

The Head of Lake Wakatipu

Walking and tramping around Glenorchy



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Weka



TRACK CLASSIFICATION



Short Walk – Easy walking for up to an hour for most fitness levels on well-formed tracks.



Walking Track – Walking from a few minutes up to a day on mostly well-formed tracks; 'shoe' standard and suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities.



Easy Tramping Track – Comfortable multi-day tramping/hiking on generally well formed tracks. Some sections may be rough, muddy or steep. Major stream and river crossings are bridged. Light tramping/hiking boot standard; suitable for people with limited backcountry experience.



Tramping Track – Challenging day or multi-day tramping on mostly unformed tracks that may be rough and steep; 'boot' standard. Suitable for people with moderate to high-level backcountry skills and experience, navigation and survival skills required. Streams and rivers may not be bridged.

Introduction



Glenorchy Lagoon with Humboldt Mountains

Glenorchy, at the head of Lake Wakatipu, is 48 kilometres from Queenstown. In the mountain valleys beyond the township are some of New Zealand's best-known multi-day tracks. There are also great day walks on these tracks and many shorter walks.

History

Glaciers sculpted this mountainous landscape until, some 15,000 years ago, ice melt started filling Lake Wakatipu. Tectonic uplift and weathering still shape the schist where it is not covered by tussock, beech forest and subalpine shrubland.

Māori first visited here in search of pounamu/greenstone and moa. They were hapū or extended family groups from Otago and the Southland coast, who left evidence of about 30 summer campsites.

The first European settlers were runholder William Rees and his family in 1860. By 1862 the lure of gold brought many more. The drawcards for early settlers were resources: gold, scheelite, grazing land and timber, but tourism soon followed.

Commercial mountain guiding began in 1882 on Mt Earnslaw/Pikirakatahi, and within seven years there were six hotels and guesthouses at the head of the lake. Until 1962, when the Glenorchy Road was opened, tourists relied on boats and pack tracks to get here. Two years after the road came through Mount Aspiring National Park was formed. By 1990 the national park was virtually twice the size and became part of Te Wāhipounamu-South West New Zealand World Heritage Area; a classification that recognises the region's significance to global landscape conservation.



Explanation of the symbols can be found on the map.



Glenorchy Boardwalk

1 Glenorchy Walkway

1–2 hour loop track

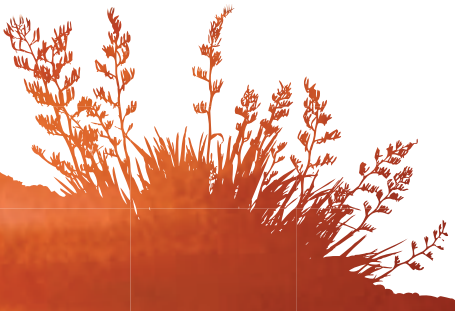
Start/finish: signposted from Glenorchy waterfront



A great family walk, with views of Mt Earnslaw/Pikirakatahi, Mt Alfred/Ari and the surrounding ranges. This track has recently been extended. Dogs are allowed on a lead only.

The boardwalk traverses wetlands just north of Glenorchy with plenty of opportunity to view bird life. Native species include, pied stilt/poaka, South Island pied oystercatcher/tōrea, Australasian bittern/matuku, New Zealand shoveller/kuruwhengu, grey teal/tete (in spring), grey duck/pārera, and scaup/pāpango. The New Zealand falcon/kārearea may be seen soaring above the wetland hunting for prey.

In heavy or prolonged rain the Glenorchy Lagoon section of the walkway becomes flooded. Care is required.



Walks in Whakaari Conservation Area

2 Mt Judah Track

2–3 hours one way

Start/finish: Whakaari car park



From the car park on the Queenstown–Glenorchy Road, three kilometres before Glenorchy, an easy climb leads up onto the old Mt Judah Road which sidles around the northern side of Mt Judah. The track passes the remains of the Glenorchy Scheelite Battery and the State Mine, last operated in the 1960s. The Bonnie Jean Hut (day use only) is a half-hour climb up a marked track from the end of the old Mount Judah Road. Ten minutes before Bonnie Jean Hut, a short signposted track leads to The Boozer Hut, relocated and restored in 2011.

3 Heather Jock Track

3–4 hours one way

Start/finish: end of the old Mt Judah Road, 2 hours from car park



From the Mt Judah Road below Bonnie Jean Hut, a marked track follows an old mining road up a zigzag to Heather Jock Hut (3 bunks). From there the track sidles down and across to Bonnie Jean Hut, before dropping back down to Mt Judah Road.

4 Mt McIntosh Loop Track

8–10 hours return

Starts at Whakaari car park, finishes on the Queenstown–Glenorchy Road beside the Buckler Burn, 15 minutes walk from the car park



From The Junction (1 hour 30 min from the car park) follow the marked track which drops steeply down to the Buckler Burn. A steady climb on an old mining road leads to McIntyre Hut (3 bunks). A further 1 hour 30 min on is McIntosh Hut (4 bunks) on the flanks of Mt McIntosh, this is a half-hour climb beyond Long Gully Saddle. Dropping back to Long Gully Saddle, a steep climb leads along a ridge giving superb views of Lake Wakatipu, Mt Earnslaw/Pikirakatahi, and the Dart Valley. The track, going through overgrown bush in some sections, drops steeply along a fence line to the Glenorchy Road beside the Buckler Burn.

River crossing experience is essential.

5 Diamond Creek

45 minutes one way to Lake Reid

Start/finish: Glenorchy–Routeburn Road,

15 minutes from Glenorchy



Following the true left bank of Diamond Creek, a popular trout fishing stream, this sometimes boggy track to Lake Reid provides good opportunities for viewing waterfowl and Paradise and the Dart Valley.

6 Invincible Gold Mine

1 hr 30 min up, 1 hour down

Start/finish: Rees Valley Road (gravel, with fords)

30 minutes from Glenorchy



This track was built by miners in the 1880s and features great views of the Rees Valley and Mt Earnslaw/Pikirakatahi. Remains of the water wheel and a unique set of seven berdans—large, slowly revolving cast iron bowls that ground the ore—are also visible.

7 Earnslaw Burn Track

4–6 hours one-way

Start/finish: the true left bank of the Earnslaw Burn partway along Lovers Leap Road, a right turn off the gravelled Glenorchy–Paradise Road, 20 minutes from Glenorchy



Following the Earnslaw Burn through bush to the tussock basin at the head of the valley, there are impressive views of an icefall on Mt Earnslaw/Pikirakatahi. An overhanging rock just within the forest on the true right of Earnslaw Burn provides useful shelter. Crossing the river to the bivvy is dangerous in heavy rain.

8 Kea Basin Track

Time: 4–5 hours one-way from Muddy Creek, 1 hour 15 minutes from the sign on the terrace before the bush edge

Start/finish: Rees Valley Road – Muddy Creek car park, 30 minutes from Glenorchy; gravel road with fords)



It is well worth the half-day climb to this beautiful subalpine



Earnslaw Burn Track

tussock basin beneath Mt Earnslaw/Pikirakatahi, with stunning views up the Rees Valley towards Rees Saddle. The zigzag track starts on the low terrace north of Lennox Falls, where the bush edge meets the terrace. One hour up, Earnslaw Hut (basic) has 4 bunks; 15 minutes further on there is a rock bivvy just above the bushline. Kea Basin adjoins the Mt Earnslaw/Pikirakatahi Tōpuni, which recognises the historic and cultural importance of this mountain to Kāi Tahu.

Take great care crossing the Rees River and its tributaries, they become dangerously swift when high. River crossing experience is essential.

9 Lake Sylvan

40 minutes one way or 1 hr 40 min returning via the tramline loop

Start/finish: Lake Sylvan car park, 30 minutes from Glenorchy (gravel road)



This recently upgraded, well-defined track leads through old moraine river terraces and very tall red beech/tawhairaunui to pretty Lake Sylvan, home to brown trout and numerous small native fish. Returning via the 1920s tramline loop, you can compare regenerating beech in this cutover area to the untouched forest that you walk through on the way in.

Note: The tramline loop includes a river crossing.

10 Sugarloaf–Rockburn Track

2–3 hours Lake Sylvan to Rockburn hut, 6–8 hours Rockburn Hut to Routeburn car park

Start/finish: Lake Sylvan car park, 30 min from Glenorchy



From Lake Sylvan (#9) the marked track traverses moraine through beech forest. After severe storm damage the Rockburn Hut had to be removed, but a nearby camp shelter, owned by Dart River Jet Safaris, is available for public use. River beaches and pools and a chasm are close by. Climb through forest to the fragile Sugarloaf Saddle with great views of the Rockburn and Routeburn valleys. The descent to the Routeburn Track is steep.



Lake Harris on Routeburn Track

Routeburn Track day-walk options

11 Routeburn Nature Walk

Time: 40 min – 1 hr return



From the Routeburn Shelter car park, cross the Routeburn on the swing bridge and follow the main Routeburn Track for approximately 10–15 minutes. A marked turnoff on the left takes a winding path down from the main track onto the valley floor, where you pass through beautiful red beech/tawhairaunui-dominated forest.

After meandering its way through this flat area for 10–15 minutes, the track rejoins the main Routeburn Track at Sugarloaf Stream. From here you can either carry on across the Sugarloaf swing bridge up the Routeburn Track, or turn back and follow the main track back to the car park (20–30 minutes).

12 Routeburn Flats

1 hr 30 min – 2 hr 30 min one way, 6.5 km



From the car park at the Routeburn shelter, cross a swing bridge to the well-formed track weaving through beech forest. Beyond Sugarloaf Stream, the track follows the old bridle path, built in the 1870s, up to Bridal Veil Stream and a sidle above Routeburn Gorge. The third swing bridge takes you back across the Route Burn to open grassed flats. At the marked junction, turn right to Routeburn Flats Hut (bookings required late October to late April), or left to continue towards the Routeburn Falls.

13 Routeburn Falls

2 hr 30 min – 4 hr one way, 8.8 km



Follow the track to Routeburn Flats as above, continue left towards the Routeburn Falls. It is a steady climb through stunning beech forest crossing two swing bridges. A recent slip allows excellent views of the valley below. Care should be taken crossing this slip, especially after heavy rain. The impressive Routeburn Falls are situated on the edge of the bushline next to Routeburn Falls Hut (bookings required late October to late April).



Routeburn Falls

14 Harris Saddle

4 hr – 6 hr 30 min one way, 12 km



Follow the track towards the Routeburn Falls as above. From here, the track climbs steadily to the outlet of the river at Lake Harris. Stop occasionally and look behind you for great views of the Routeburn Valley.

A sidle through moraine and above Lake Harris leads to the high point of the track at Harris Saddle/Tarahaka Whakatipu (1255 m). Please keep to the track as vegetation in this subalpine area is very fragile. Harris Saddle is located on the boundary between Mt Aspiring National Park and Fiordland National Park. A day shelter and toilet are located here.

15 Scott Creek Track

3–4 hours one way

Start/finish: signposted near Scott Creek Bridge Glenorchy–Routeburn Road, 20 minutes from Glenorchy (gravel road)



This track is irregularly marked, steep, and in parts obscure and washed out. In some places, you must follow the creek bed. Access can be gained to Kay Creek, which leads to the Caples Valley. Please note that the Scott Creek hut has been removed.

16 Glacier Burn

2 hours one way, 1 hr 30 min back down

Start/finish: signposted off the Glenorchy–Kinloch Road, 25 minutes from Glenorchy on a gravel road



Follow the creek until the marker indicates the crossing to the true left, and start climbing through beech forest. There are old log hauling snig lines near the start of the track. You will reach Glacier Basin in two hours. From there you can follow up the creek to view the Humboldt Mountains, an area with abundant bird life.

Do not go above the bush line in winter and spring, it is avalanche prone.



17 Lake Rere

4–6 hours, loop track

Start/finish: Greenstone car park, 1 hour from Glenorchy, on a gravel road with fords



Travelling clockwise, cross the bridge and follow the marked track along Lake Wakatipu to Elfin Bay, crossing Greenstone Station land for an hour. From here, climb steeply through red beech forest. The track eases before reaching picturesque Lake Rere – a popular tourist destination in the 19th century. Walk through patches of mountain beech and grasslands, eventually joining the Greenstone Track to return to the car park.

Beware of stream crossings in heavy rain.

18 Lake Wakatipu's Islands



Pig Island/Mātau and Pigeon Island/Wāwāhi Waka are both accessible to the public by boat. On Pigeon Island/Wāwāhi Waka you'll find walking tracks of varying difficulty, between 30 minutes and 2 hours long. Camping is permitted, and there is one basic eight-bunk hut for public use on the island, managed by the Queenstown Lakes District Council. Contact QLDC on 03 441 0499 when planning to use the hut.

Thanks to engaged community groups, Pigeon Island's vegetation is recovering from devastating fires. The mild microclimate allows podocarps to grow, as well as southern rātā, kōwhai and a small patch of red beech. As the islands are predator free, native bird life is thriving. In a joint project between Kāi Tahu Papatipu Rūnaka i Araiteuru, Te Rūnanga o Ngāi Tahu and DOC, buff weka were re-established in Otago. They disappeared from the mainland in the 1920s because of predators and habitat loss. In 2002, 30 buff weka were transferred from the Chathams to Stevensons Island (Peka Karara) on Lake Wanaka. The project was extended to Lake Wakatipu with weka released on Pigeon/Wāwāhi Waka in 2006 and Pig/Mātau Island in 2008.

Please protect the islands and buff weka:

- No dogs
- Light no fires
- Do not feed the weka
- Take your rubbish away with you

GLENORCHY INFORMATION AND STORE
NZ
"The One Stop Shop In Glenorchy"

GLENORCHY INFORMATION

- Weather & Track Updates
- DOC Brochures & Topo Maps

GLENORCHY BOOKINGS

- Accommodation & Dining
- Transport & Activities

GROCERY & BOTTLE STORE

- Internet & ATM
- Mountain Bike & Fishing Rod Hire

Located at the Glenorchy Hotel

Further Information

For further information please contact:
Whakatipu-wai-Māori/Queenstown Visitor Centre
50 Stanley Street
Queenstown 9300
03 442 7935 | fax 03 442 7934
queenstownvc@doc.govt.nz
www.doc.govt.nz

Cover photos: (top) Earnslaw burn, (middle) Lake Rere, (bottom) Lake Sylvan track bridge.
All photos: DOC

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New Zealand Government

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468

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





Routeburn near Routeburn Flats Hut

GENERAL INFORMATION

Always contact the nearest DOC Visitor Centre for the latest information on facilities and conditions, and ensure you are prepared for the weather conditions. Higher altitude tracks can be exposed and icy from autumn through winter, and well into spring.

Remember—your safety is your responsibility. Choose a track that suits your level of fitness and experience.

Follow the Outdoor Safety Code:

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

www.adventuresmart.org.nz

Maps are guides only

The map in the brochure should not be used for navigational purposes. We strongly recommend purchasing topographical maps from the DOC Visitor Centre: NZ Topo50 CA10, CBo9, CB10.

Please respect private land

Respect the landowner's property where tracks cross private land. Stay on the track, don't disturb livestock and leave gates as you find them. Thank you.



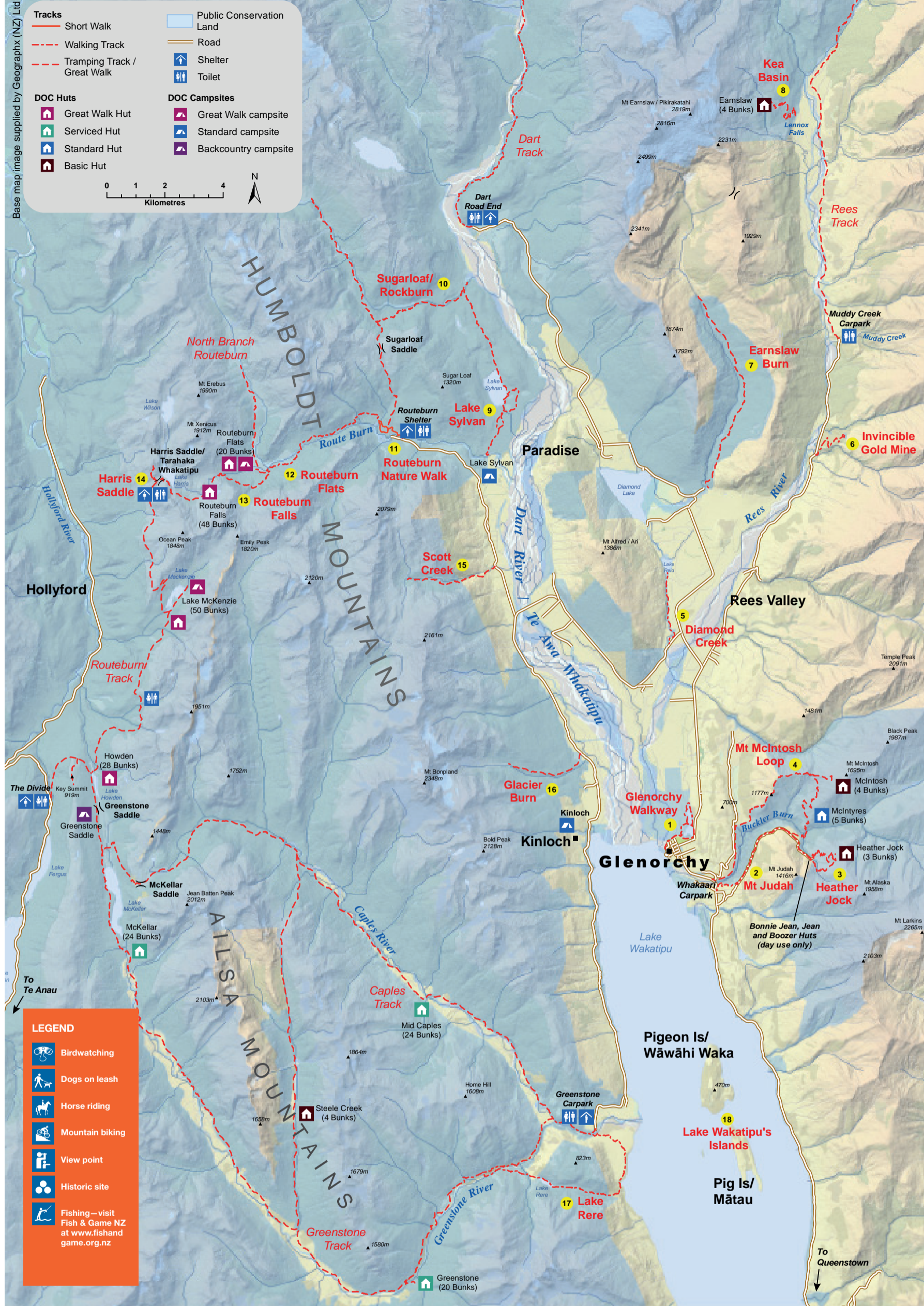
Berdans for goldmining on Invincible Mine track

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

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.



Jean Hut

DOC CAMPSITES

There are two designated Conservation campsites in the Glenorchy area. Lake Sylvan campsite is within Mount Aspiring National Park, 30 minutes drive from Glenorchy. The Kinloch campsite is located on the northern shore of Lake Wakatipu, also 30 minutes from Glenorchy.

GREAT WALK CAMPSITES usually require bookings: see www.doc.govt.nz, email greatwalksbookings@doc.govt.nz or visit a DOC Visitor Centre. Facilities include toilets, hand-washing sinks and a water supply. More about Great Walk campsites can be found in Great Walk brochures.

STANDARD CAMPSITES work on a first in, first served basis and fees are paid via the self-registration system. Facilities are more limited: toilets (usually composting or pit variety), water

supply (tap, stream, or lake) and vehicle or boat access. Wood BBQs and fireplaces, picnic tables and a cooking shelter may be provided.

BACKCOUNTRY CAMPSITES also work on a first in, first served basis and have toilets and a water supply, which may be from a stream. Some have picnic tables, cooking shelters or fireplaces.

FIND OUT MORE

DOC's website doc.govt.nz provides extensive information about where you can go, what you can do and where you can stay in New Zealand's outdoors.