

Gillespie Pass circuit, Mt Aspiring National Park

This circuit takes in the Young and Wilkin river valleys and crosses 1600m-high Gillespie Pass.

The track starts at the small settlement of Makarora, where you can book a jet boat to speed you up the Wilkin River to near Kerin Forks Hut.

The alternative is a tedious slog along cattle flats which begins with a deep crossing of the Makarora River. If it's not safe to cross, you may need to use the jet boat, or begin at Blue Pools.

From Kerin Forks Hut, walkers can either choose to explore the upper Wilkin River by heading to Top Forks Hut, or stay on the Gillespie Pass Circuit and climb into the Siberia Valley.

If heading into the upper Wilkin, plan for an extra two nights to allow the opportunity to view the notorious Waterfall Face of Rabbit Pass, or to visit lakes Castalia and Lucidus.

Back on the Gillespie Pass Circuit, the trail from Kerin Forks is well-built and easy to negotiate. A wide path utilises switch-backs to negotiate a bluff, then gently descends onto luxurious grassy flats beside Siberia Stream. It's a couple of hours walk to Siberia Hut.

Spend two nights at the hut to allow for a detour to Crucible Lake, which involves a calf-deep crossing of Siberia Stream, then an abrupt climb to a hanging valley and a moraine wall which dams Crucible Lake.

You'll want good weather to safely cross Gillespie Pass. The track gradually zigzags up a forested spur, then drops into an alpine basin. By Gillespie Stream, there's excellent camping in a grassy clearing.

Climb out into open tussock terrain, where you may need to kick steps in the snow – in winter, you'll need ice tools and the experience to use them.

Hop along the weathered schist slabs until reaching the flat ridge-top. The steep descent into the Young Valley can be knee-wrenching, but it's mercifully short. Boulder-hopping and route-finding are easier along the valley floor of the Young River. The track plummets into the forest to Young Hut.

It takes a couple of tough hours to reach Young Forks campsite, where the south and north branches of the Young River meet.

It's then an easy meander to the mouth of the Young River. Scout for a suitable crossing of the Makarora River here. If this is not possible, tramp 7km north to the bridge at Blue Pools to access SH6.

WILD FILE

Access From Makarora, north of Wanaka

Grade Moderate

Time Makarora to Kerin Forks Hut, 4-5hr; To Siberia Hut, 2-3hr; To Young Hut, 6-8hr; To Makarora, 6-8hr.

Allow extra days to explore Top Forks Hut and Crucible Lake

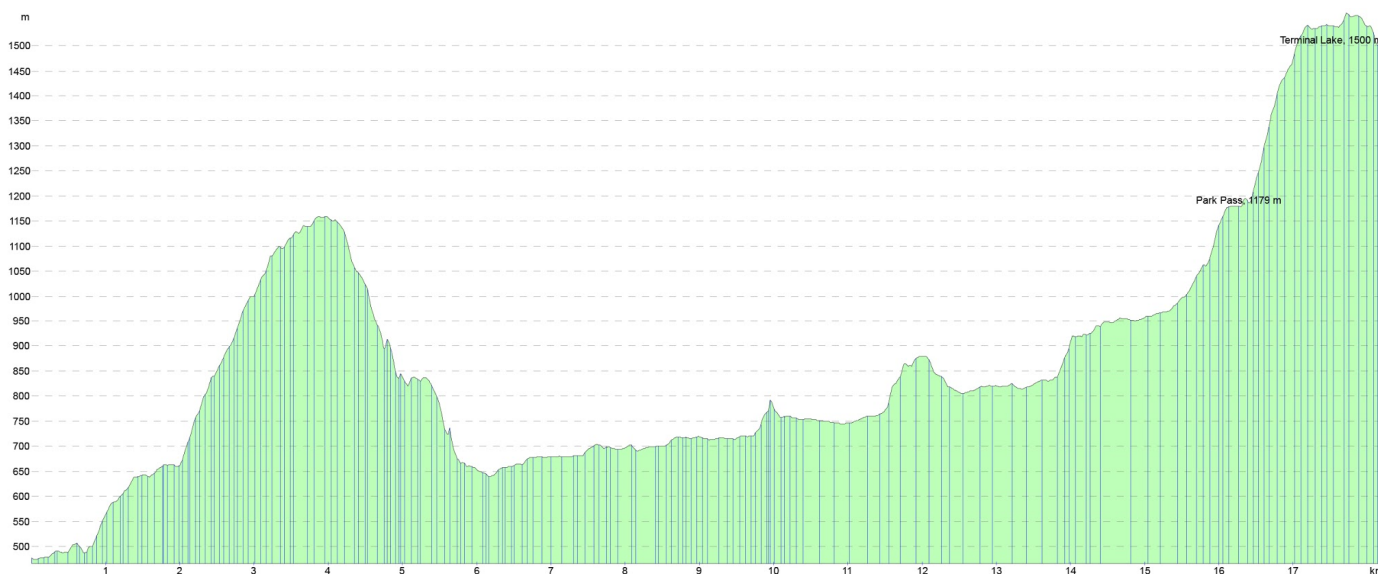
Distance 58km

Total ascent 2640m

Accommodation Kerin Forks Hut (\$15, 10 bunks), Siberia Hut (\$20, 20 bunks), Young Hut (\$15, 20 bunks)

Topo 50 map BZ12

Elevation Profile



A detailed topographic map of the Makarora River area in New Zealand. The map features the Wilkin River and Makarora River, with numerous contour lines indicating elevation. Key locations include Makarora, Haast, and various peaks like Mt. Turner and Mt. Bygonne. The map also shows the Wilkin Valley Track and the Makarora River bridge. The map is oriented with North at the top.

Gillespie Pass circuit, Mt Aspiring National Park. Map2



