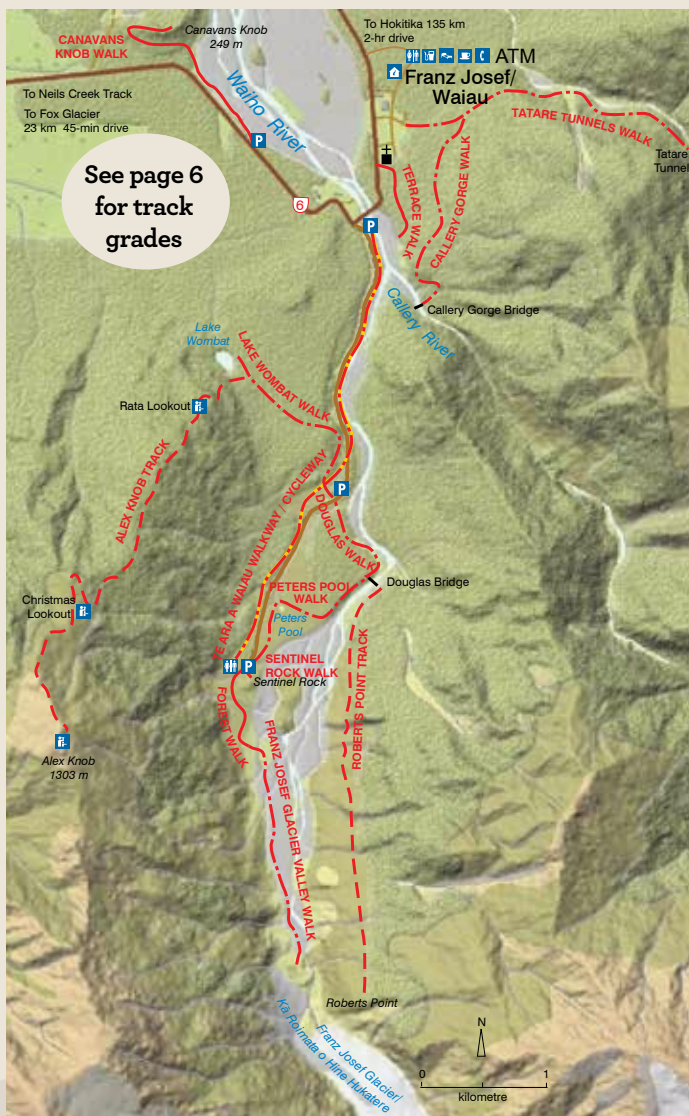


Franz Josef/Waiiau

Built on the grit and determination of the pioneering gold miners, explorers, farmers and tourism operators, Franz Josef/Waiiau is a small yet bustling village surrounded by high snow-capped mountains and lush rainforest. Opportunities to explore the environment abound, so make the most of your time here and immerse yourself in nature.



To reach the glacier car park:

Driving

Drive south from Franz Josef/Waiiau village over the Waiho River bridge. Turn left after the bridge. The glacier access road is not suitable for trailers or caravans. The road winds its way alongside the Waiho River before entering Rātā Grove which can be awash with the glowing red flowers of rātā during summer. Watch for cyclists and walkers crossing the road through here. The road continues to the car park, with increasing views of the glacier valley and surrounding mountains.

Walking or cycling –

Te Ara a Waiiau Walkway/Cycleway

Time: Walk – 2 hr return,

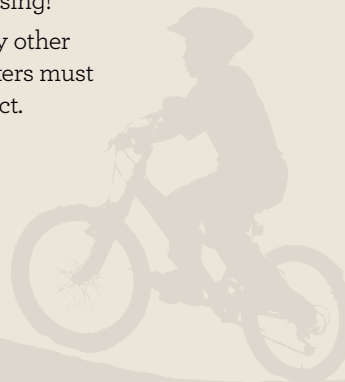
Cycle – 1 hr return 8.7 km return

The track begins on the right-hand side of the road just south of the Catholic church, before crossing and then going under the Waiho River bridge. The track then runs along the left-hand edge of the glacier access road on a sealed lane marked for walkers and cyclists.

The track heads into the forest on the left-hand side of the road for a short time, before re-emerging from the forest and crossing the glacier valley access road. Take care to give way to all traffic and cross carefully.

Once across the road the track winds its way easily up the valley, through lush rainforest with abundant birdlife. The track crosses Lake Wombat Walk just minutes from the road crossing – take care at this intersection also, cyclists watch for walkers crossing!

Bikes are not permitted on any other tracks in the glacier valley. Bikers must obey the bikers code of conduct.



Franz Josef Glacier valley walks

Sentinel Rock Walk

Time: 20 min, 900 m return

This short steady climb up a now bush-covered ice-scraped rock offers the most impressive views of the glacier valley and the Waiho River.

In 1865, Sentinel Rock had just emerged from beneath the glacial ice. Until 1909, ice pressed against Harper Rock, just in front of Sentinel Rock. Since then, plants have progressively colonised the rock in a process called plant succession (see page 40 for more on plant succession). Information panels at the viewpoint show dramatic photos of the glacial retreat. This is one of the best places to appreciate the power of the glacier.

Forest Walk to Glacier View

Time: 30 min, 1.4 km return

This easy forest walk leads to a riverbank view of the glacier, river valley and surrounding mountains.

Franz Josef Glacier/Kā Roimata o Hine Hukatere Walk



This track is sometimes closed due to ice collapse, flooding or landslides – check the latest information on the safety panels.

Time: 1 hr 30 min, 5.4 km return from the car park

Continuing from the end of Forest Walk, follow the markers past Trident Falls to a point with a view of the terminal face of the glacier. This is not a track but a route over the shingle and rock of the riverbed and it can be quite rough underfoot – make sure you have suitable footwear.

This is a beautiful yet volatile place. The glacier is constantly moving. Ice and rock fall from the terminal face without warning. Creeks may rise up to a metre in even moderate rain. Water levels rise in as little as 15 min.

DOC constantly monitors conditions here. Protect yourself by staying behind barriers and observing signs. *Read the advice on page 7 before starting on this track.*

Peters Pool

Time: 25 min, 1.1 km return from the car park

This fully-accessible walk winds through the rainforest to a small kettle lake, which was formed by ice melting amongst glacial moraine about 200 years ago. Enjoy the reflective views of the glacier and mountain peaks in this tranquil setting.

Douglas Walk

Time: 1 hr (including 15-min loop back via Te Ara a Waiau Walkway), 3.9 km loop

This easy forest walk crosses glacial landforms created

Photo: © Katrina Henderson



between AD 1600 and AD 1750 by glacier advances. Walk through a succession of vegetation types, each representing a different stage of regrowth behind retreating ice and/or different soil types. Visit Peters Pool, a reflective kettle lake, and the historic Douglas suspension bridge.

Lake Wombat Walk

Time: 1 hr 30 min, 3.8 km return

Lake Wombat Walk starts from a small car park on the right side of the road, approximately half way to the glacier car park. Alternatively it can be accessed on foot via Te Ara a Waiau. The fern-lined track climbs steadily from the road through rimu forest to a peaceful lake. Termed a kettle lake, it was formed by the melting of a huge piece of ice left amidst glacial debris about 9,000 years ago. This walk offers good opportunities for bird watching if you stop quietly along the way.

Tramping tracks in Franz Josef Glacier valley

Roberts Point Track

For experienced and well-equipped trampers only. Check with the DOC Visitor Centre before starting this track.

Time: 5 hr, 11 km return – from Glacier Road/Wombat car park to Roberts Point

5 hr 20 min, 12.3 km return – from glacier car park to Roberts Point

- *This track does not provide access onto the glacier.*
- *Fording the streams on this track can be dangerous during and after rain – be careful, and turn back if you are unsure.*
- *The track requires a good level of fitness and it is slippery in places. Good boots are essential.*
- *Stay on the marked track – do not attempt to climb down to the main river from any point on the track.*
- *Never attempt to cross the Waiho River.*

Starting from Douglas Bridge, Roberts Point Track winds up the true right of the Waiho (Franz Josef Glacier) valley, over ice-carved rock and across many side streams to a viewpoint high above the glacial ice. In around an hour the track opens out onto ice-smoothed rock outcrops at Hende's Hut. This hut is unsuitable for overnight accommodation, but it does provide a sheltered lunch spot.

The track climbs on through open scrubland to a suspension bridge crossing Rope Creek and continues steadily upwards to Roberts Point. The views from here are well worth the effort with the glacier, sheer rock walls, waterfalls and mountain peaks all visible.



Photo: © Ian Singleton

Alex Knob Track

For experienced and well-equipped trampers only. Check with the DOC Visitor Centre before starting this track.

Time: 8 hr, 17.2 km return

Alex Knob Track is a steady well-graded climb that branches off Lake Wombat Walk. The vegetation changes visibly with increasing altitude from lowland rimu forest, through rātā and kāmahī forest, subalpine New Zealand cedar and tree daisies to alpine meadows. Rātā Lookout, Christmas Lookout and Alex Knob give excellent views of the glacier and the ancient glacial landforms across the coastal plain, which date from the last ice age.

Start early in the morning to be on the mountain top before afternoon cloud obscures the view.



In the winter months, snow is likely above Christmas Lookout. Do not go beyond the snowline if you are inexperienced in walking in alpine areas in winter conditions. Boots are essential. Take drinking water with you.



Photo: © Cornelia Vervoorn

Walks near Franz Josef/Waiau village

Callery Gorge Walk

Time: 1 hr 20 min, 5.2 km return

Callery Gorge Walk begins approximately 5 min along the Tatare Tunnels Track with a short, gentle climb to a high terrace behind Franz Josef/Waiau township, passing the town water-supply pipes and tanks.

The track narrows through the rainforest, and follows alongside an old gold mining water race. The water race and some rusty relics are among the last visual reminders of the gold mining era.

The track then descends to the historic Callery gorge bridge site. From here there are views of the narrow Callery gorge, which has changed dramatically over the years due to gravel deposits filling in the gorge and raising the level of the riverbed.

Tatare Tunnels Walk

Time: 1 hr 20 min, 3.6 km return

After 10 min walk on a four-wheel-drive road the track climbs gently then drops to a view of the scenic Tatare Gorge. The track becomes steep and narrow for the short climb to the Tatare Tunnels.

If you wish to explore the tunnels you will need a torch and a raincoat, and you will get wet feet. You may see glow-worms and cave wētā. The track stops at the old wooden flume at the end of the first tunnel.

Terrace Walk

Time: 30 min, 1.8 km return

This easy walk winds a short way along the bush-clad terraces at the south end of the village. The walk provides a good introduction to the rainforest of the glacier region.

Take a torch and explore this walk at night to see glow-worms in the forest, especially under and around large fallen trees alongside the track.

Canavans Knob Walk

**Time: 1 hr, 3.2 km return from car park;
1 hr 40 min, 6.3 km return from Franz Josef/Waiau township**

Start from a small car park 1.2 km on State Highway 6 south of Franz Josef/Waiau village, or walk from the village across the Waiho River Bridge and turn sharp right onto a stop bank. Halfway along the stop bank follow the track marker pegs off the stop bank, across the creek and onto the next section of stop bank where the track starts. The first 800 m of track from the car park is along the river stop bank. A short but steady climb then takes you through rainforest to the top of this granite outcrop, where you will get commanding views of the coast and lowlands to one side, and up the Waiho River to the glacier and Southern Alps/Kā Tiritiri o te Moana from the other.

The granite of Canavans Knob is much older than the schist rocks of the glacier valley across the Alpine Fault, and therefore it survived the scraping of glacier ice 9,000 years ago.



Photo: © Katrina Henderson