

Every day Department of Conservation rangers check conditions and put up barriers and signs to show **YOU** the current hazards. Follow their instructions and stay behind the barriers.



But . . .

“I can see people up the valley – past the barrier – so it must be safe . . .”

You may see people up the valleys beyond the barriers. They will be guided parties or people with experience in the valley. They know the conditions and have good safety systems in place to ensure the well-being and safety of their party. Don't follow these people and lead others into dangerous situations.

“The barrier is in place, but the valley looks harmless. I can't see any problem carrying on”

Don't be fooled by the apparent calmness of the valley.

The barriers are in place because there is an imminent threat to your safety in the valley. There could be an ice-dam blocking the river about to burst at any moment causing a river surge; or there may be unstable rock above, ready to fall on your path. A flooding river or stream may be about to burst its banks. You might not see these threats but all are likely events in a glacier valley.

“But I came all this way to touch a glacier”

Ask the families of the people who have died if it was worth going beyond the safety barriers.

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.



Getting up close safely . . .

You can touch the ice by going with an experienced glacier guiding company from Franz Josef/Waiiau or Fox Glacier/Weheka townships. Guided trips are safe and informative.

Franz Josef Glacier Guides –
www.franzjosefglacier.com

Fox Glacier Guiding – www.foxguides.co.nz

Glacier Valley Eco Tours – www.glaciervalley.co.nz

For more information . . .

Visit the Westland *Tai Poutini* National Park Visitor Centre and i-SITE
State Highway 6, Franz Josef
phone 03 752 0796
email westlandnpvc@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz/visittheglacierssafely

Published by
Department of Conservation
West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy
Private Bag 701
Hokitika, New Zealand
2011

newzealand.govt.nz



Visiting the Fox and Franz Josef glacier valleys

Your guide to a safe visit



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Welcome! 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 in the glacier valleys.

- Access roads and tracks to Fox and Franz Josef glacier valleys can be closed due to rock falls or flooded rivers.
- Glacier viewpoints may be hundreds of metres from the face of the glacier.

To help you choose which glacier to visit and get the latest information:

- visit the Westland *Tai Poutini* National Park Visitor Centre and i-SITE in Franz Josef/Waiiau or South Westland *Weheka* Area Office in Fox Glacier/Weheka (information foyers open 24 hours)
- visit www.doc.govt.nz/visithetheglacierssafely

Be prepared

The weather can change at any time. Walking to the glaciers:

- is over rough and uneven ground
- can involve crossing streams.

Be prepared to turn back if conditions are not favourable or you are outside your comfort zone

You will need

- good sturdy footwear
- warm waterproof clothing.

Check the weather forecast and carry the right gear



Read the signs and stay behind barriers

You will be walking on the floor of the glacial valley – right in the path of any dangers, like flood waters, river surges, rock or ice fall. Signs are in place to explain the dangers and barriers are in place to protect you – read and respect them.

Ice falls

Never go over the barrier and stand close to the glacier face – rocks and ice fall from the terminal face continuously – some pieces can be twice the size of a campervan!



River surges

Glacial rivers can be dammed by ice falls; the dam will burst creating a huge surge of water and ice, flooding the valley within minutes.



Rock falls

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



River flooding

Downpours can create flooding within minutes. Follow the marked track, obey all signs and never cross barriers.



Experienced ice climbers and guides who continue past the barriers and on to the glacier have the specialised equipment and skills needed.

Your safety and that of your family is your responsibility at all times.