

Copland Track to Welcome Flat Hut

Westland Tai Poutini National Park



Further information

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www.doc.govt.nz

Care for Aotearoa



Protect nature

Keep your distance and don't feed wildlife. Follow any rules restricting dogs, fires, drones or vehicles.



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.



Keep NZ clean

Take all rubbish with you and use toilets where provided.



Show respect

Respect others, respect culture.



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai



Cover: Welcome Flat Hut. Photo: Wayne Costello

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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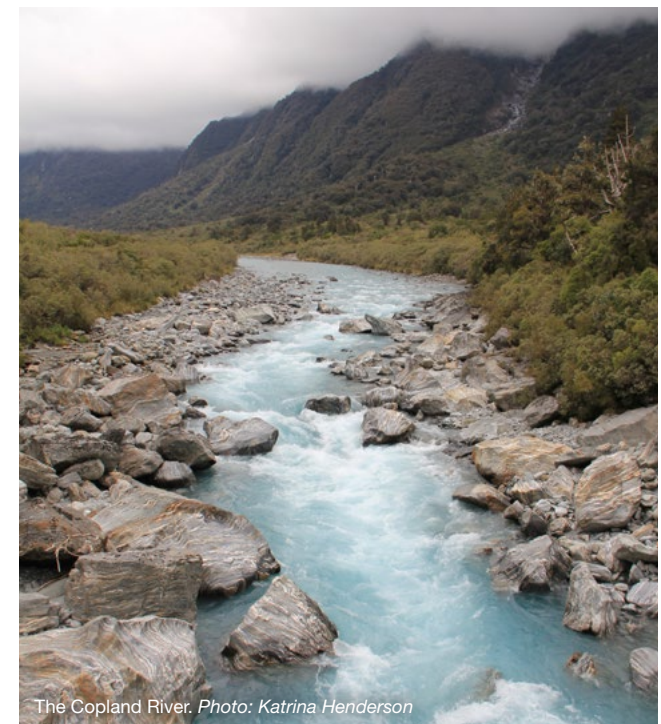
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For Fire and Search and Rescue Call 111



Te Kāwanatanga o Aotearoa
New Zealand Government



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The Copland River. Photo: Katrina Henderson

Introduction

The tramp up the Copland valley to Welcome Flat Hut in Westland Tai Poutini National Park is a popular overnight return trip for visitors to the glacier region.

The tramp gives a glimpse of Westland's spectacular forest, river and mountain scenery, while natural hot pools at Welcome Flat are an added attraction for weary adventurers.

The forest of the Copland valley is visually dominated by a healthy canopy of southern rātā, a spectacular sight during the summer flowering season. At higher altitudes, the forest gives way to the upper montane vegetation of tree daisies and dracophyllums, which in turn give way to the truly alpine habitats of tussock grasslands and native herbs.

Regular possum control has been undertaken in this area since the mid-1980s, and as a result the forest damage is significantly less than in the neighbouring Karangarua valley, which has extensive canopy dieback.

General information

Duration: 2–3 days

Grade: Great Walk/ easy tramping track

Experience: Suitable for people with limited backcountry (remote area) experience. The track will be closed for heavy rain events as side streams on the track become impassable.

It is advised that you watch the Mountain Safety Council video about the Copland Track before you go (available online at www.doc.govt.nz/coplandtrack).


Best time to go: Summer and autumn.


Maps: NZTopo50: BX14 Gillespies Beach; BX15 Fox Glacier.

Hazards: Flooded rivers, rock fall, landslide and avalanche.

Note: True left and true right refer to the side of the valley or river when facing and looking downstream.

The times given are to be used as a guide only and will vary greatly depending on your fitness level and the weather conditions. Tramping in this area is demanding and unsuitable for inexperienced parties – allow plenty of time to reach your planned destination.

 **No dogs**

 **No drones**

Hunting

Tahr, chamois and deer can be found in the Copland valley. Tahr are found on the steep faces mainly in the mid and upper valleys, but are difficult to access. There are good numbers of chamois throughout the valley, and deer are mainly found lower down the valley near the Karangarua confluence. Due to high visitor numbers, no hunting is permitted in the Copland valley from 20 December to 31 January (inclusive) and Good Friday to Easter Monday (inclusive) annually. All hunters must have a hunting permit. Apply online at www.doc.govt.nz/hunting-permit.

Fees and booking information

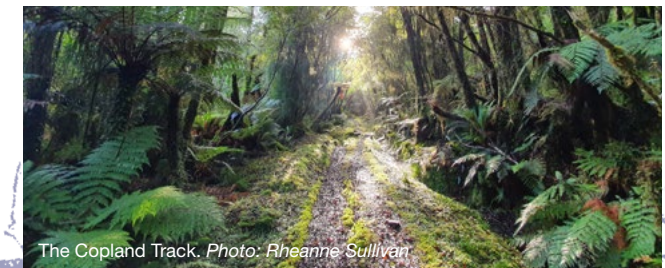
Welcome Flat Hut, the Sierra Room and the Welcome Flat campsite must be booked year round. Bookings can be made online at www.doc.govt.nz/online-bookings or through the visitor centres. Payment is to be made when you make your booking (fees may apply). Hut tickets (fees may apply). Hut tickets cannot be used at Welcome Flat Hut, and Backcountry Hut Passes can only be used to make bookings from 1 May to 30 September.

The Sierra Room is a sole occupancy room within Welcome Flat Hut, available for groups of up to four to book. It has gas and a gas cooker, a pot-belly stove and a shower, as well as lighting and basic kitchen and cooking equipment. Although located within the main building, it has separate access for a more private backcountry experience. The toilet is shared with the hut and the campsite.

A hut warden will generally be present at Welcome Flat Hut.

You must purchase hut tickets before staying at Architect Creek Hut (1 Standard Hut Ticket per person per night).

Facility	Capacity
Welcome Flat Hut	31 bunks
Welcome Flat Sierra Room	4 bunks (sole occupancy)
Welcome Flat campsite	8 tents sites
Architect Creek Hut	2 bunks



Getting there

Access is off State Highway 6, 26 km south of Fox Glacier.

The turn-off to the car park is well signposted on the northern side of the Karangarua River bridge. After turning off, drive approximately 150 m down the gravel road to the car park, closing the gate on your way through. There are no camping facilities at the road end and it is recommended you do not leave any valuables in your vehicle. Bus transport may be available but must be booked in advance.



Crossing the Welcome Flat Hut bridge. Photo: Katrina Henderson

Track description



Car park to Welcome Flat Hut

7 hr, 18 km

Note: All times and distances are one way.



The Copland valley is subject to flooding at any time of the year. Do not attempt this trip in bad weather or when sustained or heavy rain is forecast. When Rough Creek is running high, unbridged side creeks will not be able to be crossed safely and the Copland River may flood sections of the track, making it impassable.

During severe weather the Copland Track may be closed (often at short notice) due to flooding or other damage. If closed, notices will be placed at the start of the track and parties with bookings will be notified. If you are at Welcome Flat Hut, you will need to wait until the track has reopened. There is a flood bridge across Rough Creek for emergency use only to exit the valley (located 30 min upstream from the car park).

Cross Rough Creek to the orange marker on the other side, then follow the well-formed path through the forest. The track is marked across open areas and river crossings by orange triangle markers. From the confluence of the Karangarua River to Architect Creek, the track alternates mostly between boulder hopping on rocky riverbeds and forest tracks, with the occasional grassy clearing. Architect Creek is considered to be roughly halfway to Welcome Flat.



Katau Creek. Photo: Sophie Mitchell-Findlater

There are two active landslide areas to be crossed on the track to Welcome Flat Hut. The landslide areas are approximately 30 min upstream of Architect Creek, on the true left of Shiels Creek – both are signposted. **Due to unstable slopes, you will need to take particular care during and just after heavy rain.**

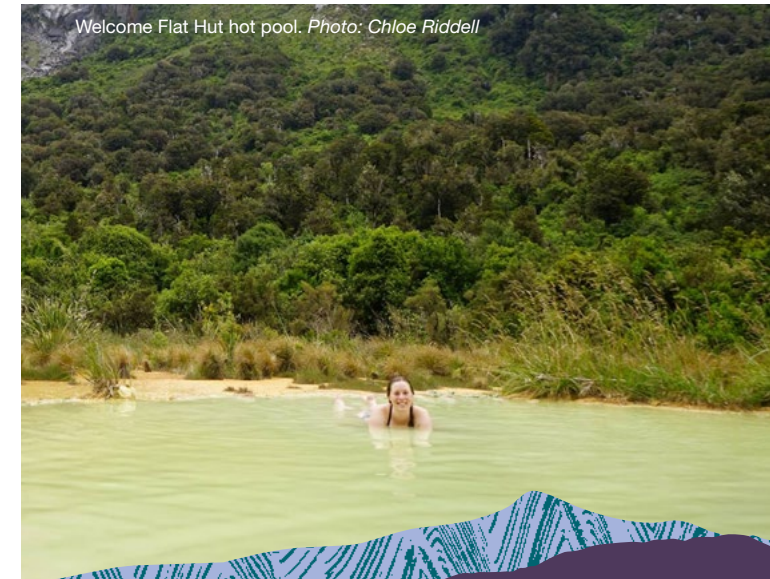
Beyond Architect Creek, the track climbs very gradually towards Palaver Creek as the valley narrows. The climb becomes more noticeable once you have crossed Open Creek. After crossing the Shiels Creek bridge, there is a short climb to the highest point of the track, after which you descend through forest before emerging at Welcome Flat Hut.

The hot pools are just a short stroll from the hut and offer fine views of the Sierra Range on a clear day. These pools are a fragile environment so do not use soaps or shampoo, or dig more pools.

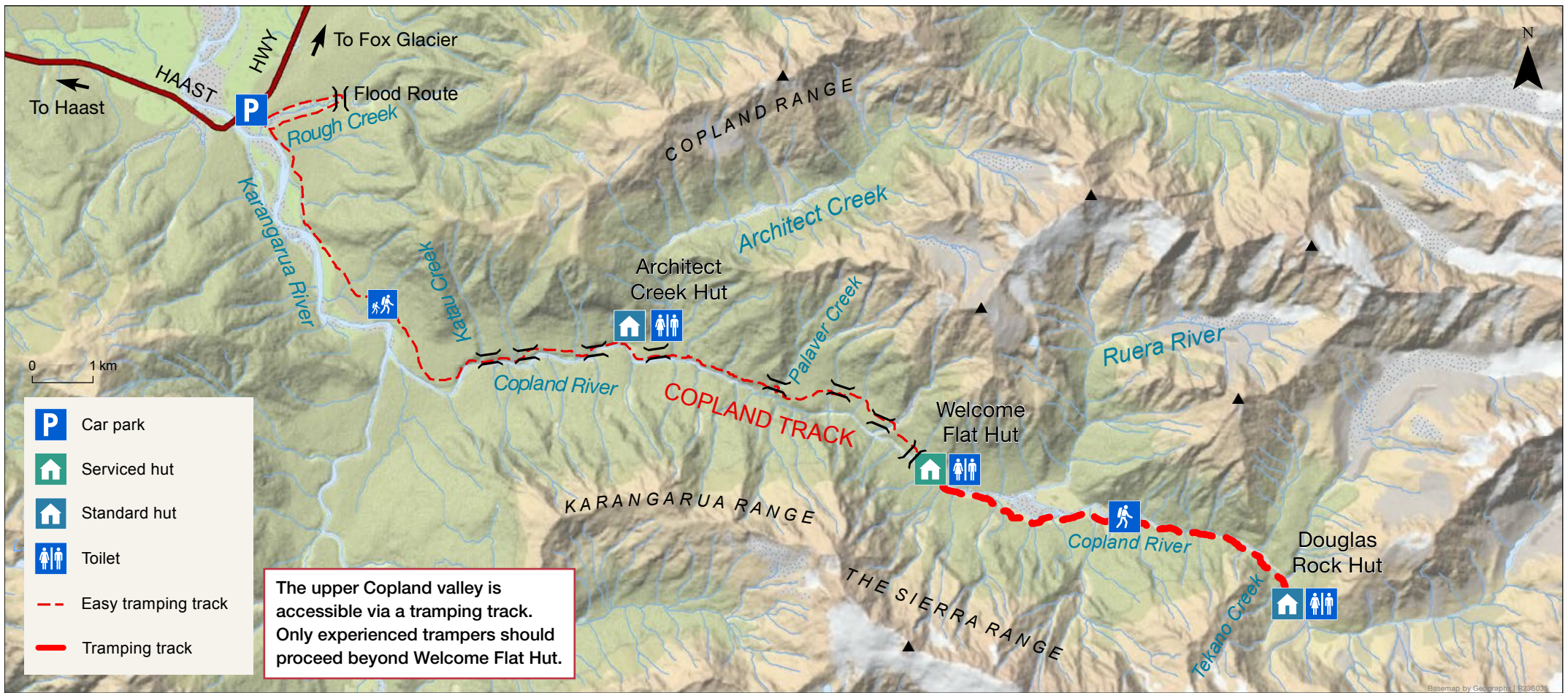


Remember to always keep your head above the water to avoid the risk of amoebic meningitis.

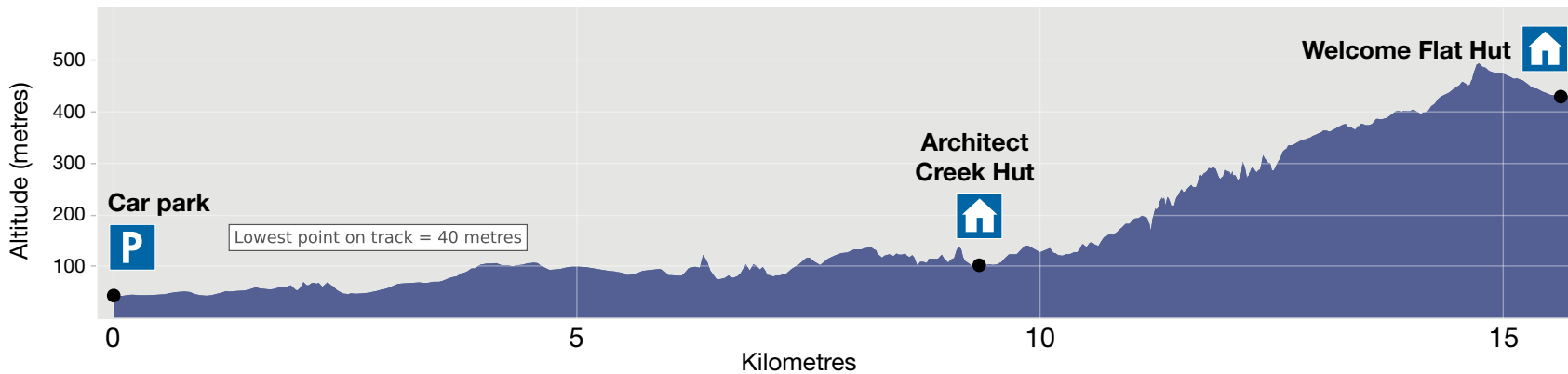
The upper Copland valley is accessible via a tramping track. Only experienced trampers should proceed beyond Welcome Flat Hut – see the *Upper Copland valley* brochure for more information (available online at www.doc.govt.nz/upper-copland-valley-track).



Welcome Flat Hut hot pool. Photo: Chloe Riddell



Elevation profile of Copland Track



Track grades

- Great Walk or easy tramping track:** Generally well-formed track for comfortable overnight tramping/hiking trips.
- Tramping track:** Mostly unformed track with steep, rough or muddy sections; has directional markers, poles or cairns.