

Routeburn Track

Pre Walk Information Booklet

Prior to arrival

Thank you for booking a guided walk with Ultimate Hikes.

Insurance

We **STRONGLY RECOMMEND** you arrange to take out your own personal travel insurance to cover your walk and related costs if you are not able to start or complete your adventure.

In the unlikely event of a medical emergency on the track, a medical evacuation by air will be carried out by New Zealand emergency services, which might be at your own cost.

Health and Safety

The health and safety of our walkers and team is at the forefront of our operation. Ultimate Hikes has long been a voluntary member of active adventure programmes and we regularly seek out audits to review our health and safety practices.

Our guides are trained in first aid and go through an extensive pre-season training programme in mountain safety. You are required to adhere to any instructions they give you at all times.

Guides and lodge staff are in constant touch with each other, the lodges and the Queenstown base by radio.

For the safety and consideration of others, walkers must sign a waiver to confirm they are not ill or been in contact with someone who is, within 48 hours of departing and should consult a staff member if they feel unwell on track.

Each person is responsible for their physical capability to complete the walk and should actively commit to fitness training prior to departure.

Each person is responsible for bringing and wearing appropriate clothing while walking. Please see the section below on equipment you must bring and the checklist.

Please read all the information in this booklet carefully.

The Routeburn Track traverses mountainous and remote terrain and preparation is key to your safety and enjoyment.

If you are the main contact for a group or family, you are responsible for ensuring every person on your booking has read and understood the information below.

Adventure activity

Before starting a hike with Ultimate Hikes, you should be aware that hiking on New Zealand's Great Walks and tracks involves risks that include natural hazards such as flood, rockfall, landslip, earthquake and avalanche. Unpredictable weather including high winds, snow and heavy rain can occur at any time. The tracks are uneven, rocky and steep in places. Ultimate Hikes takes every reasonable precaution to eliminate or minimise the risks you could be exposed to, but natural hazards can be unpredictable and should they occur, they could result in injury and even death.

You are required to adhere to any instructions given to you at all times. Failure to comply with any instruction could result in you being unable to continue and/or being removed from the activity. You are also responsible for all children in your care doing the same.

[You can read our risk management strategy here](#)

Fitness requirements

To enjoy your walk you must be able to carry a medium sized backpack (weighing 5-7kgs) for 6 to 9 hours over 10-15km of mountain track each day.

The track surface varies from rough terrain broken up by large rocks and tree roots to well-formed paths. Training on uneven ground with poles is strongly recommended along with core strength exercise to support balance on rough terrain. We recommend you wear hiking boots, which provide firm ankle support.

If you are not a regular walker, you should begin walking regularly at least 6-8 weeks before your departure carrying a pack and including hills and/or staircases. You should also be prepared to walk in windy and rainy weather. Walking through surface and even running water is probable in heavy rain.

To maximise your enjoyment we encourage you to set your own pace while walking the track, there is no need to keep up with the fastest walkers. There is always a guide at the back of the group.

[Click here for more information](#)

Cancellation policy

All cancellations must be made in writing and sent to info@ultimatehikes.co.nz or Ultimate Hikes Reservations, PO Box 259 Queenstown NZ, 9348.

Cancellation fees for all Multi Day Walks are charged on the following basis per person:

Outside 90 days from date of walk departure:
NZ\$100 per person

Between 89-60 days from date of walk departure:
NZ\$200 per person

Between 59-31 days from date of walk departure:
50% of full fare

Within 30 days of date of walk departure:
100% of full fare

The date and customer name, for which the walk has been booked, once confirmed by the Operator providing the services and activities described, is non-transferable.

[See Terms and Conditions for more information](#)

Our cancellation policy applies to all walkers and is non-negotiable.

Excess luggage

We recommend you leave any excess luggage at your pre and post accommodation.

We can store excess luggage at our centre in Queenstown for an additional fee. There is no need to book this – just bring it with you on the day of your departure.

Luggage storage is not available for Te Anau departures. For further information, please contact our Reservations team prior to your arrival.

Vehicle parking

Check with the accommodation you have booked if you can leave it there otherwise there are some options in Queenstown and Te Anau.

[Click here for more information](#)

Solo travellers

Walking is a great opportunity to meet like-minded individuals from around the world. Please note however that we cannot always guarantee same sex shared rooms.

Equipment & what you will carry

You will carry your own pack from lodge to lodge. We do not transport packs.

Clothing requirements:

For your safety and comfort while hiking, you must wear fabrics that are warm and quick drying such as merino wool, polypropylene, thermal, micro fleece and polar fleece. **Cotton, silk and denim is not recommended for physical activity as when it gets wet, the fabric retains the moisture next to your skin which will make you cold and expose you to the risk of hypothermia.**

Please follow our recommended [equipment list](#) to ensure you are prepared for the unpredictable environment we hike in. A checklist is included in this booklet

Pack & pack liner

You can supply your own or we can provide a 40L backpack for you. This can be collected at the pre-track briefing or from the Ultimate Hikes Centre. A photo of the pack can be viewed on this link [What to Bring](#). A pack liner can be collected at the briefing. The pack is likely to weigh between 5-7 kg (10-14lbs) full, if you follow our recommended [equipment list](#).

Please note that because of weight restrictions on our coaches, excess luggage and suitcases cannot be transported.

Lodges and accommodation

The maximum number of people per departure is 40.

Power

Power in the lodges is driven by generators. They are turned on in the morning (timings depend on lodges) and all are turned off at 10pm. There is no power from 10pm until the morning. Nightlights operate on small batteries charged during the day.

Electrical devices can be charged in NZ power sockets while the generators are running.

There is no internet access in the lodges or along the track.

CPAP machines: We are able to supply 600W power points to two private rooms for a CPAP Machine at each of our lodges to run machines through the night. You must have booked a private room and contact us in advance of your arrival to be allocated the room – they are subject to availability. There is no power source for CPAP machines in multishare rooms.

Clothes washing/drying: All lodges have facilities for washing clothes by hand, soap and drying rooms.

Bathrooms/toilets: All bathrooms have flush toilets and hot showers, with soap, shampoo, conditioner, towels and hairdryers provided.

Please flush only toilet paper in the flush toilets – any other products will block and/or contaminate the natural breakdown system in the septic tanks. Covered rubbish bins are provided in all bathrooms for any other products including and specifically for sanitary product and wipes. All other rubbish should be disposed of in bins provided.

Shared rooms: Up to 4 people share bunk rooms with separate shared bathroom facilities. A sleep sheet is provided and must be used. Duvets, pillows and blankets are also provided. We have one room that can sleep five people. Please request this at time of booking as it is subject to availability.

Private rooms have a queen bed or two king single beds and ensuite bathroom. All linen is provided.

Lounge and dining

Smoking and vaping is strictly prohibited in all Lodges and Ultimate Hikes facilities. Please ask at lodges where the designated smoking area is.

Meals provided

Day 1	Morning tea, lunch, dinner
Day 2	Breakfast, lunch, dinner
Day 3	Breakfast, lunch

Breakfast
Selection of cereals, toast, fruit, cooked options, juice, hot drinks.
Lunch
Selection of breads, sandwich fillings, salad, fruit, snacks.
Dinner
Varies between lodges: starter, main course (choice of 3 options), dessert.

Vegetarian options are included in all our menus.

We will notify where no dairy or gluten is added.

If you have specific food allergies or dietary requirements, please contact us to discuss them. We will endeavour to cater for general requirements but we are unable to cater for strict diet plans or specific food requests due to the extremely isolated and challenging environment we operate in.

A selection of New Zealand wine, beer and soft drinks are available for purchase at the lodges.

An explanation of meals and timings is provided in the itinerary section.

FOR YOUR SAFETY and comfort while hiking, you must wear fabrics that are warm and quick drying such as merino wool, polypropylene, thermal, micro fleece and polar fleece.

Cotton, silk and denim is not recommended for physical activity as when it gets wet, the fabric retains the moisture next to your skin which will make you cold and expose you to the risk of hypothermia.

Equipment checklist

Required to walk

Walking boots or sturdy hiking shoes

Base layer - wool, polypropylene,
or thermal (top and bottom)

Fleece or merino wool jacket.
An ideal outer layer in cold weather

Waterproof raincoat
we can provide, see below.

Long-sleeved wool, polypropylene,
or thermal top

T-shirt. wool, polypropylene,
or thermal. **Avoid cotton**

Sunhat (with peak or brim)
and wool/fleece hat

Warm gloves - wool, polypropylene,

Shorts/walking trousers
(not jeans or lycra/cotton leggings)

Three pairs of hiking socks -
merino wool or thermal

Sunscreen, insect repellent

Water bottle or bladder (1 litre capacity)

Optional but recommended

Walking poles – highly recommended
(you can rent a pair from the UHC)

Waterproof over trousers

Gaiters

Swimwear & lightweight towel

Spare laces. Just in case

Sealable plastic bags

Reusable lunchbox – we can supply
but more environmentally friendly.

Essential equipment you need to bring
on your multiday guided walk.

In the lodge

Shirt or long sleeved top

Sweater/jersey

Lightweight trousers

Lightweight shoes – with a hard sole.

Nightwear

Personal toiletries
*(soap, shampoo and conditioner
are provided)*

Change of underwear

Extras/useful items

Credit/debit card *(for purchases in Te Anau
and to settle bar bills at the end of your walk).*

Foot fleece/second skin

Strapping tape

Lip balm

You can collect from us

Backpack & Liner
(weighs approx 2kg empty)

PVC Waterproof raincoat with hood
(weighs approx 500gms)

Sleep sheet are provided in the lodges
(for shared rooms only)
Jersey cotton sleeping bag shape
You may prefer to bring your own.

Many items can be purchased
at the Ultimate Hikes Centre.

On track

Your guides will accompany you every day and will provide current weather and track conditions. There is always a guide at the back of the group, near the front, and in the middle of the groups. They will show you interesting aspects of the track, provide general knowledge and are trained in weather and safety protocols. You must adhere to any requests or instructions made by the guides.

You are encouraged to walk at your own pace in your own time (unless advised otherwise). Parts of the track can be uneven, wet or rocky – take your time.

Please keep all rubbish with you and dispose of it in the lodges.

Sandflies are common along the track. We recommend you wear insect repellent each day.

All of our lodges have flush toilets. There are flush toilets at the Department of Conservation huts. Toilets along the track and at all our lunch shelters and huts are kiwi long drops. Toilet paper is provided. If you need a toilet stop between these dedicated spaces please leave your pack on the track. Make sure you are 50 metres from any water sources and bury your waste.

The unpredictable nature of the weather in this region means that snow, high winds and heavy rain can occur at any time of the year. It is therefore very important to be prepared for all weather conditions, and carry the appropriate clothing at all times.

Pre-track briefing

Please check in at **1.45pm** on the day prior to your walk for a group pre-track briefing. The briefing is held at the Ultimate Hikes Centre, Ground Floor, The Station Building, Duke Street Entrance, Queenstown.

If you are unable to make it to the pre track briefing please advise our reservations team closer to the time of your departure, to ensure you have all the up to date information required for your walk.

At check in you will complete your registration form to confirm your dietary and medical information and emergency contact details.

You will be able to pick up any gear you need to borrow from us or purchase any items you may need from our shop. Our customer service staff will



Ultimate Hikes Centre Location (Queenstown)

also give you an overview of what to expect while you are on track.

Day of departure

Please check in at the Ultimate Hikes Centre at **6.15am** on the day of departure.

There is no collection from accommodation or the airport. We can collect you from the Frankton bus shelter on request.

Please ensure you have breakfast before arrival as food and beverages cannot be consumed on the coach. Morning tea will be provided in Te Anau on arrival – at about **9.00am**.

Te Anau departures. If you are starting the walk in Te Anau please contact Reservations to arrange your registration and receive a briefing. You will meet the group at **9.00am** at The Ultimate Hikes Te Anau Desk in the Alpine Centre cafe cnr Sandy Brown Rd & Highway 94, Te Anau.

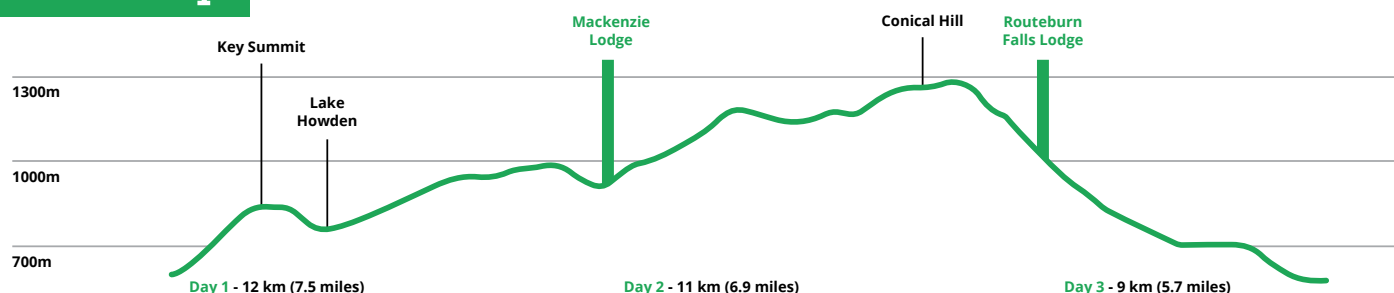
Please note: We do not go through Te Anau on the return trip.

Return time

The coach returns to Queenstown on the final day at approximately **4.00pm**. You will be dropped off at the Ultimate Hikes Centre in Queenstown. Arrival times may vary due to weather, road and traffic conditions.

PLEASE NOTE: The Routeburn Track ends at Glenorchy. The return coach therefore does not pass through Te Anau or Frankton/the airport. Any onward travel should be arranged from the Ultimate Hikes Centre in Queenstown.

Itinerary



Day 1 | 12km (7.5 miles)

Queenstown to Mackenzie Lodge

TRACK TERRAIN: The track starts with a steady uphill followed by a downhill section to the lunch stop. In the afternoon the track continues a gradual climb to Earland Falls. There are large rocks to navigate around Earland Falls, and a steep and rocky downhill section before reaching the lodge. Care should be taken.

The group meets at the Ultimate Hikes Centre in Queenstown at **6.15am** ready for departure. Your pack will be put under the bus and not available until you reach the Divide at the start of the track, so it's a good idea to keep your water bottle, a warm layer, your phone/camera, and some money to carry with you on the bus.

The bus will travel to Te Anau where morning tea is provided including tea and coffee, before travelling on to the start of the walk at the Divide. The drive to Te Anau is approximately two hours, with the stop of half an hour and the onward drive along the picturesque Milford Road to the Divide is approximately one hour.

At the Divide, you will collect your pack, and the guides will allocate packed lunches – if you have provided a dietary request, be sure to advise them so you collect the right lunch for you.

The guides will give you an update of the track and weather conditions and can check your pack and pole fittings before you start walking. The front guide will then start the group off up the track. The rest of the guides will walk within the middle of the group and there will always be a guide at the rear of the group. If you have any questions or concerns please ask the nearest guide or stop to wait for the guide behind you.

The track begins with a steady climb up through Silver Beech Forest so take your time to find your rhythm. After about an hour you will reach the turn off to Key Summit. A guide will be there and

depending on the weather conditions, will advise you to either go up to the summit or continue to Lake Howden.

Key Summit is an optional return walk (leave your pack at the turnoff) of about one hour up a zigzag track and back the same way. It is well worth the trip - at the top there is a boardwalk through wetlands and amazing 360-degree views of the surrounding mountains and valleys.

Back at the turn off, collect your pack, and it's a short though steep downhill walk over rocks and tree roots to Lake Howden where you will stop at the shelter for lunch and a hot drink.

After lunch, the track steadily climbs to Earland Falls – about 3.5kms. Stop for a break at the base pool. From the Falls it is another 5kms to the lodge. The track traverses around the mountain side to the Orchard. Beyond, you'll climb for a short section before descending to Mackenzie Lodge. The descent is steep with large steps down across rocks and tree roots. At the bottom you will emerge from the trees into the Hebe garden and see Mackenzie Lodge ahead of you.

Take the entrance to the right off the track and a warm welcome will await you at the lodge entrance. Your host will offer a cold drink and a snack before showing you to your room and pointing out the lodge facilities.

If you have time and the inclination, you can walk a few minutes further along the track to Lake Mackenzie to view it in the afternoon light and take a swim in the icy fresh water.

After a hot shower, you can rinse your hiking clothes and hang them in the drying room before relaxing in the lodge for afternoon tea. The bar will open late afternoon with pre dinner snacks followed by a three course meal and a briefing on the following day.

Generators will turn off at 10.00pm. Nightlights will operate in rooms and corridors.

Itinerary

Day 2 | 11km (6.9 miles)

Lake Mackenzie to Routeburn Falls Lodge

TRACK TERRAIN: Uneven and steep ascent from Lake Mackenzie with a series of zig zags up the side of the hill to Ocean Peak Corner. The track then is quite narrow but mostly flat across the mountain side – rising again around the Harris Saddle and Lake Harris before descending into the valley with some boardwalks and steps. This is the most exposed day on the track and can be windy and cold in wet weather.

Generators will turn on to start your day in the morning. Please check the timing in each lodge as it can differ slightly. Hot water in the bathrooms will take about 15 minutes to heat up. Once the generators have turned on, lunch making preparations are set up in the lounge. Each person can choose from a variety of fillings to make sandwiches, wraps or salads. There is also a selection of snacks, home baking and fruit to choose from. Please ensure you pack enough food to sustain you through the day.

A continental breakfast, tea and coffee will also be available in the dining room and a cooked breakfast will follow. Once you have completed lunch making and breakfast, and re-packed your pack, your guides will be waiting for you outside the main entrance to the lodge.

Once everyone is ready the guides will take you down to Lake Mackenzie for a group photo. Bring everything with you because the track continues past Lake Mackenzie and rises up through ancient Beech Forest, emerging out of the treeline for stunning views of the lake below. The ascent to the treeline is rocky with tree roots and is steep in places. It is also narrow so please let people behind you go through when you can. At the treeline the track zig zags across the mountain until it rounds the top and spreads out to Ocean Peak Corner.

Take a break here, have a snack and enjoy the view. On a clear day you'll have a full panorama of the Darran Mountains across the Hollyford Valley, to the distant Tasman Sea at Martin's Bay.

When you are ready, the track drops down and follows along the mountain face. This is true alpine terrain - ask your guides to point out the native flora, including mountain daisies, buttercups, gentians and edelweiss.

The track traverses the Hollyford Face for about 4.5km, approximately 2 hours. There are few water sources along this section and none at the lunch stop. Your guides will advise where to fill up with water. The track rounds the corner from the face and crosses a stream. Ahead is a short but steep staircase. At the top you will wind around some alpine tarns and arrive at the Harris Shelter. A welcome sight with hot drinks available.

Relax inside the shelter or on the surrounding deck and enjoy your lunch. Weather permitting there is an option to take a side walk behind the shelter to Conical Hill. This is a scramble up a steep front. There is a plateau overlooking Lake Harris two thirds of the way up – stop here or continue up to the panorama views out to Martins Bay on the West Coast. This walk takes about an hour and a half to two hours round trip and is a very steep scramble up and down. Check with a guide if you are unsure about going up.

After lunch, the track continues around Lake Harris and reaches the highest point. This section of track is narrow with some drop offs, keep to the hillside and wait for a guide if you are nervous of heights. From the highpoint the track descends into the upper basins of the Routeburn Valley skirting the Routeburn Falls. The track is graded with boardwalks and some wide steps. As the Routeburn river reaches the Falls, the track will wind down a rocky section that can be slippery in the rain. Hold on to the handrails and make your way down to the lodge nestled in the trees. A host will be waiting to greet you at the entrance and the schedule for the afternoon/ evening will be similar to the previous one.

Routeburn Falls Lodge has a tree hut quality with external walkways and a water source running underneath.



Itinerary

Day 3 | 9km (5.7 miles)

Routeburn Falls to Queenstown

TRACK TERRAIN: Starts with a rocky descent then mostly wide and smooth with some rocky patches.

When you are ready to leave the lodge, meet at the front entrance. The track descends a steep rocky section with some big steps down before widening out to a broad track. You'll cross some small bridges and an open section formed by a tree avalanche in 1994 that affords an amazing view of Routeburn Flats below.

Steep downhills are over when you reach the valley floor. A guide will be at the junction and will encourage you to leave your pack there and turn left along the track for about 5 mins to Routeburn Flats and the DOC hut. Use the bathroom here and wander out to the pasture of the Flats where you'll pick up the Routeburn River again.

Returning to your pack, the track continues through Red Beech Forest shadowing the river. About 4kms along the track you will reach Forge Flat – head down to the river and if the weather is in your favour stop for lunch. Check with your guide for the river conditions if you are keen to brave the icy fresh turquoise water.

It is an easy walk from here to the end of the track so take your time, listen for native birds in the valley and enjoy this last part of your journey through native forest with the beauty of the river flowing down the ravine below. Take the detour loop track to a nature walk that has panels about the natural history of this vast forest. Shortly afterwards you cross a large suspension bridge and arrive at the Routeburn Shelter and the end of the Routeburn Track.

The coach will be waiting and the driver will assist the guides in collecting the equipment you may have borrowed – change your shoes if you want to and keep things you'll want with you for the drive back to Queenstown. Once everyone has arrived the bus will take the group to the village of Glenorchy – about 30 mins where you can purchase a celebratory drink at the pub. The drive from Glenorchy to Queenstown is another hour along the side of Lake Wakatipu and arrives back at the Ultimate Hikes Centre.

The bus route into Queenstown comes from the opposite direction to the way you went out so we are unable to do any drop offs in Frankton or the airport.



Track Map

