

Know about hazards

Make sure you **plan, prepare** and **equip** yourself well. Remember—**your safety is your responsibility**.



Hypothermia can affect anyone when it's cold, wet or windy. Have the right clothing and equipment to help you stay warm and dry. Photo: Les Molloy.



Avoid crossing streams and rivers after heavy rain or snow thaw. Never cross a flooded river. Check the NZMSC publication *River Safety*. Photo: NZ Mountain Safety Council.

In case of emergencies

Fire and search and rescue emergencies: phone **111**.

DOC HOTline
0800 362 468
Report any safety hazards or
conservation emergencies
For fire and search and rescue call 111

Published by
Department of Conservation
P.O. Box 10-420, Wellington
New Zealand
December 2009.

Cover image: Kepler Track.
Photo: www.naturespic.com.



Planning a trip in the backcountry?



NEW ZEALAND

FREE



Department of Conservation
Te Papa Atawhai

Look after yourself

Your safety is your responsibility

Fabulous walks, rides, climbs and heritage sites are found throughout New Zealand's backcountry (outdoors), and visiting these places is often a memorable experience. Going bush (tramping/hiking, mountaineering) is also serious recreation business. But it becomes really serious for others when a trip goes wrong and search and rescue teams are called in to help lost, sick, injured or expired adventurers.

Plan, prepare and equip yourself well for a safe and enjoyable adventure of any length in the backcountry.

Plan your trip

Choose a trip suitable for the skills, knowledge and experience of your group—be realistic



With so many places to go and different things to do, there are activities for everyone.

Please use DOC visitor centres and the website to thoroughly plan your trip.



Facilities and services change—always check the latest information before you venture out



Huts move, bridges are washed out, track conditions change. Photo: Removal of Speargrass Hut by helicopter, P. Dulieu.

Check the latest notices from your local DOC visitor centre or the DOC website www.doc.govt.nz

Backcountry huts and campsites

There are different types of hut. Most are Basic and Standard category. Only Basic huts are free to use, all others have a fee. Bookings are required for many Great Walk huts and campsites but are generally not required for Serviced or Standard huts. Read the DOC brochure *Backcountry huts* to find out more.



Walk-in backcountry campsites have very basic facilities so you need to be completely self-sufficient.

Check the latest weather and conditions

New Zealand's weather changes rapidly. It can be very cold at any time of year. Always be physically and mentally prepared for the worst and be ready to change your plans. Obtain the latest information from:

NZ weather service: phone **0900 999 + the Area Code** (for the local area) or: www.metservice.co.nz

Mountain Safety Council: www.mountainsafety.org.nz

Avalanche warnings: www.avalanche.net.nz



Sudden poor visibility on the track to Lake Angelus, Nelson Lakes National Park. Photo: Diana Parr.

Let someone know before you go

Trip intentions are important. Remember to leave details of your trip (return date and time, planned route, party member names and vehicle details) with a responsible person, and don't forget to check in when you return. The NZ Mountain Safety Council (NZMSC) has a Backcountry Intentions form to make this easy for you—available from DOC visitor centres or www.mountainsafety.org.nz

Remember to fill in hut books during your trip, even if you do not stay in the hut. They can assist in search and rescue operations, and may help save your life.

Prepare

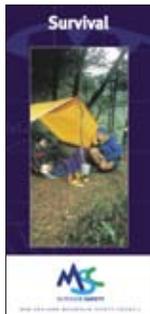
Have the right skills and knowledge

You need to have well-developed skills for backcountry adventure. Know about where you are going. Find out about the types and severity of natural hazards you might encounter and how to deal with them. Make well-informed decisions about risks to yourself and others in your care.

- Develop bushcraft and outdoor first aid skills, and learn how to recognise and cope with survival situations. The NZMSC offers training courses.
- Read outdoor safety and survival publications.
- Be aware of the causes and symptoms of hypothermia and know how to treat it.
- Travel with and learn from skilled and experienced people, or go with a licensed guide.
- Treat rivers with respect. Attend river safety training if your trip involves river crossings.
- Join a tramping or mountaineering club trip. Check the Federated Mountain Club website for details: www.fmc.org.nz

Special skills and equipment are needed for New Zealand's unique alpine conditions. Seek expert local guidance and information before an alpine trip.

- Consider hiring a NZ Mountain Guide Association guide. Visit www.nzmga.org.nz for details.



A comprehensive gear and equipment checklist is found in the NZMSC brochure **Going Bush?** Read **Survival** and **Hypothermia** and learn more about staying safe in the outdoors.

Equip yourself well

At all times of year, have warm and waterproof clothing.

- Have layers including a hooded raincoat, over-pants, hat and gloves, warm and fast drying tops, trousers and shorts, and thermal underwear made from wool or polypropylene. Wear sturdy boots.
- Carry a map and compass, first aid **and** survival kits (whistle, cord, sharp knife, pencil and paper, survival sheet and firelighters), water bottle and plenty of high-energy food.
- Carry a tent or fly on overnight trips. Huts can fill up at any time so you can't rely on space.
- Hire a 406MHz personal locator beacon, Mountain Radio, or satellite phone for backup. Mobile phones rarely work in the mountains.



Using Mountain Radio service in the Glaisnock River valley. Photo: www.naturespic.com.



Having the right gear makes adventures more enjoyable. Photo: www.naturespic.com.

Choose the right type of track for you

Tracks are developed to different standards, catering for a variety of experiences. Choose the type of track that matches your skills, fitness and the experience you want – be realistic. **Safety is your responsibility.**



Easy access short walk

- Easy walking for up to an hour
- Track is well formed, with an even surface. Few or no steps or slopes
- Suitable for people of all abilities and fitness
- Stream and river crossings are bridged
- Walking shoes required



Short walk

- Easy walking for up to an hour
- Track is well formed, with an even surface. There may be steps or slopes
- Suitable for people of most abilities and fitness
- Stream and rivers crossings are bridged
- Walking shoes required



Walking track

- Easy to moderate walking from a few minutes to a day
- Track is mostly well formed, some sections may be steep, rough or muddy
- Suitable for people with low to moderate fitness and abilities
- Clearly sign posted. Stream and river crossings are bridged
- Walking shoes or light tramping/hiking boots required



Great Walk/Easier tramping track

- Moderate day or multi-day tramping/hiking
- Track is generally well formed, may be steep, rough or muddy
- Suitable for people with moderate fitness. Limited backcountry (remote areas) experience required
- Track has signs, poles or markers. Major stream and rivers crossings are bridged
- Light tramping/hiking boots required



Tramping track

- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking
- Track is mostly unformed with steep, rough or muddy sections
- Suitable for people with good fitness. Moderate to high level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings
- Tramping/hiking boots required



Route

- Challenging day or multi-day tramping/hiking
- Track unformed and natural, rough, muddy or very steep
- Suitable for people with above average fitness. High level backcountry skills and experience, including navigation and survival skills required
- Complete self sufficiency required
- Track has markers, poles or rock cairns. Expect unbridged stream and river crossings
- Sturdy tramping/hiking boots required