

Introduction

The Haast area is more than a collection of small settlements near the main highway or along the road to Jackson Bay *Okahu*. It is a diverse region, stretching from Knights Point to the Cascade Valley and inland to the forest-lined Haast Pass. The area offers a wide variety of scenery, chances to view wildlife and many recreational opportunities.

The region is famous for its dramatic coastline - the sweeping curves of beaches, the rugged cliff tops, and the striking rock formations at Knights Point south of Lake Moeraki.

Here the visitor can travel through a series of unspoiled natural environments, often in a continuous sequence, from the sea through ancient sand dunes, lakes and forests of different types, to the backdrop of the Southern Alps, a mountain chain dividing east from west. This landscape, so wild and remote, lay relatively undisturbed until 1965 when Haast was finally linked by road to the rest of the West Coast.

It is an area abundant with wildlife. Fiordland crested penguins (*tawaki*) may be seen at Monro Beach during the spring. Forest birds include the threatened kaka, (a large native parrot), Haast tokoeke (kiwi) and falcon (*karearea*).

At the extreme end of the road south on the West Coast side is the Cascade Valley. Close to the road end is the Cascade viewpoint that offers views of the markedly different scenery of the Cascade Plateau and the Red Hills. This glacier-carved landscape lacks the forest that dominates elsewhere in the region. Instead it has stark barrenness due to a concentration of naturally occurring minerals that inhibit plant growth. The abundance of iron in this mineral mix gives the rocks a red colour for which the hills are named.

This superb diversity of features was recognised nationally with the creation of Mt Aspiring National Park, and internationally with the establishment, in 1991, of the Te Wāhipounamu - South West New Zealand World Heritage Area. World Heritage status means this part of New Zealand has been recognised as being among the world's foremost natural landscapes.

Haast has always been a place where residents and visitors have been continually challenged and inspired by the environment.

Department of Conservation Te Papa Atawhai

The scenic reserves, national parks and other protected lands in the Haast area are administered by the Department of Conservation as part of the Department's West Coast *Tai Poutini* Conservancy.

Management and conservation work at the local level represented in this document is provided from South Westland *Weheka* Area Office located at Fox Glacier and Haast *Awarua* Field Centre located at Haast. Brochures, maps, hunting permits, hut tickets and general information are available from these offices.

Further information on the Department of Conservation can be found on the Department's website.

Track standards



Easy access short walk - wheelchair accessible



Short walk - easy walking for up to an hour



Walking track - gentle walking from a few minutes to a day



Tramping track - backcountry skills and experience needed



Route - navigation and high level backcountry skills and experience required.

Te Wāhipounamu - South West New Zealand World Heritage Area



South West New Zealand is one of the great wilderness areas of the Southern Hemisphere.

Known to Māori as Te Wāhipounamu (the place of greenstone), the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area incorporates Aoraki/Mt.Cook, Westland/Tai Poutini, Fiordland and Mount Aspiring National Parks, covering 2.6 million hectares.

World Heritage is a global concept that identifies natural and cultural sites of world significance - places so special that protecting them is of concern for all people. Some of the best examples of animals and plants once found on the ancient supercontinent Gondwana live in the World Heritage Area.

Māori first settled here at least 800 years ago, the sea, coast and navigable rivers providing main points of access. Māori settlement and activity was centred around gathering, carving and trading precious jade, known as pounamu (greenstone).

European settlement was attempted at Jackson Bay *Okahu* during the 1870s. The pioneers' attempt to "tame" the landscape was largely unsuccessful but their efforts left a tradition of South Westland residents as being tough, resilient and independent.

This brochure should help visitors find their way around the Haast area. Displays at the Department of Conservation's Haast Visitor Centre and at other sites within the World Heritage Area will help people understand and appreciate what makes this area one of New Zealand's finest.

The main route through Haast, State Highway 6, is part of the heritage highway system. Access to many walks and scenic attractions is directly off this highway.

Walking times are average times and do not include resting or viewing stops.

Dogs and domestic animals are not permitted in National Parks or Reserves.

Look after yourself

Although the walks described are recommended to day visitors, the nature of the West Coast means that weather and track conditions can change dramatically in a short time. Visitors are advised to call at the Department of Conservation offices or visitor centres to check on current track conditions. Strong shoes or boots are recommended for anyone planning more than a few minutes walk. Be prepared for rain at any time of the year. For longer walks pack a small first aid kit and take some food and drink.

Insect repellent is recommended to ward off sandflies and mosquitoes.

Leave your intentions with a reliable contact.

Look after the environment

All native plants, wildlife, natural features and historic sites are strictly protected. Please take rubbish away and do not light fires except where facilities are provided at designated camping sites. (See also environmental care code printed elsewhere in this brochure).

Safety

Please pass on any comments about the facilities or walks described in this brochure to the Department of Conservation's South Westland *Weheka* Area Office in Fox Glacier or the Haast *Awarua* Field Centre located in the Haast Visitors Centre. If it is a safety issue you may contact:



Further information

www.doc.govt.nz

**Haast Awarua Field Centre/
Haast Visitor Centre**
Department of Conservation
PO Box 50, Haast
Ph 03 750 0809
Fax 03 750 0832

**South Westland Weheka
Area Office**
Department of Conservation
PO Box 9, Fox Glacier
Ph 03 751 0807
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**West Coast Tai Poutini
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Published by
Department of Conservation
West Coast Tai Poutini Conservancy
Private Bag 701
Hokitika
2008
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New Zealand Government



Protect plants and animals
Remove rubbish
Bury toilet waste
Keep streams and lakes clean
Take care with fires
Camp carefully
Keep to the track
Consider others
Respect our cultural heritage
Enjoy your visit
Toitu te whenua (Leave the land undisturbed)



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Haast Visitor Centre

Information on the Te Wāhipounamu - South West New Zealand World Heritage Area, other lands administered by the Department of Conservation, tracks, accommodation and advice on recreational opportunities in the Haast area can be obtained from the Haast Visitor Centre at Haast (situated on the corner of SH6 and the Jackson Bay Road). Hut tickets, hunting permits, maps, conservation souvenirs and publications can also be obtained from the visitor centre. EFTPOS is available.

Walks north of the Haast River

To Blow Fly Hut

Part of the Historic Haast - Paringa Cattle Track



Time: 3 to 4 hours return

Distance: 6.6 km return

Leads to a large ephemeral lake with fine views of granite cliffs at the head of the valley.

Monro Beach Walk



Time: 1 hour 20 minutes return

Distance: 3.3 km return

An easy walk through luxuriant coastal forest to the remote Monro Beach. Between July and December *tawaki* (Fiordland crested penguin) might be seen in the surf and on the beach.

Kahikatea Swamp Forest Walk (at Ship Creek Tauperikaka)



Time: 20 minutes return

Distance: 1 km return

A gentle walk following the slow flowing Ship Creek Tauperikaka. A creek-side viewpoint allows easy observation of the forest plants and wildlife. The track loops through an area of dense swamp forest where stunning specimens of New Zealand's tallest tree, the kahikatea can be seen.

Dune Lake Walk (at Ship Creek Tauperikaka)



Time: 30 minutes loop walk

Distance: 1 km loop

This walk winds through dense coastal forest stunted by wind. It opens out to provide magnificent photo opportunities from platforms overlooking the dune lake and the sweep of coastline south-west to Jackson Head.

Haast

Walks and activities in the Haast area



WEST COAST TAI POUTINI



Knights Point (photo: P. McDonald - DOC)



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Haast Pass highway walks

Roaring Billy Falls Walk



Time: 30 minutes return
Distance: 526 m return

An easy walk along a track lined with fern, passing some fine examples of miro, mātai and silver beech trees. The broad gravel bed of the Haast River is in contrast to the jumble of huge boulders over which the aptly named Roaring Billy cascades.

Pleasant Flat



Time: 5 minutes return
Distance: 300 m return

Picnic shelter and view point.

A designated site for overnight camping, this area includes a shelter, toilet and a 5 minute return walk through beech forest. There are excellent views of Mt Hooker.

Thunder Creek Falls walk



Time: 5 minutes return
Distance: 300 m return

A short walk, suitable for wheelchairs, to a view of the impressive 28m high falls. Like all waterfalls in the Haast Valley these are at their best after rainfall.

Fantail Falls Walk



Time: 5 minutes return
Distance: 200 m return

Another easy short walk to the attractive fan-shaped falls. Note the reduced size of the Haast River here compared with its volume at the Roaring Billy Falls walk.

Jackson Bay Okahu highway walks

Hapuka Estuary Walk



Time: 20 minutes loop walk
Distance: 1 km

This walk takes the visitor into the intertidal zone. Information panels explain the ecology of the estuary, the story of whitebait and the rich birdlife. Photo opportunities abound, especially in the spring when the kōwhai is in flower and tui, korimako (bellbird) and kereru (native pigeon) are in abundance. A viewing platform looks out to Open Bay Islands *Taumaka* and *Popotai* and interpretation panels tell stories about seals.

Lake Ellery Track



Time: 1 - 2 hours return
Distance: 3 km return

A pleasant walk through beech forest to a glacier formed lake. The track meanders alongside the Ellery stream which can be boated. Access: 3 km on unsealed road from the turnout at the Arawhata Bridge.

Smoothwater Bay Track



Time: 3 to 4 hours return
Distance: 9.4 km return

This track offers a variety of terrain. For the first 45 minutes it follows an old pioneer's track until the clear-flowing Smoothwater River is reached. The track can get muddy in place as it follows the true right of the river out to the coast, but the reward is the beauty and solitude of Smoothwater Bay. Sturdy footwear is recommended.

Stafford Bay



Time: 5 hours one way
Distance: 8 km

The track turns off the Smoothwater Bay track after 45 minutes, following the river upstream and along Kakapo Creek. It veers off to the right over the Stafford Saddle, sidles around a hill, then drops into a creekbed, which it follows all the way down to the Stafford river mouth where the new 6-bunk Stafford Hut is on the true left. Parts of this track are unmarked and follow the streambed so wet feet are inevitable. If the tide is low, an alternative return journey can be taken along the coastline via Smoothwater Bay (allow 6 hours back to road).

Wharekai / Te Kou Walk



Time: 40 minutes return
Distance: 2 km return

Walk from sheltered Jackson Bay *Okahu* through the wildlife refuge to the rocky shore at Ocean Beach. Interpretation panels tell stories about tidal pools and the life of the rocky shore. Please leave shellfish untouched for others to see.

Other things to see and do

Jackson Bay Shelter

Interpretation panels tell various stories of the nature and history of Jackson Bay *Okahu*.

Ollivier Grave

Situated on the foreshore at Jackson Bay *Okahu* near the start of the Wharekai/Te Kou Walk, this is the earliest recorded European grave site on the West Coast.

Arawhata Pioneer Cemetery

Situated between Neils Beach and Jackson Bay *Okahu* this cemetery is the burial site for some of the first European settlers to come to Jackson Bay *Okahu* as part of an unsuccessful settlement programme in 1875. The forest has reclaimed most graves with only about 13 sites still discernible. The story of the unsuccessful settlement at Jackson Bay *Okahu* is one of hardship, premature death and unrealised dreams.

Cascade Viewpoint

Situated about 3 km past Martyr Saddle on a hill overlooking the mighty Cascade River, this roadside lookout provides excellent views of the Cascade Valley and the Red Hills. Interpretation panels tell stories about wilderness, past glaciers and highly mineralised rocks. The road is narrow and unsealed.

Knights Point Viewpoint

Stop here for panoramic views of the wild coastline, rainforest and ocean. Seals are often seen in the distance on the beach at Arnott Point. Information panels tell of the landforms, early travellers, the sea and marine mammals.

Edge of Wilderness

A short film.

The title of this film sums up the Haast experience. Screened at the Haast Visitor Centre, this 20 minute show captures the magnificence of the Haast area landscape and its wildlife, from raging waters of a river in flood to the musical chorus of birdsong at daybreak. It is a highly recommended feature of a visit.

Tramping Tracks

For visitors interested in more than a short walk there is information available on longer tramping tracks from the visitor centre.

Camping

The Department of Conservation maintains basic overnight camping areas at Lake Paringa and Pleasant Flat. Camping fees should be paid into the honesty boxes situated at each camping area. Commercial camp grounds are available at Haast.

Nature Tourism Opportunities

There is a range of activities available in the Haast area. Information is available at the Haast Visitor Centre.

Ship Creek Tauperikaka (photo: Don Neale)



Haast River (photo: Les Molloy)

