

Nau mai, haere mai, tauti mai

Welcome to the Matukituki valley

The valleys of the west and east branches of the Matukituki River are an hour's drive from Wanaka and offer enjoyable day walks, as well as access to a number of demanding tramping and climbing routes in Mount Aspiring National Park. The special features of this region were recognised nationally in 1964 through the creation of the national park and internationally in 1990 with the establishment of Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area.

The valley walks cross farmland and beech forest flats, while the higher altitude routes negotiate alpine tussock grasslands and snowfields. The lower grassy river flats are private farmland – please respect this and do not disturb livestock.

Mount Aspiring National Park

In the West Matukituki valley, the park's boundary runs just beyond Aspiring Hut and along the bush edge on the true left of the river. In the East Matukituki valley, the boundary is along the bush edge on the true right of the river up to Junction Flat. Remember that the true right of the river is the right bank when looking downstream.

 **Warning:** The last 33 km of the access road is unsealed. The last 10 km from the car park is subject to washouts and flooded creeks and should only be accessed in fine weather. Check the road conditions before beginning your drive.

Your safety

Read the DOC publication *Planning a trip in the backcountry* before you start, visit www.doc.govt.nz/planning-a-backcountry-trip. Make sure you choose a track that suits your level of fitness and experience.

Follow the Outdoor Safety Code.

- Plan your trip.
- Tell someone your plans.
- Be aware of the weather.
- Know your limits.
- Take sufficient supplies.

Visit www.adventuresmart.org.nz for more information.

Your safety is your responsibility. You should carry the NZTopo50 maps CA10 and CA11. This pamphlet is a guide only and should not be used for navigation purposes.

Treat all river crossings with great care and wait if the river is too high. The terms 'true left' and 'true right' are defined by looking down the river or water flow.

Private property: Some of these tracks cross private land. Respect the landowner's livestock and property: stay on the marked track until you reach the conservation land, leave gates as you find them and use stiles where provided. Livestock can be unpredictable – keep your distance at all times/go around if necessary.

 **Untreated water - Water at huts is not treated or tested, and may not be suitable for drinking, food preparation, tooth brushing or washing dishes. Boil water before use.**

 **Dogs and other domestic animals are not permitted in national parks.**

Our national parks have been preserved for their recreation values and to protect significant native flora and fauna. It is vital that habitats of threatened species are properly protected.

 **No unauthorised drones within Mount Aspiring National Park.**

Drones can:

- interfere with helicopters for search and rescue, fire, and operational needs
- cause noise, disturbing native birds and visitors.



Check, Clean, Dry

Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

Further information:

For recreation and conservation information, visit the DOC visitor centre:

Tititea/Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre

1 Ballantyne Road, Wanaka
PO Box 93, Wanaka 9305

PHONE: 03 443 7660

EMAIL: mtaspiringvc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz

Matukituki Valley tracks

| Mount Aspiring National Park



Matukituki valley from Shovel Flat.

Photo: E. Astin.

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Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

History

Tititea, the Māori name for Mount Aspiring, means 'steep peak of glistening white'. Throughout the year, Māori travelled from Foveaux Strait and Coastal Otago to the inland lakes to collect kākāpō, kākā, kererū/wood pigeon and tūi from the forest. For the first 200 years of Māori settlement, there would also have been moa along the forest edges.

Kāi Māmoe and Kāi Tahu both had named settlements around the shores of Lakes Wanaka and Hāwea, including Nehenehe (meaning forest), on the north side of the mouth of the Matukituki River. Several sites on the lake shores have ovens for cooking cabbage tree/ tī rākau roots.

Government surveyor John Turnbull Thompson was the first European to see Mount Aspiring/Tititea in 1857, while James Hector was the first European to explore the West Matukituki valley in 1862. Farming began in the valley in the 1870s.

Natural history

Most of the Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana started to form over 220 million years ago as sediment and rock lying on top of volcanic rocks on the seafloor. Intense heat and pressure consolidated the rock, which was then uplifted to form the Main Divide. During the ice ages, huge glaciers filled and scoured out the valleys to give the landscape we see today.

Beech is the dominant forest type in the Matukituki valley. Red beech/tawhairaunui prefer warm valley sites and are common just below Aspiring Hut. Mountain beech/tawhairauriki dominate the drier, eastern end of the valley, while silver beech/tawhai increase towards the wetter, western end. Ferns and mosses are a feature of the usually open forest. Above the tree line, at about 1,100 m, stunted subalpine shrubland gives way to alpine tussock grasslands and fell fields.

Insect-eating birds such as fantails/pīwakawaka, tomtits/miromiro and rifleman/titipounamu thrive in beech forest, and seed-eating parakeets/kākāriki are common in the red beech forest. In 2008, South Island robins/kakaruaui were released into the valley to re-establish the species in this area. Paradise shelducks/pūtakitaki are a conspicuous and noisy feature of the river flats, and spur-winged plovers and oystercatchers/tōrea are common on farmland and along the drive from Wanaka in the summer.



Rifleman/Titipounamu.
Photo: Michael Hamilton |
Creative Commons



Matukituki Valley Protection Project

This joint partnership between the Department of Conservation (DOC) and the Matukituki Charitable Trust aims to minimise the threat of predators to native flora and fauna and to ensure that the valley's original native wildlife is reinstated and thriving.

To find out more about this predator control project or how to get involved, go to www.mctrust.co.nz or www.doc.govt.nz, or visit the Tititea/Mount Aspiring National Park Visitor Centre.

Hunting and fishing

You must get a permit from DOC before carrying a firearm in the park.

There are brown and rainbow trout in the Matukituki River – you will need a current fishing licence to fish here. For more information, see <https://fishandgame.org.nz>.

Huts and camping

Aspiring Hut, which is owned by the New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) and managed by DOC, has a wood burner for heating, mattresses and tank water. From late October to late April, a hut warden is in residence and cookers and gas are provided. At all other times, trampers need their own cookers and gas.

French Ridge Hut (NZAC), Colin Todd Hut (NZAC) and Liverpool Hut (DOC) have mattresses and tank water but no heating. French Ridge and Colin Todd huts also have VHF radios.

Trampers should leave the huts clean and tidy, and pack out everything that they pack in.

Important note: Hut tickets for the three NZAC huts can be purchased at the DOC Visitor Centre in Wanaka or through the NZAC website www.alpineclub.org.nz. Online bookings are needed for Aspiring and Liverpool huts (Dec-April). Check www.doc.govt.nz for updated information and for bookings.

Camping beside all huts incurs a nightly fee. Aspiring Hut has a designated camping area with a shelter and toilet – hut facilities are not available to campers. Liverpool Hut has limited space for camping. Campers at other huts can use the hut facilities.

Camping elsewhere within the park boundary is allowed under the following conditions.

- Camp at least 200 m away from tracks (this may be difficult in places due to steep slopes or thick bush)
- Follow the Leave No Trace principles. This includes burying toilet waste well away from any water sources or carrying it out.



Check, Clean, Dry

Stop the spread of didymo and other freshwater pests. Remember to Check, Clean, Dry all items before entering, and when moving between, waterways.

Heading up the valley. Photo: Nicole McCrossin

Matukituki valley. Photo: Nicole McCrossin

West Matukituki valley

Note: All times and distances are one way unless otherwise stated.

Raspberry Creek car park to Aspiring Hut

2 hr–2 hr 30 min, 9 km

The tramp to Aspiring Hut, 411 m above sea level (a.s.l.), mainly passes over grassed flats with a couple of easily negotiated small bluffs that offer great views of the valley – please leave farm gates as you find them. The historic Cascade Hut (NZAC, locked) can be seen from the last bluff. The 29-bunk Aspiring Hut is 20 min beyond this hut.

Rob Roy Track

3–4 hr, 10 km (return)

 **Warning:** This track passes through ‘simple’ avalanche terrain to the Lower Lookout followed by ‘complex’ avalanche terrain from the Lower Lookout to the end of the track; refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip in this area between May and November.

The valley is a good entry point to an area of spectacular alpine scenery, snowfields, glaciers, sheer rock cliffs and waterfalls. A swing bridge located 15 min from the Raspberry Creek car park crosses the Matukituki River West Branch downstream from the Rob Roy Stream junction. After crossing the bridge, the track climbs through a small gorge into beech forest, then into alpine vegetation at the head of the valley where there are good views of the Rob Roy Glacier.

Shotover Saddle Route

3 hr, 2 km

 **Warning:** This route passes through ‘complex’ avalanche terrain; refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip in this area between May and November.

Just below the Brides Veil Waterfall on the top of the hill, a sign indicates the start of a marked route to the Shotover Saddle. The poled route initially negotiates patches of bracken, crossing the stream twice before reaching higher tussock slopes. Just below the saddle, a shelf with a large tarn makes an easier finish to the saddle for magnificent views of the West Matukituki and Rob Roy valleys.

Venturing beyond the saddle requires navigational skills as there is no marked route. Prior permission is required from Branches Station to exit via the Shotover River.

This route crosses private land so please keep to the route and respect the landowner’s property.

Closed for lambing 17 October – 7 November.

Aspiring Hut to Pearl Flat

1 hr 30 min, 5 km

 **Warning:** This track passes through ‘challenging’ avalanche terrain between Rough Creek (just beyond Aspiring Hut) and the intersection with Liverpool Track. Refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip in this area between May and November.

The track enters the bush near Aspiring Hut. After 10 min, a bridge crosses Cascade Creek. Two further bridges are crossed at Rough Creek and Shovel Flat, as you travel through a mixture of beech forest and open clearings to reach Pearl Flat.

Pearl Flat to head of the valley

2 hr, 3.2 km

 **Warning:** This track passes through ‘complex’ avalanche terrain from the bridge at the beginning of Liverpool Track to the head of the valley; refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip in this area between May and November.

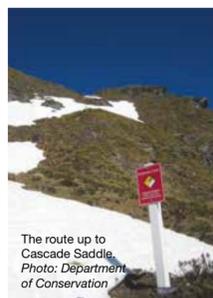
From the top of Pearl Flat the track enters the bush on the true right of the river. Cross the Liverpool swing bridge and after 10 min cross the French Ridge swing bridge to the beginning of the French Ridge Track. After sidling for 100m you will come to a track junction. Follow the Upper Matukituki track which branches off to the left, climbing through beech forest before reaching open scrubby country. Scotts Rock Biv is about 500 m upstream from this point and 50 m from the river. This small and not entirely waterproof rock shelter is marked with a cairn on top.

Note: The route beyond the head of the valley to Bevan Col is for experienced trampers and climbers only.

Aspiring Hut to Cascade Saddle

4–5 hr, 6 km

 **Warning:** Multiple fatalities have occurred on this route so make sure you have the right skills and equipment. Be prepared to turn back if conditions are unfavourable – failure to make good decisions while attempting this traverse may result in serious injury or death.



The route up to Cascade Saddle. Photo: Department of Conservation

The Cascade Saddle Route passes through ‘complex’ avalanche terrain; refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip in this area between May and November.

This route is an alpine crossing and should not to be attempted in bad weather. Steep snow grass slopes can be very slippery when wet or covered with snow or ice. Sudden storms with snow affect this area, even in summer. In early summer, crampons and an ice axe may be required. This route is not recommended in winter or spring.

Signposted from Aspiring Hut, the track climbs steadily up through mixed beech forest. Above the bushline, the track becomes a route and is marked with orange poles that follow a steep snow grass and tussock ridge with a few rocky outcrops and ledges to negotiate. It reaches the pylon at the top of the ridge (1,835 m a.s.l.) via a steep and narrow gully that holds snow for much of the year. After the pylon, follow the poles down to Cascade Creek, and cross the creek to the easy slopes and flats leading to Cascade Saddle (1,524 m a.s.l.). The route to the valleys of the Dart River/Te Awa Whakatipu and the Rees River veers off to the left, just before the saddle.

This route can be accessed from the Dart, Rees and West Matukituki valleys. For safety reasons it is recommended that trampers begin from the Matukituki side. If the route is attempted in reverse (from the Dart valley), the pylon and orange-poled route MUST be located before descending into the Matukituki valley. This section of the route is much more difficult to go down than up.

Cascade Saddle to Dart Hut

4–5 hr, 10 km

 **Warning:** This route passes through ‘complex’ avalanche terrain; refer to www.avalanche.net.nz if planning a trip in this area between May and November.

Follow the orange poles along the ridge and then the rock cairns down the steep and unstable slopes to the valley floor and lateral moraines of the Dart Glacier. The descent from the ridge to the valley floor is very exposed to the weather.

Stay on the true left bank of the Dart River/Te Awa Whakatipu – the left side looking downriver. You will need to ford several side streams – take particular care with streams further down the valley close to Dart Hut, as the water level can rise quickly with rain or afternoon snow melt.

Slightly upstream from the confluence of the Dart River and Snowy Creek, a bridge crosses the creek and leads to the 32-bunk Dart Hut.

Information on other routes leading from the Dart Hut is available in the Rees–Dart Track brochure. Visit www.doc.govt.nz/reesdart.

Aspiring Hut to Liverpool Hut

3–4 hr, 6 km

 **Warning:** Tussock and rock can be treacherous and slippery when wet or covered in snow.

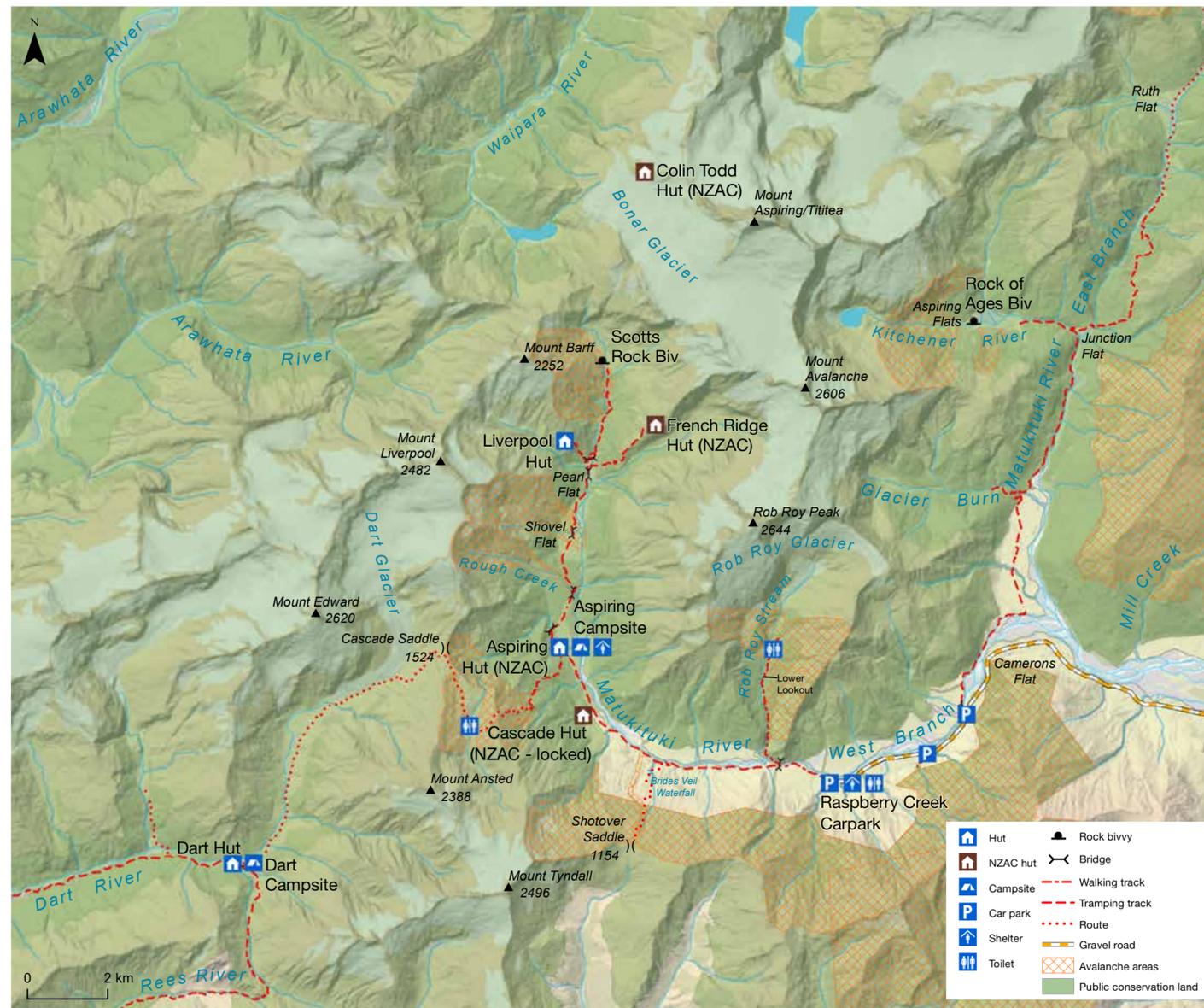
From Pearl Flat, cross the swing bridge at Liverpool Stream. The track to the 10-bunk Liverpool Hut (1,100 m a.s.l.) is a steep and often slippery climb to the bushline. Above the bush, the track initially leads across steep, exposed shingle, rock and tussock terrain before bearing left up an easier tussock slope to reach a knoll overlooking the hut. Note: Do not sidle across to the hut below this knoll when the hut is first sighted.

Aspiring Hut to French Ridge Hut

4–5 hr, 7.2 km

 **Warning:** The upper part of the French Ridge Track is very exposed and can be treacherous in bad weather.

From Pearl Flat, ford the river to the east bank or cross the Liverpool Stream swing bridge and continue 10 min further up the valley where a second swing bridge provides access across the river. After crossing Pearl Flat, the track enters the bush and climbs steeply all the way to the ridge – with narrow cuttings and creek beds to negotiate in the subalpine zone. From here, follow the gentle tussock slopes for about 1 km. The 20-bunk French Ridge Hut (1,480 m a.s.l.) is on flattish ground, just below the normal summer snowline of around 1,500 m a.s.l.



Track grades

-  **Easy tramping track**
Well-formed track for comfortable overnight tramping/hiking.
-  **Tramping track**
Mostly unformed but with track directional markers, poles or cairns. Backcountry skills and experience required.
-  **Route**
Unformed, suitable only for people with high-level backcountry skills and experience.

East Matukituki valley

Cameron Flat to Glacier Burn

2 hr, 5 km from river crossing; or
3 hr, 7 km from Otago Boys High swing bridge

Cross the Matukituki River near Cameron Flat. If the river is high, use the Otago Boys High swing bridge, which is a 1-hr walk (2 km) upstream. Cross the grassy flats to Glacier Burn and deviate left before the bridge. The track leads up the Glacier Burn’s true right then drops down to the Glacier Burn. The marked track finishes here but experienced trampers can continue up to the head of the valley.

Cameron Flat to Junction Flat

3–4 hr, 9.5 km

The first section of this track follows the grassy flats to Glacier Burn. After crossing the bridge at Glacier Burn, continue on the true right of the Matukituki River East Branch through beech forest, crossing a second 3-wire bridge to Junction Flat.

Junction Flat to Aspiring Flats

1 hr 30 min, 2.5 km

Follow the true right of the Kitchener River. After climbing an old slip, pass through beech forest to the top of the gorge. The Rock of Ages bivouac is 30 min past Aspiring Flat, 20 m into the bush on the true right near the head of the flats (NZTopo50 Sheet CA11 651 738).

Junction Flat to Ruth Flat

4–6 hr, 6 km

Cross the Kitchener River and the Matukituki River East Branch at Junction Flat – both have three-wire bridges. On the true left of the Matukituki River East Branch, follow a marked track by Hester Pinney Creek that leads steeply up to the bushline. The route across the tussock slopes is marked by orange snow poles until it re-enters the bush and descends to a large washed-out creek. Follow the East Matukituki branch river’s true left until Ruth Flat can be seen on the other side.

Further information on the Wilkin River–East Matukituki Traverse can be found in the *Gillespie Pass, Wilkin valley tracks* brochure. *Note: This route is for experienced trampers only.*



Aspiring Hut. Photo: Rochelle Richardson



French Ridge Hut. Photo: Nicole McCrossin