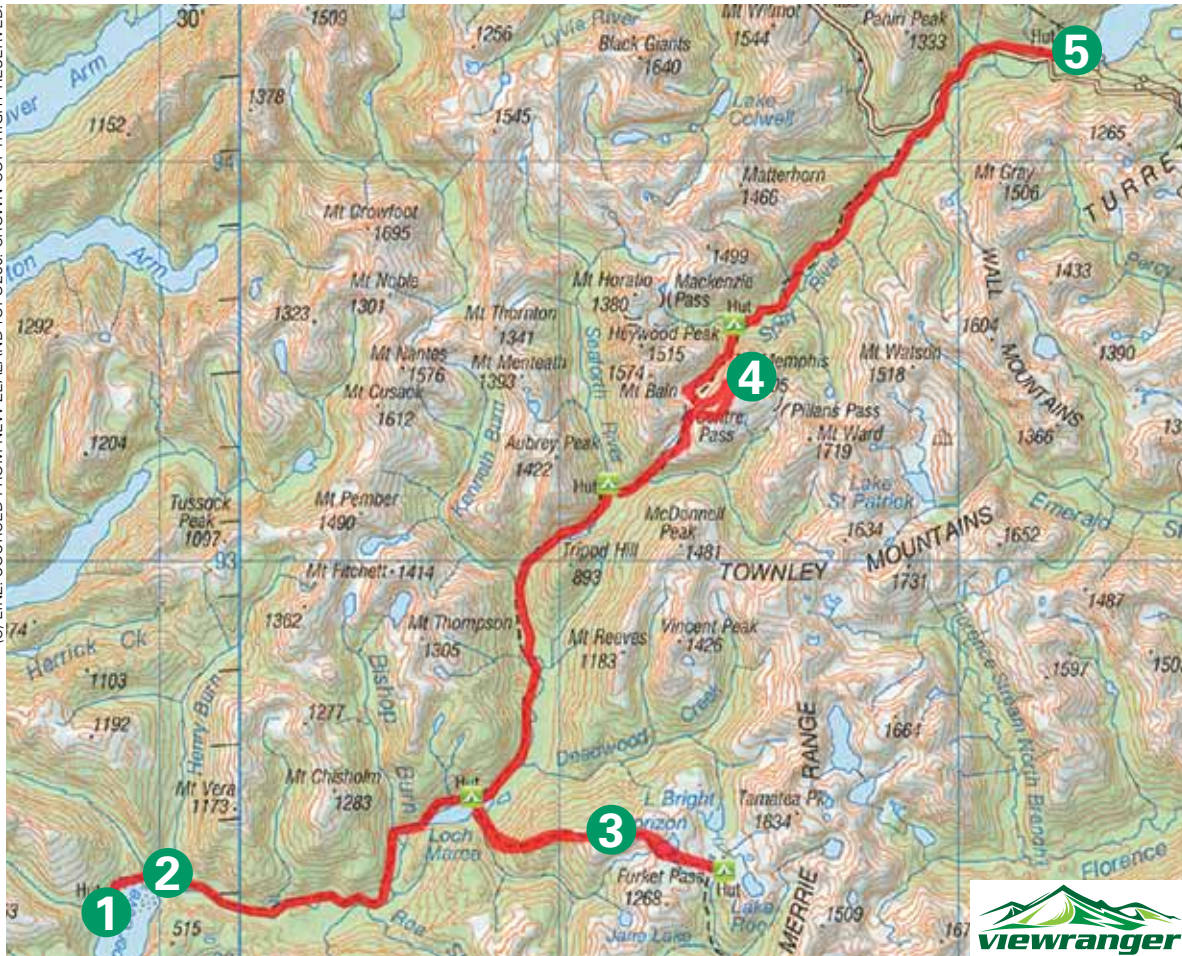


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## ■ Dirty Kiwi

Looking for an off-the-grid trek you can handle with nothing more than your wits, your gear and your GPS? Head over to New Zealand and tromp out onto the mighty, muddy Dusky.

By Cameron Martindell

The Fiordlands of the South Island of New Zealand may already be on your radar, but instead of following the flock and fighting for a permit to Milford Sound only to tramp a well trodden track, consider the solitude and challenge of the Dusky. Simply named for the time of day Captain Cook entered it for the first time in 1770, Dusky Sound is where you're likely to see some indigenous wildlife and is a popular breeding ground for the Fiordland Penguin. While the trail is mostly well marked following rivers, it's not always obvious (bring a map, compass and GPS) and is sometimes covered in water. This is what the Dusky is famous for: deep mucky mud, huge puddles of standing water, intricate systems of roots to be used as ladders over massive boulders, a lush forest thick with mosses

and ferns covering every square inch of the rich sod and spectacular views of this dramatic Fiordland landscape.

The closest towns are Te Anau and Manapouri. From here a number of options exist for this trek. You can grab a ferry to start or do as I did and hire a float plane to fly into Suppers Cove and hike back out over 5 days. Search "Dusky Track" at doc.govt.nz for more info.

### 1 Start: Supper Cove (-45.702145, 166.944626)

I jumped off the pontoon of the float plane and slogged through the knee deep salty water of Supper Cove, the deepest reaching of Dusky Sound from the ocean. My pack was held high over my head as I took it from the plane up on to the small beach along the serpentine tree-covered coastline. The pilot said not to worry about taking my boots off to keep them dry as I deplaned: my boots and feet would be soaked not ten minutes into the trail anyway he said.

### 2 Walkwires: Minimalist Bridges (-45.694077, 166.964767)

These bridges take some getting used to. You walk

on a wire and have two hand-rail wires to hold your balance. The bridge does swing some but the wires keep their hold. Don't worry if you don't totally get it on the first try, you'll have plenty of opportunities to practice.

### 3 Side Trip: Furkert Pass (-45.69241, 167.108231)

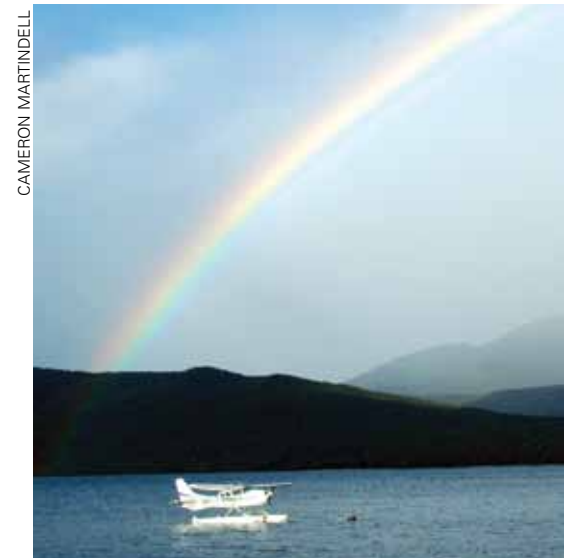
With just a daypack I popped up and out of the valley onto the ridge above to get some spectacular views west back toward Supper Cove, then returned to Loch Maree Hut for a second night. Bring your full pack and add a few days to this trek and visit Lake Hauroko.

### 4 Off Trail: Mt. Memphis (-45.591461, 167.163467)

No Elvis here, I checked. After lunch at Centre Pass, I wasn't satisfied with the elevation gain and wanted to see more. I stashed my pack and forged my own route upward to 1,405m (4,600ft) and enjoyed a view of where I had just been and could look ahead along the trail to come.

### 5 End: Lake Manapouri (-45.523834, 167.274734)

Off the trail and after a short stint on a dirt road I reached the west arm of Lake Manapouri and only had a short wait until the once-a-day boat arrived to pick me and a few other trekkers up. The boat departed at 4.30 p.m., but be sure to double check in town before you depart on your trip.



CAMERON MARTINDELL  
OPEN IT UP: SLOGGING TO THE BACKCOUNTRY TURNS AT TREELINE.

## TRAIL GEAR

### DEUTER AIRCONTACT 65 + 10

Comfortable straps, lots of room and durable materials make this pack ideal for trekking the Dusky. You'll need room for a sleeping bag, plenty of food, warm clothes and maybe a dry bag depending on the season.

\$269; deuter.com



### OBOZ BEARTOOTH BOOTS

Slippery roots, steep ascents and descents and the chance of being (at least) knee deep in mud means you want a solid boot for the Dusky. Helicopter evacs are expensive so take care of your feet.

\$210; obozfootwear.com



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