

Plan and prepare

KEPLER TRACK



Duration: **3–4 days**
Distance: **60.1 km (loop)**



Great Walks season:
late October – 30 April



Department of
Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



**Te Kāwanatanga
o Aotearoa**
New Zealand Government

KEPLER TRACK

Set out on a wilderness adventure above the clouds, high in the mountains above Lakes Te Anau and Manapouri in Te Wāhipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area.

The drama of these vast tussock-covered ridgelines and spectacular alpine vistas contrasts with the peaceful lakes and the beech forest of the Iris Burn valley.

The Kepler Track is circular and can be walked in either direction. The track is well marked and signposted, but some sections are steep and rough and may be muddy and slippery. Poor weather conditions can make this walk challenging, even in the Great Walks season.

This brochure describes a 4-day hike for independent, non-guided walkers during the Great Walks season (late October – 30 April).



Outside the Great Walks season (May to October) walking conditions are more hazardous – see the safety information.

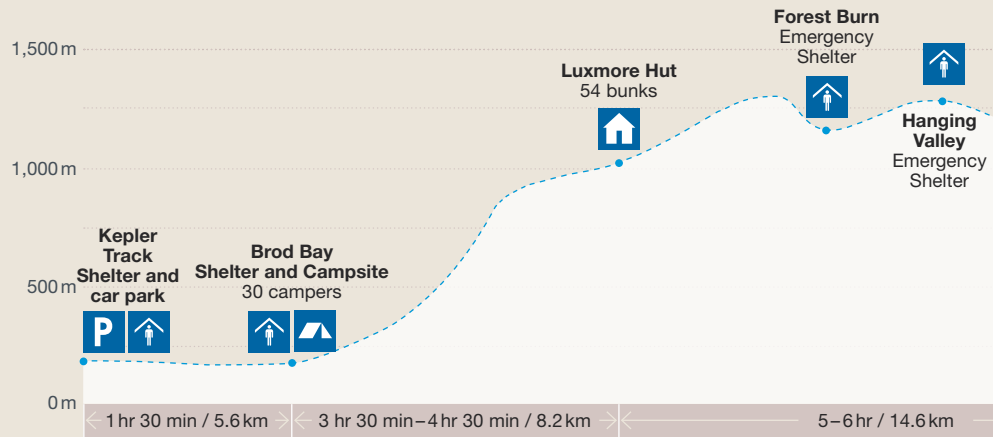


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Elevation profile & track guide



Day 1: Kepler Track car park to Luxmore Hut



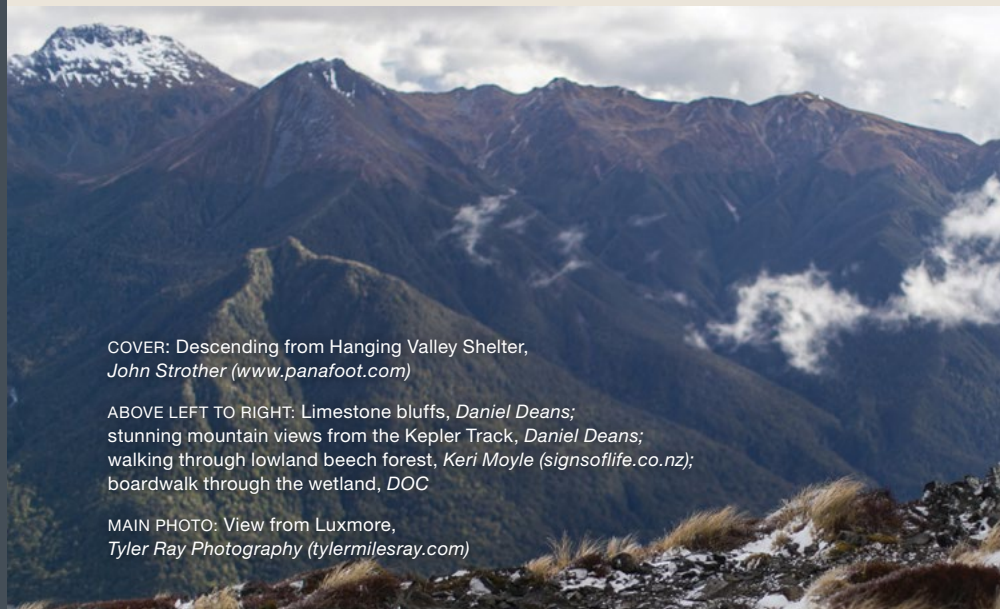
Day 2: Luxmore Hut to Iris Burn Hut

➤ 5–6 hours, 13.8 km

Your journey begins with a stroll through the beech forest along the shore of Lake Te Anau, the largest body of fresh water by volume in Australasia, to Brod Bay. A challenging climb under impressive limestone bluffs takes you above the bushline to panoramic views of the Te Anau basin and surrounding mountains. Luxmore Hut is a 45 min walk from the bushline.

➤ 5–6 hours, 14.6 km

Start your day on top of the world. From the hut, you'll climb to a ridge just below Mount Luxmore. In good weather there are stunning views across the south fiord of Lake Te Anau to the Murchison Mountains. After a wonderful day on the tops, you'll arrive at Iris Burn Hut, situated in a large tussock clearing.



COVER: Descending from Hanging Valley Shelter, *John Strother (www.panafoot.com)*

ABOVE LEFT TO RIGHT: Limestone bluffs, *Daniel Deans*; stunning mountain views from the Kepler Track, *Daniel Deans*; walking through lowland beech forest, *Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)*; boardwalk through the wetland, *DOC*

MAIN PHOTO: View from Luxmore, *Tyler Ray Photography (tylermilesray.com)*



hut



campsite



shelter and toilet



car park

Iris Burn Hut and Campsite
50 bunks
30 campers



Rocky Point Shelter



Moturau Hut
40 bunks



Rainbow Reach Shelter and car park



Kepler Track Shelter and car park



5–6 hr / 16.2 km

1 hr 30 min–2 hr / 6 km

2 hr 30 min–3 hr 30 min / 9.5 km



Day 3: Iris Burn Hut to Moturau Hut

➤ 5–6 hours, 16.2 km

Experience ever-changing scenery as the track takes you over a low saddle, then down to Rocky Point, past a large slip caused by heavy rain. You'll then wind through a gorge and lowland beech and podocarp forest, before reaching the shore of beautiful Lake Manapouri. The beach-side Moturau Hut has stunning views of the lake.



Day 4: Moturau Hut to the Kepler Track car park

➤ 4 hours – 5 hours 30 minutes, 15.5 km

The last day starts in the forest, then the track emerges into a wetland area. The track through the wetland is on a boardwalk, to protect the unique and fragile ecosystem. The track then returns to the forest to follow the Waiau River terrace to the swing bridge at Rainbow Reach. You can leave the track here and catch a shuttle bus to Te Anau, or continue alongside the Waiau River to the Kepler Track car park.





The map in this brochure is a guide only and should not be used for navigational purposes.

Getting there

You can access the track from the:

- **Kepler Track car park:** a 5-km drive from Te Anau township.
- **Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre:** a 50-minute walk along the lakefront to the entrance of the track.
- **Rainbow Reach car park:** a 12-km drive from Te Anau.

Transport options are available during the Great Walks season at your own cost: daily shuttles to the entry and exit points on the track, and boat transfers to Brod Bay.



Places to stay

DOC operates 3 huts and 2 campsites along the Kepler Track, which **must be booked in advance** during the Great Walks season (late October – 30 April) to avoid disappointment.



Great Walks huts

Visit www.doc.govt.nz/keplertrack for prices.

During the Great Walks season the huts have bunks, mattresses, heating, toilets, basic cooking facilities, solar-powered lighting, and cold running water. A DOC ranger is in residence. The huts do not provide food, cooking utensils or showers.

Outside the Great Walks season, facilities are greatly reduced and there are no DOC rangers. Booking is not required, huts and campsites are first come, first served and fees are reduced. See the website for details.



Great Walks campsites

Visit www.doc.govt.nz/keplertrack for prices.

Great Walks campsites offer basic facilities including toilets, sinks and a water supply. Campers are not permitted to use hut facilities.



Photo: John Strother (panafoot.com)



Photo: Andrew Walmsley (andrewwalmsleyphotography.com)

Air New Zealand partners with the Department of Conservation to bring birdsong back to our Great Walks.



2

Photo: stokedforsaturday.com



3

Photo: Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)



4

Photo: Michelle Crouchley



5

Photo: Keri Moyle (signsoflife.co.nz)



6

Photo: Andrew Maloney

- 1 Watch out for cheeky **kea** – the world’s only alpine parrot. The kea is found in the South Island high country and is known for its inquisitive nature.
- 2 Explore the fascinating **Luxmore Caves**, a 10-minute walk from Luxmore Hut.
- 3 A 20-minute walk from Iris Burn Hut leads to the isolated **Iris Burn Falls**, perfect for a refreshing dip after the day’s walk.

Conservation story

- 4 Students from Fiordland’s five centres of learning are helping restore the unique environment of the Kepler Track and bring back its birdsong in the award-winning community conservation education-based **‘Kids Restore the Kepler’** project. With funding from major sponsor Kids Restore NZ, Community Trust of Southland and Distinction Hotels NZ, the project is led by the Fiordland Conservation Trust in partnership with DOC and the learning centres. kidsrestorethekepler.org.nz
- 5 **Tussock** is a spectacular feature of the alpine areas of the Kepler Track, providing a stunning foreground to the expansive views.
- 6 Look for the **New Zealand falcon/kārearea**. It can fly at over 100 km/hr when chasing prey.

What do I do next?



Start off at www.doc.govt.nz/keplertrack for more information.

BOOK

Book your huts and campsites online at bookings.doc.govt.nz.



Book your transport to and from the track.



Buy your food and **pack your bags** – go to ‘What to take’ on the webpage for a list and make sure you have everything you need for a 4-day independent unguided walk.



Read up on **safety** and make sure you’re well prepared for your journey and changeable weather at www.doc.govt.nz/keplertrack.



Visit the closest **DOC Visitor Centre** (Te Anau) to pick up your **tickets** and official **track guide**, and chat with the friendly staff for the latest weather forecast and track conditions.



All set! Lace up your boots and get hiking. Don’t forget to share your experience on [facebook.com/docgovtnz](https://www.facebook.com/docgovtnz).

For in-depth local knowledge, visit:

Fiordland National Park
Visitor Centre

Phone: +64 3 249 7924

Email: greatwalksbooking@doc.govt.nz

www.doc.govt.nz/great-walks

This information was accurate at the time of printing. For the latest information on DOC’s policies and facilities, visit www.doc.govt.nz.

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Photo: Shellie Evans, tikitouringnz.blogspot.co.nz

Safety on the Kepler Track

- Go to www.doc.govt.nz/keplertrack for detailed safety and planning information.
- The alpine sections of the track between Luxmore Hut and Iris Burn Hut are not recommended for children under the age of 10.
- Fiordland National Park is in an area with high rainfall and changeable weather. Cold temperatures, snow, strong winds and heavy rain can happen at any time of the year.
- Walkers should come well equipped and prepared for all weather conditions. Check weather.niwa.co.nz/parks for the most up-to-date forecast.
- The Kepler Track has complex avalanche terrain, and the risk of avalanche can extend into summer. Check www.doc.govt.nz/keplertrack or contact the DOC Visitor Centre in Te Anau for track conditions and weather warnings before your walk.

Your safety is your responsibility

 You are strongly recommended **NOT to attempt this track** between early May and late October (outside the Great Walks season).

The winter environment in Fiordland National Park is very cold and wet, with ice, snow, avalanches and short daylight hours.

DOC is unable to manage any hazards outside the Great Walks season. Bridges are removed, as floods and avalanches occur on these tracks during winter.

To attempt the track in winter conditions, you need to be very experienced in backcountry winter navigation, have river crossing expertise and appropriate alpine skills and equipment. **Hut facilities are greatly reduced** – with no cooking gas, limited water and no hut wardens or emergency hut radios.

For more information, see ‘Outside the Great Walks season’ at www.doc.govt.nz/keplertrack.

Care for the Kepler Track



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don’t feed wildlife. Feeding wildlife is harmful to them. Follow any rules restricting fires, vehicles or boats. No dogs or unpermitted drones allowed.



Keep New Zealand clean

Take all rubbish with you. Use toilets where provided. You can find them at all huts, campsites and shelters.



Be prepared

Stay safe in the outdoors by following the Land Safety Code.

- ▶ Choose the right trip for you.
- ▶ Understand the weather.
- ▶ Pack warm clothes and extra food.
- ▶ Share your plans and take ways to get help.
- ▶ Take care of yourself and each other.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture. Respect others by keeping common areas in the hut and around the campsites clean and tidy. Minimise noise when others are sleeping. Book and pay for your accommodation to help maintain the track and facilities.



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