred left. But the entire rowi population lives in an area of about 100 km² around Ōkārito Lagoon,

and if you take the Pakihi Walk or Ōkārito Trig Track at dusk on a still evening, you may hear the birds calling. Listen for the high almost-eerie whistle of the male – a single rising note repeated several times – and the hoarser response of the female.



Photo: © Iain Graham

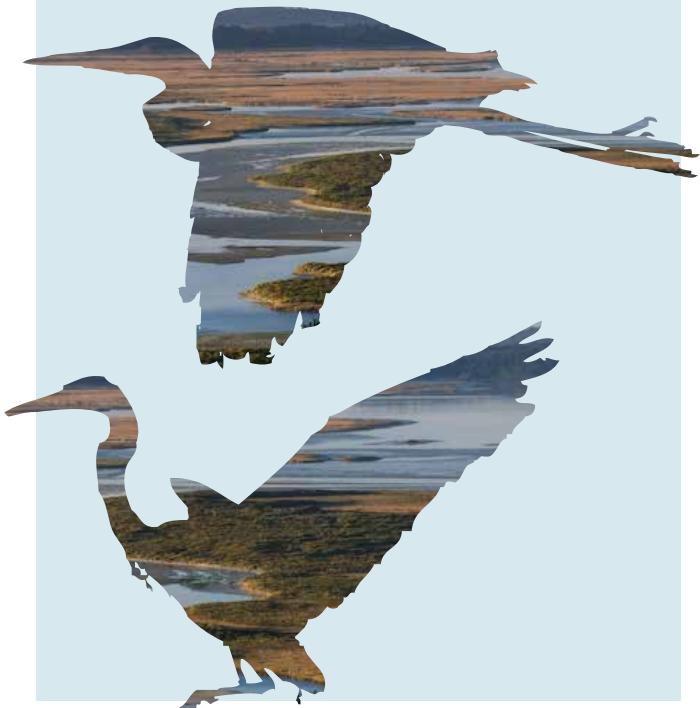
At home in Waitangiroto

Amongst the thousands of birds which visit or live at Ōkārito Lagoon is kōtuku, the white heron. The lagoon is the heron's main seasonal feeding ground with the only New Zealand breeding site just north of here. In August and September, when the whitebait are returning from the sea, kōtuku settle in beside the slow-moving Waitangiroto River. In kāmahi, māhoe and kōwhai trees, and in the crowns of tree ferns above the water, they build their large untidy nests.

Waitangiroto is a nature reserve and you cannot visit without a permit. From late October until early February, you can take a wildlife tour from either Whataroa or Franz Josef to view the nesting kōtuku from a hide on the opposite side of the river.



Kōtuku. Photo: © P McClelland



Tiny bait . . .

News travels fast when the whitebait are running. These minuscule fish are an icon on the Coast, where the locals spend hours on end waiting to scoop them into mesh nets. Each fish is just a couple of centimetres long, so it takes a few to make a traditional egg-and-bait fritter.

Whitebait are young native fish – most commonly of the inanga species, but also kōaro and a variety of kōkopu. After hatching in swamps and estuaries in autumn, the juvenile fish head to sea for six months before returning to freshwater streams and rivers to live.

During the West Coast season, which runs from 1 September until 14 November each year, whitebaiting becomes a lifestyle for many. At river mouths and along the banks of waterways you will see stands and shelters, caravans and deckchairs, and dozens of patient fishermen and women prepared to wait for days for a shoal of this translucent delicacy to swim by. If you want to have a go at whitebaiting, make sure you check out the West Coast whitebait fishing regulations first.

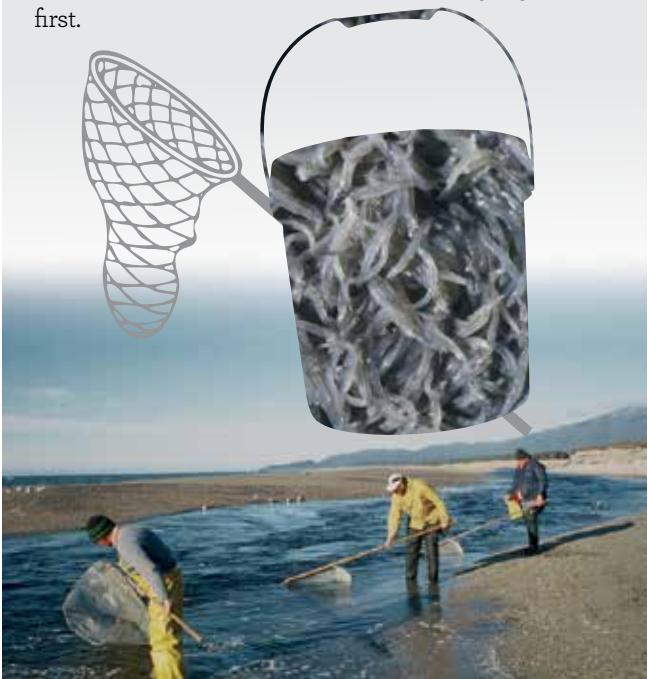


Photo: © P Gerbeaux

Photo: © Tony Lilleby

Accommodation in the glacier region

There is a large range of accommodation options within the region – visit www.glaciercountry.co.nz for more information.

DOC manages three conservation campsites and one lodge in the area.

Lake Ianthe/Matahi conservation campsite

Standard campsite 

Adjacent to State Highway 6, 15 km north of Harihari
One of Westland's many beautiful forest-edged lakes at the northern entrance to the glacier region. Popular for boating, trout fishing and swimming. Lakeside camping and campervan parking – gravel and grass areas. Area is sheltered from the road.

No bookings. Fees apply. Self registration.

Lake Mapourika—MacDonalds Creek and Ottos Corner conservation campsites

Scenic campsite 

15 km north of Franz Josef/Waiau

This attractive lake is surrounded by lowland rainforest and, on calm days, features superb reflections of the surrounding forest and mountain scenery. Popular for boating, fishing and swimming.

Large flat open gravel area for campervans (MacDonalds Creek) and smaller sheltered/secluded flat grass area for tents, with steps down to the lake beach (Ottos Corner).
No bookings. Fees apply. Self registration.

Gillespies Beach conservation campsite

Standard campsite 

North end of Gillespies Beach, 22 km from Fox Glacier
Camp at this beautiful beach near the old gold-mining settlement and seal colony. Grassy area for pitching tents.
No bookings. Fees apply. Self registration. Road not suitable for towing caravans.



Photo: © Liz Brown

Responsible camping

Please be a responsible camper and look after the environment – or you could receive an instant \$200 fine!

- Camp at designated campsites only
- Dispose of all waste (including human waste) responsibly
- If you aren't in a self-contained van, please camp at a campsite with a toilet!
- Camp at least 200 m away from a sign prohibiting camping
- If you are unsure – just ask.

Lock it or lose it

Every year visitors lose valuables from their cars in the many remote and not so remote areas of New Zealand. Car parks at walk and track entrances are particularly vulnerable.

- Take all valuables with you
- Leave nothing on display in your car
- Remember to lock!

Ōkārito School House

The Ōkārito School House is managed as a historic asset by DOC, and is available to book for individuals or families/groups of up to 12 people to enjoy the wonders of Ōkārito and the glacier region, while immersing themselves in local history. Book online via the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz.



Other activities



Boating and kayaking

Great spots for boating and kayaking are the forest-lined lakes of Ianthe/Matahi, Mapourika and Wahapo and the Ōkārito Lagoon. Commercial companies offer kayak tours and hire, and boat tours on Lake Mapourika and the Ōkārito Lagoon. Motorboats are permitted on these lakes.



Hunting

Permits are required for hunting and can be obtained online www.doc.govt.nz/hunting. Some area restrictions apply, so check the permit conditions carefully.



Tramping

Track and route guides for multi-day and remote tramping, including the Copland Track to Welcome Flat Hut, can be obtained from local DOC offices or visit the Department of Conservation website: www.doc.govt.nz/recreation.



Mountain biking

Te Ara a Waiau and Te Weheka walkways/cycleways and Neils Creek provide the only opportunities for off-road mountain biking within the national park. Ask at the Westland Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre about further mountain biking options in the North Ōkārito and Saltwater forests.

Guided walks

If you want to get close to (or even walk on) one of the glaciers, there are several companies in Franz Josef/Waiau and Fox Glacier that offer this opportunity. See www.doc.govt.nz/visittheglacierssafely for more information.



Dogs and pets

Dogs and domestic animals are not permitted in national parks or reserves, or at any of the DOC accommodation and campsites listed in this brochure. Permits are required for all other areas of public conservation land outside national parks – contact the nearest DOC office.



Didymo

Didymosphenia geminata is an introduced pest native to Europe and North America. It poses a serious threat to the environmental, recreational and aesthetic values of our lakes and rivers.

Didymo attaches itself to streambeds, forming a thick layer that smothers rocks, submerged plants and other materials. It is already present in a number of waterways in the South Island, and is spread very easily, by a single drop of water.

Check – remove all obvious unwanted material from items that have been in contact with the water.

Clean – clean all equipment with a detergent solution, ensuring surface contact for one minute. You can use a 5% solution of dishwashing liquid.

Dry – dry the item to touch and leave for at least 48 hr to kill didymo.

No drones in the Franz Josef or Fox glacier valleys. Permits required elsewhere – contact the nearest DOC office.



Three Mile Beach. Photo: © Petr Hlavacek

Getting to and from the glacier region

Are you looking for a short walk to break your journey to the glacier region? The following are all easily reached and signposted from the main access roads to (and on) the West Coast. Check out the DOC visitor centres in Arthur's Pass, Punakaiki, Haast or Wanaka for more details of the range of walks on the roads to and from the glacier region.

From Christchurch via Arthur's Pass

Devils Punchbowl Falls

1 hr, 1.6 km return

On the edge of Arthur's Pass township. The top of this spectacular waterfall (131 m) can be seen from the main road, but a walk to its base is well worth doing in any weather, at any time of the year.

From Nelson via the Buller Gorge

Pancake Rocks and blowholes

20 min, 1.1 km return

Spectacular walk through coastal forest to blowholes that are at their best at high tide when there is a westerly swell.

From Wanaka via Haast Pass

Blue Pools Walk

30 min, 1.5 km return

4 km north of Makarora village or 1 hr, 75 km south of Haast Pass

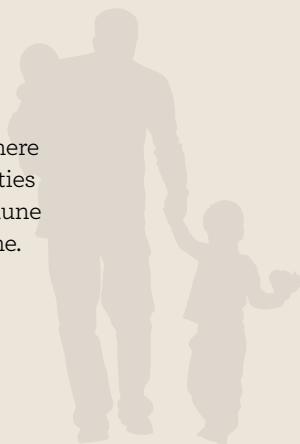
An easy walk that starts at the car park just north of Muddy Creek, and leads through silver beech to a viewing platform overlooking the pools at the mouth of Blue River.

Dune Lake Walk at Ship Creek

30 min, 1 km return

On the highway north of Haast

This walk winds through dense coastal forest stunted by wind. There are magnificent photo opportunities from platforms overlooking the dune lake and the sweep of the coastline.



Travelling times between key locations

Christchurch – Arthur's Pass – Hokitika

252 km, 3.5 hr drive

Hokitika to Franz Josef Glacier

136 km, 2 hr drive

Franz Josef Glacier to Fox

Glacier 23 km,

45 min drive

Fox Glacier to Haast

117 km, 2 hr drive

Haast to Wanaka

145 km

2.25 hr drive



DOC office contacts

Westland Tai Poutini National Park Visitor Centre

Department of Conservation

69 Cron Street

PO Box 14, Franz Josef Glacier 7856

Ph 03 752 0360 Email westlandnpsc@doc.govt.nz

Open 7 days

Fox Glacier Office

Department of Conservation

Main Road

PO Box 9, Fox Glacier 7859

Ph 03 751 0807 Email foxglacier@doc.govt.nz

Open Monday – Friday

Awarua/Haast Visitor Centre

Department of Conservation

Haast Junction, Cnr SH6 and Jackson Bay Road

PO Box 50, Haast 7844

Ph 03 750 0809 Email haastvc@doc.govt.nz

Open 7 days

Hokitika Office

Department of Conservation

10 Sewell Street

Private Bag 701, Hokitika 7842

Ph 03 756 9100 Email hokitika@doc.govt.nz

Open Monday – Friday



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
- Respect wildlife and farm animals
- Be considerate of others

