

active earth Adventures | HIKING New Zealand

RABBIT PASS ALPINE TREK





ITINERARY

This private guided trek located in Mount Aspiring National Park takes you through the grassy flats of the Wilkin Valley where there are no more huts or crowds and there is no better way to experience the remote and untouched alpine scenery of New Zealand. Surround yourself with unspoilt forests, alpine meadows, huge waterfalls and amazing alpine lakes.

Rabbit Pass Alpine Traverse is one of New Zealand's most challenging yet rewarding advanced trekking trips. With steep exposure and some technical sections, The Rabbit Pass Alpine Traverse route requires exceptional fitness, balance, coordination, and a good head for heights. Much of the Rabbit Pass route is off any prepared track, so the terrain is uneven.

LENGTH	4 days
GRADE	E (Uneven terrain and high passes)
PRE TRACK BRIEFING	Meet your guide in Wānaka at 4.30 pm the day before your departure to check your clothing and equipment and confirm final details.
START	8.30 am, Wānaka
FINISH	5.00 pm, Wānaka
DEPARTURES	Dates on request: November to March All departures are for private or custom groups. Simply request your dates and we'll take care of the rest.
PRICE	**1 Jul 2026 - 30 Jun 2027** Rates on request

"WE HAD SUCH A GOOD TIME"

We had such a good time! [The staff in the office] were very helpful in planning the best trip for us, always available for any questions we had. Our guide was the most passionate and fun guide we ever met, spending 3 days in the mountains with him was a treat. We look forward using the learned mountaineering skills in the future.

~Eva, Aspiring National Park Trip

ITINERARY

DAY 1 WĀNAKA TO TOP FORKS HUT

Up to 12km (7.5 miles), 6-7 hours hiking, +/- 500m (1640 ft) elevation
We drive to the small village of Makarora, about 45 minutes away and board a helicopter into the heart of Mount Aspiring National Park, towards Rabbit Pass.

Your hike begins with a leisurely walk up the river flats of the Upper Wilkin Valley brings us to Top Forks Hut. The afternoon is spent exploring this beautiful valley with the option of checking out the alpine lakes of Castalia (additional elevation of 1140m (3740ft)) and Lucidus (additional elevation of 828 m (2716 ft)). *Includes lunch and dinner*

DAY 2 RABBIT PASS

Up to 12 km (7.5 miles), 9-11 hours hiking, elevation +/-1000m (3280ft)
An early start gets you up to Waterfall Flat, a place where the name speaks for itself. Torrents of water pour off the surrounding cliffs, while you scramble up the face leading to Rabbit Pass.

We clip you into a fixed hand line for 6m, giving you confidence on the trickiest part of the route, before a long descent through native herb gardens to end an exhilarating day.

We arrive at Pickelhaub Camp, where we will be tent camping for the evening. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*

DAY 3 BLEDISLOE GORGE

Up to 12 km (7.5 miles), 7-8 hours hiking, +/-80m (260ft) elevation
Wake to the sound of icefalls crashing down from towering Pickelhaub Mountain. We enjoy a leisurely breakfast before heading down the Upper East Matukituki Valley.

Even with no track, the going is easy through this isolated, yet scenic valley. Expect many unbridged river crossings (which can make this route impassable after heavy rain). Once we come across the Bledisloe Gorge, the climbing begins again. From open river flats through ancient forest and up through alpine areas - this is a big climb and many find this more challenging than the technical Rabbit Pass.

Experience another night backcountry camping with incredible views from the incomparable Aspiring Camp. *Includes breakfast, lunch and dinner*

DAY 4 RETURN TO WĀNAKA

11 kms (6.8 miles), 5 hours hiking, +/- 240m (787 ft) elevation
On the final day of the traverse, the trail down to the valley floor winds through tall beech forest with Mount Aspiring in sight. We cross a couple of 3-wire bridges over the East Matukituki River and to keep things thrilling, Kitchner Stream.

Gradually, the track opens up into farmland and we meet our waiting transport back to civilisation and a hot shower. *Includes breakfast and lunch*











LIFE ON THE TRAIL

GRADE E - CAPABALE OF:

- 1,000m ascent and descent in a day
- 8-10 hours of physical activity a day
- 4 consecutive days ascent and descent
- Carrying 8-12kg pack
- Comfortable on rough, unmaintained tracks
- Comfortable with heights and exposure
- Recent experience on “rough track” terrain
- No rope familiarity required
- Some rock climbing experience is encouraged
- Multi-day trekking experince using huts/camping

Our main aim is for mountaineers to enjoy this experience and be safe doing so. This is as much about the expectations you form as well as being realistic about your current abilities. If you’re in doubt, we recommend using the following guide to determine if this course is for you:

GUIDES AND SAFETY

Guides are hand-picked, qualified to international standards, and there with you from your first day. You’re paired with people that live and breathe guiding. Their mountaineering achievements are matched only with their level of passion for creating experiences for clients that linger in your soul long after the descent. They’re there as you accomplish lifelong ambitions, reach new heights, and dig deep as you pursue the grittiest of adventure experiences. Overcome your limits, and discover the moments that lead to enduring achievement and pride of what you can accomplish.

FOOD

We put a lot of work into supplying you with wholesome meals with a variety of healthy and tasty ingredients and snacks catering to common preferences. Where possible, we provide fresh vegetables and real coffee. However, there will always be limitations when cooking in an alpine or wilderness environment. Meals like salads are limited or not possible to provide. Some trips are not recommended for people with very restrictive or complex dietary requirements. If you do have a restrictive eating regime we ask that you disclose this to us at the time of booking and we may ask you to provide us with an advance copy of what you would typically eat on a wilderness trip and the team will shop and cook accordingly.

ACCOMMODATION

You stay at mixture of Department of Conservation mountain huts and pre-placed camp sites. During busy times (typically Christmas/New Year holiday period) in the less remote areas of the hike such as Gillespie Pass, there are camping options available if DOC huts are crowded. Sit back in the door of your private tent while a good wholesome meal is prepared (no freeze dried food here!). Everything is supplied for you so all you need to do is relax and enjoy this alpine paradise.

TRANSPORT

You have an hour journey to Makarora before you hike starts, followed by a helicopter transfer to start your hike.

ADDITIONAL COSTS

There are no additional costs for this trip, however, if the group are required to stay longer due to adverse weather conditions, additional charges will be made to cover costs. Currently the cost is $500 per party per day + $100 per person per day.

BOOKING CONDITIONS

Changes

Weather can be temperamental in our mountains and can impact on trips and planned itineraries and routes. If weather events require the guides to alter the original trip itinerary, we will find another amazing alternative where weather is more favourable. Every effort will be made to ensure the trip can be enjoyed as planned. If the trip cannot proceed, some costs that were not incurred may be refunded, such as a heli transfer, however other costs that are absorbed in planning and booking will not be refunded, such as guide costs. The guides may refund up to 50% off trips that do not proceed at all, or offer a credit on future trips. Any cancelled trips are assessed individually for refund options. If the group are required to stay longer due to adverse weather conditions, additional charges will be made to cover costs. Currently the cost is $500 per party per day + $100 per person per day.

Payment

For bookings made four or more months prior to the departure date, a deposit of NZD$1000 per person is required, with the remainder due 95 days before your trip. For bookings made within four months of the departure date, full payment is required at the time of booking.

Cancellations

45 days or more prior to departure date: Full refund, less $500 per person forfeited.
44 to 31 days: 50% of tour price forfeited.
30 days or less: 100% of the tour price forfeited..

Travel Insurance

We strongly recommend that you have comprehensive travel insurance.

This trip is run in conjunction with another operator.

PACKING LIST

ESSENTIAL ITEMS

Please bring all your equipment to the scheduled pre-trip meeting.

Summer weather is usually quite warm however, you will be in a remote alpine location and winter type conditions can happen any time of year in New Zealand. Required clothing can vary somewhat according to the time of year or the current weather.

While parts of your trip are hut based, some huts can't be reserved and in some cases clients should expect to camp during peak times of the season. You will need to carry your own personal gear as well as some group fresh food. Many people prefer to use their own sleeping bag, pad and backpack. We recommend an inflatable sleeping mat, 60+ litre backpack and 2 season sleeping bag graded to 0° C (and liner). Lighter is OK for mid-summer. On most days there are unavoidable river and stream crossings, so it is likely your boots will get wet and stay wet.

- ☐ Inflatable sleeping mat – available to borrow
- ☐ Backpack (50+ litres) – available to borrow
- ☐ Sleeping bag (2 season, 0° C) & liner – available to borrow
- ☐ Underwear
- ☐ Base layer (150-200g, merino or polypropylene, no cotton)
- ☐ Oasis LS Crewe)
- ☐ Top
- ☐ Leggings
- ☐ Mid layer top (fleece or windproof)
- ☐ Insulating jacket (fleece or synthetic fill)
- ☐ Waterproof jacket (eg Gore Tex® or similar)
- ☐ Overpants (waterproof as above) – available to borrow
- ☐ Lightweight, quick drying shorts or trousers
- ☐ Light collared trekking shirt or short sleeve t-shirt
- ☐ Sturdy, stiff ankle height trekking boots - your boots will get wet from river crossings
- ☐ Gaiters (recommended)
- ☐ 3-4 pairs of trekking socks (merino)
- ☐ Sunhat - cap
- ☐ Warm hat & neck gaiter (eg Buff®)
- ☐ Sunglasses
- ☐ Warm waterproof gloves
- ☐ Bowl & spoon (supplied)
- ☐ Personal toiletries and medication
- ☐ Packliner or dry bags
- ☐ Insect repellent - for sandflies
- ☐ Sun cream and lip cream
- ☐ Water bottle (at least 1 litre)
- ☐ Camera
- ☐ Headtorch

OPTIONAL ITEMS

- ☐ Collapsible trekking poles (recommended) – available to borrow
- ☐ Light book or magazine
- ☐ Earplugs (handy for communal huts)
- ☐ Plastic cup for drinking from streams – available to borrow
- ☐ Lightweight hut or camp shoes (eg Crocs)

