

MY DREAM FISH NEW ZEALAND

Trout, Wilderness & Adventure in the Backcountry

Safety, Packrafting, Fishing & Trekking Equipment • Dangers & Safety Measures
Nutrition • Trekking Infos • Guiding • Regulations • Stories • Rivers & Lakes



TONY ENTWISTLE • CHRIS BELL • ROB VAZ
SAMUEL HARRISON • STEVE REBELLTON

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Author, Layout, Cover, Editing, Proofreading and Translations:
Stephan Janischewski

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E-mail: info@mydreamfish.com

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Dedication

I would like to thank all authors, as well as Fish & Game, who have enriched this book with their contributions and information.

Special thanks go to all photographers and participants

Simon Wilson • Logan Ahfeld • Joe Wilson • Jesica Kelly • Isaak Mischefski • Dayne Mc Knight • Stuart Kennedy • Scott Jay Maybury • Tony Pearce • Manuel Heraud • Rob Kirkwood • Dan Regan • Conner Andrew • Ben Haywood • Peter Grundmann • Kieran Lee • Chris Hemphill • Emily Bell • Jack Kingsborough • Quentin Forster • Oliver Bell • Rob Vaz • Samuel Harrison • Chris Bell • Tony Entwistle

Your main author

Steve Rebellton

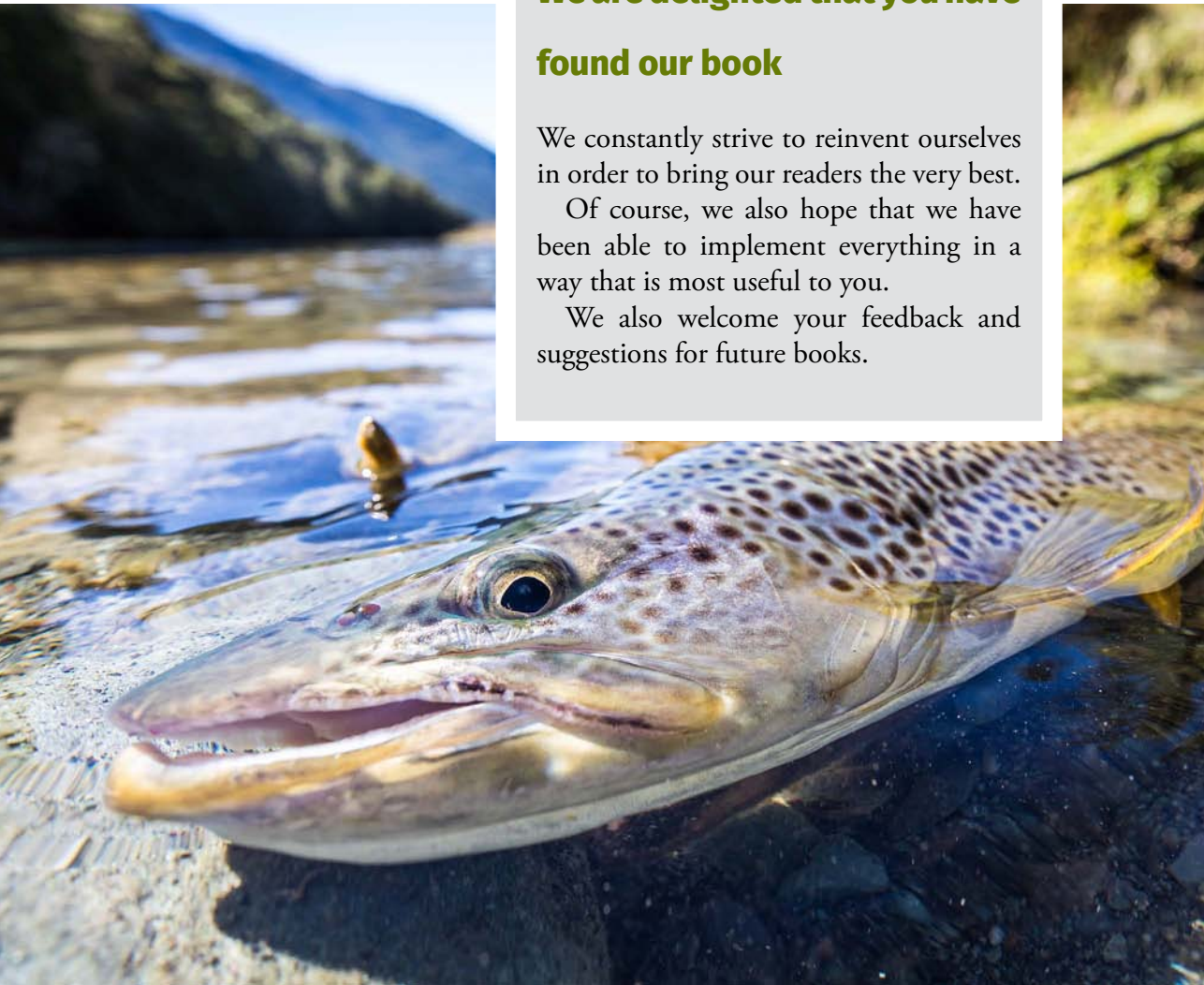
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**We are delighted that you have
found our book**

We constantly strive to reinvent ourselves in order to bring our readers the very best.

Of course, we also hope that we have been able to implement everything in a way that is most useful to you.

We also welcome your feedback and suggestions for future books.



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Foreword

For many, New Zealand is just a dream of crystal-clear water, untouched wilderness, and endless open space. For us, it's more than that. It's the country where every fly, every spinner, every cast, and every step through the backcountry writes a little story.

My Dream Fish New Zealand – Trout, Wilderness & Adventure in the Backcountry is not a typical fishing guide filled with pretty pictures and generic tips. It's a handbook for those who truly want to get out there – to where the roads end, the maps have gaps, and the trout grow so big you start to question reality.

This is about the whole package. It covers all your trekking and backcountry gear, fishing equipment, bait selection and seasonal food sources, right through to practical tips on how to stay safe so you can explore New Zealand's backcountry with confidence.

We talk about real conditions: wind, weather, water levels, exhaustion. About what you should do, and what you're better off avoiding.

We show you how to read both small and large rivers, how to assess waters and move safely in them – with or without a guide. You'll learn where you're allowed to camp, what you'll need when things go wrong, and why sometimes a satellite communication device is more important than the most expensive rod.

In short, this guide isn't just about catching fish. It's about immersing yourself in everything that makes New Zealand what it is – wilderness, freedom, and adventure.

If, at the end of your trip, you're standing barefoot in the river thinking, "Wow, this is exactly why I came here," then it's all been worth it.

A good insulation **Sleeping mats, trek- king poles & gaiters**

It should be warm at night

Another thing to carry!

But for a comfortable night's sleep, you need a sleeping mat that is suited to the circumstances.

The aim here is to keep the weight as low as possible while ensuring robustness, comfort and insulation.

In addition, we should make hiking easier by using trekking poles. And for protection, we should wear gaiters during the day when fishing or trekking.



Ultralight and durable 3-season sleeping mats for trekking tours

Whether you are on alpine trekking routes, river hikes, bikepacking trips or mountaineering adventures, a high-quality sleeping mat is essential. It provides insulation from the cold ground and ensures comfortable sleep after long and exhausting days.

The mat must offer enough insulation during spring, summer and autumn (3-season use), while still being light and tough enough to barely add weight to your backpack and withstand rough terrain. After all, much more body heat is lost through the ground than through the sleeping bag.

So, the sleeping mat is key to staying warm at night in any situation.

Thermal insulation and R-value

A key requirement for any 3-season sleeping mat is sufficient insulation against ground cold. The industry standard for this is the R-value, which indicates thermal resistance. The higher the R-value, the better the insulation.

For use from spring to autumn, mid-range R-values are ideal. Typically, an R-value of around 3 to 3.5 is sufficient down to roughly -5 °C ground temperature, covering all three seasons. Lower values (around R 1–2) are only suitable for summer nights, while high R-values above 5 are designed for winter trips.

In practice, figures can vary slightly, but as a rule of thumb a 3-season mat should have at least $R \approx 3$ to keep you warm even on chilly nights at higher altitudes. Modern ultralight air mats can now achieve $R \approx 4\text{--}5$ while remaining lightweight, offering an extra buffer for frosty nights.

Weight and pack size

When trekking or bikepacking, every gram counts. That's why almost exclusively inflatable mats are used, as they are noticeably lighter and more compact than self-inflating foam-filled versions, which can quickly exceed 700 g and take up a lot of space. High-quality air mats for three-season use typically weigh between 300 and 500 g. The low weight often comes at the expense of material thickness.

Ultralight designs use very thin outer fabrics made from 15 to 30 denier nylon, which saves weight but is also more prone to abrasion and punctures. So, it's a conscious trade-off: keep it light, but not at the cost of reliability.

In terms of pack size, air mats clearly have the edge. They can be compressed to the size of a bottle, about 20 to 25 cm long and 9 to 11 cm in diameter. Even bulkier versions with 10 cm of thickness usually stay below 27×11 cm. Foam mats, on the other hand, need to be rolled or folded, taking up roughly 50–60 cm in length and 15–20 cm in diameter, which means they can only be carried on the outside of the backpack. For minimalist setups, a small pack size is a major advantage, especially when space is tight or gear is mounted on a bike.

Many manufacturers offer their models in different shapes. Narrower mummy-style mats save even more weight and volume, with typical dimensions around 180×55cm. Rectangular versions provide more room to move but also add a bit of extra weight.

Durability and material selection

When travelling in alpine terrain, especially during bivouacs without a tent or near water, the durability of a sleeping mat is really put to the test. Sharp rocks, thorns or rough ground can easily damage thin mats. That's why a tough outer fabric is crucial. High-quality mats use ripstop nylon in varying denier strengths: common ultralight models use 20D or 30D nylon, while extra robust versions feature 50D, 70D or even 170D fabric on the base.

This makes the mat extremely abrasion-resistant, though noticeably heavier as well. To extend the mat's lifespan, it's worth taking a few precautions. Always clear the ground of sharp objects before laying it out, and if possible, use a groundsheet or tarp underneath. Anyone sleeping directly on the ground without a tent should definitely protect the mat from abrasion and punctures this way.

Despite all precautions, small punctures remain a risk with air mats, which is why reputable manufacturers include a repair kit with self-adhesive patches, so leaks can be fixed quickly in the field.

Alternatively, you can opt for closed-cell foam mats. These are practically indestructible, unaffected by moisture, ready to use instantly and weigh around 500 g including an aluminium coating.

Such foam mats score high on durability (no puncture risk), but usually offer only $R \approx 1.5$ –2 and about 2 cm of padding, which isn't enough for proper cold conditions. For 3-season use, they're only really suitable for summer or as an additional layer underneath an air mat to improve both insulation and puncture resistance. In most cases, lightweight inflatable mats are the preferred choice for alpine trekking, as they're carefully engineered to deliver maximum warmth and comfort while keeping durability within reason.

Trekking poles

Trekking poles are a must for every hiker, especially when you are travelling alone through rivers and uneven terrain.

They are available in mixed metals, aluminium, GRP with carbon or Kevlar components. They are extendable or fixed, with or without shock absorption. There is a specific basket shape for each area of application or surface, which can be adjusted to suit the terrain. ***For safety reasons, you should not use the strap/safety strap on the handle in water, as it could get caught.***

It is also important to note that, unlike GRP, carbon or Kevlar, metals do not absorb the impact shock of the pole on the ground very well and transmit vibrations directly to the wrist and forearm. This can cause pain. Therefore, I do not recommend metal poles if you intend to use them regularly, every day throughout the year. However, the higher-quality ones are made of aircraft aluminium and are correspondingly more robust. Look for ***'shock absorbers'***.

A pair of poles weighs around 500-600g and is either made from one piece, extendable, height-adjustable or multi-piece, and may have an internal cable pull to make assembly easier.

They have ergonomic handles made of cork, plastic or rubber, with cork being the better choice because it is more skin-friendly and can absorb sweat. Also, make sure that the handle really fits the shape of your hand and is not too big or too small in diameter. This causes cramping of the hand and blisters.

The extendable lengths range from 115 to 135 cm, which must be adjusted according to your height. To do this, stand upright and hold your arm at a right angle, grasp the handle of the pole and push it into the ground up to the basket.

If you are facing a steep ascent or descent, you can shorten the length by 5-10 cm or extend it by 5-10 cm. When crossing water, it is always advisable to use a longer setting of 10 cm, as the ground is often sandy and using a small basket will cause you to sink. Please also remember to use a closed basket to avoid getting stuck.

Gaiters

Knee-high gaiters are ideal for trekking tours in the backcountry and in water, as we march through the bush or undergrowth, cross rivers or linger in them. They protect against bumps, blows and snags and provide insulation. Gaiters are made of neoprene, polyester or nylon fabric and, depending on their use, also have material reinforcements or impact protection.

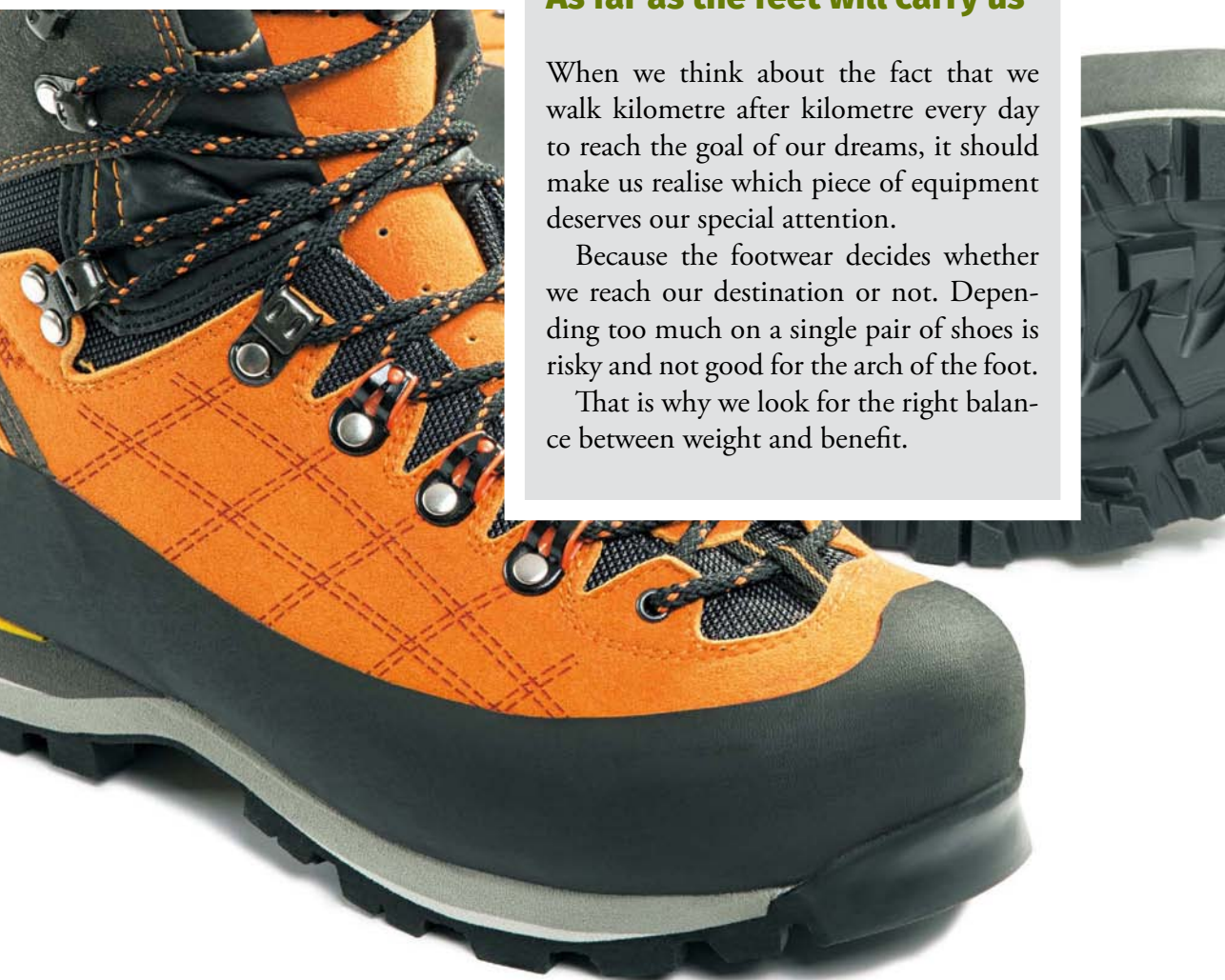
Good fit **Hiking or wading shoes for your fishing trip?**

As far as the feet will carry us

When we think about the fact that we walk kilometre after kilometre every day to reach the goal of our dreams, it should make us realise which piece of equipment deserves our special attention.

Because the footwear decides whether we reach our destination or not. Depending too much on a single pair of shoes is risky and not good for the arch of the foot.

That is why we look for the right balance between weight and benefit.



Anyone who sets out on a mountain path and into a river needs suitable footwear. Whether your wading shoes meet these requirements depends on the product. There is no single shoe for everyone, only one that hopefully fits you perfectly. The studs should preferably be removable, especially for those who travel with only one pair of shoes. I am thinking here of packraft use and the risk of damage.

The shoe should have the following qualities:

- Accurate fit
- Torsional stiffness in the sole
- Flexibility in the front sole (important) to ensure proper rolling of the forefoot,
- Lateral stability for the ankle,
- Slip resistance,
- Water resistance,
- Durability

!!! Anyone planning to walk a lot also needs the best shoes !!!

How do I test my shoes?

We test the shoe according to how it will be used and what you plan to do. Walk up and down some stairs. Hook your heel on the edge of a step and stretch your foot forward as far as possible. Your toes must not hit the front of the shoe. Do not confuse this with the top.

At the same time, your heel should not slip out. It is important that the construction of the shoe and the heel padding keep your heel securely in place. That is why you should look for a shoe with a slightly forward-tilted heel.

The shaft area should be stabilised towards the outside and always well padded to avoid pressure points and to enclose the foot completely, so that the shoe and the foot become one. Also, make sure that the padding is not too soft.

You can test this with a palm test, similar to checking a steak. Bring your thumb together with your middle or ring finger without tensing your hand. Then press the palm just below the thumb. The firmness you feel there is suitable for long hikes. The same principle applies to backpack straps.

Make sure your foot has enough space in width, length and height. When you put the shoe on (without tightening it), you should feel it gently wrap around your foot, as if you were placing one hand over another. Usually, your shoes will stretch

slightly depending on the material. If the shoe is framed, for example with rubber, it will generally not give way.

In the forefoot area there should be about a thumb's width of space in front of the toes (not more) and enough height so that the big toe, if possible, does not touch the top. The shape of the shoe (the last) must not restrict the natural form of the foot.

Some soles of trekking and wading shoes are stiff in the forefoot. These are only suitable if the sole is pre-curved to allow the foot to roll naturally. However, this type of sole is still not ideal for long hikes. Even pre-curved soles only partly support the natural movement of the bending forefoot.

That is why I always recommend choosing a hiking or wading shoe with high flexibility in the forefoot. This provides more comfort and less pain over long distances.

The sole also includes the midsole (EVA, ethylene vinyl acetate, or PU, polyurethane), which provides cushioning and stability. PU offers good cushioning but is not resistant to moisture (it tends to break down sooner when exposed to it, I've seen it happen myself). EVA, on the other hand, is better and more durable, providing longer-lasting cushioning.

In some cases, extra cushioning elements or pronation supports (inner arch supports) are built into the heel area. Supination supports (outer arch supports) are quite rare. That is why it is important to know the orthopaedic structure of your foot before buying and to choose your shoes accordingly.

This also includes any necessary orthopaedic insoles, which should be made from durable plastic rather than leather. When trying on the shoes, always replace the standard insoles with your orthopaedic ones (there may be height differences). Also, always try the shoes with neoprene or normal hiking socks.

The shoe should still fit when worn with hiking socks (use different thicknesses or functional socks). If there is too much space inside the shoe, the height difference can usually be compensated with a flat, stiff insole. In this case, the insole should be non-slip on both sides. An additional adjustment by an orthopaedic shoemaker can further improve the fit.

Tip:

If you have back or knee problems, it is worth checking whether it makes sense to have your insoles or shoes modified, for example to add better cushioning. The manufacturer, a specialist shop (regarding the sole structure) or an experienced orthopaedic shoemaker can tell you how and whether this is possible.

The lacing of your shoe ensures an optimal fit for the instep, the ankle and part of the lower leg. The key point in a lacing system is that the shoe can be fastened quickly, easily and securely. This requires, for example, eyelets that allow the laces to glide smoothly through. A so-called deep-draw hook also helps to keep the lacing firmly in place. The idea is to adjust the entire foot with a single tightening of the laces.

There are, of course, quick-lacing systems that adjust the shoe by turning a dial, for instance. However, I advise against such systems, especially for longer trips abroad. A shoelace can be replaced easily, but a whole system cannot. It is also questionable whether each system actually does what it claims to do, which is to tighten properly. Be sure to read user experiences on this before buying.

Always break in every pair of shoes before your trip and clean them thoroughly!

Which shoes should I take with me?

It is recommended to take two pairs of shoes on any multi-day trek. Both should be closed at the forefoot (to avoid injuries) and weight-optimised. Depending on the demands of the trek, some people only take one pair of wading shoes suitable for hiking and an additional pair of water-resistant hiking sandals.

This depends on the necessary approach, which is determined by the terrain. Usually, you start by hiking a long distance to reach your destination, the river or the lake. Then you have to decide whether to set up camp at that spot or move upstream with your gear while fishing at the same time. Others prefer to hike upstream first, set up camp and then fish their way back towards it.

Why should I use two pairs of shoes?

- Because of different types of terrain
- Because changing shoes helps prevent blisters and foot fatigue
- To have a spare pair in case one gets damaged
- To move more freely after fishing (a lighter shoe comes into use)
- To switch into a dry shoe after fishing (the foot needs to dry again)
- Or as a lightweight summer version of the fishing shoe that you can wear in the water

Choosing the right shoes

Since we have to pay attention to every gram, we will look for a solution suitable for both purposes. Lightweight models such as light hiking, trail or trail running shoes are good options (make sure they offer stability and do not rub around the ankle).

Such products can now also be found among fishing shoes. It is important that they are made entirely of synthetic fabric and that the midsole is made of EVA, so they are not affected by moisture. These shoes are ideal for walking on flat terrain or simple paths. Those who prefer hiking sandals should stick to the same materials and make sure the seams are double or very strong.

Your main shoe should be a wading shoe that meets the criteria of a hiking shoe. There are certainly hiking shoes that almost meet the requirements of wading shoes, but they are usually not 100% optimised for wet conditions and are instead designed for external waterproofing. If the upper is made entirely of synthetic material and the sole is EVA, it could be suitable for use. What might still be missing, however, are the studs, if needed.

Weight of the shoes

With two pairs of shoes, both your pack and the load on your feet will naturally be a bit heavier.

Hiking sandals

Lightweight hiking sandals weigh between 400 g and 600 g. Depending on whether they are meant to be used in water or not, you should also pay attention to their robustness and material composition.

Light hiking or trail running shoes

A pair of light hiking shoes weighs between 600 g and 1200 g, and a pair of trail running shoes between 600 g and 700 g.

Wading and hiking shoes

Wading and hiking shoes should be very robustly built and, as mentioned before, allow for proper rolling of the forefoot. The pair weight here ranges between 1400 g and 1900 g.

Materials used for shoes

Eyelets: Made of non-rusting metals with reinforced holes.

Seams: The shoe should have double seams made with very strong or durable threads.

Lining: *Polyester fabric, neoprene or cell foam, etc.*

Upper material: Mesh fabrics made of nylon and polyester, synthetic leather, soft synthetics, PU, TPU or rubber coating for toe and impact cap reinforcement. Side materials for shock protection: usually made of rubber compounds.

Insole board: Glued or stitched sole connected to the upper. It supports rolling motion and sole stiffness. Depending on the brand and model, it is made from various synthetic materials.

Midsole: PU or EVA (brands have their own names for their PU and EVA types), either cut or moulded (moulded is better), available in different Shore hardness levels. These define resistance to penetration by a test body.

Outsole: Vibram, Michelin rubber sole, or general rubber (make sure the tread pattern is not too tight).

!!! Important !!!

Keep in mind that your foot, in a wading shoe with or without waders and neoprene socks, is constantly in a damp environment. If this continues for many days or weeks, it can lead to athlete's foot, skin breakdown and sores. That is why I recommend using foot powder for additional drying after fishing. Carrying dry socks is essential.

!!! Important !!!

Check old shoes for signs of deterioration (cracks, detaching soles, etc.). These pose serious risks and could even result in losing a shoe during a trek.

And based on all the criteria mentioned so far, adjust your choice of footwear accordingly.

Wearing comfort **Trekking backpacks – which one suits me?**

**As long as the back can handle
it**

We put a great deal of strain on our backs, which is why we should focus on achieving the best possible carrying comfort and proper relief.

This is mainly achieved through the construction of the backpack and the ability of the back and strap system to adapt to the anatomy of your spine.

However, not every backpack is made for you, and it takes time and patience to find the right one for your needs.



On the market, there is a wide range of system, functional and material variations for backpacks. The key is to choose the one that suits your back (base height, height adjustability and comfort), the expected carrying weight (carrying system, material thickness, seam quality, coating) and your intended use (modular design such as split or detachable parts, flexible access, water resistance).

A backpack becomes lighter when it has less volume, fewer compartments or dividers, fewer straps, fastenings, seams (even without tape) or seam covers, no coatings, no back rods, low foam density in the strap system and no height adjustment.

The challenge is to find the right balance among these factors. The way the backpack can be packed also plays an important role.

How do I pack properly?

The way you plan and carry out your multi-day trip affects how you should pack your backpack. So I can't cover every possible situation here, but there are a few basic principles that should always be followed.

Once loaded and the straps adjusted correctly, a backpack should become one with your body. To achieve this, you need a proper, well-thought-out packing method. When you're walking on a trail, over rocky riverbeds or through mountainous terrain, it's crucial to maintain balance at all times. The backpack must therefore be packed so that its weight and dimensions do not throw you off balance.

But how do I achieve that?

A backpack is generally divided into three sections: the bottom compartment, the main compartment and the lid pocket. In addition, backpacks may have side pockets on the left and right (removable or not) and sometimes an extra detachable rear pocket.

The basic rule is to pack the backpack so that the heaviest items are placed at the very bottom and as close to your body as possible, along the spine. The main compartment should also be packed in such a way that the centre of gravity lies close to your body, roughly from the hips to the middle of your back. Only the lightest items belong in the lid pocket.

If you use side pockets, it's best to fill both to maintain balance. Personally, I don't recommend using a rear pocket, even if it can serve as a small separate backpack, because it makes the pack too bulky and can get in the way when moving through dense terrain.

I also prefer not to use side pockets at all but instead increase the pack's volume (and weight slightly) to keep the body and backpack working as one unit and to create more space for other gear. Bottom side pockets, however, are useful for storing a rod tube or a water bottle if your backpack doesn't already have an internal hydration system. Straps or tightening systems on the back and sides are also helpful for securing items such as a tent that hasn't yet dried.

Which items are the heaviest?

Depending on the length of your trip and the type of activity, the following items play a role:

- Packraft with accessories and straps (approx. 4 kg),
- Food (dried food) (approx. 3 kg),
- Water (approx. 2 kg),
- Survival gear, communication equipment (approx. 2 kg)
- Rods, 2 reels, 1 landing net, accessories (approx. 2 kg),
- Tent with accessories (approx. 1.5 kg),
- Clothing (approx. 1.5 kg),
- Trail running shoes, light hiking shoes or sandals (approx. 1.2 kg),
- Sleeping bag (approx. 1.0 kg),
- Sleeping mat (0.5 kg),
- Cooking utensils (approx. 0.8 kg),
- First aid kit, medicines (approx. 0.5 kg),
- Miscellaneous (approx. 1.0 kg)

Without any additional weight optimisation (UL) and including the backpack's own weight (approx. 2 kg), this brings the total to around 23 kg of carrying weight, depending on which shoes and clothing you are wearing. Of course, this can be optimised and reduced to around 20 kg or even less. The total weight also depends on how long you will be spending in the backcountry. Ultimately, you have to decide for yourself what you can do without and what you cannot.

Volume and accessibility of your gear affect how you pack

Of course, we must also consider volume, since it determines whether you carry an item inside or outside the backpack, and what overall size you ultimately need. It also depends on your personal preference for having certain things quickly within reach.

That's why you should first decide which gear you will take and then choose the backpack size accordingly. Try out several models before making a decision so you get a feel for the quality and functionality. Backpacks are like shoes, they need to fit your body exactly.

Bulky items such as the rod tube, paddles or landing net are usually attached to the sides or back of the pack. Many backpacks have straps at the bottom that extend the pack downward, but when loaded, these can interfere with walking. This depends on how the backpack is designed and where the attachment points are. The tent or sleeping bag can be fixed there, but keep in mind that when you set the pack down, these items may be standing in water if it rains.

The packraft can be stored together with your food in the bottom compartment if the backpack has separate main and lower compartments and enough space. Ultimately, though, it's up to you how you transport your gear and adjust the backpack volume accordingly. Also remember that any gear carried outside the pack doesn't count towards the backpack's internal volume, which can help reduce total weight.

Backpack types / carrying weight

For anglers trekking to remote waters over several days, choosing the right type of backpack is crucial. The most commonly used are trekking backpacks with a volume of 50 to 70 litres. These offer a balanced combination of carrying comfort, capacity and durability, making them ideal for tours lasting two to five days. A good carrying system with sturdy shoulder and hip straps ensures that loads of 10 to 25 kg, depending on the model, can still be carried comfortably.

In the category of ultralight backpacks, the focus is clearly on saving weight. Some models weigh less than one kilogram while still offering a volume of 50 to 60 litres. The real advantage comes if you optimise your entire gear for lightness, which can bring your total weight down significantly to around 12 to 15 kg.

Travel, alpine and expedition backpacks are not considered here, as they are not suitable for our purpose. ***For experienced trekkers who have their setup well under control, ultralight backpacks are definitely a worthwhile option.***

Back length / adaptability / comfort

To ensure proper adjustment to your back, you need a well-designed strap and carrying system. This is essential for transporting your gear comfortably and safely from one place to another.

There are four key factors to pay attention to:

- Height adjustment (adjustable back system)
- Adaptability to body shape (through straps and aluminium stays in the back panel)
- Back ventilation (ventilation channels or special fabric construction in contact areas)
- Width, contact area and firmness of the chest and hip belts – the material density determines comfort. Foam that is too thin or too soft in these areas is unsuitable for heavy loads, as it causes pressure points, chafing and can cut into the skin.

Construction

The construction of a backpack has a major influence on how comfortable it feels over long distances.

An internal frame, now standard in most trekking models, is clearly the recommended choice for anglers who regularly carry between 10 and 25 kilograms. A frame made of aluminium or plastic ensures good weight transfer to the hips and a stable, body-hugging fit. Many internal frame designs also allow for effective back

ventilation, which is an important comfort factor during strenuous climbs or in humid weather.

Frameless backpacks play a role in the ultralight community. They are minimalist in design, often weigh less than 800 grams and offer very little structural support. Anyone using one must pack with great precision and significantly reduce their equipment depending on the pack.

Without sufficient experience or when carrying heavy gear, most of these packs quickly reach their limits. For anglers with minimalist equipment and experience in the ultralight field, such packs can work well, but for the majority, a well-designed internal frame system remains the better choice.

Modular features

For anglers who regularly fish at different waters, modularity in a backpack is a major advantage. A particularly useful feature is a detachable lid with an integrated carrying system. This allows the lid (top pocket) to be used separately as a small day pack or hip bag. Ideal for carrying a first aid kit or a snack without having to take the whole backpack along.

This type of setup is mostly found on higher-end backpacks and should not be confused with simple removable lids that cannot be carried on their own.

An additional chest pocket provides more storage space, shifts the load from the back and serves as a counterweight, helping to distribute the weight more evenly when carrying the pack. You could store your smaller fishing gear here if you prefer not to wear a fishing vest. It also allows quick access to essential items without having to remove the backpack. This is a real benefit on long approaches or when switching frequently between hiking and fishing.

Removable side or front pockets make it possible to expand the pack's volume when needed or to organise your gear more flexibly. A modular design is especially useful when the length of your tour or the amount of equipment varies.

A fixed, detachable or stretchable mesh panel, either built into or attached to the backpack, is also practical for carrying wet clothing, a rain jacket or a tent that hasn't fully dried yet.

Materials and trends

There is a clear trend towards lighter yet durable materials that stand out through more environmentally friendly production methods. Tear-resistant fabrics such as

Dyneema and XPac are moving from niche use into the mainstream, although still mostly in higher-priced models. At the same time, proven materials like nylon and Cordura remain the backbone of quality packs, as a backpack should last for years and withstand rough conditions. What really matters is that the seams, straps and base are well made. A great fabric is useless if the stitching doesn't hold.

Outer material

Backpacks are typically made from synthetic fabrics, most commonly polyamide (nylon) because of its high tear and abrasion resistance. Many brands use their own variants of Cordura (a particularly durable nylon) in different thicknesses. For trekking backpacks, 210D to 500D ripstop nylon is common, offering good durability at a moderate weight.

Heavy-duty and expedition models often use 500D or even 1000D nylon in high-stress areas such as the base or corners. Polyester fabrics are also found in more affordable backpacks. Polyester is more UV-resistant but usually slightly less abrasion-resistant than nylon at the same weight. For that reason, premium manufacturers mostly rely on nylon, sometimes combined with polyester in the back area, as it absorbs less moisture.

New materials

An exciting development has also reached the backpack sector. UHMWPE fibres (ultra-high molecular weight polyethylene) are used, similar to those used in tents. Well-known brands here include Dyneema and Spectra. These fibres have extremely high tensile strength while being very lightweight. Dyneema Composite Fabric (DCF), formerly known as Cuben Fiber, is a laminate made from Dyneema fibres or film.

It is exceptionally strong and ultra-light, and depending on how it is processed, it can also be made fully waterproof. You'll mainly find it in ultralight backpacks (such as Hyperlite or Zpacks) and increasingly in alpine models.

X-Pac, made by Dimension-Polyant, is another trending material that is also very light and hard-wearing. It consists of a sandwich construction of nylon fabric, X-shaped polyester fibres and a waterproof PET film. Here too, the level of water resistance depends on the way it is processed (examples include Atom Packs, Hyberg and the Exped Lightning series, which offers variants with VX material).

HDPE Gridstop is a nylon fabric woven with Dyneema fibres, which increases the material's stability and strength.

Recycled fabrics

Many manufacturers, such as Deuter, have already made the switch. Companies are now trying to use as much recycled material as possible, reducing their environmental footprint without major losses in performance.

Coatings / water resistance / waterproofing

To make materials weather-resistant, the inside surfaces are often coated with PU (polyurethane). This gives the fabric waterproof qualities, usually with a water column rating of 1500 mm or higher. Some backpacks, such as dry bags, reach up to 10,000 mm (TPU laminated) or use TPU coatings, as seen in the Exped Serac 50, though this remains the exception for backpacks with stitched seams.

The outer surfaces are treated with DWR (Durable Water Repellent) coatings to reduce moisture absorption. However, this treatment wears off over time depending on use and weather conditions. In the past, DWR coatings contained PFCs, but many brands now advertise PFC-free alternatives. Manufacturers such as Mammut, Vaude and Deuter use environmentally friendly DWR coatings.

Frame materials

Aluminium is the standard choice (lightweight, flexible and cost-effective). Carbon fibre is becoming more common in high-end models, as it is even lighter and can offer greater stiffness. Some backpacks also feature carbon back plates.

Fastenings and buckles

Modern buckles are often made from lightweight hard plastic or use aluminium hook systems to save weight, especially on ultralight packs where aluminium hooks replace plastic buckles. Magnetic closures (for example, on some hydration tube holders) and quick-release buckles also make handling easier.

Carrying system developments

Examples include rotating hip belts that adapt to the movement of the hips, or adjustable foam systems. There are also sophisticated ventilation designs that create a continuous mesh trampoline from the back panel to the hip belt, combining air-flow with balanced load distribution.

Weather resistance

For anglers, weather resistance is not a nice extra but an essential requirement. A backpack must protect its contents from rain and the elements, and the main goal is to prevent water from penetrating through the fabric or seams.

Since in most situations you won't be using a completely waterproof backpack, the focus should be on how to minimise water ingress.

A rain cover that shields the sides and front of the backpack offers solid protection. Many packs already come with one, but you can also carry a separate model. Even better is a backpack made from material with a higher water column rating, which helps stop water from penetrating the fabric in the first place.

Even when using a rain cover or a waterproof poncho as an alternative water can still run down your back and seep through the contact and pressure points between your body and the pack.

For this reason, you should protect your gear further by using one or several waterproof dry bags (which also help with organisation) to keep everything dry inside.

Because most backpacks do not have seam taping, it may be possible, depending on the design and materials, to improve water resistance by sealing the interior seams with silicone or by applying seam tape afterwards. However, this is only possible if the material allows it, and you will never reach the same level of waterproofing as with a product originally built with taped seams or sealed materials. That difference comes down to the production methods used to ensure tight sealing.

Be aware that in either case, such modifications may void the warranty, as they alter the product. It's best to get advice from a specialist retailer before attempting this (see also Backpack / Materials / Coatings).

Dimensions and volume

A backpack for multi-day trekking tours with fishing gear should be able to adapt to changing requirements, starting with its volume. Many trekking packs feature exten-

sion collars or height-adjustable lids that allow for an extra 5 to 15 litres of capacity. A typical 60-litre backpack, when fully packed, measures about 65 to 75 cm in height. The width is usually around 30 to 35 cm, and the depth about 25 to 30 cm, keeping the pack within shoulder width so that the load stays close to the body.

With side compression straps, the width and depth can be reduced when carrying a lighter load, making the backpack slimmer and less likely to snag on obstacles.

If additional volume is needed, side or front pockets can sometimes be attached, or an extra mesh panel can be added to store a jacket, for example. A proper fit that matches your back length is crucial, either provided through size options (S, M, L) or an adjustable carrying system. Side pockets, front openings and bottom compartments are useful for accessing certain gear quickly without having to unpack everything, which is especially handy in rain or when changing location frequently.

The minimum compressed size with light gear and the fully expanded size should both suit the intended use. Those who take day trips from a base camp benefit from a backpack that can be reduced in size when needed.

Backpack weight

Backpacks in the 1000 to 2000 gram range currently offer the best balance of carrying system, durability and versatility. A trekking pack with an internal frame in this range can comfortably carry 15 to 20 kilograms without adding unnecessary weight.

Ultralight models under 1000 grams are only recommended if the total gear weight stays under 12 kg (even though some can carry twice that) and if you consciously accept reduced padding and stability. Especially when carrying fishing equipment, make sure there are enough attachment points and strap systems to secure items such as the rod tube.

Heavier models over 2 kg can offer more comfort, but the added weight is only worthwhile when carrying heavy gear or on longer expeditions with substantial loads.

Have a good sleep
Trekking sleeping bags
0 °C comfort range (-/+
5 °C)

Waking up refreshed in the morning

For our needs, during the travel period from October to the end of March, a so-called three-season sleeping bag is sufficient.

It should of course not only keep you warm but also be comfortable. That is why it is important not to choose a sleeping bag solely based on its thermal performance.

Make sure there is enough room for movement, especially if you are planning a longer trip.

The range offered by many brands is huge, and we want to take a closer look at it here.



How do I choose the right sleeping bag?

When getting advice, start by defining the area of use, such as temperature and humidity, then set your budget, and within that range look for the sleeping bag with the features that matter most to you, such as weight, comfort, or sustainability.

Manufacturers' statements and independent magazine tests help you to evaluate your options. Equally useful are long-term experiences from other trekking enthusiasts in forums or review reports, as they show how a sleeping bag performs over the years, for example zips, loss of loft, and so on.

Many of today's sleeping bags have reached a very high standard thanks to improvements in materials, which are often PFC-free and recycled, as well as in construction. It is now difficult to make a completely wrong choice, as long as you have decided between down or synthetic filling and pay attention to the relevant specifications. With the information and examples provided above, choosing a suitable trekking sleeping bag for temperatures down to 0 °C should be much easier.

If you would like a warmer sleeping bag, you already have all the key background information needed to make an informed choice.

!!! Important !!!

If you find a sleeping bag that performed very well in a test but is no longer available for purchase, it is best to look for the successor model from the same brand. Check for the same design, fill weight, and materials, or contact the manufacturer directly for further details.

!!! Important !!!

Sleeping bags are usually tested using a test dummy in a standardised environment. The resulting data helps to estimate the range of use and is shown as temperature ratings. These values can change in real conditions due to environmental differences. In addition, every person has an individual perception of heat or cold, which influences how the temperatures are felt. Even user tests should be read with caution.

A good alternative, however, are tests conducted with a thermal imaging camera. They show how heat is distributed and retained or lost within the sleeping bag.

Three-season sleeping bags for trekking

Three-season sleeping bags are designed for comfortable use from spring through autumn, even when there is occasional ground frost around freezing point. Such sleeping bags provide enough warmth for cool nights without being too hot during mild summer nights.

From experience, I would say that women tend to feel cold more quickly than many men when sleeping outdoors. It is therefore often worth choosing a sleeping bag with a little extra warmth for women. Of course, that is not a rule of nature, individual differences are significant.

Since personal sensitivity to cold, as well as factors such as wind, humidity, or the sleeping mat, can affect how warm you feel, everything should be well balanced. Those who get cold easily should choose a slightly warmer sleeping bag. On the other hand, a sleeping bag that is too warm can be ventilated by opening the zip or used as a blanket.

As I assume that most of you will be travelling between October and May, which corresponds to the New Zealand spring, summer, and part of the autumn, a three-season sleeping bag is just right for these conditions.

During this period, average night-time temperatures in New Zealand range between 9 and 14 degrees.

In the summer months from January to March, sleeping bags with a comfort rating of around 10 degrees are usually sufficient. However, especially on the South Island, you should expect occasional temperature drops. In addition, sleeping close to bodies of water affects how cold you feel. That is why I have chosen a comfort range of 0 degrees here.

Area of use

A three-season sleeping bag with a comfort rating of around 5 °C is suitable for trekking tours in temperate regions, low mountain ranges, and even higher altitudes during summer. This makes it ideal for our planned backcountry trips.

It should keep you reliably warm at night-time temperatures between about 0 °C and +10 °C while not turning into a sauna on warmer nights. Modern models achieve this balance through well-designed insulation and ventilation options.

You can roughly gauge the thermal performance by looking at the fill thickness. Still, a good three-season sleeping bag should not be unnecessarily bulky or heavy, since it needs to be carried in your backpack while trekking.

For that reason, many manufacturers offer lightweight down or high-performance synthetic models that weigh around 1 kg and can be packed down compactly without compromising the temperature range.

In the weight range between roughly 1000 and 1300 g you will find plenty of versatile three-season sleeping bags with solid durability and good value for money. However, there are also very lightweight options available at affordable prices. More on that later in the section on value for money.

Mummy sleeping bags – shape and function

The mummy shape has become the standard for trekking sleeping bags because it offers the best balance of warmth, weight, and pack size. A mummy sleeping bag follows the contour of the body, featuring a close-fitting hood, a slightly wider cut at the shoulders, and a tapering shape towards the feet. This body-hugging design minimises the amount of air that needs to be warmed by the body and therefore prevents unnecessary heat loss.

Although this comes at the cost of slightly restricted movement, high-quality models strike a good compromise. Another variation is the so-called egg-shaped sleeping bag.

With more room around the hips and knees, it combines freedom of movement with fairly good heat retention. For warm summer nights or indoor use, some people also use rectangular sleeping bags that can be fully opened, but for typical trekking temperatures around 0 °C, rectangular models are unsuitable as they lose too much heat. Mummy sleeping bags therefore remain the first choice.

Typical features

Mummy sleeping bags almost always have an insulated hood that can be tightened closely around the face with a drawcord, since a great deal of body heat is lost through the head.

Many models feature a draft collar, also known as a shoulder or thermal collar, which wraps around the neck and shoulders like a scarf and prevents warm air from escaping from inside the bag – an important feature when temperatures are around 0 °C.

Combined with an insulated zip baffle, a padded strip of fabric running along the zip, this effectively prevents cold spots around openings. High-quality mummy sleeping bags have a thick, well-fitted zip baffle and anti-snag reinforcements so

that the zip remains sealed and moves smoothly even when you turn over in your sleep.

Most three-season models are also equipped with two-way zips, meaning they can be opened from the bottom for ventilation at the feet, which is a clear advantage on warmer nights.

A side zip is standard, available either on the left or right (right-handed users usually find a left-hand zip more practical). Some models feature zips that extend almost to the foot end for maximum ventilation, while others save weight with a three-quarter-length zip. The choice depends on personal preference, whether you value more foot space and airflow or prefer to keep the weight down.

Overall, mummy sleeping bags are very versatile thanks to this thoughtful design and these practical details. You can close them completely in cold conditions or leave them half open like a blanket when the temperature is milder.

Construction and design of modern sleeping bags

Apart from the shape and insulation material, the chamber construction plays a key role in thermal performance. In down sleeping bags, separate baffles prevent the down from shifting and forming cold spots. Simpler and cheaper summer sleeping bags are sometimes stitched through, meaning the outer and inner fabrics are sewn directly together. This saves weight but creates cold bridges along each seam.

For temperatures around 0 °C, stitched-through seams are not ideal. Higher-quality three-season down bags use baffle walls between the inner and outer fabric. The simplest version is the H-baffle, where parallel walls form rectangular chambers between the fabrics. This design is lightweight, reliable, and gives the down plenty of space to loft. A more advanced version is the trapezoidal baffle, where the walls are angled to reduce cold spots even more efficiently while saving weight at the same time.

More complex V-shaped or hybrid baffle constructions are typically found in thick winter sleeping bags, as they require more material and stitching.

The key point is that a good trekking sleeping bag has no continuous seams without insulation in the upper or side areas, in order to prevent heat loss. Some manufacturers combine different constructions, using simpler designs in less sensitive zones such as the back or legs, and more advanced ones in areas that are more exposed to cold.

Synthetic sleeping bags do not contain down that can shift, but the synthetic insulation still needs to stay evenly distributed. Here, shingle constructions are common. The insulation layers are arranged like overlapping roof tiles so that any

gaps are covered by the next layer, avoiding cold bridges. This also prevents the filling from moving. Such shingle or layered constructions are often used in synthetic winter sleeping bags.

Simpler models may use quilted insulation, which is a bit less efficient but cheaper. In general, modern synthetic fills are made to keep their shape. They are often multilayered and use different fibre types to maximise loft. These design details translate into better warmth-to-weight performance in real use.

Additional features

As mentioned above, trekking sleeping bags should have a draft collar and an insulated zip baffle. These are usually well padded and fit snugly to prevent gaps when you move in your sleep. A good model also includes reinforcements that stop the zip from snagging.

Just as practical is an anti-snag strip along the zip and a zip garage, a small fabric tunnel at the collar end that covers the zip to reduce draughts and snagging. Many sleeping bags also have a small internal pocket for storing items such as a phone or earplugs overnight so they do not get lost. Such details are often already found in solid mid-range models and noticeably improve sleeping comfort.

The quality of the hood is also important. It should be well filled and adjustable so that it fits closely around the face and prevents heat from escaping. Separate drawcords, often with different shapes such as round and flat, for the hood and the collar opening help you adjust it correctly even in the dark.

At the foot end, good manufacturers pay attention to an insulated foot box, sometimes with extra filling to keep your feet warm. Finally, the way the outer seams are placed can affect the sleeping bag's thermal efficiency: fewer seams on the top side mean fewer potential cold spots and better wind resistance. Some models therefore use offset stitching or special cuts to further minimise heat loss.

Challenge of humid climates: New Zealand and the subtropics

New Zealand presents an interesting use case because it contains a variety of climate zones within a relatively small area, and your equipment should be adapted accordingly. These range from temperate to humid subtropical and cooler conditions.

For a trekking sleeping bag, this means it must cope with high humidity, frequent rain, and heavy dew, while still providing enough warmth on cool nights such as during the New Zealand spring or autumn, or in the mountains.

In subtropical and humid regions in particular, resistance to moisture becomes a key factor. Traditional down sleeping bags have a disadvantage here, as down loses its insulating power when it becomes damp since the fine clusters stick together.

Synthetic fillings, on the other hand, absorb far less moisture and continue to insulate reliably even when wet, as they do not clump. Therefore, in rainy regions, in areas with high humidity, or when sleeping near bodies of water, synthetic sleeping bags are the better choice. Down sleeping bags with special water-repellent treatment or a material blend can also be suitable options.

Down vs. mixed filling

Not every down sleeping bag can handle such conditions. Hydrophobic down or mixed materials can help here.

The manufacturer uses a blend of down and wool in its DownWool models, which helps maintain up to 30 percent more loft in high humidity. Pure wool sleeping bags with specially developed wool fleece also provide an exceptionally comfortable sleeping climate and continue to insulate reliably even in damp air.

However, they are somewhat heavier and more expensive than pure down. For New Zealand, a sleeping bag with good ventilation options is also practical. In subtropical nights around +15 °C, a 0-degree sleeping bag can quickly become too warm. In such cases, a long zip is worth having, as it allows you to use the bag as a blanket or let fresh air in at the feet.

Quilts

Some ultralight trekkers opt for quilts, which are blanket-like sleeping bags without a back panel. Quilts reduce heat build-up since they can be used open like a blanket and adjusted as needed. They save weight and are versatile – you can wrap yourself in them or spread them out wide for better ventilation.

However, quilts require some experience, for example attaching them properly to the sleeping pad to prevent draughts, and they are less thermally efficient than mummy sleeping bags in strong wind.

For variable climates like in New Zealand, a quilt combined with a good sleeping mat and suitable sleepwear can be a workable solution if weight is the top priority.

For most people though, the safer option remains a classic mummy sleeping bag made from durable, moisture-resistant materials.

For a longer trekking journey across New Zealand covering all climate zones, a flexible sleep system is ideal. This could be a medium-weight down sleeping bag with a comfort rating around 0 °C and hydrophobic treatment, combined with a silk liner for hot nights and possibly a lightweight bivy cover for added moisture protection. That way you are well prepared for both frosty mountain nights in a tent and warm, humid nights in the rainforest.

Filling materials

The choice of insulation, whether down or synthetic, has a major impact on the warmth, pack size, weight, and price of a sleeping bag. Both types of filling have their specific advantages and disadvantages, which should be carefully considered in a trekking context.

Down filling

The soft down feathers from ducks or geese offer an unbeatable warmth-to-weight ratio. High-quality goose or duck down has excellent loft, meaning it can trap a large volume of air and therefore provides outstanding insulation.

A down sleeping bag is significantly lighter and more compressible than a synthetic one with the same thermal performance. You save both space in your backpack and overall weight, a benefit you immediately notice on the trail. The sleeping climate in down bags is also very comfortable.

Down is breathable and can absorb some body moisture without feeling damp. With proper care, down also has an exceptionally long lifespan. It is important, however, to focus on ethically sourced down, following standards such as the Responsible Down Standard (RDS). Well-known brands now use almost exclusively RDS-certified down, ensuring that no live plucking is involved.

Fill power values, such as 650, 700, or 800 cuin, indicate the quality of the down. The higher the number, the greater the loft per gram. There is a direct relationship between down quality, fill weight, and temperature performance. For example, a typical 0-degree down sleeping bag contains around 600 to 800 g of down, depending on quality, while a synthetic sleeping bag offering the same warmth often requires 1000 g or more of filling material.

Disadvantages:

Down is sensitive to moisture. When it becomes truly wet, the loft collapses, and its insulating ability drops dramatically. Without protection, a down sleeping bag should therefore never be exposed directly to rain. Even condensation inside a tent or several days of high humidity can gradually make the down damp. Regular airing and drying are therefore essential.

Modern water-repellent down, known as hydrophobic down, offers a bit more security in this regard. Through a special treatment of the down clusters, often PFC-free and polymer-based, they absorb less moisture and dry more quickly. Many manufacturers now use this type of down

However, treated down is more expensive and not a complete solution. It still should not be allowed to get completely soaked. Another disadvantage of down sleeping bags is their higher price compared to synthetic models, particularly at higher fill power ratings and with premium shell fabrics.

Synthetic fibre filling

Sleeping bags with synthetic filling are usually made from hollow polyester fibres arranged in layers or as a fleece. They are cheaper to produce than down and therefore often more affordable to buy. Their biggest advantage is their resistance to moisture.

Synthetic fibres absorb very little water and continue to insulate even when damp, as they do not clump together. Even if you press against the tent wall and condensation soaks the sleeping bag, or you accidentally spill something, a synthetic sleeping bag will still keep you warm and usually dries very quickly.

They are also easier to care for. Most synthetic sleeping bags can simply be machine washed without special down detergents or dryer balls. In rough conditions – bivouacking under the open sky, heavy use, frequent washing, or for children's sleeping bags – they are durable and forgiving of less careful handling.

Disadvantages:

When it comes to weight and pack size, even the most advanced synthetic fibres struggle to match down. A polyester fibre cannot trap as much air as high-quality down, so more material is needed to achieve the same warmth. This results in greater pack volume and higher weight. Anyone counting every gram will usually opt for down.

The sleeping climate is also an important factor. Synthetic fibres cannot regulate moisture as well as down, making you more likely to sweat, and the material tends to feel a bit clammy. Many people also find that down sleeping bags have a higher “cosiness factor.”

In addition, synthetic sleeping bags have a somewhat shorter lifespan. Over time, and especially when compressed frequently, the insulation loses its loft as the filling becomes fatigued, which affects warmth. Even with good care, this happens more quickly than with high-quality down, which can retain its loft for many years.

Over the long run, this means the initial price advantage may even out, as a synthetic sleeping bag might need to be replaced sooner.

Latest fill materials

Synthetics fibre filling

A lot has happened in the field of synthetic fibres to bring them closer to the performance of down. G-Loft is considered one of the most efficient fibres, being highly compressible and shape-retaining.

PrimaLoft, such as the Gold and Silver variants, is another well-established down alternative used in various sleeping bags and known for providing high loft at moderate weight.

More recent developments include recycled polyester insulation and fibre fillings with silicone coating. The latter, a deep silicone coating within the fibre, prevents tangling and reduces moisture absorption, which increases durability.

Another interesting approach is the use of aerogel particles within the fibres to further improve thermal performance, although these technologies are still rare in the trekking segment.

Down filling

Innovations in down focus mainly on moisture protection and sustainability. PFC-free DWR coatings for both down and shell fabrics have now become standard, helping to protect both the environment and human health.

Some premium manufacturers are experimenting with graphene-coated down or other treatments to improve heat distribution. A more practical trend is the development of combined fillings that incorporate natural materials.

Overall, there is now a wide range of fill technologies available, from classic 90/10 high-performance goose down to high-tech synthetic fibres made from recycled PET. In the end, budget, intended use, and personal preference determine the choice.

Initial conclusion

In summary, down sleeping bags offer maximum warmth with minimal weight and pack size, as well as long durability, but they require careful handling in damp conditions and come with a higher price tag.

Synthetic sleeping bags are more affordable, robust, and resistant to moisture, but they are heavier and bulkier and have a shorter lifespan. For many trekkers, both options are interesting today, and the primary area of use often determines the better choice.

For tours in cool, dry climates or when weight matters, most people choose down. In humid, moderate regions or for those on a budget, synthetic insulation makes more sense. Some manufacturers also offer hybrid solutions that combine the advantages of both materials, such as down–synthetic mixes or two-in-one systems. For example, a thin summer sleeping bag combined with a three-season synthetic bag can create a winter-ready setup.

These modular systems can be used separately or together, offering flexibility, though they tend to be relatively heavy, around 2 kg for the full combination.

Outer material

It's not only the filling that determines performance, but also the outer shell of a sleeping bag. The shell needs to be lightweight and downproof, yet also tear-resistant and as water-repellent as possible.

Most are made from nylon ripstop or polyester fabrics, with thicknesses ranging from 10 denier (ultralight and very thin) to 40 denier (more robust but heavier). Many high-quality sleeping bags use fabrics from Pertex, a well-known manufacturer of lightweight, downproof nylon materials. Pertex Quantum, for example, is a very light, tightly woven nylon with a soft feel and usually a DWR coating.

A DWR (Durable Water Repellent) finish allows water to bead off the surface, so light rain or condensation doesn't immediately soak into the fabric. However, DWR is only a temporary treatment that needs to be renewed occasionally and

won't stop moisture from penetrating under prolonged wet conditions. Still, it significantly improves weather resistance.

Particularly at the foot end, where tent condensation often hits first, a good DWR finish helps water roll off instead of being absorbed. The seams are sealed like those on a hardshell jacket, so practically no water can get in.

For normal use, a combination of a good DWR-treated outer fabric and careful handling – such as using a tent or tarp and a stuff sack – is usually sufficient. Yet it shows that weather-resistant sleeping bags are possible, even if that comes with trade-offs in price, weight, and breathability.

Modern nylon shells generally perform well against wind. The fabrics are woven so tightly that hardly any air passes through, which also keeps down feathers from escaping. In very windy bivouacs without a tent, cold air can still cool the outer surface.

In that case, a well-designed shell or a bivy sack provides extra wind protection. Some down sleeping bags even use Gore Windstopper or similar windproof membranes in their outer material to withstand icy winds, though at the cost of a bit more weight.

Inner material

Here, sleeping comfort is the top priority. The lining fabric should feel soft against the skin, be breathable, and wick away moisture effectively. Fine nylon or polyester taffeta is commonly used, sometimes with a brushed surface for a cotton-like feel.

Some manufacturers use special inner fabrics such as Thermolite or Polygiene-treated materials to prevent odour build-up. In the higher price segment, silk or silk-blend liners are also occasionally used.

In general, outer and inner fabrics differ in that the inside is made from a more breathable and comfortable textile, while the outer material focuses on durability and water resistance.

It's important to look for skin-friendly inner fabrics, and anyone who tends to sweat will appreciate a quick-drying polyester blend lining. Some women's models feature fleece or wool panels in the foot or kidney area to improve warmth and comfort. In unisex sleeping bags, this is rare, but accessories such as insulated socks or liners can provide a similar effect.

Additional moisture protection

Regardless of the sleeping bag's material, it should always be packed properly. A waterproof stuff sack or a liner inside the backpack is highly recommended. Many sleeping bags come with a compression sack, but these are usually only water-repellent, not waterproof.

A simple no-cost trick is to use a sturdy rubbish bag as a pack liner inside your backpack. That way, the down stays dry even if you hike for hours in continuous rain. For extra reliability, you can use silicone-nylon dry bags or modern Cuben Fiber sacks – the latter are extremely lightweight and completely waterproof.

!!! Important !!!

Sleeping bags with a membrane outer shell should be turned inside out before packing so the trapped air can escape more easily, allowing a more compact pack size. In general, any model can be further reduced in volume using a suitable compression sack. It's worth checking how many litres of packed volume the manufacturer specifies and, if needed, getting a compression sack that matches that size.

!!! Also take care !!!

Sleeping bags should not be stored in a highly compressed state for long periods, as this can damage the insulation. For long-term storage, always keep them loosely hung or uncompressed.

Size, fit, and unisex models

Sleeping bags are usually available in different sizes or lengths. The most common options are Regular, suitable for people up to about 180 cm tall, and Large or Long, for those up to around 200 cm. Some manufacturers also offer intermediate or extra-long versions, and occasionally shorter models for people under 165 cm.

It's important that the sleeping bag matches your body size. A bag that is too small feels uncomfortable and compresses the insulation, which reduces warmth. A bag that is too large leaves unnecessary empty space that must be heated by your body. As a general rule, the sleeping bag length should be roughly body height plus 20 cm. This gives you a bit of space in the foot area without being excessive.

Shoulder and hip width also vary between models. Here, personal preference plays a major role. Some prefer a slim cut for maximum thermal efficiency, while others value more freedom of movement.

Some models advertise extra spacious designs. Those who move a lot in their sleep or like to bend their legs should pay attention to the internal dimensions, which are often listed in the product details. Egg-shaped sleeping bags or special “comfort” cuts provide more room around the knees and elbows, making them especially suitable for side sleepers. However, this added space slightly increases both weight and packed size.

Unisex vs. women's models

Many trekking sleeping bags are marketed as unisex, meaning they are intended to fit all genders. In practice, however, these models are usually designed around the average male body shape, as men tend to be taller and broader.

For women, who are generally smaller and more prone to feeling cold, many manufacturers offer dedicated women's versions.

These often differ in the following ways:

- Shorter overall length – to prevent a large cold zone at the foot end
- Extra insulation in sensitive areas – typically thicker fill around the feet and upper body
- Slightly narrower at the shoulders and wider at the hips to match typical body proportions

Women's sleeping bags usually also have their own EN comfort ratings, which are often about 5 °C higher than the corresponding unisex model, reflecting the additional insulation.

!!! Important !!!

Of course, men can also use a women's sleeping bag if the dimensions fit – many men who feel the cold appreciate the extra warmth. Conversely, taller women sometimes choose a unisex or long version if women's models are too short. There are also sleeping bags that can be zipped together, which is ideal for couples.

Second conclusion

A medium-sized unisex mummy sleeping bag fits many people well. However, anyone with a different body size should look for S, M, L, or XL versions. Women and those who tend to feel the cold may benefit from specific women's models or at least some practical tricks, such as adding extra insulation – for example, using a fleece liner or placing a down jacket over the foot area if you get cold at night.

Ideally, you should try the sleeping bag in a shop to get a sense of the length and width. When buying online, look for details like shoulder and foot width, or user reviews from people with similar body types.

Many manufacturers also provide size guides or recommend height ranges (for example, “size L suitable for 1.70 m to 1.85 m”). Paying attention to these helps you avoid ending up in a “sleeping bag tent” that's too large or feeling restricted in one that's too tight.

Weight and pack size

Weight

When trekking, weight and pack size are crucial since you carry your sleeping bag every day. Modern three-season sleeping bags have made huge progress here. Twenty years ago, a 0-degree synthetic sleeping bag often weighed between 1.8 and 2.2 kg and filled a large compression sack. Today, thanks to high-performance down, there are models that weigh between 500 and 800 g (with some compromise in comfort), while advanced synthetic fibre options stay well under 1.2 kg.

For both sleeping bag and sleeping mat combined, you should aim for a total weight of around 2 to 3 kg. Ultralight enthusiasts target under 1.2 kg for both, though that comes at a high price. For most trekkers, a combined weight of around 1.5 kg (for example, a 1 kg sleeping bag and a 0.5 kg mat) is a good guideline.

What does lightweight mean?

For a full-featured three-season sleeping bag, roughly anything around 1.5 kg is considered conventional or robust, 1.0–1.2 kg is already light, and under 1 kg counts as ultralight (with certain limitations). Some specialist models go below 800 g, but these are usually designed for summer or transitional seasons, with comfort ratings above 5 °C.

You shouldn't be misled by weight figures alone. What really matters is whether the stated comfort temperature is genuinely achieved – otherwise, you'll need to compensate with additional clothing. Unfortunately, high-quality down insulation is still not naturally hydrophobic against moisture.

Pack size

In general, the weight and pack size of a synthetic sleeping bag are still larger than those of a down bag with the same warmth rating. However, I believe that within the next three to five years, thanks to artificial intelligence and material innovation, synthetic insulation will have advanced enough that we can do without down while maintaining the same performance. And of course, a better stuff sack can often reduce the pack size even further.

Optimising pack size

A good compression sack works wonders. Some manufacturers supply waterproof roll-top bags, but there are also very lightweight aftermarket options.

When packing, it's best to stuff the sleeping bag rather than roll it, as this distributes the material more evenly and reduces volume. That way, even a relatively warm model can fit into a trekking backpack.

Synthetic sleeping bags are always a bit bulkier, as the material resists heavy compression, but even here, a 0-degree model can reach a pack size of under 10 litres – still perfectly fine for a 50-litre backpack.

If you travel with such a small pack, though, down becomes hard to avoid, since sleeping bags with pack sizes below 8 litres are almost exclusively down models.

Some sleeping bags can actually be compressed more than their supplied stuff sack allows. In that case, it's worth getting a smaller compression sack to reduce the overall size.

!!! Important !!!

Always store your sleeping bag dry whenever possible and air it out in the sun when you have the chance. A damp sleeping bag, whether from condensation or sweat, is heavier and insulates less effectively. During breaks, take the opportunity to spread it out and let it dry. Down sleeping bags should also be fluffed up and aired before going to sleep. Close the bag completely and tighten the hood to retain heat inside. The warmer your body is when you get in, the faster the sleeping bag can build and maintain warmth.

My second home **Tents – feeling comfortable even when it gets small**

How much space do I really need?

Good question, but considering that I have to keep an eye on pack size and weight, I'm willing to compromise a bit on space.

Still, it's perfectly possible to live comfortably in a small area. It all comes down to organisation and setting priorities.

Minimalism is liberating, especially on a trekking tour. The most important thing is to have a roof over your head at the end of the day and to be sheltered for a restful sleep.



A tent not only has to withstand all kinds of weather conditions but also meet a wide range of requirements. These arise when we look at you as an individual, the means of transport, and the environment in which you plan to embark on your adventure.

To understand which materials are needed for your tent, we will take another look at the study of materials.

Functionality

The main functions a tent should fulfil are:

- Protection from the elements
- Protection from insects and small animals
- Providing privacy
- Offering a place to sleep
- Allowing cooking in bad weather
- Providing storage space for equipment

The individual human

We are not all the same height or weight and depending on the person, we need more or less space inside a tent. Some people also feel confined when sleeping in a very narrow or low tent.

Means of transport (load capacity, luggage weight)

The larger a tent gets, the more weight you have to carry. The volume also increases. Always consider the total weight and your means of transport, usually your backpack, to decide whether to carry the tent inside or outside of it.

As mentioned, you must be able to carry your luggage even under difficult conditions. To stay within a comfortable range, you should not exceed a total weight of 15 kg.

Snow and winter use

If you plan to get a tent that can withstand almost any adverse condition, you should look for a four-season model. These are designed to handle heavier loads thanks to improved pole quality, stronger or differently composed materials, and overall higher resilience. A four-season tent can usually tolerate a light layer of snow on top.

Four-season models can, depending on the construction and materials, be heavier than three-season tents.

Be careful with how tents are labelled

Some tents may be declared as four-season models but do not actually feature the necessary material adaptations. This can especially be the case with very cheap tents. Always check the materials and construction carefully when a tent is advertised as a four-season model. For most situations in New Zealand, a three-season tent will be sufficient as long as you camp in spring, summer, or autumn.

Wind stability

To give a tent proper wind stability, you need robust materials, a solid structure, and an aerodynamic shape. Depending on the intended use, a tent should be able to withstand winds of up to 100 km per hour.

To achieve this, small ground areas and low or narrow profiles are beneficial depending on the construction. The durability of the poles and the ability to secure the outer tent close to the ground also play a crucial role.

Choose a tent that meets your requirements

With the wide range of tents available, you will surely find one that you feel comfortable in and that meets the basic needs of a fishing or trekking holiday. Here are the most common types.

Tunnel tents

Advantage: Tunnel tents are very resistant to storms when set up correctly. They perform well aerodynamically if the narrow end faces the wind. The place where you pitch the tent also always plays a crucial role.

Disadvantage: The tent is not free-standing. It must be pegged out, and if it stands sideways to the wind, it becomes less stable.

Dome tents

Advantage: Dome tents are more stable in changing wind directions. They are also free-standing and self-supporting.

Disadvantage: In strong winds, two poles are usually not enough. Only with three poles, as in geodesic tents, and therefore six anchor points, does the construction become storm-resistant.

Geodesic tents

Advantage: Geodesic tents offer the highest wind stability of all tent types. The crossing poles distribute the load across many points. The construction is extremely torsion-resistant, ideal for strong and shifting winds or snow load. They are free-standing and require very little guying.

Disadvantage: They are more complex to set up, usually heavier and more expensive than other types with comparable performance. On tours with moderate conditions, the effort is often unnecessary. The pack size and weight are higher compared to tunnel and dome tents.

Ridge tents

Advantage: A-frame tents are simple in construction, quick to set up, and usually require only two upright poles and one ridge pole. They can be very light and easy to transport. Their slanted roof shape allows rain to run off reliably.

Disadvantage: They are neither free-standing nor particularly stable in strong winds. Because of their linear structure, they lack lateral stability, and the steep side walls offer a large surface area for the wind. In strong winds or on soft ground, they fail faster than tunnel or dome tents. They require careful guying and a well-chosen pitch.

Tipi tents

Advantage: Tipi tents are extremely wind-stable since their conical shape allows the wind to flow around them from all sides. They usually need only one central pole and can be set up quickly with a few pegs. The steep wall angle helps rain and snow run off easily. The spacious interior height creates a pleasant feeling of space, especially during longer stays.

Disadvantage: They are not free-standing and need a sufficiently large, even area for proper guying. The usable interior space is limited by the steeply sloping sides, especially in smaller models. In strong side winds or on poor ground, stability can suffer. In addition, they often lack an apse, which would improve weather protection.

Space and comfort

Despite their compact pack size, trekking tents should offer enough space for sleeping and storing equipment. Dimensions, layout, and construction make a big difference here.

To lie comfortably and have enough room for your backpack and packraft, the inner tent (for example, a dome tent) should have minimum dimensions of 210 cm in length, 120 cm in width, and 100 cm in height. Allow about 60 cm in width per person. In this tent, two people could also sleep if necessary, as well as sit and even cook inside if the weather turns against you.

You will especially notice how the space inside a tent feels by the shape of the walls. If you prefer a relatively larger sense of space, where you can move around evenly at all points inside the tent, straight walls are ideal. In that case, you would probably go for a dome tent, which increasingly uses cross poles.

If, however, you want to use the available space more efficiently and have a more multifunctional setup, an asymmetrical floor plan such as that of a tunnel tent would be better.

The tunnel tent is designed according to functional zones, usually lower in height at the foot end and higher at the head end. This saves material and weight, which can then be used for a small vestibule, providing space to cook in bad weather or store gear outside the sleeping area.

Outer tent / vestibules

Almost all trekking tents have at least one vestibule, which serves as storage space for your backpack or other items. They offer more flexibility in bad weather, for example, for cooking. You should also consider long-term use of the tent, where comfort always plays a role.

A good outer tent should not only be lightweight and provide protection from the weather, but also allow variations in how it can be pitched, which contributes to comfort. Make sure your outer tent can be set up and stand on its own.

Guy lines should match the requirements of the construction. Manufacturers often provide their own solutions for this. Some high-quality tents even use strap systems.

(see table on the right: Usability, configuration and setup options:)

Tent poles

For trekking tents under 3.5 kg, aluminium poles are the gold standard. These use stable or hardened aluminium with an elastic cord inside. Premium manufacturers use branded poles such as DAC or Yunan, which offer an excellent weight-to-stability ratio.

Carbon poles are rare. They are very light but expensive and can splinter with sharp edges if they break. Cheaper models often use fibreglass poles, which are heavier and more prone to breaking.

Usability, configuration and setup options:

- Windows
 - Ventilation openings
 - Multiple entrances (for flexibility and safety)
 - Options to modify or reconfigure the outer tent
 - Independent usability (for example as a sunshade)
 - Quick-tension system for securing the tent fly
 - Fast setup capability (for example hook-and-loop fasteners to attach the inner tent)
 - Very good water-repellent or waterproof zips (with pull cords)
 - All guying points must be reinforced
- The outer tent should be able to be tensioned all the way down to the ground (air resistance)
 - Tension straps for tightening the outer fabric
 - Additional longitudinal straps for structural stability (tunnel tents)
 - Easy insertion of poles (possibly with markings)
 - Stable pole feet
 - Free-standing (dome tent)
 - Quick connectors for securing the outer fabric of a dome tent (hook-in system)
 - Durable plastic or rust-free metal eyelets

A current trend is short segment lengths of 30–35 cm to keep the packed size very compact. During setup and takedown, markings on the poles and on the inner or outer tent are often helpful.

Instead of traditional tent poles, some tent constructions use trekking poles or even paddles as ridge poles, which reduces total weight. For better stability, a horizontal ridge pole is sometimes added. Poles are connected either to the inner or outer tent and are inserted through loops or attached with clips.

Tent pegs

Whenever something needs to be guyed out, you will need tent pegs. These come in various materials, shapes, and levels of stability.

Materials:

<i>Material</i>	<i>Characteristics</i>	<i>Description</i>
Aluminium	Light, corrosion-resistant, flexible	Standard for trekking tents
Steel	Very strong, heavy	For long-term camping or hard ground
Titanium	Extremely light, strong, rustproof	Expensive, UL option* for hard ground
Plastic	Cheap, light, large surface area	For sand, snow – not durable
Carbon	Ultra-light, brittle under lateral stress	For UL specialists only

*UL=Ultralight

Shape types:

Typ	Description	Advantages	Disadvantages	Suitable for
V-profile	Triangular peg with V-shaped cross-section	Good durability on soft to medium ground, lightweight	Can bend on very hard ground	All-round use, grass, forest floor
Y-profile	Three flanks, highly torsion-resistant	Very high holding power, resistant to bending	Heavier	Soft ground, wind, storm, sand
Round stake (nail)	Smooth, round cross-section	Good for hard ground, easy to drive in	Low holding power on loose ground	Hard, rocky ground
T-profile / snow and sand stakes	Flat, wide, with holes	Holds well in soft, deep ground	Often needs to be buried (deadman technique)	Snow, sand, loose gravel
ZToothed peg / screw peg	With thread or barbs	High holding power, partly screwable	Heavy, labour-intensive	Sand, snow, camping (not trekking)
Flat peg / sheet peg	Simple bent aluminium strip	Ultra-lightweight	Low holding power, bends easily	Emergency use, UL, very hard ground

Length and weight:

Length	Typical weight per peg	Use	Description
Short (10–15 cm)	5–10 g (titanium, aluminium), up to 15 g (steel)	Hard, rocky ground, UL tours	Low holding power, only suitable for optimal ground conditions
Standard (18 - 22cm)	19–20 g (aluminium, UL), up to 25 g (steel)	Trekking all-round, grass, mixed ground	Best compromise between holding power and weight
Long (>25 cm)	20–40 g (aluminium/sand pegs), >50 g (steel)	Soft ground, snow, sand, storm	More surface area, more grip, but noticeably heavier and bulkier

Since we often pitch our tent near riverbanks with many large stones, gravel, and changing ground conditions, and want to reduce weight, it is advisable to use robust UL pegs.

These would be, for example, **6 Y-pegs** (hardened aluminium, e.g. 7075-T6, 18–20 cm) plus **2–4 titanium pegs** for difficult conditions (approx. 15–16 cm), and **1 spare peg**. This ensures resistance to stones, stability, low weight, and compact pack size.

Always keep in mind that good anchoring means being able to drive the peg as deep into the ground as possible, so different lengths depending on the terrain are an advantage.

Which main criteria should you consider when choosing your tent?

There are six key components that determine a tent's overall functionality: the tent material, the construction, the functionality, the weight, the size, and the shape.

Tent material

Tents use nearly the same base materials as backpacks or clothing, namely polyamide (PA) and polyester (PES). In clothing, polypropylene (very functional) or acrylic (low strength) are also used. However, there are also very innovative materials that are lighter, more waterproof, and more durable than those mentioned.

Outer tent and coating

Most outer tents are made of lightweight synthetic fabrics such as **polyamide (PA)** and **polyester (PES)** with a waterproof coating.

Polyester fabric (PES) is less stretchable (**more dimensionally stable**) and **absorbs less moisture**, which means a pitched tent will not sag when wet and needs less retightening.

Adhesives also adhere well, which ensures long-lasting seam sealing. Polyester tents are almost always coated with **polyurethane (PU)** to achieve higher waterproofing. However, **PU-coated polyester** is slightly heavier than **coated nylon**.

Nylon fabric (PA) is **more abrasion-resistant** than polyester fabric, especially under dynamic stress such as rubbing or friction against hard surfaces. Nylon is also tougher and can withstand stronger loads like wind at the same weight.

Therefore, high-quality tents are often made from nylon.

In addition, nylon fabric is coated on both sides with silicone. This increases the tear resistance many times over and also improves UV resistance.

However, silicone coating has one disadvantage. Seam sealing tape hardly adheres to siliconised fabrics, which makes the seams difficult to seal. Only a few manufacturers, including Vaude, are able to apply seam tapes successfully. Other tent manufacturers include a tube of liquid silicone with the tent so that users can seal it manually if needed.

Dyneema is one of the lightest filaments and synthetic fibres and is made from **ultra-high-molecular-weight polyethylene (UHMWPE)**. In tents, Dyneema is used as a multi-layer high-performance composite film. In textiles, **composite fabrics (DCF)** are used.

It is one of the strongest materials in the world, with a specific strength of about 38–42 cN/dtex, which is roughly 15 times stronger than steel at the same weight. I mention these values so you can trust the material, because even I found it hard to believe when I first saw tents made from it.

However, the material is not suitable for every type of use and is also expensive.

Applications:

- in tents as groundsheet and outer tent
- in sails as rigging
- in protective clothing as full-body garments
- in fishing nets
- in ballistic equipment

!!! Note !!!

PU coatings can deteriorate over the years, becoming brittle and flaking off. Silicone, on the other hand, is resistant to this. Therefore, siliconised nylon fabric has a longer lifespan.

A stronger fabric, for example 40D to 150D (**unit: D = denier**), also contributes to better durability. Lightweight fabrics under 20D save weight but are more susceptible to tearing and abrasion. The weaving technique itself also has a strong influence on a tent's longevity. One such fabric is the already mentioned **ripstop nylon**.

!!! Note !!!

After spending the night, you will probably want to move on early in the morning. At that time, your tent will still be damp because condensation collects under the outer fabric.

To prevent mould or musty odours, it is recommended to dry the tent with a sponge or microfibre cloth. You can also attach it to the back of your backpack under a ventilated mesh so it can continue drying as you walk.

Otherwise, always make sure there is good ventilation when the tent is set up.

Inner tent

Inner tents are usually made from a fine-mesh, breathable nylon or polyester. A mosquito net is also integrated to further reduce the tent's weight and improve

ventilation. The mosquito net should have a very fine mesh (0.6–0.8 mm) to keep out sandflies, which are 2.5–4 mm in size.

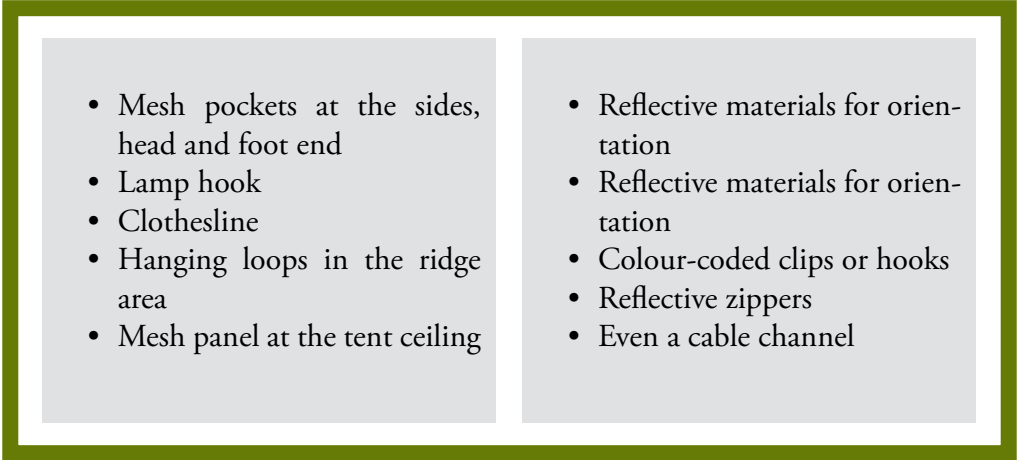
In four-season tents, mosquito netting is often omitted or reduced. Instead, wind-resistant fabric is used to protect the interior from draughts.

Some inner tents are connected to the outer tent using hook-and-loop fasteners or elastic cords. Depending on the construction, the outer or inner tent can be used independently.

Organisation inside the inner tent

High-quality tents in particular offer well-thought-out interior solutions. This keeps the floor free of small items and allows easy access even in the dark. And if you ever have to spend longer periods inside the tent, such a well-designed interior really pays off.

They are, for example, equipped with:

- 
- Mesh pockets at the sides, head and foot end
 - Lamp hook
 - Clothesline
 - Hanging loops in the ridge area
 - Mesh panel at the tent ceiling
 - Reflective materials for orientation
 - Reflective materials for orientation
 - Colour-coded clips or hooks
 - Reflective zippers
 - Even a cable channel

Tent floor and coating

A tent floor is made from PA or PES, with **Cordura** and ripstop nylon being the most common. The floor must be resistant to abrasion, pressure, and standing water. Therefore, the water column **should be at least 5000 mm**, ideally 10,000 mm.

However, this higher water column increases the material's weight since the coating must be thicker. For that reason, high-quality tents usually feature a silicone coating, which is generally lighter than PU, depending on how it is applied and on the fabric used.

A good tent floor is designed as a bathtub floor, meaning that the seams are raised several centimetres above the ground so that no water can penetrate and the seams do not become a weak point. The seams are also sealed.

Sturdy tents use 40D–70D nylon fabric. There are also floors for extreme conditions and long-term durability with up to 150D.

To reinforce the tent floor, a separate groundsheet can be useful. Especially for ultralight tents with thinner floors, this can make sense. I would only recommend it, however, for tents (for example Zpacks) that already have a high water column in the material and where the additional groundsheet mainly serves to prevent damage.

Otherwise, I would advise against it. It's better to buy a tent with a robust floor right from the start.

Water column

You have just read that in practice a water column of 10,000 mm is required to guarantee waterproofing, and that is true.

However, a tent has a large surface area, which would quickly lead to a weight increase of up to 40% if we demanded a 10,000 mm water column instead of 3,000 mm for the outer tent as well.

This would mean that an average two-person tent without a vestibule would increase from 2.6 kg to 3.64 kg, and with a vestibule to about 5 kg. When trekking, though, every gram counts. Of course, there are solutions that achieve lower weight.

For this reason, manufacturers try to resist rain, snow, or wind through construction, workmanship, or the coatings mentioned earlier. The highest pressure on the material occurs at the floor due to our body weight. Therefore, tent manufacturers view the floor as the weakest point, and that's where we find the highest water column.

Waterproofing through silicone or PU coating always means that the material does not breathe. This is particularly noticeable in single-wall tents, where condensation can form on the inside wall. Double-wall tents, on the other hand, are more breathable because the waterproof layer is limited to the outer tent and air can circulate between the outer and inner layers.

- Outer tent: <5,000 mm is standard (**up to 20,000 mm**)
- Inner tent: 1,500 mm – 3,000 mm is standard
- Floor: 3,000 mm – 10,000 mm is standard (**up to 20,000 mm**)

Environmental compatibility

If you want an environmentally friendly impregnation, look for **PFC-free DWR coatings**. In addition, flame retardants should be avoided. You can also check whether your tent is made from recycled materials.

Construction

Single-wall tents:

- Ridge tents
- Tipi tents

Double-wall tents:

- Dome tents
- Tunnel tents
- Geodesic tents

In double-wall tents, the outer tent layer is positioned about 15 cm away from the inner tent. This provides better protection against moisture (depending on the material) and allows for improved air circulation. As a result, less condensation forms on the inside of the outer tent.

Weight

Weight plays a major role when purchasing a tent. Therefore, the total weight should be reduced as much as possible.

- Ultralight tents start at around 500 g to 2 kg (***including accessories, sometimes without poles***)
- Standard tents weigh about 2.5 to 3.5 kg (***including accessories***)

Pack size

Lightweight one- to two-person tents are characterised by a very compact pack size. Many current models can be packed down to a volume of 5–8 litres, which corresponds to an approximate pack size of 40 × 15 cm.

Ultralight tents go even further, starting at around 2.3 litres and a pack size of 28 × 10 cm (***A-frame tents without poles, using trekking poles instead***). The low weight is therefore also due to the absence of tent poles

Otherwise, the typical range is about 3.5–4.5 litres. In ***ultralight tents***, the pole elements are made thinner and divided into more sections to save weight and reduce pack size, which requires high-quality poles.

Packing itself is made easier by high-quality, thin, silicone-coated materials, which can be compressed very tightly when stuffed into a pack sack, saving time.

If you are looking for more comfort and plan to share a tent, the pack volume can quickly reach around 10 litres. However, when trekking as a pair, weight and volume can be distributed easily between both people.

Pitching the inner or outer tent first?

In rainy regions such as New Zealand, it is advisable to choose a tent construction where the outer tent can be pitched first so that the inner tent stays dry.

Setup time:

One- to two-person tents can usually be set up within 3–5 minutes. Many models can be erected by one person. Dome tents with clip systems (for hanging the inner

tent) are especially quick to pitch. Setting up tunnel tents usually takes about one minute longer since more guy lines are required.

There are also tents where the inner tent is permanently connected to the outer tent, which greatly speeds up the setup process, which takes around 2 minutes to pitch.

The fastest setup is achieved with so-called pop-up tents, which unfold automatically after unpacking and stand on their own. Their disadvantage is the high weight, around 4.5 kg. In addition, these tents are usually designed as two-season tents.

Are they the lightest tents in the world?

Zpacks, a tent maker from the USA, is dedicated to ultralight design and uses **Dyneema as the primary material**. The company also produces lightweight gear such as backpacks and sleeping bags.

The tents made from this material are single-walled and in some models connected to the bathtub floor only at certain points to improve ventilation and allow condensation to drain. Other models, however, are fully connected to the groundsheet.

These tents are highly minimalist and offer few interior features. The simplest versions come without mosquito nets. At first glance, some tents appear to be designed solely as emergency shelters, and some are, but others are fully functional tents. The tent is designed so that standard telescopic trekking poles can be used for support, though a completely free-standing version also exists.

To **guarantee full waterproofing (10,000 mm – 20,000 mm)**, all seams are sealed with tape. The tents are in a weight class of their own, starting at **351 g for a one-person tent** and up to **896 g for a two-person tent (without accessories)**.

Which tent is suitable for our trekking and fishing trip?

In principle, the goal is to achieve greater stability while keeping the weight as low as possible:

- Therefore, every tent should have aluminium poles.
- In addition, use a combination of suitable pegs as previously recommended.

- The outer tent and the side panels of the inner tent should be made of ripstop nylon with a fabric strength between 20D and 40D.
- The inner tent should include a mosquito net to protect against sandflies and mosquitoes, with a very fine mesh between 0.6 and 0.8 mm.
- Due to varying ground conditions, the bathtub floor should be made from strong nylon fabric of at least 70D.
- As for the coating, always prefer silicone or PU, as these reduce fabric weight and provide better UV protection.

Which tent to use for which purpose?

For those spending only single nights in the backcountry, a simpler three-season tent with a minimum water column of 3000 mm for the outer tent and at least 5000 mm for the floor will be sufficient, but not below that.

If you travel to New Zealand in early spring (October–November) or autumn (March–May), you can expect heavier rainfall, so a higher-quality tent is advisable. The water column for the outer tent should then be 5000 mm and for the floor at least 8000–10,000 mm.

If you plan to use your tent throughout your entire journey, I recommend making use of all advantages available in comfort, stability, functionality, and weight.

Even if you travel as a pair, I always recommend taking separate one-person tents. This has the advantage that if one tent is lost or damaged, you still have a shelter available. A backpack can always be stored under the vestibule.

Fun & Adventure **Explore the wilderness with a packraft**

Since when have there been boundaries?

A trek or river hike is demanding, and as anglers, we naturally want to make the most of every minute.

We should bear in mind that our bodies are most tired in the evening and we may still have hours to walk back.

This is where a packraft comes in handy. We can get back more easily, quickly, and often more safely, and still have lots of fun.

We also reach areas that are indescribably beautiful and previously seemed unreachable.



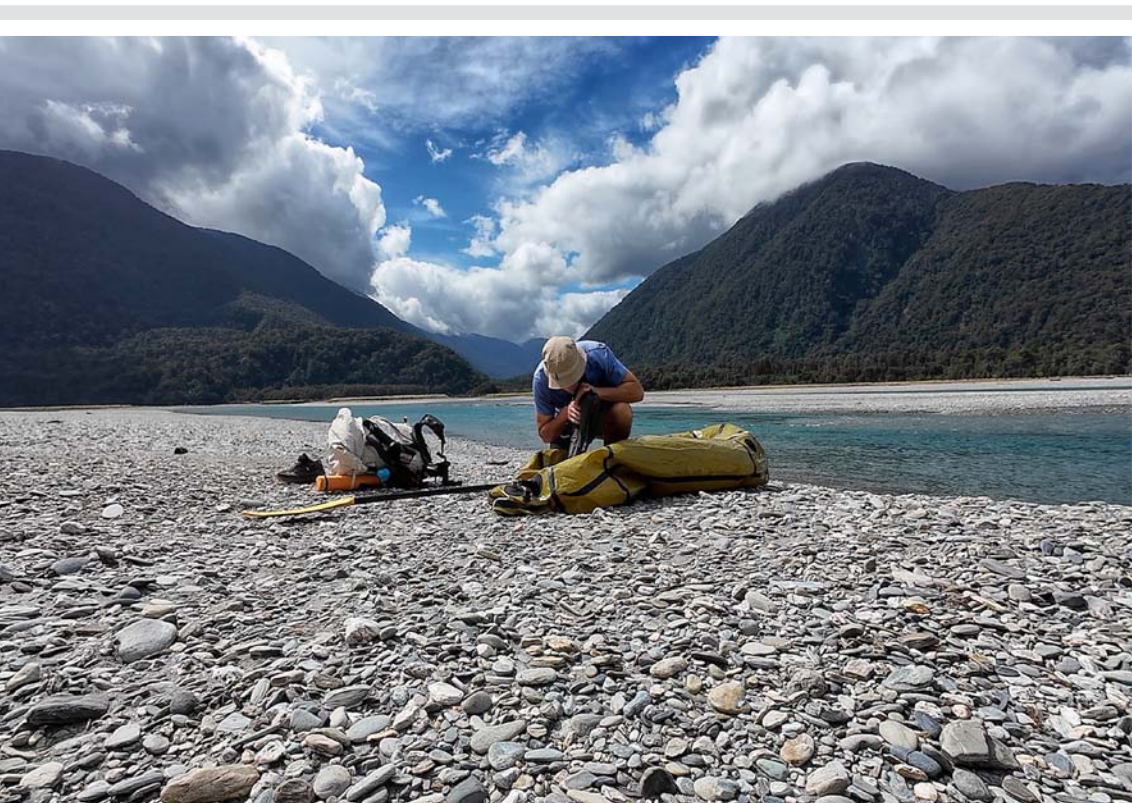


Fig. left: The packraft is being inflated and the items secured. Then it's off downriver. For short or longer stays of several days, it's always good to not have to go all the way back in the evening or on the return journey. You also get to see the landscape again from a different perspective.

Rivers carve deep furrows through valleys, lakes lie still as glass between rugged mountains, and in Fiordland the rainforest slopes plunge straight into the sea. For hikers, this often means detours or dead ends, but with a packraft these obstacles turn into new paths. A boat, hardly heavier than a tent, rests unobtrusively in your backpack until it is needed. Then it unfolds, carries you across, into, and ever onward.

For anglers it is more than just a practical tool. It is the key to exploring waters that might have seemed unreachable because of their location. With only a few paddle strokes, a lonely river course or a mountain lake with steep shores opens up. Fishing spots that once existed only on the map become real.

The alternation between walking and paddling brings its own sense of ease. First, walking all day over scree and through bush, then the silence on the water, the



Fig. right: You will encounter many obstacles in the rivers of the wilderness. Large tree trunks, often scattered across the entire river, as well as sudden short rapids or narrowings make manoeuvring difficult. Find out thoroughly about the conditions of a river before you navigate it.

steady pull of the paddle. The legs rest, other muscles take over. The body stays in rhythm, but the mind feels the change.

And the boats themselves? As tough as any piece of gear could be. They withstand sun, cold, rocks and salt. They can be inflated within minutes and packed away just as quickly. Wind and speed naturally set limits, but in this landscape, speed is no measure. What matters here is range for more freedom. The possibility of taking routes you once thought impossible.

Thus the packraft in New Zealand becomes an unbeatable companion. It not only extends the radius of a journey but also the idea of what is possible.

For the trekker, it means freedom in the choice of route. For the angler, it means access to a wilderness that is truly wild. And the combination of both creates an adventure that, here in this land of water and mountains, feels only natural.

Preparations for our adventure

So that we can enjoy all of this, good preparation is necessary. Apart from that, one should not travel on a river or lake with any vessel without gaining experience first.

Therefore, you should not start paddling on rivers and lakes only once you are in your holiday. In addition, please inform yourself thoroughly about the rivers you want to travel on and gain experience on similar rivers in your own country.

For refreshing or improving your skills, it is always advisable to train under supervision in New Zealand.

If you wish to travel with a packraft, you should contact a kayaking club or a kayaking instructor directly, who can teach you how to navigate rivers and lakes. Preparation is therefore essential, otherwise you expose yourself to great danger.

Using a packraft

Packrafts are ultralight, portable inflatable boats that you can easily fit into your backpack and combine with hiking, cycling or travelling. They are lightweight, compact and ready for use within a few minutes using the pump sack. Still, they are robust enough not to give up at the first gravel bed.

The core is always a compromise: portability versus durability versus water performance. The lighter and more compact it is, the more sensitive it becomes to abrasion and contact with rocks. The more solid and stiff it is, the better the handling on the water, but also the more weight you carry on your back.

What really matters when buying one? The intended use. Leisure paddling on a lake or calm river is very different from a trekking loop with daily entries and exits along rocky shores, and both have little in common with whitewater.

That is exactly why we sort the decision criteria according to how it will be used: from touring boats and bikepacking setups to whitewater models for classes I to V. The goal is for you to end up with a boat that fits your way of using it: stable enough when things get rough, light enough when you feel every metre of ascent, and designed so that setup, entry and handling match your pace.

Application scenarios

Before you decide on a specific model, you need to assess where and how you want to use your packraft. This is the point where the biggest differences become clear, such as in weight, material and equipment.

Touring/leisure paddling

If you mainly spend time paddling calmly on lakes, gentle rivers or fjords, comfort takes priority over technical performance. Lightweight models with a single air chamber system are perfectly sufficient. They offer enough stability, inflate quickly and can easily be handled on your own.

What matters here is smooth tracking and a shape that is easy to control. Better to have a stable and straight-running boat than one that is overly manoeuvrable. The entry should also be uncomplicated, ideally with an open cockpit. Spray decks or self-bailer systems are unnecessary in this area, they would only add extra weight and effort.

Boats made from medium-weight TPU or PU-coated fabric are ideal, as they are durable enough without becoming too heavy. If you occasionally paddle in salt water, rinse the boat thoroughly after every trip, otherwise the material will deteriorate over time.

Trekking and bikepacking

When trekking or bikepacking, every gram counts because you often carry the thing for kilometres over rough terrain. Here it is less about comfort and more about pack size, setup time and durability.

You will be loading and unloading the boat frequently, and it will come into contact with rocks, roots and branches, so the floor needs to be more robust than that of a touring model. 210D TPU fabric is the minimum, with some opting for reinforcements of 420D in the floor area.

Attachment points on the outside are useful for securely strapping down a backpack or bike frame. Some models offer special lashing or mounting systems that are compatible with tension straps.

If you mix it all up a lot, for example 30 km of cycling, 10 km of hiking and 5 km of paddling, then ultralight models with a total weight of 2 to 3 kg hit the sweet spot. You only get lighter if you compromise on durability or comfort.

Whitewater and expeditions

This is where things get serious. As soon as you move into technical or fast-flowing water, the requirements change completely. A multi-chamber system is highly recommended, if only to make sure you do not suddenly lose all buoyancy in case

of damage. On top of that come a reinforced floor, spray deck, self-bailer system to prevent water from collecting, and solid attachment points for gear.

Whitewater classification

Choosing the right boat depends heavily on the whitewater grading, which is internationally divided into classes I to VI. The difficulty is indicated according to the International Scale of River Difficulty (American Whitewater).

Level	Description	Recommendation for packrafts
1	Gentle flowing water, hardly any obstacles	All packrafts suitable
2	Moderate waves, simple manoeuvres	Standard packrafts with good buoyancy
3	Technical White water, precise control required	Special White water packrafts with spray deck
4	Strong, turbulent water, complex line selection	Only for experienced paddlers, robust multi-chamber boats
5	Extremely difficult, high waves, rollers	Only specialised whitewater packrafts with reinforcements
6	Life-threatening, barely navigable	Not suitable for packrafts

Table.: Whitewater grading

In Europe the same system is used, though it is sometimes interpreted a bit differently because water volume and technical difficulty are assessed differently depending on the type of river.

So if you regularly paddle in class III or higher, you need a boat with a stable seating position, a lower centre of gravity, multiple chambers and a spray deck that seals tightly.

For class IV or V it is no longer something for casual paddlers. You need experience, a solid safety setup and a boat that can handle heavy impacts against rocks.

Technical design parameters

This is where it is decided how well your packraft will perform in practice, whether it will stay with you for years or need patching after two trips. Materials, chambers, valves and shape are the real inner values of a packraft, and this is also where the biggest differences lie between cheap recreational boats and high-quality expedition models.

Materials used

Most modern packrafts are made from TPU-coated nylon, usually between 210D and 840D, and less commonly from PU-coated polyester. “D” stands for denier – the higher the value, the thicker and more abrasion-resistant the fabric, but also heavier.

For relaxed touring, 210D is usually more than enough. If you are paddling in whitewater or regularly getting in and out along rocky edges, it should be at least 420D, preferably 840D.

TPU (thermoplastic polyurethane) has become the standard because it is flexible, abrasion-resistant and easy to repair. It can be welded or glued, which is a real advantage when doing repairs on the go. PU coatings are a bit cheaper but less elastic and tend to age faster.

The seams are either welded or glued, depending on the manufacturer. Welded seams are more robust and resistant to UV exposure or temperature fluctuations, while glued seams can age or start to come apart over the years. If you want your packraft to last, go for one with welded seams.





Pyke River, Hollyford Pyke loop, South Island

Chamber systems

The chamber system is the backbone of safety. There are two main types:

- **Single air chamber**

Lightweight, quick to inflate and compact. Ideal for touring or calm water. The downside is that if you get a puncture, you lose all buoyancy at once.

- **Multi-chamber system**

Two or more separate air chambers, usually one on each side or an additional separated floor section. This greatly increases safety, especially in whitewater or on long expeditions. The downside is that it is slightly heavier and takes more effort to inflate.

Many boats also have separate chambers for the seat and backrest, which can be adjusted or replaced individually. This not only adds comfort but also helps distribute weight evenly and stabilise the seating position.

Internal storage / tube bags inside the float chambers

A waterproof, large-format zip (for example at the stern or on the side) opens access to the hollow interior of the air tubes. Inside, waterproof packsacks known as tube bags are secured with internal tethers. After loading, the zip is sealed and the tube is re-pressurised.

Advantages

- **Weight distribution and balance:** The luggage sits low and central. The boat runs more steadily, sways less and is less affected by crosswinds.
- **Clear deck and less drag:** Nothing gets caught outside, there is less splash water intake and a lower risk of snagging in eddies or branches.
- **Safety during capsizing:** Gear stored inside stays in the boat, there is no hanging ballast outside.

Disadvantages / risks

- The zip is a critical point: The seal needs care, sand and salt destroy its tightness. Neglect leads to slow water ingress.
- Emergency access: There is practically no access while paddling. Anything you need on the go, such as first aid, an insulating layer, snacks or the pump, must stay on deck.
- Slightly less effective air volume: A lot of gear in the tubes slightly reduces buoyancy reserve and can affect the boat's trim.
- Requires packing discipline: Hard edges can rub, poorly packed bags can press against the hull.

Practical setup (how to pack it right)

- Load symmetrically left and right, with heavier items close to the centre of the boat.
- Pad sharp edges (wrap clothing around the stove or pot). No loose metal parts.
- Dry and clean the sealing surface before closing.
- After loading, check and top up pressure if needed (the gear displaces air and lowers pressure).
- Do not store critical items inside: first aid kit, emergency blanket, snacks, pump, repair kit and electronics should stay outside, packed dry.
- After saltwater use, rinse, open the zip and let packs dry, otherwise it starts to smell and the sealing lips age faster.

When it makes sense

- Trekking / expeditions: Strongly recommended, better trim, less wind drag, noticeably more efficient on long lakes or fjords.

- Whitewater (class II–III): Good, as there is less chance of snagging outside. But zip maintenance is essential, follow the manufacturer's advice, and do not bury emergency gear inside.
- Pure touring with day gear: Nice to have. Keeps things tidy and improves stability, but not essential.

Rules of thumb

- What you need during the stage stays outside, everything else inside.
- Load first, then close, then inflate, not the other way round.
- If the zip grinds, stop. Clean it first. Do not force it.

Valve systems

A point many people underestimate. Good packrafts have large valves with a back-flow function so that no air escapes while inflating. Some manufacturers even use bayonet or screw valves from the kayak sector, which can be operated while wearing gloves.

The pump sack is standard. It is lightweight, durable and works without electricity. Mini pumps are available as accessories but are not really necessary. It is more important that the boat has a large deflation valve so you can release the air quickly after a trip.

Small details such as removable valve caps or integrated seals make a noticeable difference in everyday use, especially if you are often on tour and regularly inflate and deflate your boat.

Hull design and shape

The shape determines how the packraft handles, whether it stays stable or drifts around corners like a wet sack.

- **Round bow** is very stable, hardly tips over, but slower in forward motion. Ideal for beginners or calm tours.

- **Pointed bow** tracks much better in a straight line and is more efficient when paddling, but slightly more prone to tipping and therefore requires better balance.

For whitewater, wide and voluminous hulls with plenty of buoyancy and a high bow make sense, allowing the boat to ride over waves instead of diving into them. The floor in high-quality models is additionally reinforced, often double-coated or made with thicker material such as 840D TPU. This is useful if you often get in and out on rocky banks. In simple recreational boats, the floor is usually single-layered, which makes it lighter but also more vulnerable.

Handling and speed

How a packraft behaves on the water depends heavily on its geometry and volume distribution. And there are big differences, especially between touring, all-round and whitewater models.

A short, wide packraft (under 2.4 m in length and over 90 cm in width) sits very stable in the water, reacts gently to movement and hardly tips over. That is comfortable for beginners or when carrying gear, but you'll notice immediately that it is slow. Because of the high water resistance, you have to paddle much more to gain speed. Ideal for calm rivers, crossings or relaxed drifting, but not if you want to cover distance.

A longer, narrower packraft (from about 2.6 to 3 m in length and around 80 cm in width) has a better glide phase. It cuts cleanly through the water, holds its course more easily and reaches noticeably higher speed with the same effort. These boats, however, are more sensitive in terms of balance. You need to paddle more precisely and shift your weight carefully.

The bow angle also plays a role. A flat bow (touring shape) reduces drag and improves speed, but tends to dive when hitting waves. A strongly upturned bow (whitewater shape) rides over waves better but reduces speed because more surface area creates drag.

Fins or keel strips stabilise tracking and prevent the typical snaking that occurs with round boats. A fin increases efficiency on long, open stretches but makes the boat less agile in tight turns, so it is not ideal for narrow whitewater runs.

Total weight also affects speed. A light boat responds faster but is more affected by wind. A heavier model sits calmer in the water, tracks straighter but takes more power to accelerate.





Lake Alabaster, South Island

Roughly speaking:

- Touring packrafts: average 3–5 km/h, easy to maintain steadily.
- Longer expedition models: 5–7 km/h with good paddling technique.
- Whitewater packrafts: usually 2–5 km/h, since control matters more than speed.

Pure speed is therefore not a performance indicator, it only reflects the boat's characteristics. If you want to cover distance, you accept length and a narrow bow. If you prefer stability, you go with a short, wide design with plenty of buoyancy.

Ergonomics and comfort

A point many people only start to appreciate after their first long tour. A packraft can be technically excellent, but if you end up sitting there after an hour with numb legs and a bent back, it was the wrong choice. Ergonomics and comfort are crucial, especially if you spend several hours or days on the water.

Seating systems

Most packrafts today come with inflatable seats that also serve as insulation against the cold floor. The simpler versions are flat air cushions, which are fine for short trips. Higher-quality models have shaped seats with backrests that you can adjust to fit your seating position.

It is important that the seat is not too high, otherwise your centre of gravity shifts upward and the boat becomes unstable. In whitewater packrafts you sit a bit lower for more control, while in touring models it can be a bit higher and more upright for comfort.

If you regularly paddle long distances, a seat with variable air chambers is worth it. You can adjust the firmness to avoid pressure points. Many manufacturers also offer replacement seat and backrest options if you want to upgrade later.

Interior space and legroom

Interior space varies a lot between models. Lightweight touring boats are often narrower to save weight, while whitewater models are generally more compact due to their additional chambers.

If you are tall or have long legs, make sure there is enough space between the seat and the bow, otherwise it can get uncomfortable on longer trips. Manufacturers rarely specify the exact interior length, so the best option is to sit in it or check user reviews beforehand.

For whitewater, the rule is: the tighter the seating area, the better the boat control. You sit more securely and can steer more precisely by shifting your weight. For touring or bikepacking, the opposite is true – a bit more legroom and space to move is more comfortable, especially if you want to drift and relax from time to time.

Entry and spray protection

There are two main cockpit types, open and closed with a spray deck or skirt.

- ***Open cockpit***

The classic choice for touring, leisure paddling or trekking. You can get in and out easily and do not need any extra sealing. However, waves or rain will let water in, so you have to bail or dry the boat regularly.

- ***Closed spray deck***

Essential when paddling whitewater from class II–III upwards. It keeps splashing water out, protects against the cold and gives a more secure feeling in waves. Good systems are removable, allowing you to paddle open when conditions are calm.

Some packrafts come with modular setups that let you switch between open cockpit, detachable deck or self-bailer mode. That is practical if you want one boat for different uses, though it usually costs a bit more and adds a few hundred grams of extra weight.

Safety and control

With a packraft, safety is not a side issue but the factor that can decide how things turn out if something goes wrong. Especially since many trips take place in remote areas, you must be able to rely on your boat staying stable, no matter if it gets hit, tears or fills with water. Control on the water depends not only on your paddling skills but also on the boat's construction and equipment.

Safety equipment

Good packrafts are built so they remain buoyant even when slightly damaged. Multi-chamber systems are key here. If one chamber loses air, the others will still keep you afloat. That should be the minimum standard once you move away from the lake shore or into flowing water. Unfortunately, not all models have this, since extra chambers mean extra weight, which limits portability on trekking trips. That gap should always be compensated by wearing an inflatable life vest.

Along the edges of the boat you will often find attachment points that are not only for securing gear but can also serve safety purposes. You can attach a safety line there to secure yourself or the boat after capsizing.

For whitewater, self-bailing systems also come into play. These are openings or valves in the floor that automatically drain incoming water. It may sound like a comfort feature, but in currents from class II–III onwards it becomes a real safety factor, plus you don't have to bail the boat constantly.

Waterproof zips or internal storage hatches are also useful. They allow you to store equipment inside the boat rather than strapping it outside, which improves balance and reduces drag in the current.

Load capacity and stability

A point many underestimate is the relationship between body weight, gear load and boat volume. If you overload a boat, it becomes unstable, the sidewalls sink too deep into the water and every wave will spill over.

Most manufacturers specify a maximum load capacity. You shouldn't push it to the limit but leave 20–30% in reserve. A packraft rated for 150 kg performs best at around 100–120 kg total weight, including paddler, gear and water.

Stability also depends on width. Wider boats sit more steadily on the water but are slower. Narrower ones move more efficiently but react more sensitively to body

movement. If you don't have much experience yet, go for a wider hull with high buoyancy – it's more forgiving.

Rescue and emergency measures

As soon as you go into whitewater or remote areas, a basic safety setup is a must: throw bag, helmet and life vest are mandatory from class II upwards.

A small repair kit should always be part of your gear. A piece of TPU patch material, some glue, tape and maybe a spare valve. Good manufacturers include one, but if not, get one separately.

And one last point many forget: the safety position in the water. Float with your feet downstream, hold onto the boat and keep your head above water. The best way to learn this is to practise beforehand somewhere with a calm current, because when it actually happens, there's no time to think.

Practical aspects

This is where the theoretical idealist separates from the real user. In the end it's not just about how a packraft performs on the water, but how it handles on tour, from inflating to packing it away. Setup time, transport, maintenance, these are the things that decide in everyday use whether you enjoy taking the boat out or get annoyed before it even hits the water.

Setup time and handling

A packraft is basically straightforward. With a pump sack you are usually ready to go in five to ten minutes. Experienced users might do it faster, but the real difference comes down to the valve system, not lung power.

!!! Important !!!

“When temperatures change, so does the air pressure in the boat. In cold water it drops, so you'll need to add some air. In sun or warmth it rises, so don't inflate too hard and release a bit of air if necessary.”





Lake Mc Kerrow, Hollyford Pyke loop, South Island

After the trip, proper deflation is crucial. Let the boat empty completely, wipe out the water roughly and let it dry briefly before packing. Moisture in the stuff sack is the main cause of mould and material degradation.

If you need to assemble and pack down frequently, for example during portages or river changes, a robust valve system with a wide opening is worth its weight in gold – it saves time and nerves.

Transport and pack size

One of the real advantages of a packraft is its format. Folded up, it fits into a backpack, usually between 30–50 cm in length and 20–25 cm in diameter depending on the model. Ultralight versions can even be smaller.

On trekking or bikepacking trips, that makes a big difference. You can carry the boat on or inside your backpack, and some setups even allow mounting it on the bike frame. Some manufacturers offer special brackets or strap systems for this.

But keep in mind that accessories add up quickly. Paddle, life vest, seat, pump sack – together they can easily add another 1.5 to 2 kg. Always calculate the total weight, not just the bare boat.

If you're travelling by plane, packrafts are ideal. Even larger models rarely weigh more than 4 kg and can be checked as regular luggage. Just make sure the boat is clean and dry, otherwise you might run into trouble at customs.

Care and storage

The material is tough, but only if you treat it properly. After every trip, rinse it with fresh water, especially if you've been in salt water. Salt crystals will gradually attack the TPU coating. Afterwards, let it dry completely. If you pack it while still damp, mould develops fast and the boat starts to smell musty.

For long-term storage, don't keep it tightly rolled up. It's better to store it loosely folded or half open in a dry, shaded room. UV light is the number one enemy, as sunlight slowly breaks down the coating.

Check the valves regularly and lubricate them with a little silicone grease or petroleum jelly to keep the seals supple. Fix small damage to the material right away. TPU is easy to repair, but the longer you wait, the worse the glue will adhere.

Maintenance and spare parts

As with all gear, quality has its price, but expensive does not automatically mean better. What matters is whether the equipment, material and service match how and where you plan to use it. A €2,000 whitewater boat won't give you any advantage on a calm lake, just as a cheap leisure model is useless on a rocky mountain river.

Spare parts and repair

Packrafts are surprisingly tough, but repairs are part of the game, especially with regular use. What matters most is that the manufacturer provides easy access to spare parts and repair kits.

Make sure that valves, seats, backrests, spray decks or zips can be reordered individually. European brands or suppliers with a local service base are a clear advantage here, since you won't have to wait six weeks for parts from abroad if something breaks under warranty.

A repair kit should always be on board. Patch material (ideally original TPU fabric from the manufacturer), glue, tape and a small brush or sanding pad for surface prep. On the go, you can usually seal small damages temporarily. For a permanent fix, make sure the boat is completely dry before repair.

For larger damage or burst welded seams, it's worth contacting a professional repair shop. If you buy a higher-end model, specifically ask about the warranty and spare parts availability. Good manufacturers keep parts in stock for many years, and that says far more about quality than any marketing claim.

Areas of use

- ***Beginners (touring)***

Ideal for calm waters, lakes or easy river trips. Usually a single-chamber system, PU-coated fabric and a simple valve. Works perfectly fine as long as you stay away from extreme conditions.

- ***Trekking and expedition models***

Noticeably more robust, usually made from TPU-coated nylon with a reinforced floor, often multi-chambered and with a detachable spray deck. This

category covers most realistic use cases, from long river journeys to multi-day tours with luggage.

- **Whitewater packrafts**

This is the high end. You get welded chambers, thick floors (up to 840D), modular systems with self-bailer or spray deck, internal storage hatches and precise hull geometry. Designed for class III+ whitewater and expeditions far from civilisation.

A solid TPU boat with a 420D floor beats any overdesigned budget model – not just in durability but also in resale value.

Accessories and optional equipment

Accessories for a packraft are not just luxury items; they are often essential for adapting the boat to your intended use. Some parts simply improve comfort, others are safety-relevant or significantly expand what the boat can handle.

Floor mat and interior setup

Many manufacturers offer removable floor mats or insulated inner floors. They may look like minor extras, but they make a big difference.

A mat slightly raises the seating height, insulates against cold water and adds comfort on longer tours. Some versions can even be removed and used as a sleeping pad in the tent, which is handy if you want to save weight.

In whitewater use, a solid or reinforced floor panel adds stability since you can apply more pressure with your feet when steering, though it also shifts the centre of gravity higher. There are also inflatable footrests or adjustable internal straps for fine-tuning the seating position, worth it if you paddle a lot and want a stable posture.

Paddles – types and materials

The paddle affects your paddling feel almost as much as the boat itself. Generally, there are touring paddles, whitewater paddles and ultralight models for trekking.

- Touring paddles: usually two- or four-piece, with longer blades and lower stroke frequency. Ideal for calm waters.
- Whitewater paddles: shorter, stronger, with larger curved blades for quick manoeuvres and more power per stroke.
- Ultralight paddles: made from carbon or fibreglass, collapsible, minimal weight (under 1 kg). Perfect for bikepacking but less durable when hitting rocks.

Material overview:

- Aluminium: cheap and durable but relatively heavy, also gets very cold in low temperatures.
- Fibreglass: lighter, good stiffness, excellent value for money.
- Carbon: very light and stiff, but sensitive to impact and expensive.
- Nylon or ABS blades: durable and affordable, but with some flex that costs energy over long distances.
- Carbon blades: stiff and efficient but

As a rough guide for touring, 220–240 cm length; for whitewater, 191–203 cm. Folding paddles are unbeatable for transport and essential if you have to carry the boat.

Sails and wind support

Some manufacturers offer clip-on or roll-up sails that attach to the bow. These are useful for long lake or fjord crossings where the wind usually comes steadily from one direction. A small downwind sail can actually generate measurable propulsion (up to +2 km/h with a tailwind), saving energy and making long crossings more comfortable. Still, you need room to manoeuvre, and in gusty side winds it can get risky. The boat can tip more easily or turn sideways unexpectedly. So this is only recommended for experienced users and open waters.

Mounting systems and gear solutions

If you are going on longer trips, look for internal storage systems with waterproof zips that lead directly into the float chambers. You can then stow gear inside the tubes, which improves balance and reduces drag. External attachments are easier to access but more exposed to wind.

Sturdy D-rings or strap loops are essential, preferably welded rather than glued. For bikepacking, some manufacturers offer special frame adapters or strap kits to attach the boat directly to the bike.

Safety and comfort accessories

A few things are essential, even if they are not included in the standard package:

- Throw bag and life vest: mandatory from whitewater class II upwards.
- Helmet: required from class II, sometimes earlier depending on terrain.
- Paddle leash: keeps the paddle attached to the boat in case of capsizing.
- Dry bags: for electronics, clothes and food.
- Foot pump or mini electric pump: optional comfort feature, saves time but not essential.

You can also retrofit items like spray skirts, foot straps or neoprene seat pads. These add comfort and control but also increase the overall weight.

Summary and buying recommendation

In the end, the decision always comes down to the same question: what do you actually want to do with your packraft? The clearer you can answer that, the easier the choice becomes. There is no boat that can do everything, but you can get pretty close if you set the right priorities.

If you mainly go on tours in calm water – lakes, fjords or slow rivers – you don't need a high-tech model. A simple, lightweight boat with a single air chamber, stable

hull and open cockpit is completely sufficient. The easier it is to set up, the more often you'll use it.

For trekking or bikepacking trips where you combine the boat with other gear, every gram matters. Lightweight TPU-coated models with a reinforced floor but without unnecessary extras are worth it here. Look for good attachment options and simple valves, as they save time during setup and packing.

As soon as you move into whitewater from class II–III upwards, the rules change. You need a spray deck, ideally a multi-chamber system, a solid floor, proper safety equipment and some experience.

For class IV or V, only specially reinforced whitewater packrafts are suitable – and even then, only for experienced paddlers with helmet, life vest and rescue gear. For class VI, packrafting has no place at all; it's simply life-threatening.

In short:

- For relaxed touring, focus on weight, simple setup and stability.
- For demanding rivers and expeditions, focus on safety, durability and multi-chamber construction.
- For everything in between, find the best compromise between comfort, safety and weight.

If you're unsure, start small. Paddle calm sections first, get to know the boat, see how it reacts. With a bit of experience, you'll quickly figure out what matters to you and whether you'll want to upgrade later. A good packraft isn't a fashion purchase, it's a tool. If it suits you, it will stay with you for many years – and that's the best investment you can make.

!!! But never forget, always wear a life vest !!!

Buy a packraft

List of manufacturers:

Alpacka – <https://alpackaraft.com/>

Anfibio – <https://www.anfibio.com/>

IRON – <https://www.iron-raft.co.uk/>
JAWS – <https://www.jaws-expe.com>
Kokopelli – <https://kokopellipackraft.com/>
MEKONG – <https://www.mekongpackraft.com/>
MRS – <https://mrsraft.com/>
NRS – <https://nrs.com/>
Supai Adventure Gear – <https://supaiadventuregear.com/>
Tributary Boats – <https://tributaryboats.com/>

For late decision-makers Online shops in New Zealand:

<https://blueduckrafts.com/> (**buy or rent**)
<https://www.furtherfaster.co.nz/collections/packrafts>
<https://www.packraftnewzealand.co.nz/pack-rafts>
<https://packraftingqueenstown.com/>
<https://www.wildearth.com.au/shop/watersports/kayaks-boats>

Of course, you can also purchase packrafts in brick-and-mortar shops.

Safety and kayaking

Here are three websites where you can find information about safety and kayaking on New Zealand's rivers and lakes.

The following websites provide further information:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/rafting-and-kayaking-river-safety/>
<https://www.nzkayakschool.com/>
<https://www.packrafting.org.nz/>

Wilderness **Behaviour, Safety and Hazards**

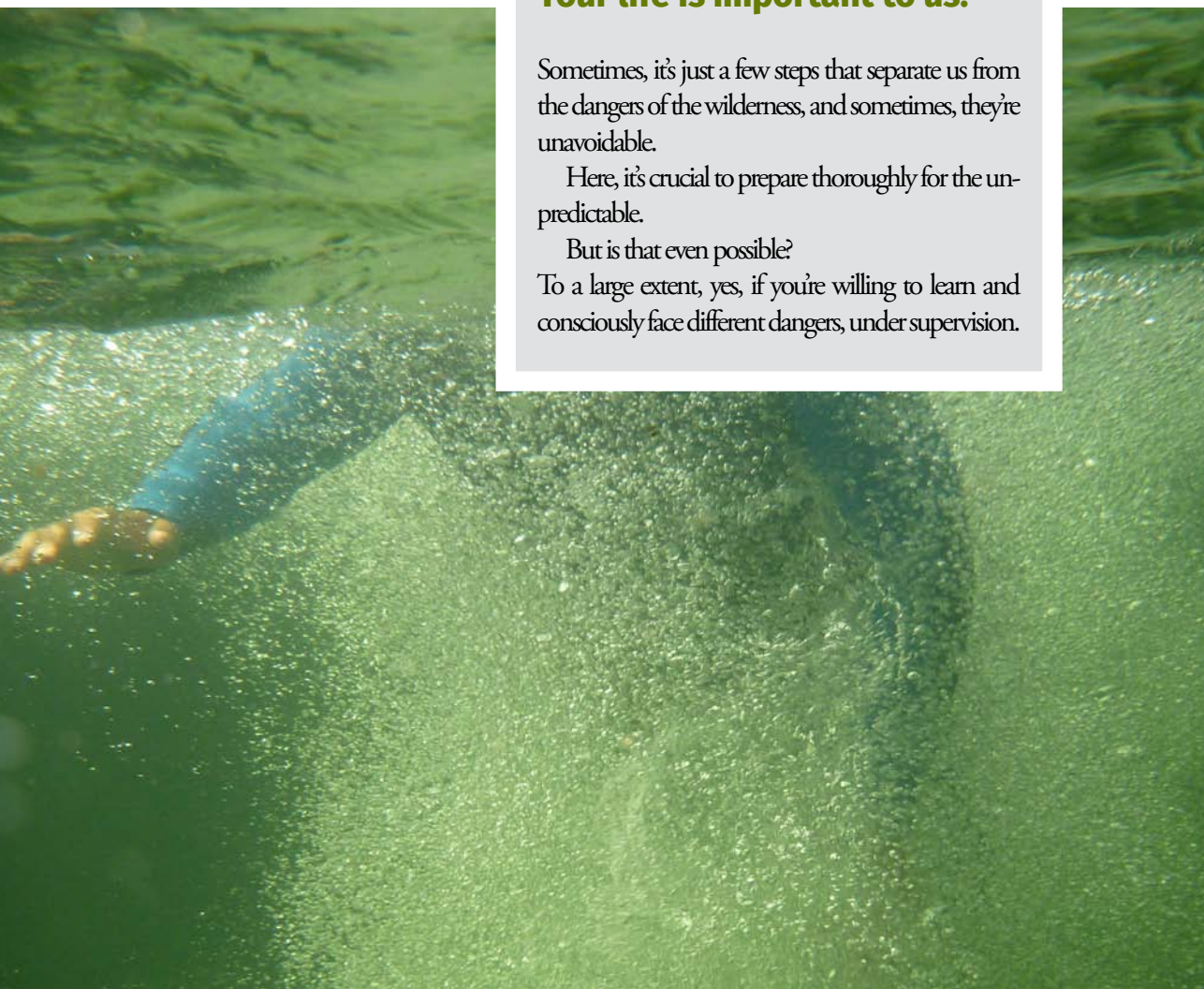
Your life is important to us!

Sometimes, it's just a few steps that separate us from the dangers of the wilderness, and sometimes, they're unavoidable.

Here, it's crucial to prepare thoroughly for the unpredictable.

But is that even possible?

To a large extent, yes, if you're willing to learn and consciously face different dangers, under supervision.



Basic requirements for a safe adventure holiday

Some are flown in and out by helicopter, while others trek or navigate rivers until they reach their destination. Some sleep in huts, others in tents, or even under the open sky.

The requirements are therefore different, so depending on how you plan your holiday, you should prepare accordingly. This applies to your behaviour in the mountains, at rivers and lakes, as well as skills in trekking, climbing, and crossing or navigating rivers and lakes.

Additionally, legal regulations (e.g. land access, entry and exit points, camping and making fires) as well as the guidelines from the Department of Conservation (DOC) or Fish and Game play a decisive role.

We want to show you the best way to prepare for New Zealand's backcountry. We do not distinguish between the angler who is flown in, as they face the same dangers as someone trekking to their destination or travelling by boat. These recommendations also apply if you are travelling with a guide, although a guide typically knows what to do and takes on many responsibilities.

Our goal is to raise awareness in you as an angler and make you aware of the most important safety-relevant issues when fishing in the backcountry.

Basic Requirements for You as an Angler Who Wants to Fish in the Backcountry:

- You have sufficient fitness and the ability to carry at least 15kg under difficult conditions.
- You have no injuries that impair you.
- You are not ill.
- You are mentally stable.
- And you can swim.

You meet almost all of these requirements?

Certainly, there are also people among you who cannot carry 15 kg but do not want to miss out on the experience. And here we come to the self-assessment, which must be done carefully.

But there are solutions for this too:

- Get a companion who will bring your luggage to the location and take care of all the preparations for you at the river.
- Get flown in and out by helicopter.
- Or just have yourself flown out, especially after completing a strenuous multi-day trek.
- It's also possible to have only your luggage flown in.
- Shorten your routes.
- Choose routes with a gentle incline.
- Also, select routes that allow you to exit the river early halfway through.
- Another option would be to take short trips of one to two days to reduce the overall weight.
- Splitting up the luggage can make sense if it really reduces the weight (e.g. sharing a tent).
- Take a fully organised fishing trip.
- Trek with ultra-light equipment (saves about 3 kg).
- Go on a hut-to-hut trip (saves about 2–3 kg).
- Get a packraft and experience an adventure by fishing the lakes, flats, and river inlets.

- Get a mountain bike or an e-mountain bike (not allowed on all paths, but ideal for riding along the large rivers in the riverbed).

Once you've found a solution and meet the basic requirements, it's about what knowledge and skills you should acquire to safely enjoy your fishing holiday.

I've provided various tips under the following headings to help you behave appropriately on your fishing trip in the backcountry.

Necessary fitness

Anyone trekking in the backcountry, including the national parks, should not only be able to fish. It requires a lot of fitness, which you either already have or should acquire beforehand.

If you don't have mountains nearby, you can also prepare using a stair climber in a gym. If you have no prior experience, you should gradually get used to the distance to avoid overstraining your body.

As a guideline, I would suggest 20 km on flat terrain with full gear. You should be able to walk this distance in 5 hours with 15 kg of luggage.

Depending on the body of water you wish to reach, up to 50 km may be necessary, and across varying terrain. However, this distance would likely be divided into several stages.

Safety tip for crossing rivers and lakes

A backpack worn on your back while crossing a river is always a potential hazard, especially if it is heavy or too high. It creates instability when walking and this is further exacerbated by uneven terrain and slippery ground.

Additionally, this backpack could pull you underwater if you fall, which, even in small rivers with only 20–40 cm of water, could turn into a disaster.

That's why I use the following equipment when crossing a river:

- An inflatable life vest for anglers (please make sure to get one for New Zealand. Also, wear it when using a packraft or when on a lake. Always put it on.)
- A seatbelt cutter in case I get caught with the backpack in the water and the strap won't release (using a knife in the water is too dangerous). I attach it with

a loop that I can reach through on my chest strap. (I first reach through the loop, then open the chest strap.)

- Trekking poles for stability (but I take my hands out of the loops as they could become a hazard when crossing the river.)
- Polarised sunglasses to be able to read the river at all times.

What to do if you get into danger?

Situations are not all the same, so it is always difficult to give specific advice. But one thing is very important: never panic. Easier said than done when your life is at stake, but that is exactly what will keep you alive.

That's why I recommend survival or safety training in your home country or in New Zealand, where you can prepare for everything near a river or lake and consciously expose yourself to dangerous situations. It's no different from learning a sport, where repeated practice leads to better results.

Here, you can practise many situations in a controlled environment, avoiding serious mistakes. Specific training is usually offered by kayaking and hiking clubs, trekking experts, and survival instructors. With a bit of luck, your fishing club may also organise a course.

Kayak schools are particularly good for teaching about water, currents, and river hazards. If you plan to use a packraft or similar boat and have no experience, you should definitely take a course.

For some, this will be fun, for others, a challenge.

Behaviour at the river or when crossing the river

Whether you cross a river with or without waders, with or without a backpack, the river remains the same. However, the dangers increase when you have waders and a backpack.

Crossing a river in the backcountry is part of daily life, as it's the only way to reach certain areas for fishing. One of the main issues is that you often enter the waters for the first time, and each river brings its own dangers.

These include currents, shallows, holes, rocks, trees, or sharp objects. What seems like a harmless crossing can quickly turn into the greatest danger. It therefore requires experience and the utmost caution when crossing a river.

Rivers are often located near mountains, which means the mountains themselves are a danger too, for example, through avalanches, mudslides, or rockfalls. I have personally faced debris at the river and had to test my swimming skills.

The following information about „behaviour at the river or when crossing the river“ is based on my own experiences, things I implement, or common practices to make my holiday safer.

What do I do before heading to the river?

I...

- Leave a message with a friend, accommodation, etc., stating where I am going and when I will return (**!!! Important !!! - see Mountain Safety document**).
- Research the specific river section and the current conditions in advance to know what to expect.
- Check the weather forecast every day.
- Always have access to detailed topographic maps of the river, waterproofed.
- Arrange for a means of communication that works everywhere and inform someone of how I can be reached. I carry it waterproof, above chest height, on my body. (Make sure the communication device is always fully charged. Mobile networks often don't work between mountains.)
- When packing my backpack, I ensure the centre of gravity is always close to my body and low.
- Check if my equipment is complete (**I always create a checklist**).

What do I do before crossing the river?

I...

- Check if everything is securely fastened to the backpack.

- Avoid tying my backpack or anything similar to my body when crossing a river, pool, or lake, so I cannot be pulled underwater.
- Check the quick-release straps on my backpack to ensure they release easily. (I must also consider that if I fall in the river and hit a rock with the quick-release, it might not open. That's why I use the seatbelt cutter.)
- Use a dry bag for my backpack when crossing slow-flowing pools that I can swim through. This makes the backpack float and reduces risks, providing additional buoyancy for my body.
- When using something like a packraft, find a suitable point to cross and land. The dry bag for the backpack can be helpful here.
- Always secure the paddle to the floating object.
- Check again if my equipment is complete.

How do I check the river section to cross?

I...

- Check if there are sufficient exit or landing points.
- Always identify an emergency exit point on both sides before crossing, so I can quickly get back on land.
- Look for a section where the water flows very slowly, never faster than walking speed.
- Find a section of the river that runs evenly over its entire length.
- If possible, always start entering the river at the uppermost point of a long stretch or pool with a constant flow speed. After this long stretch or pool, there should be no increase in current, no whirlpool, or waterfall.
- Change sides of the river if the proximity to the mountain could pose a danger, such as a risk of rockfall.

- Look for dangers in the water (e.g. steep riverbanks or sudden depth that makes exiting impossible) and any impassable obstacles.
- Don't walk through the water if it becomes murky, if many objects suddenly appear in the water, if the river has risen quickly or strongly, if there's a thunderstorm, heavy rain, or lightning.
- Never cross a river at night.
- Only go through or swim in the water if I am sure I have full control over all my actions.
- Cross rivers or pools even without waders and put them on again if necessary on the other side. **(Be cautious of hypothermia.)**

If you have a plan and prepare, you automatically reduce your risks, and if you are in a group, you can cross the water more safely and steadily. That's why it's sometimes a good idea to team up.

What are the specifics when crossing a river with waders?

- I use two straps when I'm wearing waders: one at waist height and one at chest height. I tighten them before crossing so that I can just about breathe.
- If I fall, I immediately take a deep breath and pull my legs in (no matter how deep the water is), and tense my body. This way, I maintain contact with the straps. It provides buoyancy (air trapped inside) and reduces the amount of water that can enter.
- I try to align my body immediately in the direction of the current.
- I position myself slightly on my back and drift downstream, with my feet angled forward. This protects me from collisions with rocks and other objects.
- Then I swim the safest and shortest route, at an angle to the current, back to the shore. If possible, I keep my legs angled to get more buoyancy and prevent water from entering.

Depending on the situation, depth, and conditions, the river may push you underwater. If you want to learn how to deal with this and make the right decisions, you should take a course, as mentioned earlier.

How do I cross a river with a backpack?

Always use a rain cover or a dry bag when crossing a river. These provide extra buoyancy and prevent the backpack from absorbing water quickly or at all, as well as reducing the likelihood of it getting caught on something if you fall into the water.

What to do if you fall with a backpack in the River?

If you fall with a backpack and are in the water, the key is to get back on your feet and orient yourself as quickly as possible. This is very difficult and dangerous with a backpack, depending on the current, depth, and especially if you are alone. You need to regain control to ensure your survival.

That's why I follow this important additional rule:

- I always immediately separate myself from my backpack and do not hold on to it unless the situation requires it.
- Now might also be the right time to put the life vest into use.
- When swimming across a body of water, always separate your backpack from your body, even if it is buoyant, and do not tie it on.

If the backpack falls into the water, it can likely be fished out in the next pool or by friends.

You also have the option of equipping your gear and yourself with a strong GPS tracker. This sends a signal every few hours or hourly, which you can track on your smartphone, for example. This makes it easier to find your backpack if it gets lost.

Additionally, it provides extra protection for you. Family and friends can track your location, provided you allow them to, and thus determine your position. GPS trackers are also useful for your communication and location devices in case they are lost.

Unfortunately, we cannot go through all possible scenarios after a fall here. That's why, as discussed, you should look for a course that prepares you for many eventualities.

Crossing river mouths at lakes or the sea

One of the most dangerous places to cross a river, in my opinion, is a river mouth. That's why I follow the principle: I don't cross mouths.

Even if it means walking kilometres into the interior. The same applies to large rivers or those I cannot fully see through.

Therefore, I want to draw your attention to the additional dangers you should be aware of if you decide to cross a river mouth.

These include:

- Collapse of the side banks
- Underwashing
- Deep sinking in the riverbed or surrounding area
- Getting stuck
- Often stronger currents due to the sloping terrain
- Being carried away into the lake or sea

The goal is to minimise dangers, not to expand them. The biggest risk here is always the speed of the current, not just its size.

Don't lose anything!

If everything goes well, which we assume, you have safely transported yourself and your gear to the other side of the river. Here, you should check your equipment for completeness again.

If you have a rain cover or a dry bag, this is the best way to further protect your gear from loss. I think there is nothing more frustrating than losing something important in the bush and having to cut your fishing trip short.

Therefore, the rule is:

- Nothing, or as little as possible, should be attached to the outside of your backpack in a waterproof manner.

The goal is to avoid drowning

A long-term study on drowning in rivers and lakes was conducted by the organisation Water Safety New Zealand – WSNZ for the years 2002 – 2021.

The study found that the anglers who drowned:

- 91% were not wearing a life jacket
- 82 % were travelling alone
- All were over 35 years old

In 2024, 4 people died while fishing on land.

You can find the reports at:

<https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/d336e20aa79b457fa83246828496af6c>

<https://www.watersafetynz.org/2024-national-drowning-prevention-report>

Experienced it yourself and got lucky?

I myself had to experience being without a life jacket before coming to the realisation of my rules. I've been in several borderline situations. My own, those of friends, and those shared with me through stories.

One of the most common misjudgements I fell victim to was regarding the depth and current speed, and thus misjudging the water around me.

It was October, and I walked into a very slow-flowing pool. It was almost still, and I followed a gravel bank until the last 2 meters. I was standing in water up to my hips. I was facing the current, constantly checking the ground around me, and started fishing.

With great joy, I hooked a fish, moved, turned around, and suddenly found myself in the middle of a current that was not visible on the surface.

One moment I was firmly standing on the ground, and the next, the pebbles or sand were washed away from beneath my feet by the current. I immediately pulled my legs up, gripped the rod tightly by the cork handle, and swam while the fish took line. Then I lost the fish, likely for the sake of my teeth and the rod grip.

At that point, the river was about 12 meters wide and up to 2 meters deep, and I was swimming right in the middle of it. I was lucky that not only was I wearing waders with two straps, but also my rain jacket, which slowed the water's entry. When I got out of the water, I was almost dry. But it doesn't always end that well.

Depending on how long you stay in the water, your movements, and the strength of the current, water will inevitably enter the waders. That's why I recommend always fishing without waders, as long as the weather allows, and if possible, never going into the water. It's better to work on your casting techniques to avoid obstacles and reach distances.

It's really not easy to correctly assess your situation in such a moment. You can only do that through practice and the resulting experience.

One of the greatest dangers is not saying goodbye to your fishing gear in time, even though the situation requires it. No angler wants to lose their rod and reel, but sometimes you must make that decision quickly to save your own life.

Safety information for rivers

Please also check the regional advice from organisations such as the Department of Conservation (DOC) and Mountain Safety. You will also find some instructional videos there.

If you don't speak the language, I recommend using your browser's translation function. Furthermore, you will find plenty of information on safety measures for trekking, crossing, and navigating rivers on websites in your own language.

Your online river safety course in English:

<https://bit.ly/elearnRiverSafety>

Further information can be found here:

<https://blog.doc.govt.nz/2024/11/13/if-in-doubt-stay-out-lessons-from-a-river-safety-course>

<https://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/learn/skills/river-safety>

What dangers can we expect in New Zealand?

- **Weather**

Changing weather, cold and heat, freezing and sweating, intense sunlight, heavy rainfall, snowfall in summer, sudden fog, and strong cloud cover in mountainous regions.

- **General Hazards**

Avalanches, rockfalls, landslides, getting trapped in the terrain, drowning, hypothermia, disorientation, dehydration, sunstroke, falling, slipping, getting stuck.

- **Wildlife Hazards**

Wild boars, goats, possibly deers and stags, possums (risk of infection, see bio-security), wasp nests (stings, allergy issues), sandflies (bites, risk of infection).

- **Water Hazards**

Flooding, flash floods, bacteria, and as already described under “**Safety Note for Crossing Rivers and Lakes**”.

- **Danger from Inaccessible Natural Food Sources**

In New Zealand, there aren't many edible plants to be found in the wild. Additionally, you need knowledge to be able to recognise them.

- **Fire Hazards**

Please read ***“Determine the cooking spot and light the fire”*** for more details.

- **Earthquake Hazards**

Earthquakes cause ground deformations such as cracks, fissures, subsidence, or uplift of the earth. They can also trigger glacier collapses, landslides, and rockfalls. Additionally, the water balance may be altered by changes in ground-water levels, the drying up or appearance of springs, or the turbidity of water bodies. Liquefaction of the soil can also occur (e.g., sandy areas with high water content).

If an earthquake occurs, you should first move away from the river, find solid ground, and get to safety. Seek a higher and safer area, well away from a mountain. Do not cross the river at this time.

Watch the water level. A decrease or rise in the water level indicates a disruption of the river due to a section of the mountain slipping. Water is being dammed up and will eventually release. You may need to expect a flash flood.

You should always act preventively and decisively, rather than waiting for something to happen.

Example of a poorly executed, well-planned endeavour:

Your self-assessment is a major source of danger

In this example, I intentionally didn't specify an age, because what happens in this small story can happen to anyone. One of the reasons is that we set off on a path to a place we've never seen before. Additionally, as trekkers or anglers, we carry this deep desire to experience something special that we can share when we get home.

And that, exactly that, can become our downfall.

Moreover, our time is limited, and any change in our plans has consequences. This creates stress, both consciously and unconsciously, even though we're on holiday

Of course, you've prepared well, studied maps, gathered information from other trekkers and anglers. You've also planned your trip hour by hour. You've brought enough food for six days, along with supplements.

Previously, you've been able to do plenty of sport and trekking. So, your fitness is looking good, and you've even had this confirmed by a doctor. For communication, you've got yourself a satellite phone with a power bank. You also consider yourself mentally stable, and you rate your abilities as good.

When we look at this now, we could say you've done everything to have a nice and safe trip.

Yes, if it weren't for the unforeseen events!

You set off, alone, planning to spend four days in the backcountry. You feel great at the start and begin marching. Then you realise you've misjudged the required time and realise you're unlikely to reach your destination before nightfall. So, you push yourself to the limit and arrive, exhausted, just before darkness sets in at your first checkpoint.

Orientation becomes difficult due to the encroaching darkness, so you have to set up camp somewhere unplanned, near the shore, as no higher ground is available. It begins to rain. In your haste, you set up the tent, slip, and hit your upper arm against a rock. A nerve is injured, and the function of your arm is impaired...

This is one of many scenarios that could change your life, no matter how well-prepared you were.

Insights we should internalise

We never know what lies ahead if we don't carefully implement what we've planned and prepare for the emergency plan.

In this case, you should have made the decision much earlier to pitch your tent in a safer location. Therefore, the rule is that, on our trips, we shouldn't assume we'll reach everything faster, but rather later. We should reflect this in our time planning, ensuring greater safety as a result.

The aim is to slow down for a more stress-free experience.

After all, you're on holiday!

Safety note for trekking

I'll assume you already have some trekking experience and are now ready to combine that experience with fishing.

On my trekking trips in New Zealand, I've done treks as long as 60 km, crossed many rivers, swum through pools, and encountered weather in all its forms. But I never combined it with fishing in the way Robert passionately does.

However, I'm still a river trekker who enjoys long stretches in a day, all to reach the destination of my dreams. In New Zealand, sometimes you only need to walk 3 to 5 km inland to catch the first hint of backcountry, and sometimes it's just after a few metres. Otherwise, I enjoy fishing in rivers that can only be reached by boat.

The key takeaway here is that, no matter what endeavour you want to undertake, it's important to accurately assess your abilities. The „**basic prerequisites for all anglers who want to fish the backcountry**“ also apply here, for trekking.

You can find all trekking information clearly listed at:

DOC:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/>

Safety information:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/land-safety-code/>

Mountain safety document – Don't get lost

To avoid getting lost in the backcountry, the **Mountain Safety** organisation has created a document designed to assess your situation and safety. You should fill this out every time you head into the wilderness, whether alone or with friends.

Once completed, give this form to a person you trust or leave it, for example, in an accommodation where you've stayed and may return to.

!!!But here comes something very important!!!

You must absolutely check in after your return, as otherwise, a search will be initiated for you.

You can find the form here:

<https://www.mountainsafety.org.nz/assets/2025-Outdoor-Intentions-Form.pdf>

To make sure you don't forget to check in, it's a good idea to save your return date as a recurring reminder in your phone's calendar until you've notified someone. This way, you can avoid high costs that may otherwise be incurred from a search operation.

Where should we pitch our tent?

Before fishing a river, it's helpful to take a look at a topographic map to plan your campsite in advance. Google Earth is also a very useful tool for this.

Of course, it's possible that the images may be outdated, but as already mentioned, it's always good to have a plan in place. This saves time and perhaps nerves. As a general rule, the campsite should ideally be about 10m above river level and about 30m away from the river. The best location would be a clear area, away from trees and rubble.

The following tips should help you determine the right campsite:

- Depending on where we set up our tent, it may or may not be possible to anchor it properly. Additionally, we should consider that we'll often camp near the river, probably on mixed terrain with many stones. That's why the right tent pegs are so important.
- The sleeping area should always be on a flat, level surface to ensure a good night's sleep. It's best to test it out briefly.
- Also, we need to choose our sleeping spot so that no water can collect underneath the tent in case of rain (perhaps by creating a small trench to drain it away).
- Use an additional groundsheet for protection, but make sure it doesn't trap water under the tent (set it up with a slight slope).
- The further you are from the water, the less condensation will accumulate in your tent by morning.
- Keep in mind the sandflies or mosquitoes that are often found near water, especially in the evening when you just want to relax.

- The campsite should be sheltered from the wind, so the noise from the outer tent is minimised, whether it rains or not.
- In strong winds, the tent should be aligned with the wind direction.

The greatest danger exists if you pitch your camp in the following areas:

- Look out for slanted or decaying trees near your campsite. Falling trees or branches can become a hazard.
- The same applies to steep slopes or overhanging banks. Stones can loosen, or the entire slope could collapse, causing you to slip.
- The campsite should not be in a hollow, an old riverbed, below a waterfall, on a gravel bar, or on a gravel island, as well as in terrain depressions or basins.
- Camping near or under bridges can be dangerous due to water blockages during rising floodwaters.
- Also, watch out for dam-fed rivers or lakes. Sudden changes in water flow, such as from water release, dam opening, or hydropower operations, can alter the water levels.

Additionally, never camp in a river bend, as this is where the highest erosion risk to the riverbank occurs.

Organisation is half the battle

Procedure for choosing a campsite and setting up camp

During daylight, your orientation and coordination should not be restricted, unlike in darkness. Additionally, you may be exhausted, in rest mode, and your alertness may drop. These are potential hazards that need to be overcome.

Orientation means having a clear view of everything around you. Therefore, in the evening, you will need a strong light source (e.g. headlamp, flashlight).

Before lighting a fire, it's important to orient yourself. Also, just like when crossing a river, you should have an emergency plan with an escape route (What should happen if I am in danger due to fire? A coordinated procedure.).

To limit the discrepancy in your coordination ability in the dark, it's crucial to be well-organised, follow your trekking routine like a pleasant ritual, and adapt to the new conditions.

The order of your actions on-site plays a decisive role in this.

What to do when you arrive at your campground?

- 1.) Weigh up possible dangers (e.g. trees, rockfall), choose an elevated position (e.g. to avoid hazards from the river).
- 2.) Determine the exact tent location with a windproof fire/ cooking area (at least 3m away from any fire sources).
- 3.) Set up your campsite (find or create a flat area, remove sharp objects, avoid damaging the tent floor).
- 4.) Set up, anchor, and arrange your tent (unpack only what's necessary, pack it back up immediately when done).
- 5.) Lay out your sleeping mat (possibly inflate it) and sleeping bag

Set up the fire pit

- 1.) Set up the fire pit (create a stable base, avoid placing stones around it).
- 2.) Collect enough firewood (use dry, already fallen wood).
- 3.) Split the wood and stack it accordingly (be cautious when handling tools such as a machete, axe, rope or hand saw, or knife, as there is a high risk of injury).
- 4.) Build the fire materials.
- 5.) Light the fire.

Set up the stove

- 1.) Check the stove and gas canister for functionality. Position it on a flat surface and stabilise if necessary. (Keep gas canisters away from the fire.)

2.) Light the stove and cook your food

Handling equipment

This includes:

- Always store everything in the same place in your backpack.
- Keep the backpack easily accessible (place it in the vestibule).
- Only unpack what you really need.
- Use a specific packing order.
- Pack your gear (e.g. clothing) in lightweight, preferably colour-coded bags with signal colours to immediately recognise the contents, even at night (e.g. neon colours, neon tape).
- Be able to remove part of your backpack, such as the head section, for easier access.

Awaken instincts

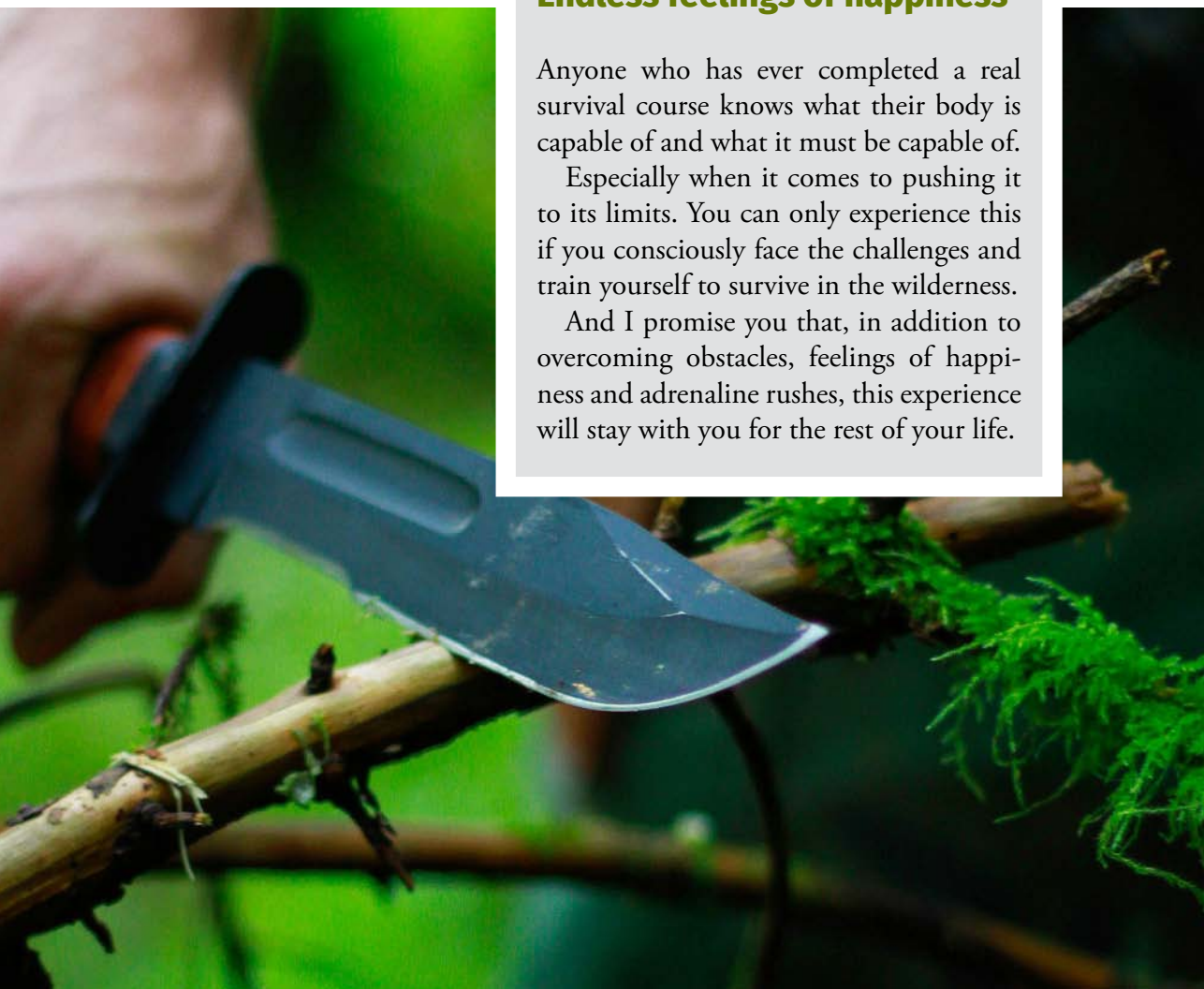
In an Emergency, it's all about Survival

Endless feelings of happiness

Anyone who has ever completed a real survival course knows what their body is capable of and what it must be capable of.

Especially when it comes to pushing it to its limits. You can only experience this if you consciously face the challenges and train yourself to survive in the wilderness.

And I promise you that, in addition to overcoming obstacles, feelings of happiness and adrenaline rushes, this experience will stay with you for the rest of your life.



In an emergency, you might be completely on your own. The goal is to keep your chances and your lifespan as stable and steady as possible, for as long as you can, until someone finds you. That's only possible if you're able to take care of yourself. Anyone who, like me, has completed a survival training course knows exactly what I'm talking about.

Depending on the outside temperature, you can survive about 3 to 5 days without water. In extreme heat, maybe only 1 or 2 days. Without food, you can stay alive much longer. That depends on your fat reserves, your level of activity, the environment and the circumstances.

The longest a person is known to have survived without food was Angus Barbieri, aged 27, who in 1966 lived for 382 days under medical supervision with only water, vitamins and minerals before ending the experiment¹.

If you lack both water and food, your life expectancy is usually reduced to about 3 to 5 days.

Source: ¹Stewart, W. K., & Fleming, L. W. (1973). Features of a successful therapeutic fast of 382 days' duration. *Postgraduate Medical Journal*, 49(569), 203–209.

So, let's make sure we're well prepared and don't let our lives hang by a thread.

Nutrition for emergencies

You often see it in films or read about it in magazines – injections that supposedly activate your last reserves and might keep you alive for one more day. There are confirmed cases where that actually happened. They're called **"Summit Shots"**.

These involve substances that are either not approved in combination or completely banned. Examples include **dexamethasone, Ritalin, modafinil, methylphenidate, and adrenaline/epinephrine**. Without going into detail, these substances stimulate the body and mask exhaustion. They trick the body without actually providing any real energy.

They're sometimes used to help someone through a very dangerous situation, in extreme cold or when an extreme athlete faces a hopeless scenario. What mustn't be forgotten, though, is that these substances can also be fatal.

So, one thing we definitely shouldn't do is compare ourselves to extreme athletes who take deliberate risks. The last 24 hours remain the last 24 hours – we don't know what will happen, but as long as we can, we should use that time and influence it as best we can.

Since there's no single solution for every situation, we should make sure we never end up in one like that in the first place. And we can do a lot to prevent it by avoiding unnecessary risks and preparing specifically for emergencies.

!!! Important !!!

There is no single medication or substance that can protect or maintain all bodily functions in a real emergency, especially when we consider each person's individual physiology.

However, by combining **carbohydrates, electrolytes, fluids, warmth, and pain management**, we can improve our chances of survival. So it's best to prepare **two emergency rations for two days**, which should ideally be edible without cooking.

Please also read the articles ***“Determine the cooking spot and light the fire”***, ***“Nutrition”***, ***“Emergency Communication Tools”*** and ***“Behaviour, Safety and Hazards”*** for more on survival.

Survival training

The best preparation is to attend a survival course. You can take one either in your own country or in New Zealand. The difference will show in the flora and fauna, which also form the basis for survival.

If you'd rather not do that and prefer to rely entirely on your equipment, then you should make sure you have a good to very good emergency kit.

That's why we put together our own emergency gear. I say put together because ready-made survival kits don't always meet the quality standards needed to ensure full functionality in an emergency. You should also, if necessary, adapt your emergency kit to the specific area you're heading to and the risks you can expect there.

Surviving with the right equipment

We're not going to teach you the full range of survival skills here. For that, you should attend a proper survival course or study the subject in depth. Only through practice and routine can you apply what you've learned with confidence. Besides, going into that much detail would go far beyond the scope of this book. What you definitely should be able to do, though, is start a warming

fire using available tools (*see “Determine the cooking spot and light the fire”*).

The goal when assembling our emergency kit is to be able to:

- 1.) Build a dry shelter (for example, with an emergency bivouac)
- 2.) Generate heat (for example, by making a fire, using matches or a fire starter)
- 3.) Obtain food (for example, by fishing or using emergency rations)
- 4.) Produce clean drinking water (for example, with chlorine tablets or a water filter)
- 5.) Communicate (for example, via satellite phone or messenger device)
- 6.) Navigate (for example, with GPS, map and compass)
- 7.) Make yourself locatable (for example, with a whistle, mirror or signal flare)

It's no use having survival gear that doesn't actually work. So, when buying, make sure your equipment is fully functional. If you follow these points, you'll have the best possible chance of making it back home.

Anything made of metal adds extra weight. You can do without an axe if you have a folding saw or a good rope or wire saw, plus a sturdy knife with a thick spine. Other cutting tools, like a multipurpose knife, can serve several functions at once.

Ready-made emergency kits come in many price ranges, roughly between 80 NZD and 1000 NZD. Electrical devices or communication tools are usually not included.

!!! Important !!!

I strongly advise ending your trekking or fishing trip if you lose essential gear such as communication equipment, a first aid kit, or your survival pack — or if you develop any signs of illness.

What should always be carried on your person?

It's important to mention that you should always have a means of communication, ideally two and both waterproof. One should be carried on your body, and the other stored in your backpack. If your communication equipment works, you can get help immediately in an emergency.

The top section of a backpack or a chest pocket is often the best place to store essential life-sustaining gear, so you can separate it quickly from the backpack if needed.

Look for quick-release fasteners and a carrying strap.

To ensure your survival, you should carry the following on your body:

- 1 * means of communication (satellite phone or messenger)
- 1 * GPS device with map guidance (or combined unit)
- 1 * compass
- 1 * whistle
- 1 * waterproof, fully charged light source (headlamp or torch)
- 1 * chlorine tablets
- 1 * vitamins and minerals (electrolytes) for at least 3 days
- 1 * fire starter
- 1 * sealable 2-litre water bag
- 1 * good knife with a thick spine
- 1 * folding hand saw or hatchet
- 1 * fishing hook and spare line
- 1 * hand mirror (not glass)
- 1 * magnifying glass (only useful in sunlight)
- 1 * map section of the area including entry and exit points (pack waterproof)
- 1 * large rescue blanket made of aluminium
- 1 * headlamp

In the top section of your backpack or in a chest pocket, you should carry:

- 1 * first aid kit
- 1 * second means of communication
- 1 * possibly a walkie-talkie if travelling in a group
- 2 * additional emergency rations
- 1 * roll of fabric tape or 20–30 m of accessory cord, 1200 daN, 5 mm
- 1 * smoke or signal flare
- 1 * water filter
- 1 * candle
- 1 * torch, possibly with crank
- 2 * HMS screw-lock carabiners (EN 12275) for belaying or abseiling (if rope available)
- 2 * oval carabiners for pulley systems or fixed points
- 2 * D-shaped carabiners (EN 12275 or EN 362) for attaching gear or connections
- 1 * emergency shelter (bivvy bag)
- 1 * fine-mesh mosquito head net for the summer season (120–160 holes per cm²)

Carabiners are only useful if you know how to use them properly.

Navigation

We rely on both modern and traditional tools that almost guarantee safe navigation. Still, you need to learn how to use these tools correctly.

Two main navigation methods:

- GPS-based navigation (recommended)
- Map and compass (classic, reliable backup)

Additional navigation methods:

- Topographical navigation (using the terrain, requires a lot of practice and knowledge)
- Sun position, shadows and natural signs (only useful to a limited extent)

Navigation without equipment

If you get lost or have lost your equipment, it is crucial to proceed smartly and methodically. In New Zealand, despite the low population density, we have the advantage that many valleys and waterways eventually pass through inhabited areas and ultimately connect with roads, settlements or the coast.

If possible, follow a creek or river downstream. Avoid going cross-country through densely vegetated or steep regions. Navigation there is extremely difficult and the risk of injury is high.

Never leave marked tracks without necessity, and never move about in the dark. Retrace the path you came on. If in doubt, wait for daylight, it saves more lives than rash action.

When following waterways, watch out for impassable narrows, slippery banks or steep drop-offs that need to be bypassed. Not every watercourse is walkable, stay cautious and plan every step. Beforehand, memorise your route back and any insurmountable, hazardous sections in detail, and have a solution ready. Take photos at important waypoints, facing back the way you came.

Emergency insurance

It is of course important to make sure you are also covered in an emergency, otherwise you will be left to pay for your rescue operation and any potential hospital costs yourself. Normally, these are international travel or international health insurance policies including emergency rescue.

The price and structure of the tariffs and their services vary from insurer to insurer. It is also important to check whether you may already have accident insurance, which often covers accident, search, rescue and recovery costs up to an amount of 200,000 NZD, and includes many additional benefits. If that is the case, and you are coming from abroad, then you only need an international health insurance policy, which you should look into more closely to avoid over-insuring yourself.

Specifically for emergencies, one of the best-known insurers worldwide is Global Rescue. This provider offers cover for those who want to undertake extreme tours, for example in crisis regions or real expeditions

You can find Global Rescue at the following website:

<https://www.globalrescue.com>

Otherwise, I would rely on the insurers of your respective country.

First Aid

The emergency number is 111.

It is important, especially when you are travelling alone or in a group, to always give priority to safety and pay attention to the weakest member. For the protection of others, it is also important to be able to apply first aid correctly.

Please also familiarise yourself with proper wound cleaning. If something happens to you on the very first day, it is crucial to keep the physical damage as limited as possible and to prevent sepsis.

The first aid kit should be kept in a waterproof container, preferably signal red or orange. You can also buy a ready-made first aid kit and add to it if necessary. ***Check the expiry dates.***

Being prepared for everything is almost impossible, and the more possibilities you try to cover, the larger your first aid kit becomes. Generally, the likelihood is high that only one person will be injured at a time, and that is what we are basing

this on here. You must also take your individual needs into account. Personally, I am someone who only embarks on an adventure when well prepared, which is why my first aid kit can weigh up to 800 g.

Many trekkers only take the bare essentials, so their kits weigh just 150–200 g. But I want you to be as well prepared as possible.

The naming of medical products can vary from country to country, even for the same medication. Here, we have listed general product names or descriptions that your doctor will certainly understand and can use to prescribe you a similar product if it requires a prescription.

This is how I put together my first aid kit, adapted to the conditions, for 5 days:

Instruments

Type	Quantity	Purpose
Pointed scissors	1	Cutting dressings
Tweezers	1	Splinters, ticks, hook remains
Writing materials + note card	1	Accident log, symptoms
Personal medication	Individual	Life support
Small mirror, magnifying glass (optional)	1	Foreign object inspection
Waterproof dry bag (1–2 L)	1	Storage for the complete kit

Medication (original packaging + information leaflet for travellers)

<i>Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Ibuprofen 400 mg	10 tablets	Pain, inflammation
Paracetamol 500mg	6 tablets	Fever, pain (if NSAIDs are not tolerated)
Loperamide (Imodium)	6 tablets	Acute diarrhoea
Electrolyte solution (e.g. Elotrans)	3 sachets	Rehydration in case of diarrhoea
Antihistamine (Cetirizine)	7 tablets	Insect bites, allergies
Hydrocortisone cream 0.5–1%	1 small tube	Insect bites, skin irritation
Antiseptic ointment (e.g. Bêtasodona)	1 small tube	Anti-inflammatory for wounds
Optional: Broad-spectrum antibiotic (prescription only)	1 pack	Only under medical recommendation

Waterproof wound care

<i>Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Sterile compresses	12 (10×10 cm)	Cleaning, wound covering
Non-adherent sterile wound dressings (Adaptic, Mepitel)	4 (10*20cm)	Burns and grazes
Blister plasters (e.g. Compeed)	4	Pressure points, heels
Waterproof (or water-resistant) adhesive plasters (strong adhesion)	15 cm	Small wounds
Adhesive tape roll	2,5m	Fixation
Wound disinfectant spray	50ml	Infection prevention
Wound closure strips (Steristrips)	1 Set	Small cuts

Waterproof wound dressing

<i>Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Tegaderm™ 3M film	4 (10*12) & (10*25cm)	Wound protection during water exposure
Coban™ self-adherent bandage (3M)	1	Stays in place even during movement and when wet
Latex finger cots or disposable gloves	3	Protection when working in water
Nitrile gloves (powder-free)	4 Pair	Hygiene during wound care

Burn injuries

<i>Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Burnshield gel compress	1 (10*10 cm)	Immediate cooling for burns
Sterile large-area compresses	2 (20*20 cm)	Covering after burn injury
Hydrogel spray (optional)	1	Alternative for small surface irritations

Bandages and Fixation

<i>Type</i>	<i>Quantity</i>	<i>Purpose</i>
Elastic bandage	2 (6-8cm)	Pressure bandage, sprain support
Gauze bandages	2-3 rolls	Padding, securing dressings
Triangular bandage	1	Arm sling, pressure bandage
Safety pins	3	Fixing cloths or bandages
Tape (Leukotape 5 m)	1 roll	Blister prevention, stabilisation
Rescue blanket (aluminium, large)	1	Cold protection, emergency insulation

Warm up **Determine the cooking spot and light the fire**

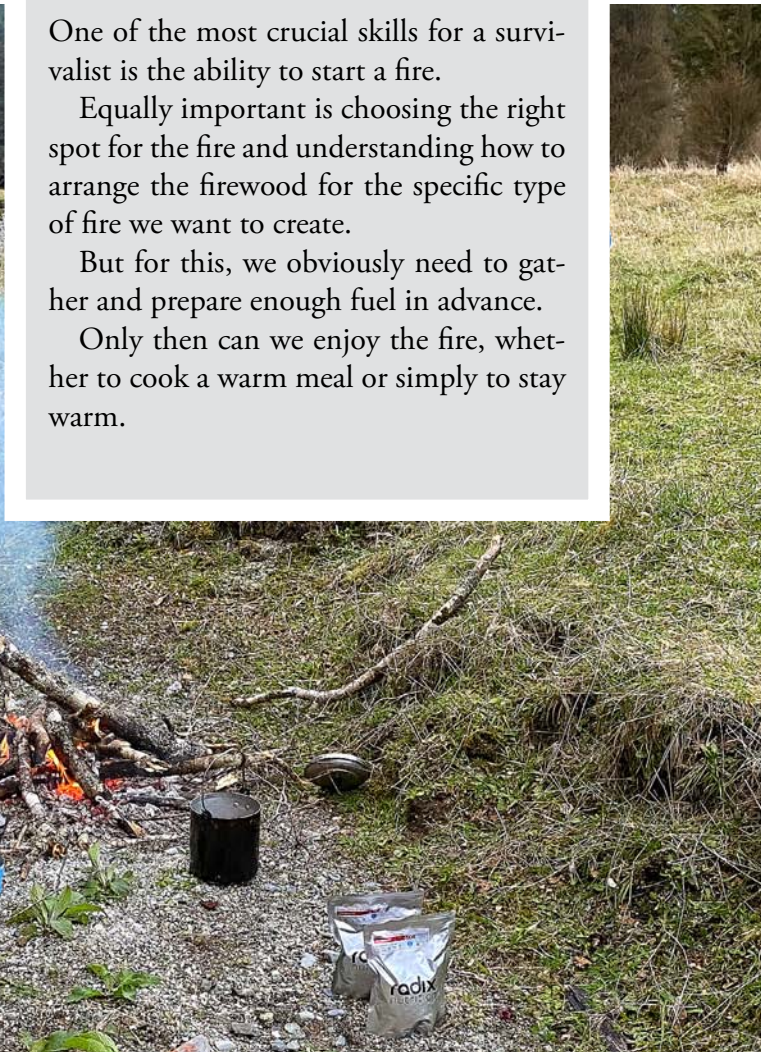
Survival starts with fire

One of the most crucial skills for a survivalist is the ability to start a fire.

Equally important is choosing the right spot for the fire and understanding how to arrange the firewood for the specific type of fire we want to create.

But for this, we obviously need to gather and prepare enough fuel in advance.

Only then can we enjoy the fire, whether to cook a warm meal or simply to stay warm.



Starting an open fire outside of designated official fire areas is permitted or prohibited under certain regulations, at specific times, in certain locations, with specific means, and in a specific size. This applies to the backcountry, and specifically to national parks.

In public conservation areas, there is a restricted fire season throughout the year. This regulation governs the behaviour and handling of fire in these areas. Additionally, two fire seasons are distinguished: „Prohibited Season“ and „Restricted Season.“

For the exact wording, please refer to the website and the downloadable PDFs on the topic of fire, provided by the DOC. Please read these carefully to avoid violating the regulations and to ensure you do not commit an offence.

Website for all fire-related questions:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/know-before-you-go/fires/>

FENZ–Fire Emergency New Zealand

Additionally, you must always check the FENZ – Fire Emergency New Zealand website for the fire risk status and any general fire bans that may be declared depending on the situation.

To access this information, visit the following website:

<https://checkitsalright.nz/can-i-light-a-fire>

You will be guided through four steps:

- 1.) Select „**Campfires**“ and click the „**Next Where**“ button.
- 2.) A digital map will appear. Place your cursor on the spot where you want to light the fire or enter an address, then click „**Next When**.“
- 3.) A five-day overview will appear. Click on the day you intend to light the fire and then click „**Next Step**.“
- 4.) All fire regulations, restrictions, and rules will appear.

The legal and safety issue with this is that in the backcountry, you might not have a radio connection to check this information daily.

This means you could be out of date and may light a fire without knowing that, due to the prevailing fire warnings and subsequent fire bans, lighting a fire is prohibited.

As a result, you could be penalised because ignorance of the law does not protect you from punishment.

Since we're talking about safety, there could be a fire outbreak in your area due to the increased fire risk. That's why it's important to check this crucial information at least once a day.

Also, please read the information on campfires:

<https://checkitsalright.nz/reduce-your-risk/campfires>

What should I do before lighting a fire?

A fire can only be properly controlled in a stove, not in the open nature.

The reasons are obvious:

- It is often very dry.
- There are thousands of flammable sources around you.
- The wind conditions are irregular to strong.

These factors promote fire development. Therefore, we should do everything we can to avoid a fire.

Five measures to prevent accidents and fires:

- Ensure you have enough water to extinguish the fire before lighting it.
- Never leave the fire unattended.
- Never bury a fire with earth or sand (it may flare up again).
- Don't place stones in the fire (risk of explosion).
- When selecting the fire spot, be mindful of any metallic or glass objects in the ground that must be removed.

What you should avoid is building a stone ring around the fire. The danger is too great that embers may accumulate between the stones, which could reignite days later.

Starting a fire

One of the most important, if not the most important, skills is the ability to start a fire in certain situations. Easier said than done, and under some circumstances, it's a challenge that should be faced before heading into the backcountry. To clarify, we're talking about starting a fire using traditional methods, not without an ignition source.

High humidity near the sea or water, in higher altitudes, or in areas with frequent fog and cloud cover can prevent flammable materials from being dry enough. We often encounter this situation in the subtropical regions of New Zealand, especially on the West Coast of the South Island.

Since accelerants such as petrol or kerosene are prohibited, starting a fire under the conditions mentioned above can become a difficult task. High-proof flammable spirits should, of course, not be near any fire source.

If there is no wind and the surroundings are dry, starting a fire with a lighter or waterproof matches is simple. Starting a fire with a magnesium fire starter and a knife, for example, by scraping magnesium shavings onto the fuel and generating significant heat, takes a bit of practice and the right fuel.

A gas-powered kitchen burner is not allowed for starting a fire.

Handling of fuel materials

When starting a fire, the key is to build the fuel from small to large, from bottom to top, and from inside to outside. Additionally, it needs to breathe, so air vents must be present for the fire to develop properly.

Before we even light the fire, we need to decide its purpose and how long we want it to burn. For cooking, we only need a burn time of about 30 minutes, whereas a warming fire should burn for several hours. This will determine the amount of fuel we need to gather in advance, ensuring it's dry and sufficient. Expect to need about 3–5kg of wood per hour.

Since we must never leave the fire unattended, the rule is:

- Prepare enough firewood in advance.

Furthermore, when creating a fire, always approach it as though you only have one chance to ignite it. This trains your skills and helps you prepare for an emergency situation.

Step 1: Make your own tinder

To create a good, burnable base for starting a fire, it's wise to have fuels that are quick to ignite, provide a stable flame, and offer a long burn time.

This can be achieved with natural materials that we treat in a specific way. Cotton or linen are especially suitable, as they have good absorption and retention properties depending on the product/fabric. However, we need to prepare these materials before heading out on our trek.

The best materials to use are:

- Cotton pads
- A coarse linen cloth, cut into 5x5cm strips.

These base materials are highly flammable. To increase their burn time, especially when starting a fire, we coat them with some petroleum jelly (this can also be melted, then cooled) and dip them in hot wax. This way, the material remains flammable, even if it falls into water. Paraffin-based firelighters are also suitable.

To use your fire starter, simply break the wax coating slightly, light it at one point, and place it in a prepared nest of additional tinder. Plan on using one cotton pad/linen piece per fire. Store them in a small box to prevent breakage. Ensure you have enough in reserve.

Step 2: Create a nest of natural tinder

To utilise the fire starter and successfully ignite a fire, we need naturally grown tinder.

Suitable dry tinder materials include:

- Grasses
- Tree bark
- Small twigs (3-5mm) from dead or uprooted trees

- Resinous or resin-rich wood shavings
- Tree fungi
- Stripped wood pieces, using a knife or axe
- A wood rasp to create tiny wood shavings, which are highly flammable.

Tree bark is also ideal as a base for the fire starter and the tinder, allowing us to introduce it into our prepared wood structure, while keeping it burning close to the ground. We bundle the tinder together (crumple it up) and place the lit fire starter inside. A short, gentle puff of air helps supply the fire with oxygen.

The often hanging tree lichens, in most cases, are not suitable, as they contain too much moisture.

Step 3: Search for suitable fuel

As mentioned earlier, dry, dead, uprooted, or even wind-fallen wood in higher riverbed regions is ideal. However, wood that has been lying on the ground for a long time tends to absorb moisture. The best fuel sources are thus standing dead trees or wood lying around after long periods of heat. Therefore, the weather situation plays a crucial role in how you should go about gathering firewood.

Look for twigs with a diameter of 1-3cm, as well as thicker pieces of wood ranging from 5 to 10cm, to get the fire going. Once the fire is started, you can gradually add larger logs with a diameter of 15-30cm. Keep in mind that the fire must not exceed 50cm in width and 50cm in height, as per regulations. In addition, a distance of at least 3 m must be maintained from any combustible materials.

The width is relatively easy to manage, but the height is typically achieved only after the fire has burned down a bit. So, build up the wood layers gradually, allowing the fire to grow slowly.

Even if we find suitable wood, it won't always be available in the right sizes, so we'll need to cut it or chop it with an axe.

I recommend a good hand saw (about 16-20cm) or a freestanding saw (around 20-40cm) with a triple-cut edge. These tools should have a twist-free, curved blade with a sturdy handle. They are usually lighter than an axe, which significantly reduces the risk of injury, and the cutting speed is high. An axe, however, is better suited for splitting wood.

Here, too, don't cut corners and practice cutting properly. The saw is also ideal for building a shelter.

Machetes are not suitable for felling trees or chopping tree trunks, as they are too light and lack the wedge angle in their edge that an axe provides.

Step 4: Building the fire

We've already discussed the base of fire creation with tinder. Now, it's about arranging the firewood, which we need to adjust based on the intended use and purpose of the fire.

Several factors come into play:

- The ground (it should not be damp and free of tree roots)
- The wind direction (build the fire on the side opposite the wind)
- The weather (seek shelter if it's raining)
- Air circulation (the creation of the fire)

There are several types of fires that are suitable for our needs. These depend on factors such as the creation of embers and heat, as well as the ability to cook efficiently.

It is generally recommended that you build the tinder and the first layer above the tinder in a teepee shape for each fire. This allows you to quickly establish a good flame that serves as a solid foundation.

It's also important that the structure and fire sources are not static. While each fire type has a specific setup orientation, there are many variations that can also be useful. After all, the goal is to create the best fire possible with the resources available.

Example:

When we talk about using beams to support our cooking pots over the fire, we could, of course, also set up two short tree stumps vertically and light the fire between them. Be flexible and inventive.

Here's the rule: Experience makes you wiser.

Step 5: The tinder must be placed into a properly built wood structure and Ignited

Whether you use your pre-prepared tinder or a flint to ignite the fire is up to you. Just make sure there is sufficient ventilation and wind protection at the same time.

Which types of fires and structures are useful for us?

- Tipi fire
- Star fire
- Pagoda fire
- Beam fire

Tipi fire

A Tipi fire has a classic tent shape with logs leaning upwards.

Advantages:

- Very easy to ignite. The structure creates a chimney effect, which quickly draws the flames upwards.
- High, bright flames with strong light. It's good for quickly illuminating an area and generating basic warmth.
- The setup is uncomplicated, requiring only logs of varying thickness.

Disadvantages:

- The wood consumption is high, and constant replenishment is necessary.
- The shape is not ideal for cooking, unless additional structure is used.
- It produces little embers, so it's not suitable as a long-lasting heat source.



Fig. right: Tipi fire, logs arranged in a tent-like structure.

Use Case:

- Ideal as a starting fire to quickly generate flames before switching to a more stable fire type.
- Good for light and atmosphere.
- Practical for quickly heating water or cooking something over a flame for a short period of time.

Method:

Build the tinder nest in the central middle. Then, layer small twigs over the tinder. Place larger logs on top. All the logs should be aligned with the direction of the wind. Ensure enough air circulation and leave an opening around the tinder to ignite it.

Star fire

The star fire consists of several long logs arranged in a star shape around a central ember, with the ends burning slowly.

Advantages:

- Very efficient in terms of wood consumption, as only the tips burn.
- Requires little maintenance; the logs only need occasional feeding.
- Develops an even, long-lasting ember with stable heat output.
- Ideal for long fires that should burn for hours or even the entire night.

Fig. left: Star fire, logs arranged in a star shape.



Disadvantages:

- Requires sufficient space and long, straight logs.
- Ignition takes time until a reliable ember is formed.
- The flame is relatively low and inward-facing, providing little light.
- Unsuitable for quick boiling or a strong flame.

Use Case:

- Perfect as a night or campfire when warmth is needed for an extended period without constant replenishment.
- Good for slow cooking or maintaining heat, but less suitable for quick cooking.
- Useful when conserving wood supplies.

Method:

Start by laying a small circle of about 30cm in diameter and place a Tipi fire on top to ignite. Around it, arrange logs of roughly 10cm thickness in a star shape (from an overhead view). Once the fire is ignited and there are enough embers, lay the tips of the star-shaped logs into the central core.

It's important that the base (the Tipi fire) is well lit and that you don't smother the fire when placing the logs. Also, ensure a stable base with the arrangement of the logs so that you can place your cooking materials directly on top.

Pagoda fire

The pagoda fire wood is stacked in several layers, at right angles, crossed over each other, like a small log cabin.

Advantages:

- Very striking flame pattern, looks neat and decorative.
- Burns relatively stable and long, as the construction does not collapse immediately.
- Develops a solid base of embers, which can later be used for cooking.
- Provides a lot of light and is ideal as the focal point of a gathering.

Disadvantages:

- The setup is quite elaborate, requiring uniform logs and time.
- High wood consumption, as the structure consumes material.
- Heat output is weak in relation to consumption.
- Replenishing wood during burning is difficult, as the fire works from the inside out.
- Requires a lot of tinder spread evenly.

Use Case:

- Ideal as a campfire or signal fire when a striking flame and atmosphere are the priority.
- Good for social evenings with plenty of light.
- Only suitable for cooking in limited circumstances – embers must be removed for that.

Method:

The wood is stacked layer by layer, at right angles to each other, and placed centrally, with tinder on each layer, from bottom to top (make sure to leave enough air circulation). This setup allows you to ignite the tinder from either the top or the bottom.

The logs should be uniform to stabilise the structure and prevent them from falling sideways as they burn, forming a channel centred around the middle. Depending on the use of tinder and the setup, the fire will burn from top to bottom when ignited.

Thus, you can also place the tinder in only the top third of the firewood, ensuring



Abb. rechts: Pagodenfeuer, Holzscheiten aufgebaut im rechten Winkel zueinander.

that the lower layers ignite later. However, this depends on the desired longer burn time and the height of the firewood.

Beam fire

The beam fire consists of two thick logs placed parallel to each other, with the fire ignited centrally between them.

Advantages:

- Very stable support for pots and pans, no additional frame required.
- Good airflow from below, ensuring clean and even burning.
- Develops a concentrated ember base, ideal for long cooking or frying.
- Relatively economical in wood consumption, as the fire runs in a clearly defined channel.

Disadvantages:

- Low light output, as the flames remain hidden between the logs.
- Setup requires appropriately sized logs and some preparation.
- Not suitable as a heat or campfire, as radiant heat is barely released to the outside.

Use Case:

- Optimal as a cooking fire, very stable, efficient, and controllable.
- Useful when cooking regularly or needing to heat water.
- Not recommended when atmosphere, light, or broad heat distribution is the priority.

Method:

This type of fire is primarily used for cooking, with varying durations (wood can be added easily). The central heat point lies between the two logs (about 20+cm thick), which can be laid either parallel or in a V-shape next to each other.

The fire source (Tipi) is built in the middle. Depending on how many people and the length of the logs, multiple cooking spots can be set up. The logs serve as wind protection and stability, not primarily to generate heat for warmth.

Since these logs will eventually catch fire, they can be used as additional fire material after cooking. Please note that for adding more firewood, you don't need to use overly large pieces. Let the Tipi burn down and generate embers. Then place your food on top and begin cooking.

Airflow

Gentle blowing to enhance the oxygen supply is helpful when the tinder has started to glow, to fully ignite the burning material. If you want to learn how to light a fire without these tools, you can attend a survival course.

Extinguishing the Fire

If you are already at a river or lake to collect water, all you need is a container to extinguish the fire. In these cases, I always use a waterproof pack or dry bag.

- Be cautious and keep your distance when extinguishing the fire to protect yourself from burns caused by rising steam, for example.
- Sprinkle or slowly pour the water over the fire to avoid stirring up ash and embers.
- Make sure the fire is completely extinguished.

Fig. right: Beam fire, logs arranged in a tipi shape in the center. Two beams as boundaries and, for example, a support for additional logs that hold the cooking pot above the flame.



What to do if you start an uncontrollable fire?

Even if you are directly at the campfire, an uncontrolled fire can quickly occur due to strong winds. This is why choosing the right campsite, with an emergency exit plan, is so important.

Additionally, I advise you to get liability insurance with adequate coverage if you haven't already.

Coordinated Emergency Notification Procedure:

- 1.) Move away from the fire and get to safety.
- 2.) Only take your backpack or survival equipment with you if you can reach them safely (this is why your emergency communication device should always be on your person).
- 3.) Once you are at a safe distance, immediately call the emergency number 111. You can also send your emergency message via your messenger app, providing your exact location (coordinates).
- 4.) Follow the instructions from the emergency response personnel.
- 5.) If you don't have a phone for communication and only have a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon), with or without SMS functionality, you can use it to report the emergency and prevent further danger.
- 6.) If you only have a smartphone but no connection, use it to report the emergency as soon as you can establish a connection.
- 7.) If you have no communication device left, find a safe way to get out of the danger zone. If possible, retrace the path you came from. Orientation is not guaranteed at night, and the risk of injury increases. Stay calm and try to maintain composure.

Be connected

Emergency Communication Tools

Rescue is close by!

We are the ones who venture into the backcountry and knowingly take on the risks that may already await us.

But we play it safe and equip ourselves with the necessary communication tools so that in case of emergency, we can inform those who can rescue us from our life-threatening situation.

It feels reassuring to have this in mind, allowing us to enjoy our fishing trip in a relaxed manner.



Walkie-Talkie (Radio)

Something I always enjoy using on my travels is a walkie talkie. They're fun and remind you of being a kid. Especially when travelling with others and wanting to keep in touch throughout the day, they come in handy. It can easily happen that you split up while hiking because everyone has their own walking pace. Or when fishing on opposite sides of a river, or exploring different areas of a lake with two packrafts or belly boats. Of course, you can usually do all that with a smartphone too, but I prefer not to take mine out on the water. Besides, it can also be useful in dangerous or difficult situations.

But here's the catch.

The walkie talkies commonly used abroad are not permitted in New Zealand because the UHF-CB/PRS band (476–477 MHz) is used there for licence-free personal radio communication.

In New Zealand, operating a radio under the General User Radio Licence (GURL) requires radio authorisation (not a radio operator's certificate). It's free, but users have to meet certain criteria to use it (no exam required). The device itself must be marked with an RCM symbol or R-NZ label approved by the Radio Spectrum Management (RSM).

RSM recommends that people who want to buy walkie talkies choose high-quality radios covering the full channel range to avoid unwanted interference during conversations. Also, make sure it supports PRS-CB operation, which assumes shared channel use.

What is permitted:

<https://www.rsm.govt.nz/licensing/frequencies-for-anyone/short-range-devices-gurl>

Two-way radios are strictly prohibited:

<https://www.rsm.govt.nz/assets/Uploads/documents/RSM-Illegal-Two-Way-Radio-Leaflet-FINAL.pdf>

Violating the guidelines for radio equipment can result in a fine of up to NZD 200,000.

The devices cost about the same in New Zealand as they do abroad.

The following companies in Auckland / Wellington / Christchurch offer walkie-talkies:

Hunting and Fishing: <https://www.huntingandfishing.co.nz/>

In electrical shops such as:

Noel Leeming: <https://www.noelleeming.co.nz/>

PB Tech: <https://www.pbtech.co.nz/stores>

Please always choose the largest stores in the city, as they usually have the highest availability, or call ahead.

Satellite communication

In remote regions of New Zealand, far away from any infrastructure, there is often no mobile phone network, especially when trekking. Here, satellite communication devices can be vital for maintaining contact with the outside world and calling for help in an emergency.

Such devices work via satellite networks and offer worldwide coverage, even when no mobile connection is available. Especially on tours lasting several weeks, it is reassuring to be able to send regular short messages to family or friends (check-ins) and, if necessary, send an emergency call (SOS) with your GPS position.

Information about devices:

There may be even better products available to ensure your safety. You can also double your safety by using multiple devices. I will try to give you the right advice here, taking into account the cost factor and the performance offered in return.

Satellite Phone

Traditional satphones allow voice calls and SMS via satellite. They're larger and more expensive but enable direct conversations. Typical examples include the Inmarsat IsatPhone 2 or Iridium phones. They often offer excellent battery life for calls (for instance, up to eight hours on the IsatPhone 2) but require a clear line of

sight to the satellite (for Inmarsat, that means facing the equator) and an extendable antenna.

Two-Way Satellite Messengers

These compact devices allow sending and receiving text messages almost anywhere in the world. They usually use the Iridium satellite network (100% global coverage, worth checking) or other networks. Examples include the Garmin inReach, ZOLEO, and SPOT X. Many of them also offer additional features like weather reports, tracking, and location sharing alongside SMS and SOS functions.

Emergency Beacons (PLB – Personal Locator Beacon)

Small radio beacons send a one-time emergency signal (including location) to rescue coordination centres when activated. They don't allow actual communication, they're only for one-way distress alerts and confirmation.

PLBs (for example, from ACR or Ocean Signal) don't require a subscription and have batteries that last for many years, but they're unsuitable for regular communication. They're best seen as an additional safety backup.

That's why I'd recommend playing it safe for your trip and getting a proper messenger instead. I've only mentioned the PLB briefly here and haven't gone into further detail.

Two-way messengers are, in my view, the ideal choice since they meet all the requirements and offer the best value for money.

Using a Smartphone for emergency alerts

In the future it will almost certainly be possible to send satellite emergency alerts using an ordinary smartphone. Mobile providers are already working on it and Xiaomi is leading the way with its 14 and 15 Ultra models. Other phones are already being discussed. They use the Chinese Tiantong and Beidou satellite networks, both of which now provide full global coverage.

It seems to be only a matter of months before the established players in emergency communication such as Garmin, ZOLEO and SPOT face worldwide competition. Apple is currently collaborating with SpaceX and Deutsche Telekom, while

Google Pixel and Samsung are partnering with Verizon and the satellite provider AST SpaceMobile. The only remaining question will be which additional services these alerts will be linked to.

Key criteria for choosing your communication device

When selecting the right device you should consider the following:

- Network coverage and reliability
- Functionality (text, SOS, tracking, weather)
- Battery life and power supply
- Weight and size
- Costs (device and subscription fees)

Network coverage and reliability

Not all satellite networks offer full global coverage. The Iridium network, used by Garmin and ZOLEO, is considered the most reliable option, providing genuine 100 percent global coverage. Inmarsat satellites, used only for phones, reach around 90 percent of the Earth's surface but cover New Zealand without any issues.

Globalstar, used by SPOT devices, mainly offers regional coverage in populated areas such as Europe, North America and Australia or New Zealand, though availability depends on the device. The key factor is whether two way communication is possible. Only then can you, for example, receive feedback from a rescue coordination centre.

Iridium: <https://www.iridium.com/network/>

Inmarsat: <https://www.satphonecity.com/pages/inmarsat-coverage.html>

Globalstar: <https://www.globalstar.com/en-ap/coverage-maps>

All of these networks provide coverage in New Zealand and many other countries.

Functionality (Text, SOS, Tracking, Weather)

All messengers have an SOS button that, in an emergency, sends the GPS position to an international rescue coordination centre and requests help. Two way devices

often allow customised SOS messages to the rescue centre. For everyday use, the text messaging function is the key feature.

Many devices pair with a smartphone so messages can be typed easily through an app. Others are stand alone devices, which are generally recommended. Some also have a small display or even a keyboard, such as the SPOT X with a QWERTY keyboard, for full standalone operation.

You should also look for extras like weather forecasts that can be accessed directly (offered by Garmin and ZOLEO devices). Naturally, GPS navigation and tracking functions are also important. These let you, for example, share your live location with contacts or analyse recorded routes later on.

Battery Life and power supply

On long trips, battery life can be critical. Modern messengers are very energy efficient. The Garmin InReach Messenger lasts up to 28 days in standard mode with 10 minute message or position transmissions, while the InReach Mini 2 lasts around 14 days.

Other devices such as the SPOT X (around 240 hours) or ZOLEO offer 8 to 10 days of continuous operation (around 200 hours). Everything depends on how the device is used, like data sending intervals, and on ambient temperature.

Anyone heading out on a trek should always carry spare batteries or power packs and ideally a power bank or solar panel. The Garmin InReach Messenger, for instance, can even act as a power bank in emergencies with its reverse charge function.

Weight and size

Every gram counts on a trekking tour. Fortunately, most modern devices are very light. Some weigh between 100 and 120 grams, like the InReach Mini 2 at around 100 grams. The Motorola Defy Satellite Link is only about 70 grams. Even a solid satellite phone like the IsatPhone 2 comes in at roughly 318 grams.

Most messengers fit in the palm of your hand and can be attached to the outside of a backpack for quick access. Despite their light weight, they're impact resistant and waterproof, usually down to one metre. In New Zealand, where conditions range from coastal to mountainous to subtropical, you can expect high humidity and frequent rain, so weather resistance matters.

Ongoing costs (Fees)

Besides the device itself, you need to consider the running subscription costs. Almost all messengers and satellite phones require a satellite service plan. Basic plans typically cost around 25 to 40 NZD per month and include a limited number of text messages. For heavier use, such as frequent tracking or dozens of messages per day, plans can reach 100 NZD or more.

Many providers offer monthly cancellable contracts (Garmin, ZOLEO, SPOT), which is ideal if you only use the device seasonally. Some, however, charge an activation fee. It's worth comparing plans and estimating how many messages you'll need per day.

SPOT, for instance, has very affordable base plans at about 25 NZD per month for simple tracking or emergency use. Satellite phones, on the other hand, incur additional call charges, often between 2 and 4 NZD per minute depending on the network.

SPOT: <https://www.findmespot.com/en-au/products-services/spot-x#service-plans>

ZOLEO: <https://www.zoleo.com/en-nz/plans>

Garmin: <https://www.garmin.com/en-NZ/c/subscription-plans/>

With these three providers, you're unfortunately tied to their in house service plans. Only with satellite phones can you freely choose your service provider.

Device costs

Good satellite messengers range from around 500 to 830 NZD, while entry-level satellite phones start at about 2500 to 3000 NZD. Prices can go much higher, but what really sets devices apart is the range of functions they offer.

Recommendation and conclusion

After researching the available options, I've come to the following conclusions. Given the balance between safety, reliability and usability in different situations, these are the devices that make the most sense.

Value for money comes first

Standing out clearly in this regard is the ZOLEO Satellite Communicator

<https://www.zoleo.com/en-nz>

This two way messenger offers great functionality for around 385 NZD. It supports check-in messages, weather forecasts, location sharing and automated live tracking. You can also download maps to your smartphone for offline use.

It uses the robust Iridium network and enables global SOS alerts. When paired with a smartphone, it offers genuine two way text communication. The running costs are moderate, up to 40 NZD per month, and with unlimited preset messages you can send daily “OK” check-ins at no extra cost. ***The only downside is that it does not have a USB-C port.***

An Alternative: SPOT

For slightly less money you could go for a SPOT Gen4, but that model lacks two way communication. The SPOT X would be required instead, at about 500 New Zealand dollars. It offers solid features like check-in messages, tracking intervals from two and a half to sixty minutes, programmable waypoints, a compass, email and SMS, predefined messages and contacts. The device can also be linked to a smartphone.

However, according to user reports, incoming messages on the SPOT X sometimes don't fully match what was sent or arrive only partially (confirmed by simultaneous smartphone use). The same seems to apply to tracking intervals, and the battery drains quickly when multiple features are used.

That suggests communication might not be 100 percent reliable in an emergency.

Sources:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=2-7CX6ajkFk>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MERgg90W5e0>

Personally, since I value efficiency and dependability, this device wouldn't be my choice. ***The conclusion here is clear: for greater safety, it's better to go with ZOLEO.***

Top recommendation for safety and functionality

The Garmin InReach Mini 2 stands out for its independence (it can operate without a smartphone) and overall balance of features. It's an outstanding device that uses the same reliable Iridium network for worldwide SOS communication. At roughly 830 NZD, the price is justified by the sheer range of functions and reliability it delivers.

The device includes around twenty features and can be expanded through the Garmin Explore app.

Key functions include:

The Garmin InReach Mini 2 offers 24/7 emergency SOS service, worldwide messaging without mobile coverage (subscription required), arrow navigation and Trac-Back route return, up to 14 days of battery life, two way communication, point to point navigation, InReach weather reports, SMS and email messaging, group chat and position sharing with other InReach devices, compatibility with Mapshare and tracking, a virtual keyboard and more.

More details can be found here:

<https://www.garmin.com/en-NZ/p/765374/#specs>

An additional, very useful accessory is the ***InReach Mini underwater housing***, which makes the messenger fully waterproof. The device itself is splash resistant and waterproof up to one metre for thirty minutes.

Just remember, a device is only as good as its user. Anyone can press an SOS button, but you should know the functions beforehand and not wait until an emergency to figure out how it works.

Satellite Phone

Everything has its pros and cons. With a satellite phone you can make a direct call and request a rescue, but you still need to give your coordinates. Whether that's possible depends on your condition at the time, sometimes it's easier to just press a single button.

A solid option is the Inmarsat IsatPhone 2. It has durable hardware, is water resistant (IP65), shockproof, and equipped with a large antenna for reliable reception. The battery life is excellent, up to eight hours of talk time or 160 hours on standby per charge. Inmarsat fully covers New Zealand. GPS coordinates can also be sent via SMS, and there's an integrated SOS button linked to the GEOS emergency network.

During a call the antenna must always point north, which can be difficult in dense forests or gorges.

An alternative is the Iridium network, with well-known handsets like the Iridium 9555 (around 2600 NZD) and Iridium 9575 Extreme (around 3000 NZD). Iridium works everywhere and doesn't require any particular orientation.

For those mainly interested in text and SOS capability, the Iridium GO is worth considering. It's a hotspot device that creates a Wi-Fi signal, allowing smartphones to use the Iridium network. It costs around 2100 NZD and must be used with a smartphone, if the phone fails, the main functionality is lost.

For anyone who needs to stay constantly reachable, a satellite phone makes sense; otherwise, a messenger device is perfectly sufficient.

Final Note:

No device replaces common sense. Whatever you do on your journey and whatever risks you face, always try to de-escalate and, if necessary, take a step back.

GPS devices with colour map display

Many people use a mapping app on their smartphone for navigation. There are plenty of open-source options and downloadable offline maps available.

The app I recommend from Google Play is the Pro version (paid, ad-free) of New Zealand Topo Maps, which can also be used offline. It costs around 25 NZD per year and can be cancelled anytime (as of 18 September 2025). The purchase is made directly in the app.

Find it here:

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.atlogis.nzmaps.free>

There are also several open-source map providers offering free downloadable maps for offline use, such as:

<https://www.openstreetmap.org/>

or

<https://www.topomap.co.nz/>

You can also consider a high-quality GPS device with inReach compatibility. A standout option is the Garmin GPSMAP H1, priced around 1200 NZD. It offers useful extras like a large colour display for better map visibility and highly accurate positioning.

GPS devices with colour map functions generally start at around 500 NZD. Some smartphones can also be used for this purpose, provided there's a stable signal. Always make sure your maps can be used offline.

Garmin devices can be found here:

<https://www.garmin.com/en-AU/c/outdoor-recreation/satellite-communicators/>

GPSMAP H1 specifications:

<https://www.garmin.com/en-AU/p/1262753/#specs>

Powerbank

Since you'll likely be using several electronic devices and need continuous display for things like maps, you should definitely bring a power bank with around 10,000 to 20,000 mAh capacity. Pay attention to the weight and to the input and output power (watts).

The following products stand out for their performance:

(see page 140)

INIU Power Banks:

INIU Power Bank 10000

Weight: 164g

Speed: 45W output, 20W input

Efficiency: 204.8 mWh/g

INIU Power Bank 20000

Weight: 322g

Speed: 65W output, 45W input

Efficiency: 209.62 mWh/g

INIU Power Bank 25000

Weight: 388g

Speed: 100W output, 65W input

Efficiency: 204.44 mWh/g

Nitecore Power Banks:

Nitecore CARBO 20000

Weight: 303g

Speed: 20W output, 18W input

Efficiency: 233.83 mWh/g

Nitecore NB Air 5000

Weight: 86g

Speed: 15W output, 15W input

Efficiency: 206.98 mWh/g

Nitecore NB10000 Gen3

Weight: 151g

Speed: 22.5W output, 18W input

Efficiency: 212.23 mWh/g

Hunger & Thirst **Nutrition on a trekking tour**

Water and food must be available!

Healthy, vitamin- and mineral-rich, energy-boosting food is essential if we want to meet the challenges of a trek.

We also look for food that is particularly energy-rich, i.e., has a high fat and carbohydrate concentration per 100g.

We should not forget protein either. In addition, we must keep an eye on our mineral and vitamin balance in order to maintain the body's performance.



Every trekking tour is different and therefore requires some adjustment when choosing nutrients. It is also about maintaining a relatively balanced diet and having tasty food, especially on a long-term trip.

That's why you should always have spices with you when preparing your own meals, particularly salt. In addition, we must not ignore the loss of fluids, which needs to be compensated for.

Some people determine their energy consumption by simply multiplying around 40–45 kcal per kilogram by their body weight. That's entirely up to you.

Fluid intake

Depending on the heat and level of exertion, we should drink between 0.5 and 1 litre per hour. Fluid intake is not only about drinking water but also about supplying electrolytes, especially sodium.

We should take these in throughout the day, as we continuously lose them through sweat and urine. Anyone who drinks only water while sweating heavily can dilute the sodium concentration in the blood (hyponatraemia). This increases risk and may cause symptoms such as headaches, nausea, fatigue, confusion or even seizures, due to cerebral oedema¹.

That's why we always include electrolytes, isotonic powder, or salty snacks, or even a cup of broth (all organic, of course) on long stages. Most research institutes recommend 6 grams of salt for sports, and up to 7 grams in cases of heavy sweating.

Therefore, check the fixed amounts for packaged foods to make sure you do not exceed the recommended levels. Six grams of salt correspond to 2.4 grams of sodium.

Source: ¹Hew-Butler T, Rosner MH, Fowkes-Godek S, et al. Statement of the Third International Exercise-Associated Hyponatremia Consensus Development Conference. Clin J. Sport Med. 2015;25(4):303-320.

Which water can I drink?

I've never drunk water directly from a river or lake, not even from a spring. The temptation is strong when the water looks so clear and inviting, but the risk of getting sick is just as real. Still, I know people who've drunk it regularly and never had any issues. But I'd rather spare you that risk and point you towards safer sources or reliable methods of purifying water.

What we need to protect ourselves from:

- Protozoa such as Giardia and Cryptosporidium, which cause prolonged diarrhoea and cramps.
- Bacteria, especially Campylobacter, as well as Salmonella and pathogenic E. coli, which lead to gastrointestinal infections.
- Viruses, such as norovirus.
- Leptospires, originating from animal urine. Leptospirosis causes fever, headaches, muscle and joint pain.
- Cyanobacteria (toxic algae), which can release liver and neurotoxins. Always pay attention to warning signs. Never collect water from such places, not even for cooking or with a filter.

This risk also exists at huts that provide untreated water.

Boiling water

The safest method is still to boil the water. To make it safe for drinking, the water must reach 100 degrees Celsius and be kept boiling for a certain amount of time. Different governments and institutes give varying recommendations depending on the country, ranging from 1 minute, 3 minutes, up to 5 minutes of boiling time to make the water drinkable.

So it's best to go with 5 minutes, just to be on the safe side.

Water filters for purification

We don't always have the time or opportunity to boil water. In such cases, a water filter can be a quick and practical solution. Basically, a filter can protect us from all the risks mentioned earlier. However, there are certain requirements a filter must meet, and not every one is suitable for everything.

I've only listed water filters here that have a minimum capacity of 1,000 litres of drinking water (around 200–250 days). You should choose a water filter based

on how you'll use it most often. Factors such as safety, weight, frequency of use and compatibility with other products all play a role. Each of you has to decide for yourself how much security and reliability you expect from a product.

Filter systems

The minimum requirement that must be met is a system with a microfilter (0.1–0.2 µm, glass fibre or hollow fibre). This removes bacteria and protozoa (*Giardia*/*Crypto*) but not viruses.

- **MSR TrailShot**, Filter quality 0.2 µm, weight 142 g, filter replacement after 2,000 litres, flow rate 1 L/min, around €80. Removes 99.99999% of bacteria and particles (no percentage specified).
- **Sawyer Squeeze SP129**, Filter quality 0.1 µm, weight 85 g, product replacement after 378,541 litres (100,000 gallons), flow rate 1 L/min, but purification rate drops to 98.5% after the first cleaning of the filter, around €70. Removes 99.99999% of bacteria and 100% of microplastics.
- **Katadyn BeFree**, Filter quality 0.1 µm, weight 56 g, filter replacement after 1,000 litres, flow rate up to 2 L/min, around €55 (replacement cartridge €40). Removes 99.99999% of bacteria and sediments (no percentage specified).

In most cases, these systems will be sufficient for you in New Zealand.

If we also want to clean the filtered water of viruses, we need an addition for the simple version of the water filter, which provides disinfection after filtering.

For this it is best to use chlorine dioxide. This already exists in bottles, with pipette, or as tablets such as MICROPUR Forte Tablets DCCNa. Please bear in mind that the ingredients are not healthy for the body, chlorine and silver ion shares. In addition both products are caustic and toxic in concentration. However chlorine volatilises when boiling.

If you apply this disinfection I would like to recommend the tablets here, these are more expensive, but pre-portioned for 1 litre of drinking water. Chlorine dioxide works well against *Giardia*, but according to <https://cdc.gov> against *Cryptosporidium* only to a limited extent and needs hours of contact time.

Therefore first filter, then disinfect, or disinfect only. In addition you must check before using this solution or tablets whether these can be used in your metal vessels, for example aluminium or stainless steel bottle.

For an emergency I always find these tablets good, but I myself want to burden my body with foreign substances as little as possible. If you are planning a longer stay in New Zealand you would, with regular use, take in many unhealthy foreign substances.

If you want the safest bacteria, protozoa and virus protection solution in one step, you should best take a purifier device that is tested as a Microbiological Water Purifier according to NSF P231, or P248 for the military. These systems must reduce bacteria, viruses and protozoa, not to be confused with protection of 100 percent. In doing so the systems use a high quality ceramic filter.

These systems are, depending on the type of water provision, also compatible with drinking bottles as an attachment for direct feeding into the bottle. One disadvantage of the ceramic filter is that it can break with impacts, in addition attention must be paid that after use it should be dried to avoid mould.

Filtering out bacteria: 99.9999%, viruses: 99.99%, protozoa: 99.9%:

- ***MSR Guardian Purifier***, filter quality 0.2 µm, 490 g, about €229–299, ceramic filter, filter replacement after 10,000 L, 2.5 L per min.
- ***Katadyn Combi Plus***, filter quality 0.2 µm, 580 g, about €180–280, ceramic filter, filter replacement after 50,000 L, 1 L per min. Additional carbon filter must be replaced after 400 L when used.
- ***Katadyn Vario***, filter quality 0.2 µm, 425 g, about €90–130, especially strong glass fibre filter, filter replacement after 2,000 L and when used.

!!! Important !!!

Cyanotoxins, caused by algae, are not reliably removed by outdoor filters or disinfection, also not by boiling. Therefore you must not use this water for drinking water treatment. To make sure this does not happen to you, please inform yourself about the current water quality in rivers and lakes. Also pay attention to signs.

Information about water quality in rivers and lakes:

<https://www.lawa.org.nz/>

Here you can find the above-mentioned products for drinking water treatment:

MSR: <https://cascadedesigns.com/>

Sawyer: <https://www.sawyereurope.com/>

Katadyn: <https://www.katadyngroup.com/>

Of course there are also other brands, systems and larger water bags including filters, which may be exactly right for your application. The use of UV light for water treatment I have left out here, because it does not filter out suspended particles.

Counting calories

The calorie content of a food, per 100 g of weight, should be as high as possible, we aim for 400 to 450 kcal. At the same time it is about saving weight and ensuring supply for the day.

To eat energy-rich and balanced, in my experience the distribution of food should be about 50 to 60 percent carbohydrates, 25 to 35 percent fat and 15 to 20 percent protein. If we look at the day, we should ideally divide it into hours for targeted food intake. The main meals are breakfast, lunch and dinner.

Throughout the day, best hourly, we take in carbohydrates, because you constantly need a source that supplies energy. Fat, on the other hand, should be minimised during exertion and distributed over the three main meals so that we do not get digestive problems. For protein it is a good measure to take it with the main meals and about twice in between, with about 40 to 50 percent of it in the evening. An increased need for protein must however be covered. The rule of thumb 0.8 g per kg of body weight is to be increased up to 2 g per kg.

Sugar as fuel is always to be avoided, because it causes tiredness and performance drops. If something sweet, then in the evening.

We should keep in mind that we are usually on the way between 2 and 5 days and our body burns about 1,000 to 1,500 calories more than usual. Thus we have a daily consumption of about 3,000 to 3,500 calories. For strong burners among you and a long day, the requirement can also rise to 4,000 calories. Cold could even increase consumption further.

To calculate your possible basic consumption during trekking, you can apply the so-called Harris-Benedict formula. You can find numerous calorie consumption calculators on the internet that make tailored calculations for you on the basis of weight, height, age and sex.

What do I eat to stay supplied continuously?

You have not yet been to New Zealand, then you will notice that some things may be similar to your country, but also many products are completely different.

This mainly concerns processed foods that have been adapted to the taste of the far south. Of course there are also many foods to buy that you will find with us. This includes many energy suppliers that we need to stay supplied on our trek.

The following lists provide information about calorie and nutrient-rich products that you need for your trek and can also find in New Zealand. Furthermore, we have linked suitable producers or companies that produce or sell freeze-dried meals, power gels, bars and dried meat.

Foods over 400 kcal per 100 g

- Macadamia nuts, 718 kcal, 76% fat, 8 g protein
- Chocolate 85% cocoa, 700 kcal, 50% fat, 10% protein
- Pecan nuts, 691 kcal, 72% fat, 9 g protein
- Pine nuts, 673 kcal, 68% fat, 14 g protein
- Coconut flakes (dried), 660 kcal, 65% fat, 6 g protein
- Brazil nuts, 656 kcal, 66% fat, 14 g protein
- Walnuts, 654 kcal, 65% fat, 15 g protein
- Hazelnuts, 628 kcal, 61% fat, 15 g protein
- Cacao nibs, 600 kcal, 54% fat, 13 g protein
- Peanut butter, 598 kcal, 50% fat, 26 g protein
- Sesame paste (tahini), 595 kcal, 53% fat, 17 g protein
- Sunflower seeds, 584 kcal, 51% fat, 21 g protein
- Almonds, 580 kcal, 50% fat, 21 g protein
- Sesame seeds, 573 kcal, 50% fat, 18 g protein
- Peanuts (unsalted), 567 kcal, 49% fat, 26 g protein
- Pistachios, 562 kcal, 45% fat, 20 g protein
- Pumpkin seeds, 560 kcal, 49% fat, 30 g protein
- Hemp seeds, 553 kcal, 49% fat, 31 g protein
- Cashew nuts, 553 kcal, 44% fat, 18 g protein
- Linseeds, 534 kcal, 42% fat, 18 g protein
- Poppy seeds, 525 kcal, 42% fat, 18 g protein
- Tiger nuts (dried), 496 kcal, 24% fat, 4 g protein
- Chia seeds, 486 kcal, 31% fat, 17 g protein
- Hard cheese (Parmesan), 431 kcal, 29% fat, 38 g protein

- Amaranth (puffed), 414 kcal, 7% fat, 14 g protein
- Hard cheese (Cheddar), 403 kcal, 33% fat, 25 g protein
- Quinoa pops, 400 kcal, 6% fat, 14 g protein

High protein sources (values per 100 g)

- Dried fish (for example stockfish, cod), 430 kcal, 2% fat, 62 g protein
- Biltong/Jerky (beef, low-fat, dried), 400–450 kcal, 3–7% fat, 50 g protein
- Hard cheese (Cheddar), 403 kcal, 33% fat, 25 g protein

Of course you can also use protein powder for protein intake. It is easy to transport and can be dissolved in water. In terms of taste, however, these have never convinced me.

Additional carbohydrate and protein sources (uncooked, values per 100 g)

Legumes

- Red lentils, 340 kcal, 1% fat, 26 g protein
- Green lentils, 350 kcal, 1% fat, 25 g protein
- Brown lentils, 340 kcal, 1% fat, 24 g protein
- Black lentils (Beluga), 340 kcal, 1% fat, 24 g protein
- Kidney beans (raw), 340 kcal, 1% fat, 24 g protein
- Lentil noodles (red), 340 kcal, 1–2% fat, 24 g protein
- White beans, 340 kcal, 1% fat, 23 g protein
- Pea noodles (green/yellow), 350 kcal, 2% fat, 22 g protein
- Black beans, 340 kcal, 1% fat, 21 g protein
- Chickpea noodles, 360 kcal, 4–5% fat, 20 g protein
- Chickpeas (raw), 365 kcal, 6% fat, 19 g protein

Grains, pseudograins

- Wild rice, 360 kcal, 1% fat, 15 g protein
- Quinoa (raw), 368 kcal, 6% fat, 14 g protein

- Spelt noodles, 360 kcal, 2% fat, 13 g protein
- Durum wheat noodles, 370 kcal, 1–2% fat, 13 g protein
- Oat flakes, 370 kcal, 7% fat, 13 g protein
- Buckwheat, 343 kcal, 3% fat, 13 g protein
- Wholemeal noodles, 350 kcal, 2% fat, 12 g protein
- Bulgur, 340 kcal, 1% fat, 12 g protein
- Couscous (durum wheat), 360 kcal, 1% fat, 12 g protein
- Millet, 350 kcal, 4% fat, 11 g protein
- earl barley, 350 kcal, 1–2% fat, 9 g protein
- Rice (wholegrain), 350 kcal, 3% fat, 8 g protein
- Lentil rice (white, long grain), 360 kcal, <1% fat, 7 g protein

Minerals and vitamin sources

Those who want to eat healthily usually resort to dried fruit. However, healthy can also mean that during your trekking time you rely on high-quality food supplements.

1. Dried fruits

- Apricots (dried) potassium, magnesium, iron, vitamin A (beta-carotene), vitamin E, little vitamin C
- Dates potassium, magnesium, copper, vitamin B6
- Raisins potassium, iron, copper, B vitamins (B1, B2, B6)
- Figs calcium, potassium, magnesium, vitamin K, B6
- Plums (dried plums) potassium, iron, copper, vitamin K, beta-carotene
- Apples (dried) potassium, some vitamin C (reduced), vitamin A
- Banana chips (unsweetened) potassium, magnesium, vitamin B6 main feature: potassium source, additionally iron and B vitamins. Vitamin C is almost completely absent.

2. Freeze-dried fruits and vegetables

- Berries (strawberries, raspberries, blueberries) vitamin C, vitamin K, manganese, antioxidants (polyphenols)
- Broccoli vitamin C, vitamin K, folic acid, calcium, iron
- Spinach vitamin A, C, K, folic acid, iron, magnesium
- Peas vitamin C, vitamin K, B vitamins, iron, zinc

- Carrots beta-carotene (vitamin A), vitamin K, potassium advantage: through freeze-drying, most of the vitamin C and antioxidants are preserved.

3. Dried vegetable mixes (for example for soups)

- Depending on the mix, these contain vitamins A, C and K as well as magnesium, iron and zinc.
- Often included are: carrots (beta-carotene), leek (folic acid, vitamin K), celery (potassium), peppers (vitamin C).

4. Nutrient-rich seeds and nuts

- Almonds vitamin E, magnesium, calcium, B2, manganese
- Walnuts omega-3 fatty acids (ALA), vitamin B6, magnesium, copper
- Pumpkin seeds magnesium, zinc, iron, copper, vitamin E
- Sunflower seeds vitamin E, magnesium, selenium, B1

5. Vitamin-rich trekking snacks

- Aronia berries (dried) vitamin C, vitamin K, manganese, polyphenols (strong antioxidants)
- Goji berries vitamin C, vitamin A, iron, selenium, zinc
- Sea buckthorn berries extremely rich in vitamin C, vitamin E, beta-carotene, potassium
- Seaweed leaves (nori, wakame) iodine, vitamin A, vitamin C, vitamin K, iron, calcium

6. Multivitamin or electrolyte tablets

Get yourself high-quality preparations that ensure high absorption by the body. These preparations help you to save weight.

- **Vitamins:** generally A, C, D, E, K + B complex
- **Minerals/trace elements:** magnesium, potassium, calcium, zinc, iron, iodine, selenium
- **Electrolytes:** sodium, potassium, chloride are important for fluid intake

Freeze-dried meals

Although large discount stores and various outdoor, sports and fishing shops also stock freeze-dried meals and energy gels, I would like to refer you explicitly to the websites of New Zealand manufacturers for the distribution of these products.

Because here we find a wide selection of products that offer us the necessary variety in food intake.

Full meals, made in New Zealand

Back Country Cuisine

<https://backcountrycuisine.co.nz/>

<https://www.wildoutdoorsman.co.nz/category/Freeze-Dried-Food.html>

<https://www.macpac.co.nz/outdoor-equipment/stoves-kitchen/freeze-dried-food>

Radix Nutrition

<https://radixnutrition.co.nz/>

<https://www.bivouac.co.nz/gear/camping-and-tramping/food.html>

Real Meals

<https://realmeals.co.nz/>

Biltong & Jerky

Made in New Zealand.

- The probably most versatile supplier in the area of dried meat is Themeatup. The manufacturer offers many qualities, flavours and packaging sizes in direct sales.

<https://themeatup.co.nz/>

- **Safari Biltong**, direct sales , “Made fresh daily from 100% New Zealand beef of the best quality.”

<https://www.safaribiltong.co.nz>

- **Fresh Jerky (NZ)**, direct sales. Those who want it absolutely fresh and straight from the meat dryer, without protective atmosphere packaging, wrapped in paper, can have their products delivered by Fresh Jerky.

<https://www.freshjerky.co.nz/>

Imported brands

Campers Pantry (AUS)

Available in New Zealand shops.

<https://www.bivouac.co.nz/gear/camping-and-tramping/food.html>

Jack Link's, sold almost everywhere in the world.

<https://jacklinks.co.nz/>

Please pay attention to the list of ingredients for all products you buy, so that you can tolerate the products. In addition, I recommend, if you have enough time, to try your freeze-dried main meals.

Most of all the mentioned foods can also be found in large supermarkets, outdoor or sports shops.

Organisation and preparation of your daily rations

Order is important on a trekking trip in order to recognise everything quickly. Especially with food we must always be exactly aware of what is still available. This also saves time and less is lost.



Organisation:

- Pack daily bags in order to see clearly how much food is being used.
- Label the bags and write the calorie information on them.
- Add one emergency bar per day.
- Remove outer packaging and pack everything into lighter boxes or bags.
- Plan a food buffer, at least one additional daily reserve supply for every 4 to 5 days.
- Pack food left over during the day into a designated bag (repack).

Composition of the food:

- When it comes to daily food intake, pay as much attention as possible to balance.
- If you take food supplements, please make sure that the substances contained are well available and that your body can absorb them.

Fuel

Of course we also need fuel to heat the water for our main meals or dried food or to prepare a hot drink. If we consider that we boil water twice per day, in the morning and in the evening, and heat 2 litres for 5 minutes, we will need about 40 to 55 g of gas per day, depending on outside temperature and wind strength.

If you use filtered water, the consumption of the cartridge is naturally reduced enormously, since only heating is necessary.

Gas cartridges are available for standard stoves in sizes of approx. 100 ml, 200 ml, 400 ml, and larger. I would always take a 200 ml cartridge with me on a 3-4 day trip.

The big issue of trash

Please take all trash you produce with you when you leave. If you find any trash, nature and all those who come after you will thank you for taking it with you.

If you find large amounts of trash, please report it to the Department of Conservation, specifying its location.

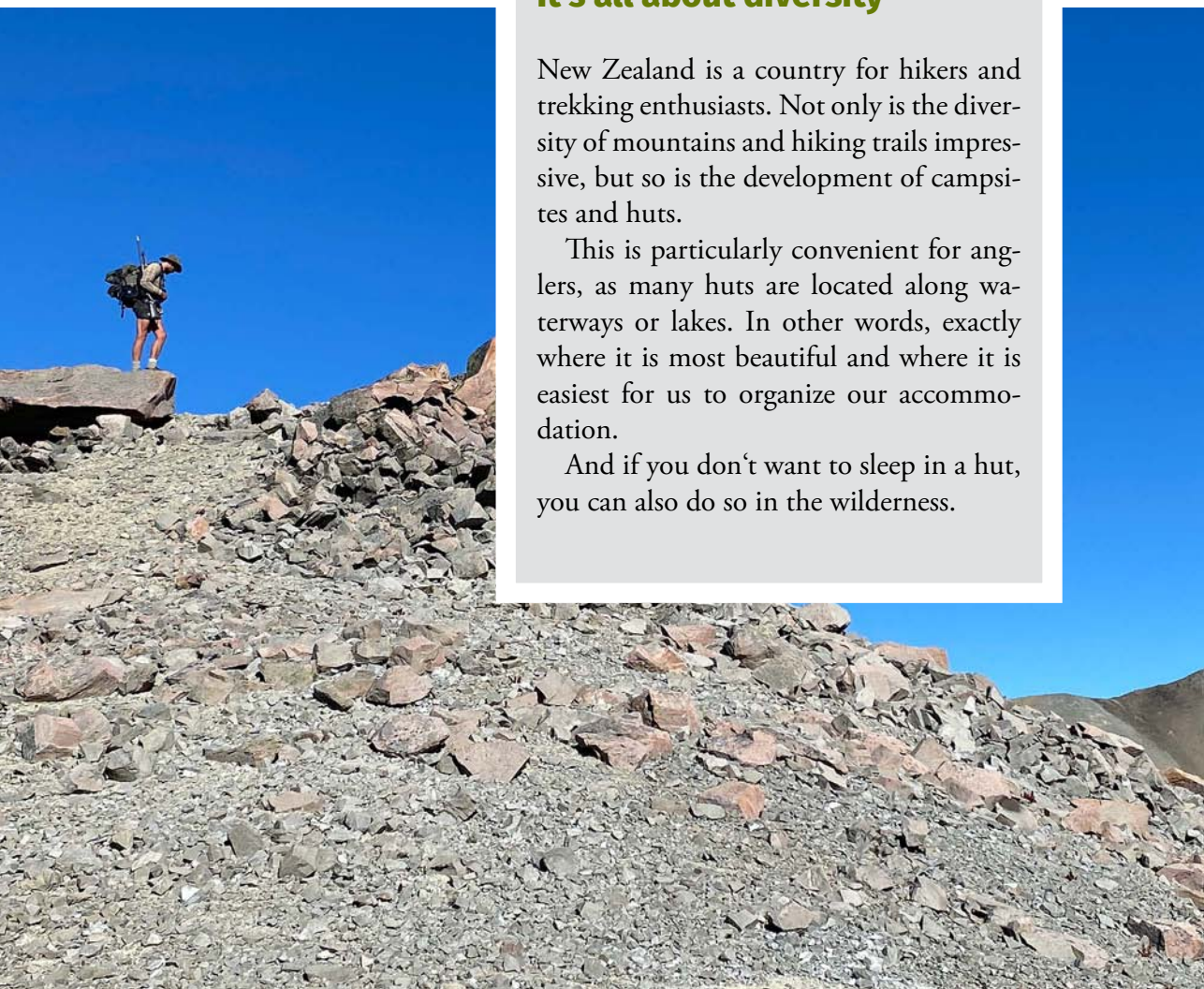
Enjoy freedom **Trekking and accom- modations**

It's all about diversity

New Zealand is a country for hikers and trekking enthusiasts. Not only is the diversity of mountains and hiking trails impressive, but so is the development of campsites and huts.

This is particularly convenient for anglers, as many huts are located along waterways or lakes. In other words, exactly where it is most beautiful and where it is easiest for us to organize our accommodation.

And if you don't want to sleep in a hut, you can also do so in the wilderness.



Existing tracks you can move on

In New Zealand there is almost no river or lake that cannot be reached by a trek. Nevertheless, in some backcountry areas that is only half the battle.

You must expect that some rivers do not have paths to allow you to follow them further. Therefore you have to fight your way through the undergrowth. But I think that is exactly what makes it a backcountry experience.

The information available about the tracks is excellent, because at the DOC, Department of Conservation New Zealand, there are recommendations for almost all tracks for the duration of your planned route.

Choose a route on their website and go into the details, here you will find a lot of information about each trek.

Here you can find all information about official tracks:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/walking-and-tramping/>

For your planning there is also an app available. It does not cover everything, but over 1,800 important hiking trails:

<https://planmywalk.nz/>

In addition, you can also put together and export maps free of charge:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/map/>

Overnight stays in designated huts or on campsites

Those who trek also need accommodation. I myself am not a fan of huts because I do not want the nightly noises and smells of sweaty hikers in my nose. On my tours in New Zealand, I stayed twice in a hut, then never again. I bought myself a tent and slept like a bear.

But as it is in life, everything has its advantages and disadvantages. When it comes towards autumn, especially on the South Island, there are frequent rainfalls combined with cold. Then it is very good to have a dry camp spot and not have to carry a wet tent the next morning.

The best information about trekking and overnight stays on campsites and in huts can be obtained from the Department of Conservation – DOC. They manage over 950 huts and 300 campsites in New Zealand. The huts and campsites are subject to fees and must be booked in advance.

Brochures with detailed descriptions of the campsites can be found at:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-stay/stay-at-a-campsite/conservation-campsites-brochure/>

Booking your accommodation

Bookings for your huts and campsites are made on the following website:

<https://bookings.doc.govt.nz/>

A distinction is made between campsites with service and without. For those travelling with a camper, a serviced campsite is recommended.

Serviced campsites

(for arrival with a camper)

Serviced campsites offer a wide range of facilities and services. Toilets with flushing water, tap water (treated or untreated), kitchen/hob, hot water showers, rubbish collection and access for all vehicle types. Untreated water should be boiled before use to ensure safety.

Serviced campsites may also have laundry facilities, barbecues, fireplaces, cookers and picnic tables.

Fees

Sites without power/tent sites:

- Adults (18+ years): 25 NZ\$ per night
- Children (5–17 years): 12.50 NZ\$ per night

- Infants (0–4 years): free

With power:

- Adults (18+ years): 20–28 NZ\$ per night
- Children (5–17 years): 10 to 14 NZ\$ per night
- Infants (0–4 years): free

Standard campsites

(for hikers – individual bookings)

“Standard campsites” have a more limited range of facilities and services compared with **“Serviced campsites”**. These campsites have toilets, a water supply (treated or untreated tap water, water from a stream or lake) as well as access for vehicles or boats.

Bring your own biodegradable soap for hand washing. Untreated water should be boiled before use to ensure safety.

Wood barbecues and fireplaces, cold water showers, picnic tables, a cooking shelter and rubbish bins may be provided – however, this varies from site to site.

Fees

Sites without power/tent sites:

- Adults (18+ years): 10 to 20 NZ\$ per night
- Children (5–17 years): 5 to 10 NZ\$ per night
- Infants (0–4 years): free

Sites with power supply, if available:

- Adults (18+ years): 10 to 20 NZ\$ per night
- Children (5–17 years): 5 to 10 NZ\$ per night
- Infants (0–4 years): free

Note: Prices vary at some campsites and may include seasonal rates – check the individual campsites.

The DOC has introduced various passes for this.

These include:

- Backcountry Hut Pass for adults, valid 12 months (160 NZ\$)
- Backcountry Hut Pass for youth, valid 12 months (80 NZ\$)
- Campsite Pass 365 nights (295 NZ\$+)

Their validity begins with the selection of the start date.

Source: Department of Conservation (NZ)

You can find all information about huts at:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-stay/stay-in-a-hut/>

You can find all information about camping at:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-stay/stay-at-a-campsite/>

Hut or camping prices on the Great Walks

In New Zealand there are so-called “**Great Walks**”. Declared as particularly beautiful and long trekking routes that offer a special view of New Zealand’s nature. These also lead past rivers and lakes and are useful if you wish to fish there. The huts or camping sites are not included in the prices mentioned above.

As the pricing structure is very complex, I must refer you here to the following website:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/about-us/our-role/managing-conservation/recreation-management/great-walks-management/pricing/>

Great walks:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/things-to-do/walking-and-tramping/great-walks/>

Campsites:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-stay/stay-at-a-campsite/campervans/>

You can also find information, maps and online courses as well as courses to get to know New Zealand from the DOC perspective.

An important point is also the use of drones, for which you need a permit from DOC.

Camping and land rights

Those who go into the backcountry and want to be as individual as possible think about camping. But under what conditions is that allowed in New Zealand and what do I have to pay attention to?

We will get to the bottom of this topic here and first of all establish that wild camping is allowed.

However, there are some restrictions, since much land is under municipal, Māori, farm or other private ownership. In addition, there is the so-called DOC land. This includes, for example, national parks or Māori land, which is partly managed by DOC. Furthermore, there are areas where plant or animal species are especially protected. Or again areas such as a DOC reserve, on whose land camping is only allowed if the signage permits it.

Responsible for monitoring our camping adventure is therefore primarily DOC. Since this also involves land ownership, I want to briefly mention that we must deal with the free accesses of Fish & Game in order to be able to enter land that we are allowed to enter.

Website for access to rivers and lakes from Fish & Game:

<https://fishandgamenzaccess.org/>

The legal basis for camping is provided by the Freedom Camping Act rules, which were last revised on 13 July 2023:

<https://www.legislation.govt.nz/act/public/2011/0061/latest/versions.aspx>

You can also obtain further information to check access:

<https://herengaanuku.govt.nz>

This page is also operated with an app and can only be downloaded with a New Zealand SIM:

<https://www.herengaanuku.govt.nz/maps/pocket-maps>

Where do you encounter rivers that border private land?

Mainly near towns and on farmland. This sometimes means that you cannot leave a river because you would otherwise enter private land. Therefore pay attention especially near towns to the entry and exit points of Fish & Game.



Sport fishing **Fish & Game and DOC Necessary Regulations**

It won't work without regulations

Many resources and their use are often taken for granted. They were given to us by nature and, in theory, belong to everyone.

But there are limits to that, and some anglers in New Zealand have already experienced those limits in different ways.

Fishing pressure has become a problem in certain river systems. For this reason, Fish and Game has introduced controlled and designated waters to manage the regional strain.

Perhaps it is also time to give these living creatures a break, allowing the populations in those areas to recover.



Fish and Game

Regulations for sport fishing and hunting

Fish and Game is the organisation responsible for issuing and enforcing the regulations for fishing and hunting in New Zealand.

Its head office is in Wellington, but each of the twelve Fish and Game regions in New Zealand operates independently. Therefore, you should contact the regional office directly if you have questions or need information about the many waters in that area.

In recent years, Fish and Game has made several changes to its pricing and licensing structure. One of the main reasons for this was the growing popularity of the country among Anglers.

This led to increased seasonal pressure in certain regions and rivers, which was also felt by local anglers. As a result, Fish and Game introduced various measures and adjusted the licensing system for specific regions and rivers.

This has provided special protection for particular river sections or entire areas, where fishing is now controlled through special licences that can be obtained for an additional fee.

New Zealand welcomes visitors from around the world

Over the past decade, New Zealand has become a hotspot for trout fishing. In the 2024–2025 season, 20,107 fishing licences were sold to overseas anglers, roughly 23 percent of the number sold to local anglers. Among the main visitors were 6,942 Australians, 6,701 Americans and 1,252 English. Around 500 Canadians, Chinese, Japanese, Germans, French and others made up the rest.

Most of these anglers arrive during the peak season from January to February, with January being the busiest month. These months also coincide with the holiday period for locals, so the fishing pressure at that time is enormous.

For that reason, I never recommend foreign anglers to fish during this period. I prefer fishing in the early season from October through December, or in the late season from April to May, when trout move toward spawning. During these times, you get the best chance to fish without pressure and experience the full range of fly fishing, from nymphing to dry fly fishing.

I also strongly suggest avoiding the rivers that are in the spotlight. You will waste time there for little reward, as the daily angling pressure is far too high.

In conversation with Maggie Tait – Principal Advisor Communications

Maggie Tait, media spokesperson for Fish and Game, has a clear message for anglers in light of the increasing fishing pressure New Zealand has experienced in recent years. It is advice that will help you fish more successfully.

Maggie Tait: If there is one thing international anglers should understand, it is that our system of Designated Waters (**DW, less than two percent of our rivers**) highlights only a tiny fraction of the incredible fishing opportunities across the country.

The DW licence exists to prevent overfishing in a small number of sensitive fisheries, but these waters are often crowded simply because they are so well known. You can find extraordinary fishing and a much better experience in nearby waters that do not require any special permits.

We genuinely want our visitors to have a wonderful and successful time in New Zealand. The regulation booklets for each region list many Fish and Game managed waters that offer excellent fishing opportunities.

The best local information can be found at the regional Fish and Game office in your destination area. Our staff can point you towards some real gems that may not be on the usual tourist fishing routes. Do not limit yourself to the famous spots when there is so much more to discover.

Comment by S. Rebellton: We are all explorers in some way, and there is nothing better than heading out alone or with a friend to discover an area far from angling tourism, one that few or no others have on their radar. That is what makes the back-country so special.

This could include the many coastal regions, lagoons or brackish water stretches where, at certain times, you can catch sea-run trout, or the smaller tributaries mentioned by Maggie Tait.

Which licences do I need to buy and where am I allowed to fish

My recommendation is to first purchase a Fish and Game New Zealand Whole Season Licence. The New Zealand Whole Season Licence is valid for all regions except Taupo, which requires its own separate licence. You can access rivers and lakes through the entry points designated by Fish and Game.

For certain private forests or agricultural areas, an access permit may be required to reach specific parts of lakes or rivers. This particularly applies to forestry land and areas owned by Māori. Out of respect and consideration for the consequences, I strongly ask you not to enter these areas and to respect their property.

If you want to fish a particular section of a river or lake from land that does not have a designated Fish and Game access point, you will need to do your research to find out who owns the property and ask the landowner for permission to cross or fish there.

All regional information can be obtained at tackle and fly fishing shops, or from the DOC (Department of Conservation) and Fish and Game offices.

You can find constantly updated information about fishing in each region on the following website:

Website: <https://www.fishandgame.org.nz>

Nevertheless, we have summarised the most important information for you here.

Costs for New Zealand fishing licences

A New Zealand fishing licence is valid for one year. It begins on the first of October and ends on the thirtieth of September the following year. ***As a visitor, not a citizen or resident, make sure you do not buy a licence intended for New Zealand residents, as this can result in a legal penalty, even if you hold a long-term visa.***

Resident Licences

Adult Whole Season licences – Resident Licences

For adults aged 18 and over on 30/09/2025

- Adult Fishing Licence Family - Resident: 203 NZD
- Adult Fishing Licence Whole Season - Resident: 156 NZD.
- Adult Fishing Licence Loyal Senior - Resident: 133 NZD
- Local Area Fishing Licence - Resident: 125 NZD

Adult Part Season licences – Resident Licences

For adults aged 18 and over on 30/09/2025

- Adult Fishing Licence Short Break - Resident: 56 NZD
- Adult Fishing Licence Long Break - Resident: 109 NZD
- Adult Fishing Licence Day - Resident: 25 NZD

Junior and Child licence options – Resident Licences

For juniors between the age of 12 and 17 on 30/09/2025

- Junior Fishing Licence Whole Season - Resident: 31 NZD
- Junior Fishing Licence Day - Resident: 6 NZD

For children aged 11 and under on 30/09/2025

- Child Fishing Licence Whole Season - Resident: 0 NZD

Non-resident Licences

Fishing licence for non-residents

- Full season licence for non-residents: 270 NZD.
- Season licence for juniors or children (non-residents): 51 NZD.
- Day licence: 38 NZD
- Day licence for children: 23 NZD

Adults aged 18 and over require an adult licence. Young people between 12 and 17 years need a junior licence. Children under 12 years can fish free of charge.

Purchasing your licence

You can purchase your card in various ways.

- **Online purchase via the online licence system:**

Online-Lizenz: <https://fishandgame.eslltd.co.nz>

or

Standard licence options:

<https://www.fishandgame.org.nz/freshwater-fishing-in-new-zealand/fishing-licences-and-regulations/standard-licence-options/>

- **By phone:** Call the toll-free licence number 0800 LICENCE (0800 542 362) during business hours (a 5 NZD booking fee applies). This number is accessible only within New Zealand.
- **In person:** You can visit any Fish and Game office or a regional licence agent, such as a tackle or outdoor shop.

Licence agents:

<https://www.fishandgame.org.nz/freshwater-fishing-in-new-zealand/fishing-licences-and-regulations/fishing-licence-agents/>

At your local tackle shop, you can also get free waterway maps with all necessary access points to lakes or rivers in each region.

Licence for designated waters and controlled fisheries

To obtain these special licences, you must already hold a full season sport fishing licence. Once you have that, you can purchase a licence for designated waters or a controlled fishery licence. To apply for a controlled fishery licence, you also need a Designated Waters Licence. **Controlled fishery licences are issued either through a ballot system or on a first come, first served basis.** Each region has its own require-

ments. The periods during which certain waters or parts of them are protected and require special licences vary and may change at any time.

Special licences:

<https://www.fishandgame.org.nz/freshwater-fishing-in-new-zealand/fishing-licences-and-regulations/special-licence-options/>

For these rivers, you will need a Designated Water Licence:

Region Wellington

- Oberer Rangitikei River

Region Nelson / Marlborough

- Travers River
- Oberer Wairau River und oberes Wairau-Beat-System
- Oberer Matakitaki River

Region West Coast

- Karamea River
- Mokihinui River

Region North-Canterbury

- Hurunui River North Branch
- Hurunui River South Branch
- Lewis Pass
- Oberer Waiau Uwha River

Region Otago

- Dingle Burn
- Oberer Lochy River
- Nevis River
- Hunter River
- Young River
- Wilkin River
- Oberer Pomahaja River
- Greenstone River
- Caples River

Region Southland

- Oberer Oreti

For these rivers, you will need a Controlled Fishery Licence:

- Greenstone River (und seine Nebenflüsse)
- Clinton River
- Worsley Rivers
- Ettrick Burn
- Ōhau River
- Oberer Hurunui

Cost for Designated Waters Day Licence

Resident Angler: 5 NZD per day.

None Resident Angler: 40 NZD per day.

Cost for Controlled Water Day Licence

For each day you wish to fish, in **Controlled Water** you must first purchase a day licence for Designated Waters. Then you can apply for free days via the booking system.

Bookings can only be made up to five days in advance of your intended fishing trip, including on the intended day of fishing.

Control and regulations

Please note that failure to comply with regulations, such as environmental protection rules, closed seasons, minimum sizes or bag limits, can result in heavy penalties.

As users of natural resources, we should show full understanding of these measures. I therefore ask you to report any violations directly to Fish and Game. In doing so, we all help to ensure sustainable conservation.

In New Zealand, you may be checked at fishing waters by officers from Fish and Game or the Department of Conservation (DOC). Regardless of whether you are a local or a visiting angler, you must always carry your valid fishing licence while fishing.

As mentioned above, compliance with all regulations must also be ensured. A link to the general and region specific regulations can be found here on the Fish and Game Council website.

To avoid the violations mentioned above, it is essential that you read the regulations carefully, especially if you plan to move between different regions.

Regulations for all of New Zealand, except Taupo, can be found here:

<https://www.fishandgame.org.nz/freshwater-fishing-in-new-zealand/fishing-licences-and-regulations/fishing-regulations/>

Fish and Game Council (Head Office):

Postal address:

PO Box 25055, Wellington 6146

Address:

Fish and Game Council

Level 1, Unit 2, 166 Featherston St

Wellington 6011

New Zealand

Phone: 0064 (04) 499 4767

Email: nzcouncil@fishandgame.org.nz

Email for Media: media@fishandgame.org.nz

Website: <https://www.fishandgame.org.nz>

Social media:

<https://www.facebook.com/FishandGameNZ>

<https://www.instagram.com/fishandgamenz/>

<https://www.youtube.com/user/FishandGameNZ>

The regulations for each individual region can be found as follows:

<https://www.fishandgame.org.nz/freshwater-fishing-in-new-zealand/fishing-licences-and-regulations/fishing-regulations/>

Please note that you can download the regulations for both the North and South Islands here.

Interesting regional information about the individual regions can be found here:

<https://www.fishandgame.org.nz/freshwater-fishing-in-new-zealand/where-to-fish/regional-info>

Regional addresses for Fish and Game:

Fish and Game Northland Region

Address:

Unit A5
7-11 Nell Place
Whangarei 0110
New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (09) 438 4135
Email: northland@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game Auckland /Waikato Region

Address:

156 Brymer Road, RD9,
Hamilton 3289
New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (07) 849 1666
Email: aucklandwaikato@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game Eastern Region

Postal address:

Private Bag 3010, Rotorua 3046,,
New Zealand

Address:

Ngongotaha Hatchery

1130 Paradise Valley Road,
Ngongotaha
New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (07) 357 5501 oder
0800 434 742 in , New Zealand
Email: eastern@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game Hawke`s Bay Region

Postal address:

PO Box 7345, Taradale, Napier
4141, New Zealand

Address:

The Game Farm

22 Burness Road, Greenmeadows
Napier
New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (06) 844 2460
Email: hawkesbay@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game Taranaki Region

Postal address:

PO Box 4152, Whanganui 4541,
New Zealand

Address:

3/477A Devon Street East
Strandon, New Plymouth 4312
New Zealand

Phone: 0064(06) 757 9676 /
(021) 2700 239

Email: taranaki@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game Wellington Region

Postal address:

PO Box 1325, Palmerston North
4440, New Zealand

Address:

292 Featherston St.
Palmerston North 4440
New Zealand

Phone: 0064 (06) 359 0409

Email: wellington@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game Nelson / Marlborough Region

Postal address:

PO Box 2173, Stoke, Nelson
7041, New Zealand

Address:

66-74 Champion Road
Ritchmond, New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (03) 544 6382
Email: nelsonmarlborough@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game North Canterbury Region

Postal address:

PO Box 50, Woodend 7641, New
Zealand

Address:

c/- Department of Conservation
32 River Road
Rangiora 7400, New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (03) 366 9191
Email: northcanterbury@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game Central South Island Region

Postal address:

PO Box 150, Temuka 7948, New Zealand

Adresse:

32 Richard Pearse Drive
Temuka 7920, New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (0)3 615 8400
Email: csi@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game West Coast Region

Address:

Airport Drive
2 Bert Mercer Drive
Hokitika 7810, New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (0)3 755 8546
Email: westcoast@fishandgame.org.nz

Fish and Game Otago Region

Postal address:

PO Box 76, Dunedin 9054, New Zealand

Address:

Cnr Hanover & Harrow Street
PO Box 76
Dunedin 9016, New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (03) 477 9076
Email: otago@fish-game.org.nz

Fish and Game Southland Region

Postal address:

PO Box 159, Invercargill 9840, New Zealand

Address:

17 Eye Street, Invercargill
Wildlife Park, Manapouri Road Te Anau
Te Anau, New Zealand
Phone: 0064 (0)3 215 9117
Email: information@southland-fishgame.co.nz

Department of Conservation

Fishing regulations

The Department of Conservation is responsible for nature protection and the enforcement of environmental laws. The DOC office in Turangi is responsible for the Taupo region and issues the regulations for fishing there, which you will receive when you purchase your licence.

Fishing regulations for the Taupo area can be found here:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/central-north-island/places/taupo-trout-fishery/other-pages/rules-and-regulation---what-you-need-to-know/>

Fishing licence for the Taupo region

The Taupo fishing licence applies to rivers in and around Lake Taupo. The DOC manages this area and the waters, which have been returned to Māori ownership. You will also find many properties here that may only be accessed with permission, or not at all.

Information on access can be obtained at local tackle shops. The range of rivers and lakes in the region is large enough that there is no need to fish in private waters.

The fishing season in Taupo begins on the first of July and ends on the thirtieth of June the following year. A special licence is required for this region; the Fish and Game licence (used for the rest of New Zealand) is not valid here.

Please note that during the winter season, fishing is restricted in certain rivers.

Licences (1 July 2025 – 30 June 2026)

Resident

Resident Adult (18+ years old as of 1 July)

- Taupō Family Season licence - resident: 159 NZD
- Taupō Senior Season licence - resident: 90 NZD

- Taupō Adult Season licence - resident: 105 NZD
- Taupō Adult Week licence - resident: 49 NZD
- Taupō Adult 24-hour licence - resident: 23 NZD

Resident Children (under 18 as of 1 July)

- Taupō Child Season licence - resident: 13.50 NZD
- Taupō Child 24-hour licence - resident: 5 NZD

Non-Resident

Non-resident Adult (18+ years old as of 1 July)

- Adult season licence: 169.00 NZD
- Adult week licence: 89.00 NZD
- Adult 24-hour licence: 23.00 NZD

Non-resident Children (under 18 as of 1 July)

- Child season licence: 13.50 NZD
- Taupo child 24-hour licence – non-resident: (price not specified): 5 NZD

Purchase your fishing licence online:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/fishinglicence>

Lake Rotoaira (special Licence)

Adults 18+ of 1 September, Children under 18 as of 1 September Season fishing licence (1 September 2025 – 30 June 2026)

Rotoaira Whānau Season licence: 99 NZD

Rotoaira Adult Season licence: 45 NZD

Rotoaira Child Season licence: 12 NZD

Week licence (7 straight days, 1 September 2025 – 30 June 2026)

Rotoaira Adult Week licence: 22.50 NZD

Rotoaira Child Week licence: 5 NZD

24-hour licences (5 am – 11 pm, 1 September 2025 – 30 June 2026)

Rotoaira Adult 24-Hour licence: 8 NZD

Rotoaira Child 24-Hour licence: 2 NZD

Information for Lake Rotoaira:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/buy-a-taupo-fishing-licence-online/fishing-licences-for-lake-rotoaira/>

Head Office DOC - Department of Conservation

Address:

DOC-office

3 Town Centre

Turangi 3334

Phone: 0064 (0)7 384 7106

Email: turangi@doc.govt.nz

Email: fishlicence@doc.govt.nz

Here is the link to the regulations and a map:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/globalassets/documents/parks-and-recreation/places-to-visit/tongariro-taupo/taupo-fishing-district-map-and-regulations.pdf>

Further information on fishing in the various regions can be found on the following websites:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/parks-and-recreation/places-to-go/central-north-island/places/taupo-trout-fishery>

Rivers, Streams and Lakes you can fish with the Taupo Licence

The following 14 streams, 11 rivers and 6 lakes are available to you:

Streams

- Mangamutu Stream
- Te Arero Stream
- Hinemaiaia Stream
- Waiharuru Stream
- Tirakai Stream
- Poutu Stream
- Tokaanu Stream
- Whanganui Stream
- Waikino Stream
- Oruapurano Stream
- Mangatu Stream
- Otupoto Stream
- Piaranui Stream
- Waihora Stream

Rivers

- Waitahanui River
- Tauranga Taupo River
- Waimarino River
- Waiotaka River
- Tongariro River
- Waipakihi River
- MoawhangoRiver

Rivers

- Whanganui River
- Otamangakau Canal
- Kuratau River
- Waihaha River

Lakes

- Lake Taupo
- Lake Otomangakau
- Lake Hinemaiaia
- Lake Moawhango
- Lake Te Whaiiau
- Lake Kuratau

Didymo (*Didymosphenia geminata*)

Is an algae plague that has been spreading across the country for over a decade and sometimes partially disappearing again. The phenomenon here is that it mainly affects the South Island, while the North Island has been largely spared for years.

To date, it has not been possible to combat this form of algae effectively. But don't worry, the fishing is still excellent, and if you encounter a river with increased algae blooms, simply move on to the next one.

However, anglers must take special precautions because of these algae! In every region, you will find places to clean your fishing clothes and equipment. In many places, such as backpacker hostels and lodges, there are bins set up for this purpose, as you can see in the picture below. Of course, you can also clean them yourself in your accommodation.

Fig.below: Here you can see the clearly marked cleaning bins. These are used for fishing and hiking equipment.





Since you may be travelling with a packraft or have a belly boat, or own trekking equipment that may come into contact with water, it is important to clean these thoroughly.

All items that came into contact with the water must be cleaned for at least 1 minute in a solution made up of equal parts:

- Saline solution, 125 ml
- 5% detergent solution, 125 ml
- 5% antiseptic hand cleaner, 125 ml
- 5% nappy cleaner, 125 ml

All these ingredients are available at your local supermarket. Mix them with 10 litres of water. Then leave to dry for 48 hours. Cleaning also applies to any items, such as rucksacks, hiking clothes, hiking boots, etc., that have come into contact with a lake or river.

Preserve Life

Careful catching and release methods

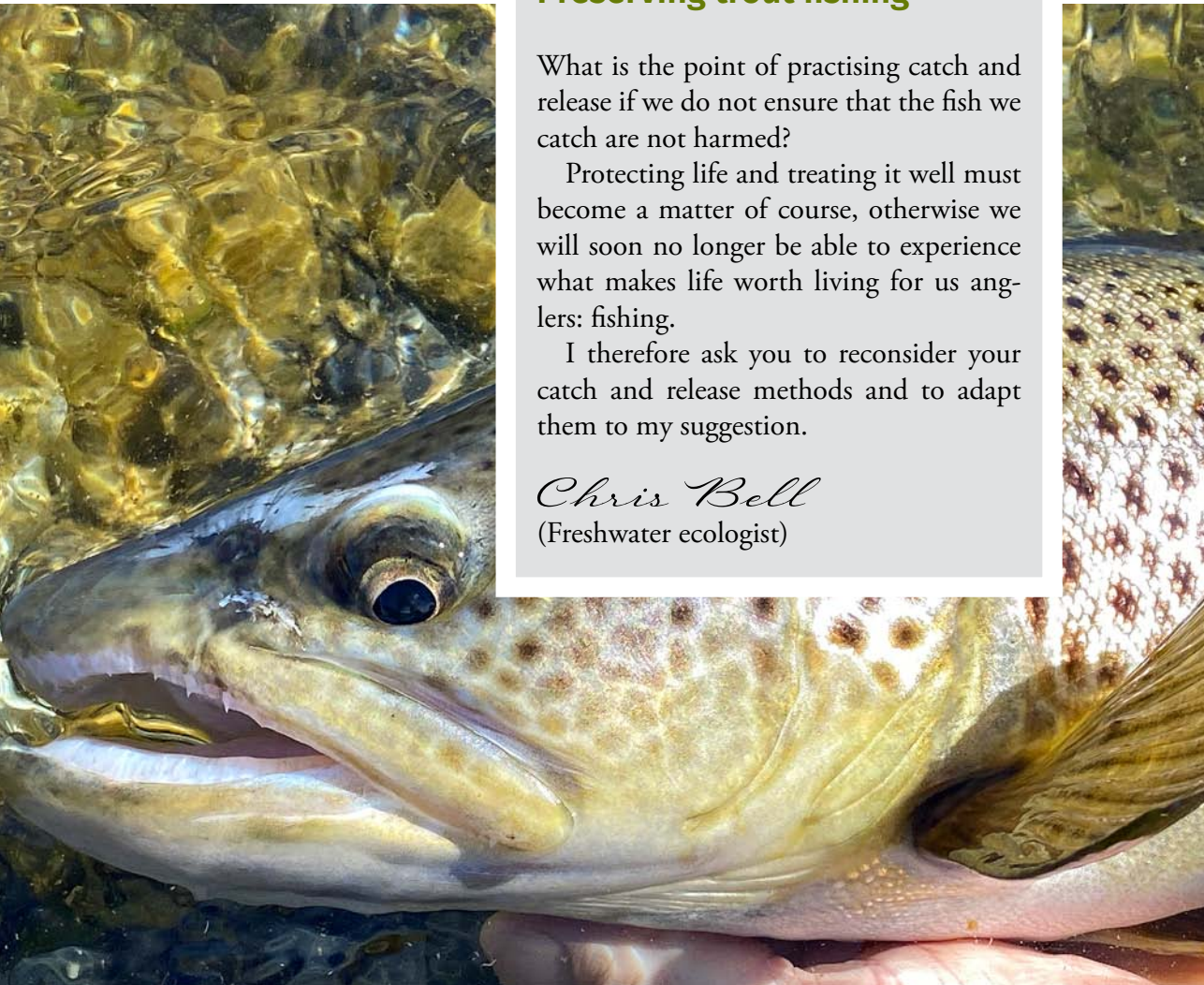
Preserving trout fishing

What is the point of practising catch and release if we do not ensure that the fish we catch are not harmed?

Protecting life and treating it well must become a matter of course, otherwise we will soon no longer be able to experience what makes life worth living for us anglers: fishing.

I therefore ask you to reconsider your catch and release methods and to adapt them to my suggestion.

Chris Bell
(Freshwater ecologist)



The careful care and handling of trout to give them the best chance of survival is something I am very passionate about, and I don't see it discussed as much as it should be! I have been fortunate enough to study and work with trout, salmon and many different species of New Zealand native fish for the last 30 years, during which time I have often been able to monitor and assess different handling methods and the short and long term affects of these on fish.

How resilient are trout?

The theory that trout are **“as tough as old boots”** isn't quite true. They do put up with some extreme environmental stresses including flooding, warm water/low oxygen, predation, and sometimes intense competition, but like any animal they have their limits.

Sometimes even just a second or two of careless handling while being played or in the landing/release process, can lead to a distressing end for these beautiful creatures.

With New Zealand's fisheries under increasing pressure, our trout populations need all the help they can get in order to preserve the world class fisheries we currently enjoy.

Ultimately, we want to know that when the fish swims off it will have the best chance of survival, and we should all be working to reduce the factors that can have a negative impact on the fish. The following points help to mitigate potential harm to trout when being caught and released.

Use strong tippet

Use as strong a tippet as possible which cannot be detected by the fish or negatively affect the natural movement/presentation of the fly, and check the tippet constantly when fishing to maintain confidence in the condition of your terminal tackle. This will reduce prolonged fights and the snapping off of flies and tippet on lost fish.

Before casting to every sighted fish, I go through a routine of testing every knot and running my fingers through the terminal tippet material to make sure that there are no weaknesses or damage. When you get into the habit of doing this you will lose fewer fish! Using strong tippets should reduce the time it takes to land a fish, resulting in less stress and exhaustion for the trout.

Barbed verses barbless hooks

The use of barbless or crushed barb hooks to allow for quick fly removal and reduced harm to the trout when removing hooks from sensitive areas, can only be positive for the fish.

It is the view of some anglers that as barbless hooks can penetrate further than barbed hooks that this will therefore inflict more damage to the fish, however I have never seen any evidence of this causing a problem in my last 30 plus years of using barbless or crushed barbed hooks.

Interestingly crushed barbed hooks are often considered better than barbless by some anglers, as they are easily removed and usually don't penetrate as far as pure barbless hooks. If using barbed hooks on your trout flies it only takes a second to crush a barb to possibly make a big difference to the outcome a hooked trout will experience!

Quite often I find my fly will have fallen out of the trout's mouth in the landing net prior to me manually removing it, and in my view the reduction in landing rates is negligible when compared to using barbed hooks.

Of greater importance however, is if a fish breaks the leader, we can feel confident that there is a greater likelihood that it will shed the hook before the leader becomes tethered. There is no question that barbed hooks will over extended periods of time either fall or rust out of a trout's mouth but the big disadvantage with this is that it will take much longer, thus putting the fish under greater risk.

My own experiments have shown bronzed fly hooks left in water for up to a month did not rust, however it is likely that different water chemistry or varied dissolved oxygen levels would likely influence the oxidation of the steel differently, as potentially would the fishes blood enzymes. I therefore expect that the theory often espoused that lost flies will rust out of a trout's mouth relatively quickly is generally an inaccurate assumption.

Of greatest importance is that less harm to the fish occurs when using barbless hooks, and many studies have shown that significantly less bleeding and lower injury rates/damage are caused by barbless hooks compared to barbed hooks^{4,5,8}.

Something further to consider would be to use just a single barbless fly in waters where snags and abundant tree root cover exists, in order to improve the likelihood of a lost fish's survival! Snapped off fish will often head for the security of cover when lost, and if more than one fly is being used, the trailing fly of a double hook rig can potentially entangle in tree roots or other objects/structures when being dragged around by a fleeing trout.

It is likely that some fish will not survive an exhausting attempt at getting free of being attached to an object with multiple flies and strong tippets.

Handle fish with gloves or bare hands?

There has always been the debate on whether it is better to use gloves or bare hands when handling fish. There is no question that you will have a better grip on the fish using gloves but the most important factor to consider, is that more protective mucous membrane is removed from the trout's skin onto even pre-wet gloves, compared to pre-wet hands.

The protective mucous membrane is the trout's anti-bacterial/anti-fungal and osmoregulatory protective coating which is the fish's natural defence against the growth of unwanted pathogens/fungus on its skin, and also in some instances helps to maintain the constant internal environment within the fish.

Touching of the fish's skin can disrupt this epidermal mucous membrane⁷. Although this layer can be replaced by the fish, even temporary removal of this protective layer can allow the unwanted growth of fungus.

From just a few moments of careless handling I have watched a beautiful 15 pound rainbow trout slowly meet its end over several weeks, as fungus slowly grew from the areas which had been in contact with gloved hands².

It is important to protect against such an event from happening whenever possible, and to me the removal of sun gloves often used when fly fishing prior to touching a fish's skin, and instead handling a captured trout using pre wet hands, is the best handling method to practice!

Studies indicate how wet hands are the best way to handle fish when participating in catch and release angling⁷, and all the scientists I have worked with over the years have invariably preferred the use of pre-wet hands over gloves, so this in itself must add some strength to the argument!

Moisten sun gloves beforehand

If you choose to wear gloves when handling fish, try to consciously wet them well in advance of touching a fish. If dry the open porous weave structure of the nylon material (usually used in the construction of fly fishing 'sun' gloves) will absorb the protective membrane of the fish as it absorbs water for several seconds upon emersion.

The abrasive texture of some gloves compared to smooth skin can also remove the mucous and they can actively transfer diseases between different fish⁹.

If you compare the two surfaces, gloves will be noticeably more slimy compared to wet hands when checked after releasing a fish. I make a habit of wetting my hands while playing a trout prior to the actual netting of the fish, as on many occa-

sions in the excitement of landing a fish I have seen anglers grab for a floundering fish's tail to help direct it into a net prior to wetting their gloves, very likely causing increased loss of the protective membrane.

The pre-wetting of gloves and hands is also very important to cool down the surfaces coming in contact with the fish.

Avoid holding the fish in one place for too long

Ultimately the least handling a fish experience's the better, however, when necessary, try to avoid holding onto fish at one location (ie above the tail) for extended periods without periodically (every 15 seconds or so) reducing the grip slightly to allow fresh cooling water to surround the fish's skin. This is especially important when handling fish with bare hands, as this will reduce any possible thermal effect on the fish from the direct skin to skin contact.

Moisten the net of the landing net

Try to pre-wet the landing net mesh by dipping it in water well prior to landing a fish. Depending on the type of net bag, this will both soften and cool down the net mesh material that will come in contact with the trout prior to landing.

The two most common types of landing net material include the older green woven nylon mesh with the larger diamond shaped holes and the newer black plastic coated or rubber mesh, usually with a larger number of small round or hexagonal shaped holes.

Black plastic/rubber mesh exposed to direct sunlight while fishing can sometimes get quite hot, and it will take several seconds to cool down when submerged in the water! It is definitely much better for the fish to use knotless mesh as it is less abrasive on the fish's skin, and ideally the newer plastic coated/rubberised mesh which absorbs less protective mucous membrane than the green nylon mesh.

This is supported by Hannan et al, 2015⁷, whose study concluded that fish landed in rubber and knotless nets acquired less fin damage and dermal abrasion, as well as experiencing lower rates of mortality.

Nets produced with a denser mesh containing smaller holes are usually harder to hold in heavy water flows due to the increased surface area creating greater water resistance, however the green mesh with larger holes entangles the jaws of some fish (especially the males/Jacks) more easily, resulting in increased handling time when releasing a fish.

The entanglement of the trout's maxillae is also much more likely in the wider holes of the green mesh, and it is possible to tear this part of the fish's jaw if the net is lifted upwards while it is entangled in the mesh.

In such situations it is important to detangle the trout's jaw and maxillae before lifting either the net or the fish, and it is always a good idea to lay the fish flat in the bottom of the net bag to avoid excessive bending of the fish's body when being lifted. This is especially important with larger/heavier fish in **"mousey" condition**.

When lifting the fish for a photograph, keep it close to the water

It is good practice to keep fish close to the water at a low height when removing it from the water to take a photo, just in case the angler accidentally drops it. It usually makes for a much **"sexier" natural photo** as well, which will be respected by other anglers!

I always try to choose a location where the water is deep enough to remove a fish from the net, so that if it is dropped the water will soften the impact on the fish, preventing it from experiencing any harm.

Avoid beaching fish on dry, sharp or hard surfaces

Always avoid beaching a fish on sharp rocks or any uneven/rough surface, and make sure any surfaces the fish comes in contact with is already wet. If the fish is not fully tired it can flap around aggressively, resulting in sometimes harmful damage to the fish.

Allow time for proper blood clotting

If you encounter a fish with blood pluming from its gills, remove the fly quickly if it is accessible in the mouth and then turn the fish upside down in the net to place it in a state of Tonic Immobility, a hypnotic state whereby the fish's activity is reduced leaving it calm and inactive in the net.

Leave the fish upside down in the net in as quieter flowing water as possible to allow the bleeding to clot. This can sometimes take up to 4 minutes in my experience, which can feel like a long time! If the majority of the blood appears to be

plumage from one side of the fish, it is a good idea to use a finger or thumb on the hand supporting the head of the fish to close the gill cover/operculum on that side of the body of the fish. This slows down or stops the water flow over that side of the gills, with the reduced flow helping to allow the formation of a blood clot. By doing this the bleeding can often be stopped faster than if both gills remain open. Don't worry as there is still enough water flow moving over the gills to allow for effective respiration and the excretion of metabolic waste with one gill cover closed. Several very experienced fly-fishing guides I know in New Zealand regularly do this, and have found it very effective at speeding up how quickly a bleed stops.

If the hook has embedded further back in a sensitive area such as the gill arches or gullet and the blood appears to be coming from this location, it is possible that the hook could be acting like a plug to help block an increased flow of blood. The hook acting as a plug is discussed in ***"The science of catching and releasing fish"*** 2020 by scientist Steve Cooke of Carleton University, and as how in such a situation it can be better to leave the hook embedded in the fish to prevent further damage to the fish when attempting to remove it³. I also believe that this will also likely lead to the blood clotting faster due to the hook plugging the flow of blood.

Cooke 2020 discussed how a study found that 42% of fish which had hooks deeply embedded in the gullet region were able to slowly expel then hooks over several days³. He further discusses how there was a high percentage of fish mortality experienced when a hook located in such a sensitive area was attempted to be removed. These days I carry a small pair of side cutters which can be used to snip off a fly at the bend of the hook if embedded in a sensitive area close to the fish's gills, so that with little interference the hook can be left in the fish while the bulk of the fly is removed. Fortunately, these get very little use but are good to have just in case!

Don't think that the trout won't survive if it is bleeding as you may have previously read. A little blood can look like a lot and can appear to always come from the gills due to the respiratory water flow in through the mouth, and out through the operculum/gills. In my experience most bleeding will clot and the fish will swim away. By letting a fish go carefully there is at least a chance for its survival, and of the hundreds of bleeding fish I have encountered over the years, I have only had around 5 trout which have not ended up having the bleeding stop, and not ended up swimming away! Just to put things in perspective, anaesthetized salmon smolt can have their very sensitive gill filaments cut off using scissors causing reasonable bleeding, and still have this clot (personal observation), so in my opinion there is hope for fish even appearing to be bleeding from the gills¹.

Once the bleeding has stopped it is important to keep the fish in the net for at least another two minutes to ensure a good strong clot hold at the site of the wound, before carefully releasing the fish. This just prevents a sensitive clot from

being dislodged due to a premature release of the fish, as there will be extra physical exertion experienced by the fish as it swims away to find cover.

Choose a safe place to release

In a moving water environment, if at all possible, always try to find a safe location out of the heavy flow to release a trout, especially if a fish has had a long hard fight or has experienced increased physiological stress.

A quiet edge can be good enough but a large quiet area nearby can give the fish a better recovery location. Also, if the fish is exhausted and heavy water/rapids are present at the release location it is good practice to remove all your gear/rod etc to a location well below the fish, and then slowly release it in quieter edge water where it will hopefully sit and rest.

It is then possible to slowly back off behind the fish out of view, as with all the gear removed you wouldn't then be seen by the fish again. This will prevent it being scared into the surrounding rough water prematurely prior to it having had enough time for a good recovery.

Further points to consider:

- When helping the fish to recover you don't need to hold the fish in a fast flow and there is no need to force the fish to swim out into a stronger flow. Realistically unless it chooses to swim away itself, all it wants to do is rest and recover in a quiet flowing area, as this will require the littlest exertion from it as necessary.
- If water current is present at the release site face the fish head first into current, however if no water flow exists, the movements of the fish's operculum (gill cover) will continue to pump a sufficient volume of water over the gills. ***Do not move the fish forward and backward in the current***, as this will at times force water against the respiratory flow over the gills.
- When experiencing the physiological stresses associated with exercise and handling, trout can lose their equilibrium and the coordinated movements of their fins, causing them to roll and nose dive⁹.
- If released prematurely before they have fully recovered, the fish may swim off but due to a lack of coordination it may end up at the mercy of the current,

ending up battered and washed up on the edge of the river further downstream.

- If a trout swims off but it appears to be out of sorts, I will always follow them downstream to make sure they stop in a safe area where they can recover safely.

On several occasions if I hadn't done this the fish wouldn't have survived, as I later found the fish being beached at the bottom of a rapid where the current had directed them to where the water shallowed out.

It is important to always remember that as anglers we should always do the best we can for a released fish, and sometimes this involves a little extra time or effort to ensure the fish is left somewhere it can fully recover in its own time!

Remove flies while the fish's gills are in the water

Remember these fish have just been fighting for their lives and are likely exhausted, just like us having run a marathon. After heavy physical activity, the metabolic nitrogenous wastes such as Ammonia built up in the fish's blood need to be excreted from the trout's blood system via the gill membranes, into the surrounding water. After a fight, if a trout is removed from the water for excessive periods, not only can they not get the essential oxygen they need, but also these metabolic nitrogenous wastes which would normally be excreted into the water then build up in the blood, essentially resulting in blood poisoning. The fish may swim off and appear fine but perhaps a few hours or so later, the fish may not survive due to being held out of the water for too long! ***Think "Gills in the water at all times!"***

Remove flies by turning the fish onto its back

When removing the fly from the trout turn it upside down in the net by holding its tail and gently rolling it over. This can sometimes be difficult with fresher/less tired fish, but by inverting the fish this will cause them to go into a state of ***"tonic immobility"*** or a ***"mellow out"*** type state, like that exhibited with sharks in many wildlife documentaries. This makes for the much easier handling of a relatively less active fish, allowing for easier hook/fly removal.

Only take the fish out of the water for a short time to take photographs

I aim on only having a fish out of the water for 5 second intervals, and such a short exposure time is supported by Cooke, 2020, as he discusses how a maximum of 10 seconds is considered the upper end of a safe oxygen exposure time³.

I have the camera ready and get the angler to remove the trout from the water for a maximum of 5 seconds at a time. This short period allows for the taking of several quick photo's, before placing the fish back in the net to get some oxygen.

After a brief removal from the water the fish should then be allowed at least another 15-20 seconds of breathing time before being removed from the water again if a second photo opportunity is necessary.

A fish being admired by an angler with beads of water dripping off its body makes for a stunning photo, strongly suggesting that the fish has only been removed from the water for a short time and handled carefully!

With modern technology it is possible to set a camera or cell phone for rapid fire shots, in order to get multiple photos of the trout as it is lifted from the net and released. Alternatively, a quick video of the release may be of preference to an angler.

Avoid lifting fish vertically by their tail fin

Avoid lifting the fish by its tail as all its weight is transferred through its spine. This is especially important with heavier fish perhaps 5lbs and larger where the vertebrae can partially dislocate in some instances because of the increased weight stress involved. Instead hold the fish using one hand just in front of the tail, and with the other hand support the fish under the pectoral girdle which is located directly under the operculum/gill region.

Make sure not to allow your fingers to enter the gill covers and come in contact with the delicate internal gills, or touch the sensitive eyes. I find by folding the pectoral fin closest to your hand gently in towards the fish's body, it is possible to have the fish lean against the hand with just the finger tips sitting flat under the pectoral girdle, supporting the weight of the fish.

It is important not to support a heavy fish's weight by lifting it when holding it further down its body in the softer belly region posterior to its head/pectoral fins. Handling in such a way can cause internal damage to organs and vertebrae due to the fish's own body weight causing pressure when held in the air⁶.

As trout live in the neutral buoyancy aquatic environment, its softer stomach area is not morphologically designed to support a lot of weight, whereas the strengthened bony pectoral girdle region located under the pectoral fins can more safely support its weight when lifted out of the water.

This is especially important with larger overweight fish such as fish showing **“mousey” condition**, where when removed from the water all the fish’s weight may be point loaded on the sensitive internal organs if held further back in the stomach area, away from the strengthened pectoral/bony region of the fish.

Avoid pressing the fish too hard

Hold the trout gently but firmly just in front of its tail, without too much pressure to cause bruising. Make sure not to squeeze the fish further forward of this point. As listed above, the trout’s gills and eyes are the least protected and most sensitive areas which should be carefully avoided, with no pressure or squeezing of these areas occurring when the fish is being handled.

The fish can be supported just using the finger tips up under the pectoral fins or head. Holding a trout in this way will also produce a more stunning photograph, with no clumsy fingers protruding in front of the fish masking its beautiful flanks.

Wooden landing nets represent excellent floating cages

Although not every angler’s preference, a wooden net anchored to the stream bottom of slow flowing water using an attached nylon strap, acts as an excellent floating cage to securely hold a landed fish. The floating frame of the net does not collapse over a netted trout such as with other sinking net types, which can sometimes restrict gill breathing movements.

With a sinking net the security of the net is lost once it sinks to the bottom, so if a fish struggles to escape at this time, an angler is likely to hold onto the fish more aggressively. Ideally this should be avoided wherever possible to prevent any extra removal of the trout’s protective mucous membrane, or to prevent too much pressure being applied to sensitive areas of the fish, potentially causing it harm!

Floating nets are also ideal for use in boat fishing situations as a landed fish can be held next to the boat in the floating net, instead of having to lift a sinking type net into the boat to prevent potentially losing it overboard.

Other things to keep in mind

- If possible avoid fishing water warmer than 20 degrees Celsius. The warmer water will contain less dissolved oxygen and played fish can be put under extreme stresses when exerting themselves in such conditions.
- Don't always aim to catch every fish you see. If you and your companions have had a good day landing a good number of fish, don't over pressure the fishery by continuing to catch every fish you see. Maybe this is a good opportunity to check out another alternative location, or to try some new techniques or "out there" fly pattern choices to reduce your likelihood of success.
- If a sighted fish appears to be in poor condition or stressed in some way, then maybe leave it alone and try to find other "happy" fish. Often darker coloured fish sitting in the quieter edges are showing signs of stress, whether due to being previously caught, or perhaps some other environmental or condition related factors.

I hope that some of this information will prove helpful, and that some of the points listed above will represent some good topics of discussion amongst other friends and fellow anglers when next out on the water.

Good luck for the upcoming fishing season!

Sources:

¹ Chris Bell. 2005 Personal observation. Salmon hatchery: Gill condition biopsy sampling.

² Chris Bell. 2012 Personal observation. Salmon hatchery: Rainbow trout handling.

³ Steve J. Cooke. 2020 The science of catching and releasing fish, Carleton University, YouTube video.

⁴ Steven J. Cooke, Luc LaRochelle, Andy J. Danylchuk, Sasha Clark Danylchuk and Lucus P. 2022 Griffin Influence of hook barbs on the "through-the-gill" hook removal method for deeply hooked Smallmouth Bass. Fisheries Research/ Volume 251, July 2022,106322.

⁵ Robert B. DuBois and Julie M. Pleski, 2007 Hook shedding and mortality of deeply hooked Brook trout caught with bait on barbed and barbless hooks. North American Journal of Fisheries Management/ Volume 27, Issue 4/ Pages 1203-1207.

⁶ Blair Grace, A Gould 2009 Injuries to Barramundi Lates calcarifer resulting from lip gripping devices in the laboratory. North American Journal of Fisheries Management/ Volume 29 (5), Pages 1418-1424.



Fig. right: The best way to calm the fish is to turn it onto its back.

⁷ Kelly D Hannan, Zachery C Zukerman, Christopher R Haak, Aaron D Shultz. 2015 Impacts of sun protection on feeding behaviour and mucous removal of bonefish, *Albula vulpes*. *Environmental Biology of Fish*/ DOI. 1007/S10641-015-0457-6.

⁸ Meka J.M The influence of hook type, angler experience, and fish size on injury rates and the duration of capture in an Alaskan catch-and-release rainbow trout fishery. *North American Journal of Fish Management*/ Volume 24, Pages1309-1321.

⁹ Proper fish handling techniques, Colorado Water Project, Conservation, Habitat, Legislation and Advocacy, Youth Education, October 27, 2015.



Versatility **Spinning and bait fishing**

Advantages that optimize fishing!

By maintaining the versatility of fishing, you give yourself a much better chance of hooking fish in any situation.

This means also using spin fishing, spoon fishing, and bait fishing, especially when the weather plays tricks on us or the rivers are too high and we have to retreat to lakes and estuaries.

It must be said that this form of fishing has many advantages. However, there are restrictions on the use of waterways, because in some rivers or sections only fly fishing is permitted.



Trout (rainbow trout and brown trout) are widespread sport fish in New Zealand's rivers, lakes, and estuaries. In addition to the popular fly fishing, spinning and spoon fishing (fishing with artificial lures such as spinners, spoons, and wobblers) as well as bait fishing with natural bait are common methods.

Equipment for spin fishing and bait fishing for trout

The equipment depends on the type of water, such as rivers, lakes or coastal waters (estuaries), as well as seasonal conditions (spring, summer, autumn). In general, light spinning tackle (rod, reel, line and some artificial lures) is sufficient for successful trout fishing in New Zealand.

spin fishing and bait fishing in rivers

In waters ranging from small streams to large rivers, a light, short spinning rod (1.8 - 2.1 m, equivalent to 6 - 7 feet) with a suitable spinning reel and thin line has proven effective. A fast action rod is advantageous for casting light lures accurately and setting hooks securely. Modern graphite spinning rods in this length range (preferably with 6 or more guides for good load distribution) are lightweight and allow for fatigue-free casting over extended periods.

Which line is the right one?

Monofilament or braided lines with a breaking strength of around 2-4 kg (4-8 lb) are common. Increasingly, anglers prefer very thin braided lines in the range of 3-6 lb (approximately 1.5-3 kg), as they are extremely strong and almost stretch-free.

This allows for long, accurate casts and reliable hook sets. When using braided line, a monofilament leader (e.g., 0.6 - 1.5 m, slightly thinner than the main line) should be added to improve visibility and abrasion resistance. For traditional mono main lines, avoid using anything thicker than 0.25 mm (6 lb), as this significantly reduces casting distance.

Which reel should I choose?

A small to medium spinning reel (size 1000-2500) with a finely adjustable drag is recommended. It is important that the drag releases the line smoothly and steadily, calibrated to the chosen line strength (it should be set so that the line can be pulled out just enough without jerking). Proper line lay is crucial, so it may be worth having the line spooled at a specialist shop.

Which is the right lure?

In New Zealand's rivers, spinners and spoons (metallic rotating or spoon lures) as well as small crankbaits („Minnows“ with a diving lip) imitate the main prey of trout, such as small fish (smelts). Small spinners and spoons weighing around 5-10 g have proven to be an all-round size.

Examples include Mepps and Veltic spinners or classic Toby spoons (e.g., in black-gold, red/gold, etc.), which mimic a baitfish. Floating crankbaits in the Rapala style (with a diving lip) are also very popular and effective, especially those with natural fish patterns (trout patterns) or those that imitate small fish such as bullies or whitebaits.

These lures perform well year-round, particularly in deeper pools, as they dive on their own and have a side-to-side swimming action. Rubber lures (softbaits such as rubber fish or twisters) can also be effective

Fishing technique and seasonal tips for river fishing

In flowing waters, you can fish either upstream or downstream. When using a crankbait, it is often effective to cast across the current and let the lure drift downstream with the flow while reeling in slowly, as this imitates an injured fish being carried by the current.

Under **spring conditions** (higher water levels, cooler temperatures), trout are often still found in deeper pools or along the edges of faster currents. In these situations, a slightly heavier spoon in bright colours (e.g. brass, orange) can help reach deeper areas and stay visible in murky water. In addition, many brown trout migrate downstream from their spawning grounds in spring, so larger, hungry fish can now be encountered in the lower reaches.

Summer, on the other hand, often calls for fine tackle and subdued colours. In low, clear water, thin leaders and smaller spinners should be used, as trout are now

more cautious and often feed selectively on insects. Early morning and late afternoon (cooler times of day) tend to be the best times to catch them.

In **autumn**, brown trout become more aggressive before spawning, and larger artificial lures (e.g. 7-10 cm crankbaits) can provoke so-called reaction bites. Rainbow trout, meanwhile, feed heavily in autumn to build up reserves. In deeper sections of a river or near the mouths of small tributaries where food is carried in, fish imitations are especially worthwhile at this time.

In general, when fishing rivers, it is important to look for holding spots (e.g. deep pools, eddies behind rocks, undercut banks), as these are the places where trout like to stay and wait for food drifting past.

Which natural baits make sense in rivers?

When fishing with bait (e.g. worms) in rivers, the same rod and reel used for spinning are often suitable. A sensitive tip is helpful for detecting bites. Typical setups include running bottom rigs with a small casting float (Sbirulino/Bombarda) or a few split shot weights above the hook to let the worm drift near the bottom in the current.

Alternatively, in calmer sections, float-style fishing can be used with a transparent bubble float, partially filled with water to serve as casting weight. This can be threaded 1–2 m above the hook to present a bait drifting on the surface (e.g. grasshopper, maggot, or a worm mounted to float).

Spring is often ideal for bait fishing with worms in rivers, especially after rainfall, when streams wash many worms into the water and trout are familiar with this food source.

In **summer**, when trout feed more heavily on insects, bait fishing is sometimes less effective than artificial lures or fly fishing, but in deeper, cooler pools (for instance, with a dew worm fished on the bottom), it can still yield large fish.

In **autumn**, bait fishing tends to be most productive in the evening hours, when trout are actively feeding. A bundle of earthworms fished on the bottom can be particularly attractive to large brown trout.

Lakes – Spin fishing from shore and boat

Still waters such as the many lakes (e.g. the Rotorua lakes, alpine lakes of the South Island, etc.) sometimes require adjustments to the equipment.

For **long casts from the shore**, a slightly longer rod is often advantageous. Spinning rods around 2.4–3 m (8–10 feet) with medium action allow for longer casts with heavier lures and help cover more water.

Especially on **large lakes or reservoirs**, where trout can be widely dispersed, a medium-weight spinning rod (casting weight up to 20–30 g) is often used. Such rods can also handle heavier spoons (spinners) up to 25 g or so-called ticer jigs (elongated metal lures designed for long-distance casting), which are useful in windy conditions or on deep lakes.

Line strength can be slightly higher here, typically 0.25–0.30 mm mono (6–10 lb), particularly when larger fish or strong resistance (deep trolling, strong wind) is expected. Braided line (e.g. 8–12 lb) combined with a mono leader is also popular, as it allows for solid hook sets even at long range.

Which lures work best in lakes?

In lakes, similar artificial lures are used as in rivers, such as Toby spoons, Tasmanian Devil attractor lures (colourful torpedo-shaped plastic lures), spinners, and crank-baits. Since lakes often have deep sections, sinking or heavier models are required to reach the depths where trout are currently holding.

In larger New Zealand lakes, species like **common bullies and small whitebait** fish form the main diet of trout. This makes **natural colour patterns (brown/green, black/silver)** particularly effective.

At **dusk** or in **murky water**, it is best to use bright or high-contrast patterns (**e.g. black/gold or fluorescent**) that stand out against the surrounding light.

What techniques should I use near the shore of lakes?

When fishing from the shore, it is best to target specific structures such as **stream or river inlets, distinct drop-offs, and areas with vegetation (reeds, weed beds)**. Trout patrol these zones while searching for food.

A successful approach is to retrieve the lure close to the bottom, as small fish rarely swim mid-water. After casting, let the lure sink, then reel in slowly or with varied retrieves, occasionally adding pauses to imitate an injured fish.

What seasonal differences can be expected at a lake?

In many trout lakes, **spring** is an excellent time for fishing. Trout are hungry and often close to the shore, where inflowing water is warmer and brings the first food. In addition, whitebait often swarm into the rivers during spring, attracting trout near the lake shores. Small silvery lures (e.g. white streamer flies on a bubble float or slim silver spoons) are ideal at this time.

In **summer**, as water temperatures rise, trout often retreat to deeper, cooler layers (the thermocline in deep lakes). During the day, fishing from the shore is usually less productive. The early morning and late evening hours are much more promising, when the fish move in to hunt near the shore. During this period, a floating bubble float with a nymph or dry fly can also be very effective for catching insect-feeding trout near the surface.

In **autumn**, as water temperatures drop again, many trout return to the shore and go on a final feeding spree before winter. Autumn fishing can therefore be very rewarding. Larger spoons or crankbaits have proven effective, especially for targeting visible big trout near the shore (such as brown trout moving in to spawn).

At the same time, autumn trout can be cautious. A subtle lure presentation (for example, sinking flies fished from the shore using a bubble float) can be convincing where aggressive lures are refused.

Fishing with natural bait at lakes

Natural bait is mainly used in lakes by beginners or for relaxed still fishing. The classic method here is a worm fished with a float or bubble float. Using a transparent bubble float (partly filled with water for casting distance), a dew worm can be presented in mid-water or near the bottom without sinking into weed.

The rig is left to drift, and every few seconds the line is slowly retrieved to give the worm a bit of life. Bites often occur when the bait sinks or starts moving again. This method is particularly effective on summer evenings when trout hunt in the shallows.

Another option is bottom fishing with a running lead and a buoyant bait (for example, by adding a small piece of marshmallow or cork above the hook so the worm hovers slightly). A long rod (over 3 m) is useful here to compensate for line stretch when striking at a distance.

!!! Important !!!

In some regions of New Zealand, or possibly at certain times, the use of natural bait is not permitted in all lakes (see regulations). Always check local regulations first.

Coastal waters – Sea trout and estuary fishing

“**Coastal waters**” here mainly refers to **river mouths** and **brackish areas** where sea trout (anadromous brown trout) are found. These “sea-run” brown trout migrate between the sea and rivers and can reach impressive sizes near river mouths and along the coast (over 3 kg is not uncommon in some South Island rivers).

The equipment overlaps with that used for heavier spinning. Many anglers use medium to heavy spinning rods (8–10 ft in length, casting weight 15–30 g) to cast long distances even across wide river deltas and in windy conditions.

Which line and reel should I use for coastal waters?

Because of the potential size of these **sea trout** and the often strong current in estuaries, slightly heavier tackle is usually required. Monofilament line of 0.28–0.35 mm (8–15 lb) or braided line around 10–15 lb is ideal. A size 3000 spinning reel with a capacity of about 150 m of line in this strength provides enough reserve.

!!! Important !!!

Ensure that the reel is saltwater-resistant if fishing in the surf zone. After fishing in spray or saltwater, always rinse the equipment thoroughly with fresh water.

Lure selection for coastal waters

Sea trout hunt mainly baitfish in the ocean and in brackish water (for example, young mullet or whitebait, as well as small fish moving through brackish lagoons). Because of this, slim, silvery lures are very effective.

Popular choices include **long spoons (“Tigers”)** weighing 10–20 g in silver, white, or white/red, which allow extremely long casts and produce a strong flashing action in the water. These are perfect for attracting the attention of feeding trout.

Larger crankbaits (7–12 cm, e.g. Rapala Countdown series) in smelt or trout patterns are also used, especially when fish are moving up through murky river water.

Soft plastic lures (softbaits), such as 3–4 inch shads on jig heads, have also proven effective in recent years (for example, in the estuaries of the Canterbury rivers for sea trout and the Pacific salmon found there).

!!! Important !!!

Note that softbaits impregnated with scent are legally classified as “bait.” Therefore, they are only permitted where the use of natural bait is also allowed.

Hot spots by season

Spring (September–November) is whitebait season in many coastal rivers. Millions of small transparent fish larvae (Galaxidae) migrate upriver, and large brown trout follow them. During this time, sea-run trout often gather directly at river mouths, even in the surf zone of beaches.

As a result, the biggest trout in spring are often caught right at the very first stretch of the river or even by surf fishing just a few metres in front of the river mouth. Small white or silvery streamer flies (e.g. trolled behind a Sbirolino) or silver spinners are unbeatable at this time.

In **summer (December–February)**, once the whitebait runs are over, the trout spread out more across the river system. During hot weather, they tend to stay in deeper, cooler water during the day – here, spinning at dusk or at night near river mouths is worthwhile. Many anglers swear by night spinning in estuary lakes or lagoons: a dark lure (a black Toby or dark blue softbait) retrieved slowly just below the surface can fool large trout at night (they orient themselves by silhouette against the night sky).

Autumn (March–May) often brings another highlight. Brown trout migrate upriver to their spawning grounds, and just before moving upstream they hold in the brackish areas and feed heavily to build up fat reserves. This is a very favourable time for anglers. After heavy autumn rain, when muddy floodwater pours into the river, estuary fishing can be spectacular.

Trout wait in the surf zone for insects and small fish washed out by the swollen river. Then, bright, larger spoons are ideal for being seen in the murky water. However, in some regions many trout waters close for the spawning season as early as the beginning of May, so always check local season dates in advance.

Bait fishing in coastal areas

Bait fishing plays a lesser role for sea trout, as artificial lures are usually more effective for catching these active, roaming fish.

Nowadays it is often restricted by regulations, and under no circumstances may live fish be used as bait. Even dead baitfish are only permitted if they come from the same water, to prevent the introduction of foreign organisms.

In some inland **estuary lakes (lagoons)**, float fishing with worms can be very successful for trout, especially in the evenings in shallow shoreline areas. In general, however, spinning with spoons and similar lures remains the dominant method for catching New Zealand's sea trout.

Equipment summary

!!! Note !!!

Lure selection can vary locally. Ask local anglers or tackle shops about the most successful artificial lures for the specific water. Commonly recommended trout lures include Rapala CD7 (trout pattern), Black and Gold Toby, Green and Gold Veltic Spinner, Tasmanian Devil "Traffic Light," and various local brands (e.g. Kilwell spoons such as Dora/Devon or Phil's Favourite 7 g).

Be aware that in freshwater areas of the Taupo region, only single hooks are allowed to comply with regulations.

Please also read the article "Food sources throughout the year" for further insights into trout fishing.

Information on Fish & Game and DOC (Department of Conservation) regulations can be found in the article "Fish & Game and DOC – Necessary Regulations"

The following table provides an overview of typical equipment combinations for trout by water type:

(see page 204)

<i>Type of water</i>	<i>Rods & reels</i>	<i>Lines</i>	<i>Preferred bait</i>
Smaller rivers & streams	Spinning rod 1.8–2.1 m (6–7 ft), light action; Reel 1000–2500	0.18–0.22 mm mono (4–6 lb) or 0.08 mm braided line with leader	Small spinners (#1–3 Mepps), mini spoons (5–7 g), small wobblers (3–5 cm); worm on a light float in a calm pool
Major rivers & canals	Spinning rod 2.1–2.4 m, medium action; Reel 2500–3000	0.25 mm mono (8 lb) or 0.10–0.12 mm brai- ded line with leader	Medium spinners/blades (7–10 g), wobblers (5–9 cm), spoons (10 g); worms on the bottom or drifting with a water ball
Lakes (shore fishing)	Spinning rod 2.4–2.7 m, medium strength; Reel 2500–4000	0.25–0.28 mm mono (6–10 lb) or 0.12–0.15 mm brai- ded line with leader	Spinner spoons (7–15 g, e.g. Toby), Tasmanian Devil (7–13 g), wobblers (7 cm); water ball with fly/worm (where permitted)
River mouths (coast)	Spinning rod 2.7–3.0 m, powerful (up to 30 g WG); Reel 3000–4000	0.30–0.35 mm mono (12–15 lb) or 0.15 mm braided line with leader	Heavy spoons/Ticer (15–25 g) in silver, large wobblers (9–12 cm), softbaits with jig head (3–4) in natural colours

Table: Overview of equipment usage

Fly fishing

Equipment and flies

On the hunt for the big ones

Going on holiday with good equipment means either tying a large number of flies yourself beforehand or purchasing them.

It is important that you don't run out of the best patterns, because it is annoying when you are in the backcourt and only one pattern is catchable.

You will therefore need approx. 6-10 flies of the same type, which you should replenish regularly.

Experienced anglers also rely on terrestrials, which often work even when nothing else does.



Fly fishing equipment

Rods: Single-handed – class 6–7 WT, length 9 feet in fresh water. Class 7–8 WT, length 9 feet in salt water or on large rivers. Rods with a fighting butt are more advisable, as the environment .

Reels: For trout fishing, these should hold between 50 m and 100 m of backing line and, when fishing in salt or brackish water, be adapted to the target fish.

Line: WF and DT, possibly saltwater resistant.

Leaders: Tapered leader, 9 - 13 feet, 6 - 12 lb; on the North Island, non-tapered 9 - 13 foot long fluorocarbon leaders are also widely used. Leader rings should always be used when using fluorocarbon. If you are after large fish, I always recommend using tippet leaders – tapered but stronger leaders.

!!! Note !!!

Take an insect net with you to check the food supply in the respective waters.

Fishing clothing

During the warmest season, from January to the end of March, fishing is usually done wearing only short or long zip-off trousers made of pure synthetic fibre. Underneath, you should wear long johns made of polypropylene, which dry quickly and offer protection from sand flies and the sun. If possible, they should be earth-coloured.

You should bring:

- Zip-off trousers (quick-drying, UV protection)
- Two pairs of swimming trunks or synthetic fibre shorts
- Fleece long johns (depending on the season)
- Functional underwear (polypropylene, quick-drying)

- Shirt (UV protection, synthetic fibre, quick-drying)
- Waders or neoprene trousers at least 6 mm thick for the New Zealand winter
- Wading or rain jacket
- Wading boots (only permitted without fur soles, studs are good)
- Lightweight, sturdy trekking shoes
- Sturdy plastic trekking sandals with rubber soles
- Sun hat
- Sun protection gloves
- Sonnenbrille, Polarisationsglas, innen nicht spiegelnd.
- Sun hat with sun protection or a cotton hat in beige to green. The lighter the colour, the less you will be bothered by sand flies. Especially in Fiordland, the hat is ideal for protection against sand flies.

Additional fishing equipment

- If you do not already have a packraft, we recommend purchasing one to explore the wilderness and lakes.
- Trekking poles
- Photography equipment, polarising filter, lens hood (New Zealand has very high light levels, which makes photography difficult).
- Life jacket, self-inflating

Which fly is the right one?

First and foremost, it is important to have a good selection of flies in your box. Russell Anderson, guide and one of New Zealand's best fly tiers, has recommended what I consider to be a great core range here.

Of course, you don't need to have all of these flies available at all times, but they represent many possible imitations that can be used to catch trout in New Zealand.

I also discuss the necessary basic fly selection in the article „**Food sources throughout the year**“.

Not all of the commercially available flies listed here are shown with a photo, and there are also a number of variations and original creations.

Flies for the North Island

Dry flies

Dad's Favourite, Kahaki Queen, Humpy Peacock, Royal Wulff, Stimulator Olive, Adams, Adams Parachute, Black Gnat, Blowfly (Blue, Green), Caddis-Elk Hair, Caddis-Goddard, Clark Cicada, Mayfly, Spent Spinner, Cartys Gff Olive, Cartys Gff Tan, Elk Hair Caddis (Brown), Loves Lure, March Brown, Twilight Beauty.

Nymphs

Caddis Net Builder, Damsel, Hare and Copper, Glo Bugs, Hare and Copper Gold BH, Hares Ear, Russell's No Hackle Mayfly, Hares Ear Flashback GTB, Lead Eye Half Back, Lead Eye Hare and Copper, Pheasant Tail GTB, Pheasant Tail, Russell's Volcanic Caddis, Pheasant Tail Flashback, Carty's Stonefly (Black, Brown, Green), Prince Nymph, Blood Worms, Rubber Leg Copper John (Olive), Deleatidium Nymph, Muppets, Carty's Coloburiscus, Carty's Oniscigaster, Snail, Russell's Toe Biter, Halfback, Black and Peacock, Caddis-Flashback-Gold BH, Hare and Copper Tungsten, Pheasant Tail Copper, Zug Nymph, Pheasant Tail GC, Caddis Horn.

Streamer

Black Marabou Lumo, Grey Ghost, Hamill's Killer, Woolly Buggers (Green, Black, Multicolor), Silicon Smelt, Fruit Salad, Fuzzy Wuzzy (Red, Black), Ginger Mick, Orbit (Green), Booby Fly (Black, Olive), Muddler Minnow, Parson Glory (Red,

Yellow), Red Setter, Black Marabou, Craigs Night Time, Yellow Dorothy, Hairly Dog (Red, Black), Taupo Tiger, Rabbit Fly Green, Mrs. Simpson.

Terrestrials

Green and Brown Beetle, Russell's Sparky Spider, Carty's General Terrestrail, Clarks Cicada, Willow Grub, Russell's Blow Fly, San Juan Worm, Turck's Tarrantular, Passion Vine Hopper, Dave Hopper, Mouse.

Flies for the South Island

Dry flies

Humpty (Red, Green, Yellow), Adams, Adams Parachute, Adams Irresistible, Black Gnat, Dad's Favourite, Twilight Beauty, Kakahi Queen, Blowfly (Green, Blue), Caddis – Goddard, Caddis – Elk Hair, Cicada, Coch y Bondhu, Red Tipped Governor, Royal Wulff, Stimulator (Olive), Mighty Stimulator, Greenwells Glory (Green), Cartys Gff Olive, Cartys Gff Tan, Dad's Favourite, March Brown, Red Spinner, Spent Spinner, Blue Dun, Twilight Beauty.

Nymphs

Entwistle's Buller Caddis, Hare & Copper, Mayfly Nymph, Stonefly (Brown, Black), Caddis (Horn), Caddis (Latex), Caddis (Yellow), Damsel Fly, Dragon Fly, Water Boatman, Cartys Coloburiscus, Cartys Oniscigaster, Pheasant Tail, Pheasant Tail, Pheasant Tail (Copper), Hare & Copper Gold BH, Hares Ear Black Tungsten BH, Hares Ear, Caddis Flashback-Gold BH, Hare and Pheasant Black Tungsten BH, Hare and Pheasant, Midge, Caddis-Emerger, Zug Nymph, Snail, Russell's Toe Biter, Prince Nymph Gold BH, Pheasant Tail (Black) Gold Tungsten BH, Cadillac Pheasant Tail, Pheasant Tail (Peacock Hurl) Gold Tungsten BH, Hare & Copper Gold Tungsten, March Brown, Caddis Halfback Nymph, Black and Peacock.

Streamer

Black Marabou Lumo, Hamill's Killer, Grey Ghost, Wooly Bugger (Green, Black, Multicolor), Black Phantom, Parson's Glory, Red Setter, Mrs Simpson, Fuzzy Wuzzy, Hair Dog (Red, Black), Craigs Nighttime, Sili Smelt.

Terrestrials

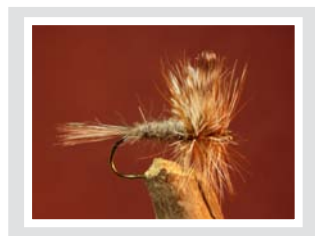
Beetle (Green, Brown, Black), Russell's Sparky Spider, San Juan Worm, Carty's General Terrestrail, Tarrantular (Brown and Black), Willow Grub, Clark's Cicada, Clark's Parabeetle, Dave's Hopper, Passion Vine Hopper.

Emerger (North and South Island)

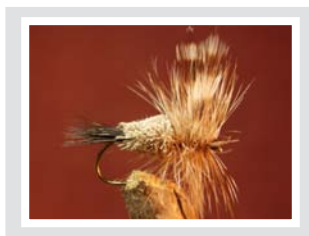
Caddis Emerger, Stus Emerger, CDC Emerger (Deleatidium)

Selected flies with pictures

Dry flies



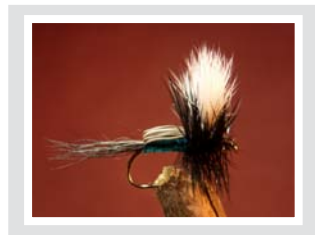
Adams # 10 - 22



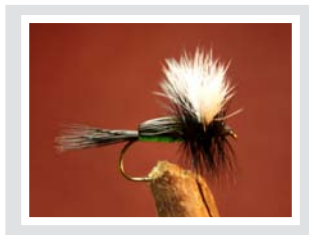
Adams Irresistible # 10 - 16



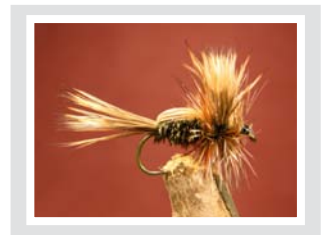
Adams Parachute # 12 - 18



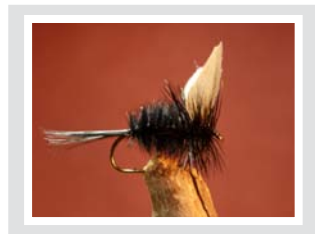
Blow Fly Blue # 10 - 14



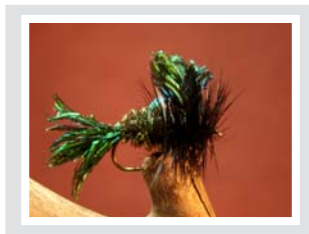
Blow Fly Green # 10 - 14



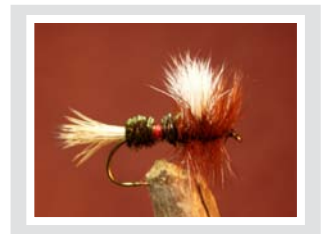
Humpty Peacock # 10 - 14



Black Gnat # 10 - 16

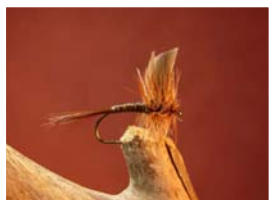


Loves Lure # 10 - 12

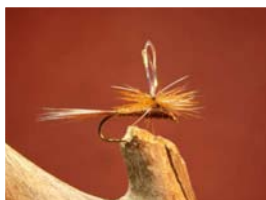


Royal Wulff # 8 - 14

Dry flies



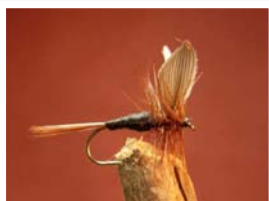
Dads Favourite # 12 - 18



Dads Favourite Parachute # 10 - 16



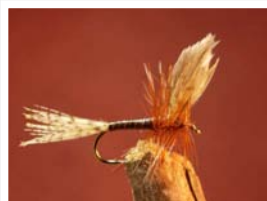
Blue Dun # 12 - 16



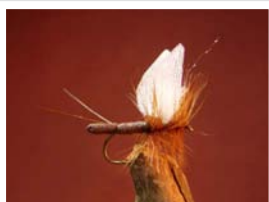
Twilight Beauty # 12 - 16



March Brown # 12 - 16



Kakahi Queen # 12 - 16



Stus High Viz Mayfly # 12 - 16



Spent Spinner # 14 - 16



Goddard Caddis # 10 - 18



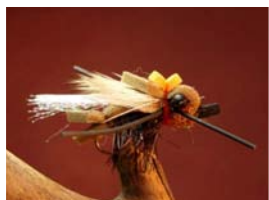
Elk Hair Caddis Brown # 12 - 18



Re Tipped Governor # 12 - 16



Cartys Gff Olive # 8 - 10



Cartys Gff Tan # 8 - 10



Stimulator Olive # 8 - 12

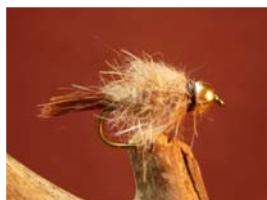


Crystal Stimulator # 8 - 14

Nymphs



Hare and Copper BTB # 10 - 16



Hare and Copper GTB # 10 - 16



Hare and Copper # 10 - 18



Hare and Pheasant # 10 - 16



Hare Pheasant BT # 10 - 16



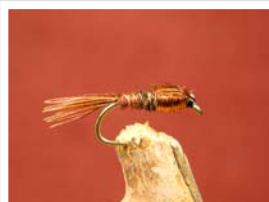
Hares Ear Flashback GTB # 10 - 16



Pheasant Tail Flashb. BTB # 10 - 16



Pheasant Tail Flashb. GTB # 10 - 16



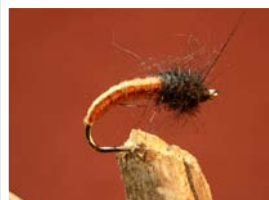
Pheasant Tail GC # 10 - 16



Pheasant Tail GTB # 10 - 16



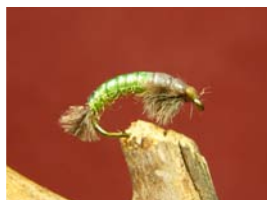
Cadillac Pheasant Tail TB # 10 - 16



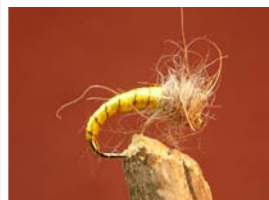
Horn Caddis # 12 - 16



Latex Caddis # 12 - 16

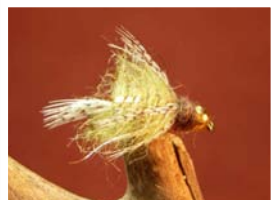


Caddis Net Builder # 12 - 16

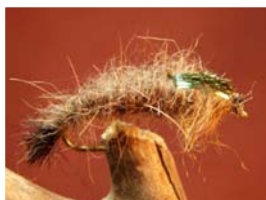


Yellow Caddis # 12 - 16

Nymphs



Caddis Flashb. G.- BH Oli. # 12 - 18



Entwistle's Buller Caddis # 8 - 10



Carty's Coloburcius # 10 - 14



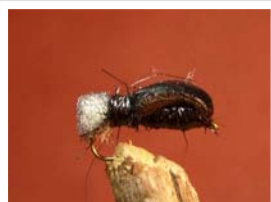
Carty's Stone Green # 8 - 12



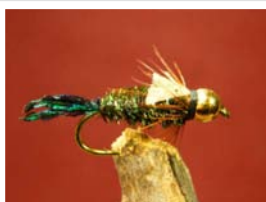
Carty's Stone Brown # 8 - 12



Carty's Stone Black # 8 - 12



Snail # 14



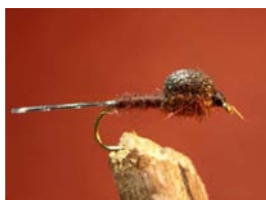
Zug Nymph # 10 - 14



Prince Nymph GB # 10 - 16



Micro May # 14 - 16



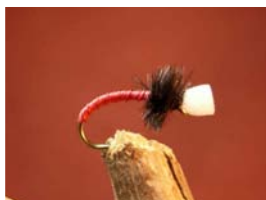
Stue's Pogo # 12 - 18



Dragon Fly # 6 - 12



Oniscigaster # 8 - 10

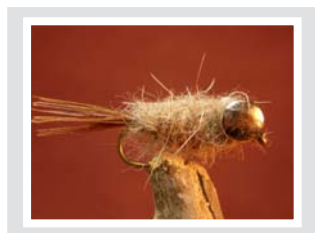


Midge # 12 - 14

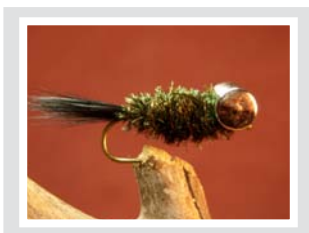


Rub. Leg Cop. John TB Olive # 10 - 16

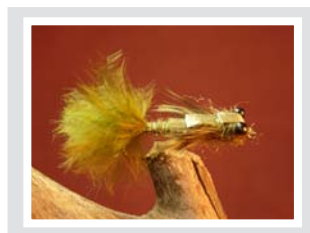
Nymphs



Lead Eye Hare and Copper # 10 - 16



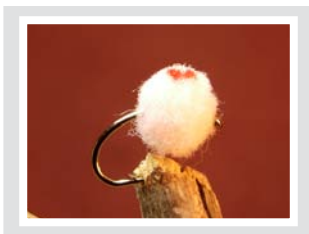
Lead Eye Half Back # 10 - 16



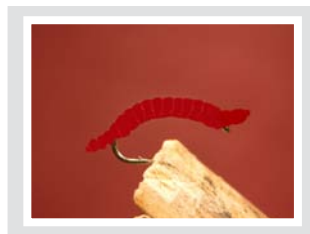
Damsel Nymph # 8 - 12



Black and Peacock # 14 - 16



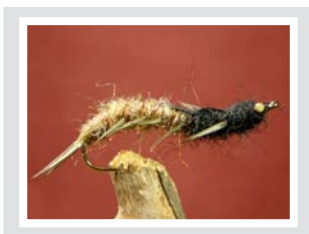
Glo Bug Champagne Red # 10 - 14



Blood Worm # 10 - 16

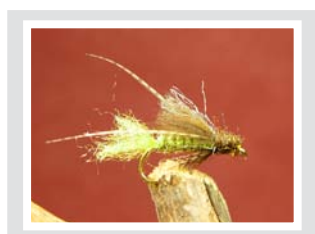


Water Boatman # 14 - 16

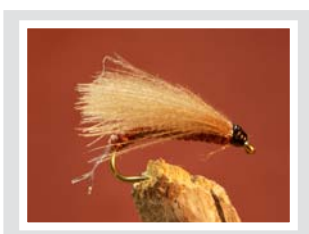


Russel's Toe Biter # 8 - 10

Emerger (North and South Island)



Caddis Emerger # 14 - 16



CDC Emerger (Deleatidium) # 14 - 16



Stus Emerger # 12 - 16

Please take the time to examine the waters for insect activity. This will not only help you choose the right fly, but also allow you to expand your knowledge of the area.

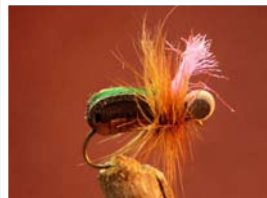
Terrestrials



Beetle Green Fleetle # 12 - 14



Green / Brown Beetle # 12 - 14



Stu Magic Beetle 12 - 14



Willow Grub # 16



Dave Hopper # 8



General Terrestrial 8 - 10



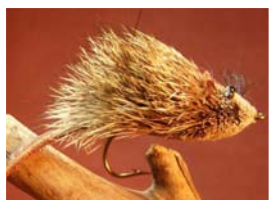
Blair Terrestrial Bug # 8 - 10



San Juan Worm # 8 - 12



Russell's Sparky's Spider # 8 - 10



Mouse # 6 - 10



Tarrantular # 8 - 10



Clark's Cicada # 8 - 10



Cicada # 8 - 10

Streamer



Black Marabou, Blk. M. Lumo # 6 - 10



Grey Ghost # 6 - 10



Hairy Dog # 6 - 10



Hamils Killer # 6 - 10



Mrs. Simpson # 6 - 10



Rabbit Fly Green # 6 - 1



Sili Smelt #



Taupo Tiger # 6 - 10



Craigs Night Time # 6 - 10



Yellow Dorothy # 6 - 1



*Wooly Bugger. Green, Black,
Multi-color # 6 - 10*

You can either tie these flies yourself or, if you prefer, purchase them from one of the many fishing shops in New Zealand.

You will find one of the largest ranges at:

<https://www.flyshop.co.nz>

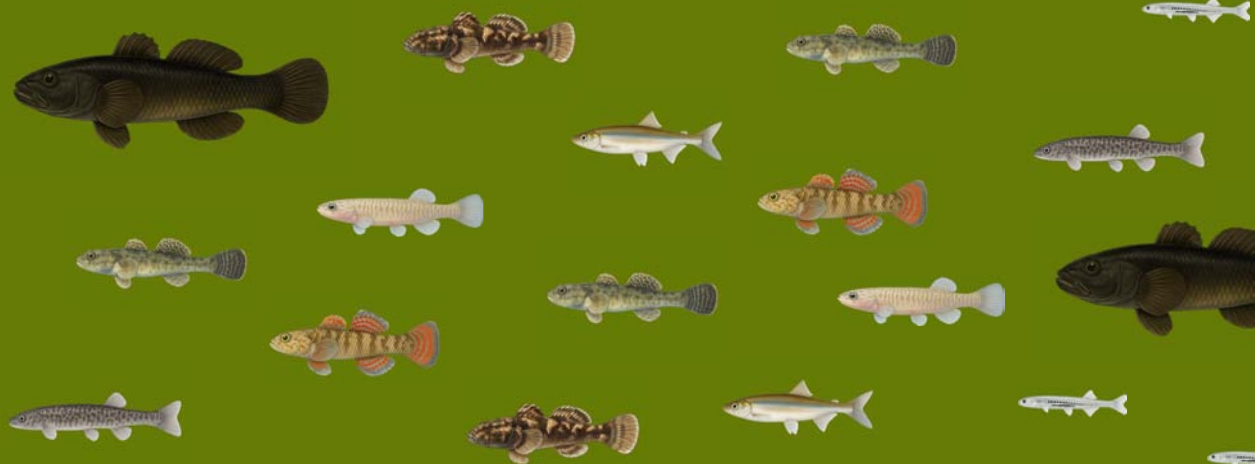
Attracting trout **Food sources throughout the year**

Insects and bait fish

Trout are capable of gaining up to approx. 3 kg per year. However, this is only under optimal conditions.

In the wild, this usually takes 3-5 years. Knowledge of feeding behaviour, water temperatures and other influences helps us to catch our target fish more easily.

Our aim is to use the right imitation of an insect that is found in the trout's environment and to present it to the trout as realistically as possible.



Successful fly fishing in New Zealand depends heavily on reading the available food sources of the trout correctly and adjusting your fly choice accordingly. Trout in New Zealand waters feed mainly on aquatic insects that develop from larvae of water-dwelling species.

These include mostly **mayflies, caddisflies, stoneflies and midge larvae in all stages**. At the same time, trout are fickle feeders and will take land-based insects (terrestrials) that fall into the water, such as **cicadas, beetles, dragonflies** and **flying ants**, and so on. Of course, they also eat small aquatic creatures like **snails, freshwater crayfish** and **small fish** (this includes a New Zealand species of goby called **bully** as well as **galaxias** and **smelt**). In special cases, even **mice**.

Alongside the **food sources**, I want to show here the matching imitations that make up the basics of **flies, nymphs, streamers** and **terrestrials** in New Zealand. There are plenty of other insects that appear more or less frequently depending on the region, but generally these can also be caught with traditional patterns or terrestrials, while others require exact replicas.

New Zealand's wide range of climates, from temperate maritime through subtropical to cool alpine, influences when and where certain food organisms appear or are available.

In the following, we'll look at the three seasons of spring, summer and autumn and distinguish between the North and South Islands to show the main seasonal food sources.

With the sheer number of fly patterns and new inventions, it's not exactly easy to make the right choice. Still, certain patterns have proven themselves, and I'll go into those here – the ones you should definitely have.

Patterns that can be used throughout all three seasons will be discussed separately.

Spring – Awakening of Aquatic Insects

In the New Zealand **spring (September to November)**, nature wakes up after winter, and that happens underwater too. Water temperatures start to rise gradually, and aquatic insects become active again, which draws the trout out of their winter sluggishness. Overall, nymph fishing dominates during spring.

On both islands, **nymphs of mayflies, caddisflies** and **stoneflies** make up the bulk of the trout's diet at this time. The fish search through riffles and runs for these larvae, so anglers should pay close attention to reading the underwater world.

Turn over stones in the shallows to spot the larvae living beneath them (a basic step before any fishing). You'll often find plenty of **mayfly nymphs**, which, when they start to hatch, tend to show up in shades from orange-brown to dark brown. Patterns like the **Pheasant Tail Flashback** or a realistic imitation such as **Russell's No-Hackle Mayfly** in the appropriate size work well here – though there are several others too.

By late spring (October/November), the first insect hatches start to appear. In the evenings, you might see small mayflies hovering over the water, and trout eagerly rise to take the first duns from the surface. There are many species in different sizes and colours that vary regionally.

Depending on the stage, patterns like the Parachute Adams or Adams in size 14/16 are useful. Generally, a dry fly–nymph combination is effective at this time, since there still aren't many adult insects visible on the surface.

Sedges (caddisflies), which come in many variations and prefer gravelly or stony areas, may also show up on mild evenings. By November, you can already fish dry flies successfully – general patterns like the **Humpy** or **Adams** in **size 14/16** imitate small light-brown insects nicely.

Stoneflies exist in a range of species and colours such as **brown, black and green**. It's best to fish these in a combination of fly and nymph to give the stonefly a more active presentation. Brown stoneflies can be fished year-round, while the green and black ones are best targeted in the core months from November to February, depending on region and weather. Effective patterns include **Carty's Stone (green, black, or brown)** and the **Jelly Stonefly Beadhead in size 10/12**.

When fishing with larval imitations of **mayflies, caddisflies, stoneflies** and **midges** in running water, it's generally most effective to present the fly right on or just above the bottom – about 30 cm up – since that's where the larvae mostly stay. In still waters or when larvae are ascending, presenting the fly mid-water can also work.

Midges (chironomids or bloodworms) are another welcome food source for trout. Here, it's mainly the larval stage that matters. They're often found in slow-moving water, cut-off pools with little inflow, or in lakes.

The **larvae** vary in colour depending on the stage, from **reddish to greenish-beige**. The **Blood Worm** pattern is ideal for this. The larvae are only 2–15 mm long, so very small hooks are needed – **size 18/20** is a good choice.

Glo Bugs (fish egg imitations) are also effective at this time. **Size 14/16** in champagne, pink, salmon or light reddish tones work well. When fishing them in rivers, they should be weighted and fished in tandem with a nymph about 30–40 cm apart to reach the bottom. **In lakes**, the egg can be sight-fished during the day in shallow

water, presented alongside a nymph – this can also be effective at night. Passing trout will notice the target, and here larger patterns in size 10/12 are recommended.

Year-Round use of special fly patterns

Because of their colouring, I want to point out briefly that you should always have a few **pink to rose-coloured nymphs in your box** to use in murky water.

Koura (freshwater crayfish) are found in almost all waters, though you rarely see them. If you want to, your best bet is to head to a stream and look for them there. The freshwater crayfish is protected in areas such as national parks, reserves or sacred lakes, especially the females. There are **natural-looking patterns** and streamers that imitate them, but I've yet to meet a fly angler who actually fishes with one.

Terrestrial food plays only a minor role in spring but increases toward the end of the season. Spider imitations, such as **Russell's Spider**, have always been a good choice for me even early in the season, and they keep working well throughout the year. In many areas, particularly on the North Island and in the lower regions of the South Island, **green-shimmering beetles** appear along the banks from November onwards.

These are native **Manuka beetles**, commonly found near bush and forest areas. This **"green beetle"** hatches in huge numbers from late spring into summer and is eagerly taken by trout when it lands on the water. They work especially well on small lakes surrounded by heavy vegetation, so the right fly pattern for them should never be missing from your selection.

Cicadas on the North Island start showing up as early as November, once **ground temperatures reach around 18–20 degrees**. Standard patterns such as **Clark's Cicada** work very well here.

Another phenomenon, especially on the South Island, is the flight of **brown beetles** in the warm spring over meadows and pastures. This beetle swarms on warm evenings in late spring. The adult beetles are nocturnal and hard for fly fishers to imitate in the evening, but the next morning you'll find many of them exhausted, drifting along the edges or in eddies. Trout key in on these rich morsels. Early in the day, a brown beetle imitation fished in the surface film, such as a **Coch-y-Bondhu pattern**, can be very effective.

On the North Island, especially in lakes around Rotorua and Taupo, you'll find baitfish like the smelt, which spawn in the shallows during spring. Also, bullies are common in rivers with sea access. There are five species of bully. Where trout encounter these small fish, streamers such as the Grey Ghost and Sili Smelt in size 8, or a Mrs Simpson in size 8 for bully imitation, can be very effective in spring.

!!! Note !!!

If you tie your own flies, I recommend adding some light Flashabou for reflection to standard streamer patterns such as the green Woolly Bugger or Grey Ghost, as it increases their catching power. Of course, you can also buy ready-made versions or attach it later.

A multicolour version of the Woolly Bugger, mainly green with some brown and Flashabou worked through the body, has proven particularly effective.

Don't hesitate to tie a few large, bushy streamers (around 10–12 cm) with orange as a trigger colour and some Flashabou added. Often, when nothing else works, even in cloudy water, this type of streamer can turn things around.

Another important, though not very nutritious, food source is **snails (shelled freshwater snails)**. They're often found near the banks, and in shallow water they can tempt cruising brown trout. Cast your **snail imitation** onto a sandbank where you've previously spotted a brown trout – due to its territorial behaviour, it will pass by regularly and notice any change. You'll need a bit of patience, and this type of fishing is rather unusual for fly anglers.

An additional opportunity to target large trout comes during the so-called whitebait season. At this time, juvenile fish of the **Galaxiidae family** migrate from the sea into river mouths, lower river sections or nearby wetlands. This spectacle takes place on both the North and South Islands, where experienced trout lie in wait for a hearty snack.

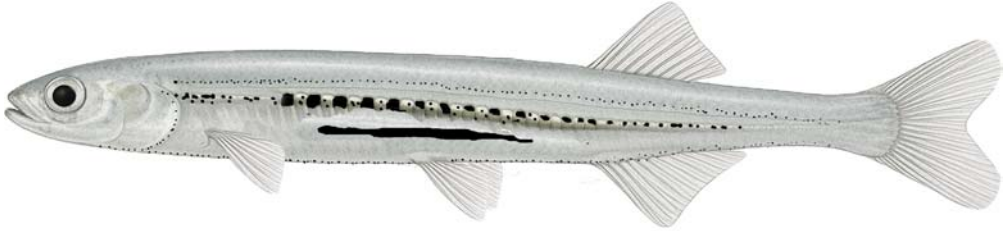
The main period for this migration varies by species, but most movement of the most common genus, *Inanga*, occurs between **August** and **November**, with the peak in September and October. **Whitebait** are around 3–5 cm long, and when fully grown, about 8–11 cm. The whitebait stage can be effectively imitated with small-sized patterns such as the Grey Ghost or Sili Smelt.

The illustrations depicted in this book may differ slightly from the actual living species.

This genus includes:

(see page 222)

- **Īnanga (*Galaxias maculatus*)** – the main baitfish, known as whitebait, translucent in appearance (Aug/Sep/Oct/Nov).



- **Banded Kōkopu (*Galaxias fasciatus*)** – adult stage (Sep/Oct).



Due to their limited populations, the following species can be disregarded:

- Kōaro (Sep/Oct)
- Giant Kōkopu (Nov)
- Shortjaw Kōkopu (Jun/Jul)

Those who want to make targeted use of the whitebait season and fish both at river mouths and further inland should visit the following website:

<https://www.doc.govt.nz/nature/native-animals/freshwater-fish/>

<https://www.wcrc.govt.nz/environment/water/whitebaiting/whitebait-stands-location-map>

Your approach in spring should be to explore and map the available food supply underwater, while keeping an eye out for the first signs of insect hatching or beetle activity. And, if necessary, switch to dry flies or terrestrial patterns.

Summer – The buffet above and below the water is open

Summer (December to February) is high season for fly fishers in New Zealand and a time when trout enjoy an abundance of food. In this warm part of the year, there's plenty to eat both in the water and on land, but it also takes careful observation to figure out what the trout are currently focused on. A good trick is to shake a bush or tree near the water and use an insect net to collect whatever drops out.

Aquatic insects are now hatching in huge numbers. Many New Zealand rivers have consistent mayfly hatches throughout the summer months, especially early in the morning or from dusk into late evening when the temperatures are ideal for insect activity.

Caddisflies (evening sedge hatches) also drive trout regularly to the surface to sip the dancing insects off the film. That's when it's time to quickly switch to an emerger or the right dry fly. Reliable patterns include the **Adams, Twilight Beauty, or CDC & Caddis Emerger**.

On lakes, specific lake-type imitations are key – for instance, a **Crane fly (sizes 6/8)** as a dry fly. **Dragonflies (size 6/8)** and **Damsel nymphs (sizes 10/12)** are usually taken in their larval stage. On the South Island, at South Mavora Lake for example, I've landed two fish on a remarkably well-tied **dry dragonfly pattern (size 6)** that I was given. The tricky part is tying it so it casts properly, folds its wings during the cast, lands upright and floats well, yet remains durable against strikes.

Another classic is the **Water Boatman (sizes 14–16)**, common in lakes, streams and very slow pools. The nymph looks like a beetle and is fished just below the surface or mid-water. It works well when retrieved in short strips of about 15–20 cm using an intermediate leader, fishing at roughly 0.5–1 m depth, not on the bottom.

As always, the more realistic your imitations, the higher your chances of success.

Despite the many surface activities, the underwater world shouldn't be overlooked in summer. During the day, especially around midday when it's bright, or later in the afternoon when the water temperature peaks, trout often stop rising and move into deeper pools or faster riffles.

There they continue feeding on nymphs and larvae. So always keep an eye on light conditions and water temperature to understand their feeding behaviour correctly.

At this time, **nymph rigs (or a dry fly with a dropper nymph)** remain important. Trout can be more selective now. In the often low, clear water of midsummer, they're cautious and have plenty of time to inspect a fly. Watch their reactions closely – if they ignore a big stonefly nymph, switching to a smaller, more natural Pheasant Tail can make all the difference.

A short note on leader setup and fly presentation

A subtle presentation using long, **tapered leaders of 3.2–4 metres and smaller patterns (sizes 14–18)** can be necessary, especially in clear rivers. A breaking strain of 8–12 lb is the right choice here. Using a lighter tippet means more stress for the fish, as it takes longer to bring it in.

Lower breaking strains and thinner, more tapered tippet sections may increase the chance of a take but are unsuitable for landing large fish and require real skill. Trout hooked this way are often lost.

When using longer leaders, the connection between leader and fly line becomes crucial. Especially when fishing alone, you must be able to reel the entire setup through the rod guides, otherwise you might hook a fish but struggle to net it.

An „**Albright knot**“ is a good option for connecting the main line to the leader. I also use small tippet rings placed about one metre from the end. Indicators should be kept as small as possible, and it is often better to use a fly as the indicator instead. In very challenging waters, where fish are easily spooked, or when specifically targeting big trout, you might want to avoid using an indicator altogether when nymph fishing.

Continuing with summer

Terrestrial insects reach their peak in summer and often provide the most spectacular fishing and takes. **Cicadas** are at the top of the list. From midsummer onwards, usually January on the South Island, these loud insects fill the forests and meadows of both islands, their constant buzzing impossible to miss.

For trout, **cicadas are like steaks** that fall into the water, large, rich in energy and easy to spot. There are several cicada species in New Zealand. **Some are green and black to solid black**, others more orange brown. It is worth paying attention and adjusting your fly pattern and size accordingly, though a rough resemblance

often does the trick. Presentation is more important, a twitching, drifting cicada is best imitated by short gentle pulls in slow current.

As in spring, **beetles** play a major role in summer. Another good imitation for green beetles is the **Foam Beetle** tied with rubber legs. These insects are still active, and larger black or brown beetles as well as **grasshoppers** often get blown onto the water, especially on windy days. When a breeze ripples the surface and reduces visibility, these patterns can bring success.

Smaller terrestrials also matter. **Ants**, especially flying ants, often swarm in masses after summer rain and land on the water. Trout can become completely fixated on them for a time. **Blowflies**, the metallic blue or black ones, are another constant feature. A **blowfly pattern** with a **blue** or **green** underside can produce fish all year. They work best on hot days, over calm pools or lake surfaces. Even **wasp** and bee imitations are occasionally taken by trout, though personally I have only caught one that way.

Another notable terrestrial event in New Zealand is the **willow grub**, a tiny caterpillar about six millimetres long (**sizes 16 to 20**). From **mid December** through March and into autumn, small glowing green larvae hang under willow leaves, and trout key in on them.

I once fished on the South Island's West Coast and had just two strikes all day, one on a streamer and one on a dry fly. Later, someone told me I should have tried a willow grub pattern, which I did not have in my box. Trout feeding on these often ignore everything else.

In short, summer is the season when almost every imaginable food source for trout is available. As the Kiwis say, "**Match the hatch, or at least the buffet.**"

Autumn – transition to nymph fishing

In **autumn, March to May**, the waters gradually settle down again. Days get shorter, nights cooler, and many insects disappear, while there is still plenty happening below the surface. Trout sense the coming winter and often feed hard in early autumn before food becomes scarce.

Aquatic insects now gain importance again. **Mayfly hatches** in the early weeks of autumn, up to March, can be very productive. On sunny March afternoons there can still be hatch situations much like in spring, and small dry flies can score once more.

From **April** onwards, however, surface activity drops off sharply, especially on the South Island. Most trout turn their attention back to food near the riverbed.

Nymphs remain the trump card. **Pheasant Tails** and **Hare's Ear**, and similar patterns in medium sizes, keep catching reliably, particularly in deep runs and pools.

An effective strategy in autumn is again to fish a dry fly as an indicator with a nymph about thirty to forty centimetres below it. That way you cover both levels. Pay attention to good knots and check them, and every hook, after each fish. Replace any hook that has opened up straight away.

In **April**, brown trout are close to spawning. They are aggressive and will snap at baitfish more readily. This is a good time to fish a **streamer**, which by the way works well all year in lakes near the shore or in river mouths. Imitations of smelt and bullies are now in demand. Patterns such as the **Woolly Bugger**, **Hamill's Killer**, or **Mr Simpson**, among other streamers, are useful here.

Terrestrials play only a minor role in autumn. In the first half of March there can still be warm days when **late born cicadas** or **grasshoppers** bumble about and are taken by trout. **Blowflies** and **wasps** can also remain active in late summer conditions in March. But as autumn advances, frost and rain take care of most insects on land.

On the North Island there may be regions where the odd terrestrial still appears during the day into April, for example in the subtropical part of the island. From April onwards, though, **aquatic food** dominates again. Fly fishers should therefore stick to **nymphs** or **wet flies**. At most, striking attractor dries like the **Royal Wulff** or a **red Humpy** can still serve as an indicator or to provoke sluggish trout.

On the South Island, autumn is short and often sudden. From mid March many areas cool quickly, and snow in the hills or the first night frosts are no rarity the further south you go. Terrestrial activity ends abruptly. In April the fly fishing here focuses entirely on **nymphing by day** and possibly **streamer fishing at dusk**. There is also an extra challenge in the autumn season. The trout have had a long fishing season and are very experienced at spotting mistakes.

Please spend time on feeding behaviour, the insects, and the matching patterns. Watch videos and visit websites that cover these topics so you are well prepared.

!!! Important !!!

When you cast your flies, focus on a gentle lay down and do not crack the line. First the fly touches down, then the leader, and last of all the fly line lands on the surface. That way you keep things quiet and you increase your chances.

If you want information about fish species and their distribution, you will find precise details on the NIWA website:

<https://niwa.co.nz/freshwater/nz-freshwater-fish-database/>

!!! Note!!!

Please make sure you read the article on „Spinner and bait fishing“. We have included further trout tips there that also apply to fly fishing. It helps especially with pinpointing spots on lakes or at river mouths, or near the sea, where trout prefer to hunt baitfish and where streamers come into play.

It also explains other links that matter in relation to water temperature and feeding behaviour.

Water temperature and its influence

You will find it easier to locate your target fish if you understand how water temperature affects them. This becomes especially important as summer approaches, when rising temperatures change feeding behaviour and drive trout into deeper, cooler areas of pools. This is one reason why I personally prefer fishing from October to December, when water temperature is still less of a factor and I can usually expect consistent success throughout the day.

Tony Entwistle has written an excellent piece about the impact of increasing water temperatures, discussing factors such as survival range, growth limits, stress thresholds and feeding behaviour. A related study was also carried out in the Nelson region. Many of you may already know this information from your angling certification training, but this report offers useful local insights that can help improve your catch rate.

Entwistle notes that feeding activity, depending on water temperature, often does not begin until around 11 to 11.30 in the morning, and during hot weather, the best fishing time can already be over by two or three in the afternoon. He also states that the feeding activity of brown trout slows significantly once the water temperature exceeds 18 degrees and ceases altogether in many rivers at about 21 degrees¹.

You can find the article on this topic at:

<https://www.flyfishingwithtony.com/post/when-the-going-gets-hot>

Source: ¹When the going gets hot, Tony Entwistle, 19.01.2024, <https://www.flyfishingwithtony.com/post/when-the-going-gets-hot>



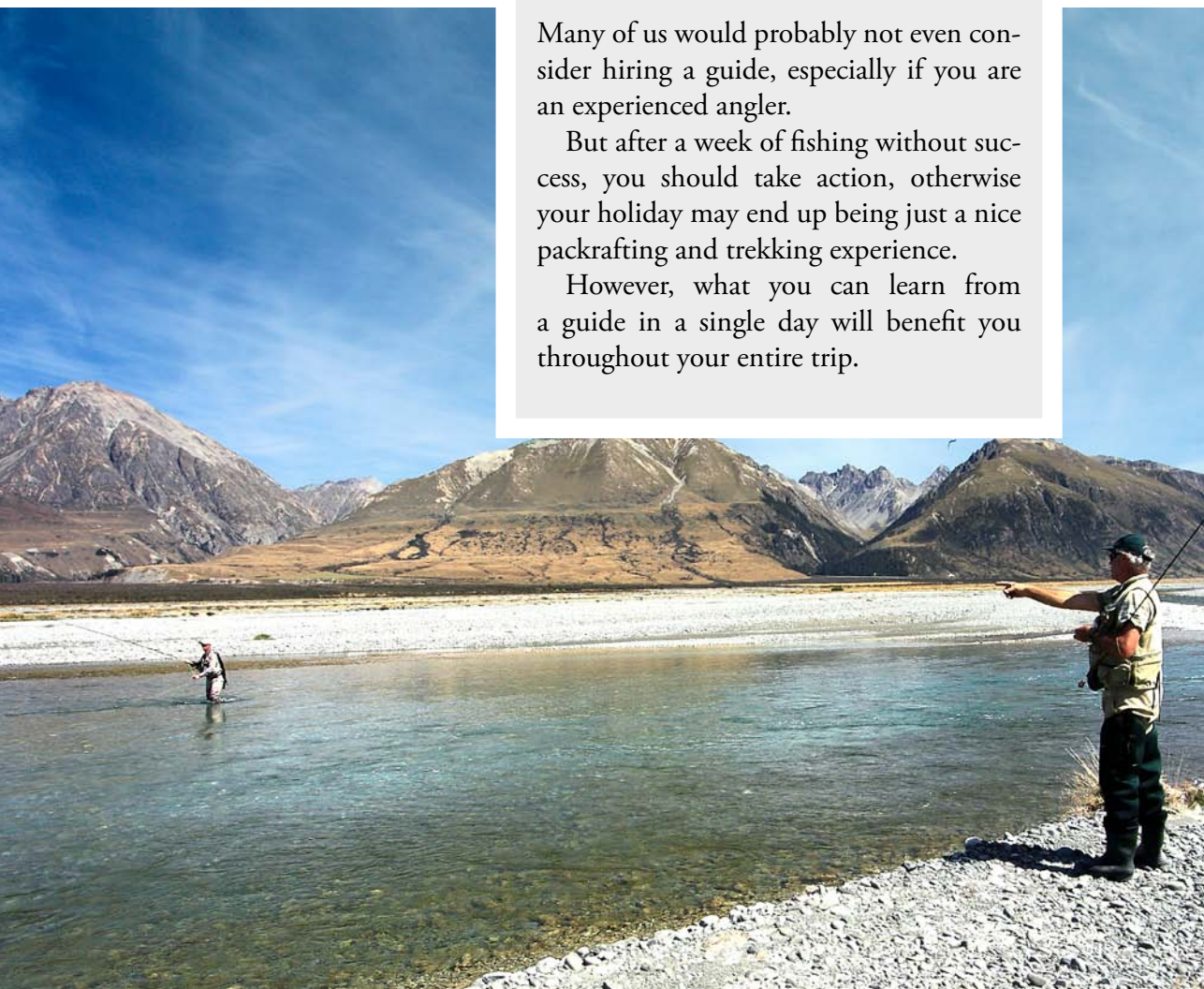
Enjoy the day **Guiding – Learn from the best!**

Why not do it this way?

Many of us would probably not even consider hiring a guide, especially if you are an experienced angler.

But after a week of fishing without success, you should take action, otherwise your holiday may end up being just a nice packrafting and trekking experience.

However, what you can learn from a guide in a single day will benefit you throughout your entire trip.



Would you also like to experience what it's like to go fishing with a guide?

If yes, then from now on your day will be fully organised! There's no need for any tiresome thinking about things such as:

- How do I get to the river?
- Where's the best place to fish, and where should I go if I'm not catching anything?
- Which lure should I try next?
- Have I packed my food?
- Can I really carry the rucksack all day with my back problems, and so on, and so on...?

After all, you want to be satisfied with the guide's performance. Your guide is responsible for you and for carrying out the service you've booked – your guiding tour. He must be well prepared, and nothing should be left to chance. That would, of course, be the ideal case.

What is guiding?

Guiding is first and foremost to be understood as a service, in other words, a professional offering. There are no limits to the variety it can take.

In general, guiding consists of leading, supporting, assisting, and sharing knowledge, and if offered or desired, it can also be booked as a full service and expanded into different forms of assistance.

Why should you book a guide for at least one day during your New Zealand holiday?

The real question is whether you need or want to afford a guide, and that depends on several factors such as **safety, time, money, service, prestige, age, physical condition, social contact, knowledge, skill, equipment, language, comfort, success, and local knowledge.**

Let's look at the reasons why you should consider hiring a guide:

- **Safety** is probably one of the best arguments for bringing a guide on board, especially for travellers who are on their own, have little local knowledge, and no experience wading or reading rivers in this country.
- **Time** is another major factor, especially for people with demanding jobs. A holiday should be the highlight of the year and deliver results. That only happens when you have the right knowledge, or when a guide or a friend helps you make the most of your time.
- **Money**, unfortunately, always plays a role. It should be clear that a service is a professional performance and has to be paid for. How often you decide to afford such a service is up to you and, in the end, probably depends on your budget.
- **Prestige** – if you happen to be in the position to hire a guide, then by all means, enjoy it.
- You might be of advanced **age**, not in the best physical shape, and looking for company. Maybe you don't have a friend who can help you cross the river safely. When things get difficult, there should be someone there to make the right decisions for you. Especially if you rely on medication, you should not go without a companion. Some guides carry a satellite phone, so they can help you immediately in an emergency. Now you can fully enjoy your holiday and your adventure.
- **No book can replace a fishing guide**, but this book aims to help you make the right decisions for your trip and give you the knowledge you need for a great fishing holiday. Reading up on this will enable you to plan your fishing trip

effectively. But questions about the current water level, changes in flora and fauna, feeding conditions, recently hatched insects, or simply “Where are the fish today?” can only be answered daily and directly on site by a local person or a guide.

- It is also extremely important that you assess your **fishing abilities** realistically. If you don't, you are very likely to have one of the worst fishing holidays of your life. Preparation is key – whether it's understanding the water and insects, mastering your casting, your rig setup, or your equipment. A guide can, of course, teach you all of this. By hiring a guide, you make use of their **service, skills, and knowledge**. Your guide doesn't just look after you while you're fishing – you can also pick his brain all day long.
- **Language** is only a secondary issue. Most guides have looked after people from many different countries, so they can easily make themselves understood. And in most cases, you'll speak at least some basic English, and I believe anglers understand each other anywhere in the world.
- You may want the **comfort** of having your fishing experience fully planned, being looked after, and knowing that all uncertainties have been considered.
- **However, guaranteeing success is generally unrealistic.** No one knows how skilled you are at fishing. The same goes for any promise that you'll catch a big fish – there are simply too many factors beyond the guide's control.
- One area where a guide is unbeatable is their **local knowledge** of the area where fishing takes place.

But there are exceptions. Thanks to local knowledge and agreements with land-owners, usually farmers or Māori tribes, some guides can take you to places where you have the chance to target truly big fish, regularly and in solitude – fish from 8 pounds upwards.

Of course, every angler's interests differ and are not all about fish size. You'll also find good opportunities in many rivers and lakes whose banks are not privately owned. You can usually ask any farmer for permission to cross their land to reach a river or lake if there's no public access nearby, and most will allow it.

The fact is, guiding can provide the right level of support for solo travellers, first-time visitors to New Zealand, beginners, and even experienced anglers to improve their success rate. Especially when it comes to spotting fish in their environment,

in the water, on the bottom, or in different structures. It also helps to use the right fishing techniques and select the right, effective lure. A guide gives you practical experience on the water – this saves you a lot of time and ensures a more successful holiday.

And if all these points still aren't enough to help you decide, let me tell you about my own experience.

Let's act like a professional!

Before I started researching for my first book, I had never used a guide.

For that reason, I can say today that I wasted a lot of time and paid my share of tuition fees before I managed to achieve the success I was aiming for. In my opinion, it's far better to book a guide and get something in return for your money than to spend days or even weeks fishing blindly and wasting time.

Any professional angler, when in unfamiliar territory, will book a guide to bring their knowledge up to date as quickly as possible. Only that way can they reach their goal of increasing their catch rate.

If you've now come closer to deciding to hire a guide, the next step is to make the right choice so that you actually get the service you're paying for.

In the maze of offers and promises

To get a sense of the range of guiding options, we need to look at the flood of regionally different offers, the price–performance ratio, and the possible standards.

Since guiding in New Zealand doesn't follow any fixed standard or uniform pricing system, it's particularly difficult to assess the quality of what's being offered. Individuality is part of the deal, and because each guide aims to tailor the experience to the client, the range of offers is enormous – but that still tells you nothing about the actual quality or standard of the service.

Options range from hourly bookings to half-day, full-day, and multi-day trips that follow a set plan. These can be booked with or without accommodation and meals. Overnight stays might be in the wild under canvas, in a hut, in the guide's own lodge, or in the accommodation you've booked yourself.

To improve your skills, you can take part in casting and fly tying courses, either individually or in a group. The necessary equipment is provided or can be hired for a small fee if you have left your own equipment at home. When it's time

to go fishing, you'll reach your chosen spot by jeep or by helicopter, and from there you can, if you wish, continue with other means of transport such as a kayak, raft, packraft, motorboat, or belly boat.

Finally, there's also the option of a completely individual fishing trip designed specifically for you, which can take place in different regions or across several locations. In this case, one or more guides may accompany you throughout the country.

It seems there really are no limits to what's possible. You still have to decide whether to book a guide at the beginning, in the middle, or at the end of your trip.

As a rule, I would always recommend updating your skills before you travel, and then booking a guide in New Zealand at the start of your fishing journey.

Doing so will have a positive influence on the rest of your trip and will only require fine-tuning afterwards. The criteria mentioned above should help you make that decision. If you recognise yourself in them, then it's up to you to make the booking.

When making your booking, you invest in yourself

Now it depends on your wallet, and for some that may be a little painful. But always remember what you get in return: adventure, comfort, knowledge and fun. That makes it all the more important to ensure that you get the best value for money. Shop around; there are always several fishing guides in a region, offering different prices and services. And in the end, what matters is that you are satisfied.

The costs for a guide, unfortunately, are unavoidable

Guides in New Zealand charge between 750 NZD and 1500 NZD for a full day. Usually, you can book the same guide for two people at the same rate, though some may ask for a small additional fee for that service. A guiding day typically lasts eight to ten hours.

Helicopter costs are charged separately and are around 1300 NZD to 2700 NZD per flight hour for the entire helicopter, depending on the number of passengers. Usually, the flight to your destination takes between 10 and 30 minutes.

What does the “best service” look like, and how can you determine it?

Having a clear idea of the level of service or guidance you want will help a lot. Otherwise, I’ve put together a list of questions that can help you find the right guide and the right service.

- 1.) Are you trained in teaching, and what references do you have?
- 2.) Do you have first aid training?
- 3.) Where did you receive your qualification to guide?
- 4.) How many years have you been working in this profession?
- 5.) How many days per year do you guide?
- 6.) What else do you do to ensure my safety?
- 7.) How long does a fishing day last?
- 8.) Do you fish yourself while I’m trying to catch fish?
- 9.) Which languages do you speak?
- 10.) What means of transport do we use?
- 11.) How much time do we need to get to the water?
- 12.) Is there an option to fish two rivers or lakes in one day?
- 13.) What does our daily schedule look like?
- 14.) In which region do we mainly fish?
- 15.) What happens if I become ill during or before my trip and can’t use the guide?
- 16.) What happens to my booking if the waters are unfishable?

- 17.) Do I need to pay a deposit, and how much is it?
- 18.) What's the average size of the catchable fish?
- 19.) What are the total costs, and what do I get for them?
- 20.) Which of my desired services can this guide provide?
- 21.) How do you ensure we're fishing in a location that isn't under heavy angling pressure?
- 22.) Do you have a satellite phone (since only a few guides do)?

If you bombard a guide with so many questions at once, he'll probably want to run for the hills. You can also first check his website and then follow up later with any questions that remain.

I've found that, in most cases, a well-structured website points to an organised, forward-thinking way of working where nothing is left to chance. But if we anglers are honest, most of us simply want one thing: a great fishing experience. Because when we catch plenty of big fish, all the mistakes and annoyances of the day are quickly forgotten and forgiven. In the end, it all comes down to one thing – the fish.

What types of guides are there?

As always, the good and the not so good!

I experienced this myself when a guide forgot his glasses and ended up almost clubbing a roughly ten-pound brown trout with the net instead of landing it. Only when my girlfriend pointed out, once we were back in the car, that the guide had left his glasses on the dashboard did I realise why he kept asking her whether she could see the fish.

It may have been coincidence that he forgot them, but it was highly unprofessional and simply shouldn't happen. It would have been better if he had gone back to get them. If you ever notice such a serious issue affecting your experience, stop immediately and sort it out.

That's why you should always do a quick cross-check and ask the guide about anything that seems important to you. That way, you can actually enjoy your day.

After the less-than-great guides, there are, of course, plenty of professionals and top professionals. They're storytellers, entertainers, lifesavers, and, most importantly, first-class fishing guides.

But one thing needs to be said in advance – there's no obvious difference between a freelance guide and one who's part of an organisation. There are associations that have adopted a code of conduct, but despite any rules or regulations they set, what really matters are the guide's personal skills, his performance, and his ability to deliver good service. You just need to make sure that your guide holds all the necessary licences, especially if helicopter access to national parks is involved.

Unfortunately, within these organisations, actual skills – whether in teaching or in casting technique – aren't formally assessed. So, you can really only rely on advertising claims or recommendations from friends, or what you find on the guide's website.

Also, guiding means leading, not fishing. What I mean is: not every guide is a good caster, and he shouldn't be fishing while he's supposed to be guiding you. The focus should be on what was already mentioned – looking after you and providing the full **“carefree package.”** So, make sure the service you expect matches your guide's abilities.

Many guides have turned their hobby into a profession. Not all of them guide full-time; some have another job alongside it. How often they can guide depends on the average number of bookings and whether the conditions even allow them to do so. The reasons are the shorter season and the weather conditions, particularly on the South Island. A well-known guide on the North Island will typically take clients fishing around 120 days a year, while one on the South Island averages about 60 days.

The life of a guide is tougher than you might think. Most good guides work almost daily during the peak season – seven days a week. The busiest months are January, February, and March. From April to September, business slows down again and only peaks once more during the winter run. All other months are considered the off-season.

When does guiding become a source of stress?

For some of you, it's when you decide to book a guide; for others, it's when you're accompanied by one for the first time. You have to get used to the idea of guiding. Always walking behind someone else and waiting to have the fish more or less handed to you goes against your ambition, your standards, and your desire to prove yourself.

Even I found this quite nerve-racking at first, because when I'm out hiking, I like to walk ahead of everyone else, and when I'm near the water, I like to give in to my obsession of spotting fish. It's easy to start feeling under pressure, unsure of what's expected of you, and wanting to do everything perfectly. But no one expects that from you.

After all, you're on holiday. Don't turn it into a stressful day, even if you keep striking too early and pulling the fly out of the fish's mouth. If you don't catch as many fish as you'd hoped, you'll still find that you've had a great day with your guide. The first day with a guide is always a learning day, and that's exactly how you should see it.

Who would I advise not to book a guide?

- If your personality doesn't allow you to be led by another person.
- If you know that you're difficult to satisfy by nature. If you can't follow someone else's lead and always need to be the one in charge.
- If you can't see that someone simply wants to support you, not boss you around.
- If you like to blame others for your lack of success. If you see yourself as a loser whenever you don't reach your goal.

Under these conditions, you won't have much fun with your guide – more likely, you'll end up in conflict.

What does a guide expect from you?

Nothing you don't want or can't do. However, you should be honest with your guide about your skills and weaknesses in fishing. Don't overestimate yourself – it's better to aim a level lower.

Here's a bit of advice: let your guide assess your abilities and then choose the water together that best suits your skills.

Most guides practise **catch and release** and don't like to see large fish taken from the water. It's mainly about protecting the resource, which is understandable. Still, you shouldn't deny yourself the pleasure of trying a nice portion-sized trout

with salmon-coloured flesh once or twice during your holiday – ***but take it from a lake, not from a river, to protect the stocks.***

What questions can you ask a guide?

Simply all those that you feel are relevant to fishing and to making your experience as enjoyable as possible.

Coordination between guides

In many regions, guides coordinate among themselves which days they'll fish certain rivers or specific sections, to keep the fishing pressure as low as possible. So, it might be that a particular stretch of river is only fished every three days, giving you the best possible chance to pursue your fish in peace.

What is a renowned name worth?

There are quite a few well-known names in New Zealand. Around 200 organised and independent fishing guides in the country focus on freshwater fishing, and naturally, some stand out through their own development and achievements.

They make films, write books, build rods, and invent new, innovative fly patterns. But none of that necessarily says anything about their actual guiding skills. It simply shows that they engage deeply with the subject of fish and are willing to share their knowledge.

Highly professional guides usually set the standard for everyone else. Through their structured, innovative ways of working, they lead the field and shape the profession. You can tell who they are because people talk about them – and others try to copy them.

How good can your friend be as a guide?

Having a friend act as your guide can, of course, be an advantage – provided that their knowledge comes close to that of a professional guide. In that case, you can increase your catch rate just as you would with a hired guide.

Another approach, however, would be to do the following.

Increase your catch rate by not fishing!

Four eyes focused on one spot simply see more than two. Instead of both of you fishing separately and blindly, one of you can take on the role of the guide and focus entirely on helping the other catch a fish. This works particularly well if both of you have already spent some time with a professional guide beforehand.

Start by examining the structure of the water, observing insect activity, and agreeing on your strategy and choice of lure. That way, you avoid misunderstandings and work more efficiently.

Switching roles every hour benefits both of you. This approach works especially well on a narrow, clear river, where your friend can spot fish for you from the opposite bank, or you can do the same for each other.

I know how much you love fishing, but don't see this as a punishment. See it as an advantage, helping you reach your target fish faster. It's also a great experience to guide someone else for a change.

Basics

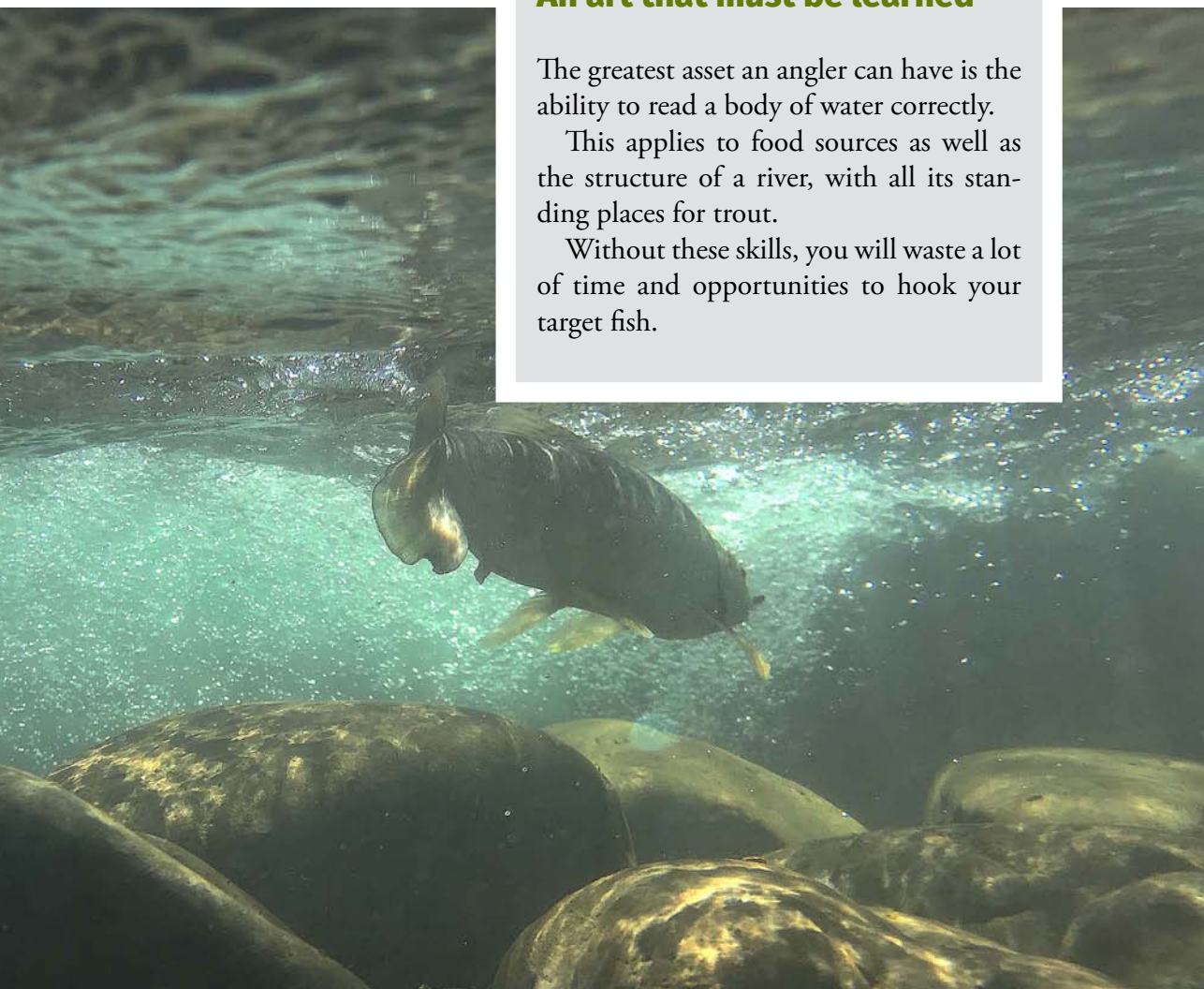
Reading the body of water correctly

An art that must be learned

The greatest asset an angler can have is the ability to read a body of water correctly.

This applies to food sources as well as the structure of a river, with all its standing places for trout.

Without these skills, you will waste a lot of time and opportunities to hook your target fish.



A key to successful trout fishing

New Zealand is famous for sight fishing, which naturally means we often encounter crystal-clear rivers. However, these differ greatly in structure and colour, depending on the riverbed composition and surrounding vegetation.

Sight fishing means spotting the fish before it spots you. The deeper the trout holds near the bottom, the harder it is to see. Broad rivers, whitewater, submerged logs, leaves (tannins), and rocky terrain can make this even more difficult. And even when the river is coloured after rain, we should still be able to locate our target fish.

It's worth distinguishing between species here. Brown trout prefer calmer water and seek areas of low resistance, while rainbow trout are often found right in the current.

Before making your first cast, observe the trout closely. Is it feeding? On what? Is it restless, calm, or fully focused on feeding?

How to approach it?

Start by finding an elevated spot. With your polarised glasses (sun position matters), get a clear overview of the river and its structure. This is especially useful when spotting trout close to the bank or near a slope. Take a moment to memorise potential holding spots where you've seen fish. A quick photo or a note on a pad can help you remember the details.

If you can't see the opposite bank clearly, it may be worth crossing the river before fishing, or fishing one half up to the midline before moving over. Alternatively, another angler can take position on the opposite bank and help you spot fish.

Of course, only do this if crossing is completely safe. Some anglers prefer to rely on casting skills instead. But casting at a fish you cannot see always carries the risk of missing it entirely.

When you start fishing, move slowly and carefully along the bank, like a stalking cat. The narrower the river, the more important this becomes. Start at the lower end of a stretch or pool and fish upstream, covering about a 90-degree arc from the outside bank towards the middle.

If the water is cloudy and you can't see the fish, begin with a short line, about 5 m plus leader, and work your way forward gradually.

What to look for in the water?

Trout don't hold just anywhere in a river – they follow clear energetic and structural patterns.

Good holding water offers:

- Shelter from strong current (for example behind rocks or near river bends)
- Access to food (channelled through feeding lanes in the current)
- Cover (depth, shade, structure)

If these elements are missing, it's unlikely you'll find trout there, no matter how promising the spot looks. That's why you sometimes find beautiful, clear pools that hold few or no fish.

From theory to practice

Even with solid knowledge, things often differ in practice. Trout don't always behave predictably. Sometimes they stay in calm areas with little food for no apparent reason.

I've often noticed this with large, slender trout – sometimes they're old, sick, or have been caught too often before. Experience and flexibility are key to recognising such exceptions rather than rigidly following textbook patterns.

Learning through observation and mistakes

Take this theory with you and watch other anglers closely. Don't cast at random spots simply because you can't yet read the water. Especially in New Zealand, where sight fishing is common, frustration is inevitable if you can't recognise structure and flow, particularly when trout are hard to spot.

So always read the water before you start fishing.

Ask yourself:

- Are there enough structural features that trout would use?

- What kind of structures are present?
- How does the current flow?
- Where are the likely resting spots?
- Where are the main feeding areas?
- Where would the bigger trout hold?
- Where would you expect to find groups of fish?
- This is how you build skill and routine. And whenever you don't catch fish, analyse why – that's where real learning happens.

!!! Note !!!

If you're inexperienced, it's worth hiring a local guide for at least a day. You'll learn a lot and avoid costly mistakes that waste valuable time.

Is reading the water more important than casting technique?

Mastering good casting technique is essential, but it won't help you find fish. It's the combination of both that leads to success. First and foremost, it's about understanding the water – recognising structure, current seams, feeding lanes and holding areas – then applying the right casting technique to reach them effectively.

Learning to read water

No two rivers look the same, but they follow the same natural principles. The goal is to locate spots where trout can hold with minimal effort while still feeding efficiently. Since food is carried by the current, most trout hold near current edges. Oxygen levels also play a significant role.

Key river structures

Despite all their differences, rivers and streams follow a basic pattern. Water flows through riffles – narrow, fast, turbulent sections – into pools.

A pool can be divided into three zones: head, middle and tail.

- At the head, fast water enters, the river widens and deepens through scouring, and the current slows down.
- The middle section is the deepest and calmest, often holding the largest trout.
- At the tail, the water shallows again and speeds up before flowing into the next riffle.

That's the classic pool structure.

Pools, however, can change after floods or sediment movement. Depth may vary across the pool, often sloping to one side, especially in bends. Some pools can widen into almost still stretches, depending on water level and surrounding geography.

Conditions trout tend to avoid

- No vegetation near the water (less insect life and food input)
- No natural food sources within the river
- No clear current lines (poor concentration of food)
- No bottom structure (little shelter, higher energy demand)
- No oxygen input (due to lack of current, waterfalls or turbulence)

Recognising and fishing pocket water

“Pocket water” describes fast-flowing sections broken by large boulders. Behind each obstacle, small calm zones – pockets – form.

Here, the current slows and small whirlpools dig out hollows in the riverbed, especially where it’s sandy or gravelly. The result is a small depression just downstream of the rock.

These sections can be hard to read because the surface looks chaotic, but they’re well worth fishing. Big trout often hold in these protected spots, feeding from the main current with minimal effort.

You’ll mostly find pocket water close to mountain areas, less so in wide valley rivers.

The most effective approach:

Fish each pocket systematically. Your dry fly or nymph must drift naturally with the current like a real insect. Avoid any line tension so the drift remains drag-free – any unnatural movement will spook fish instantly. Be mindful of sunlight and the shadow your line may cast on the water.

Other typical trout lies

Eddies – often found behind points or boulders.

Trout may hold:

- In the eddy itself, where water slowly circulates
- Along the edge of the main current
- Facing into the flow where food enters from the main current

Banks or sandbars – trout often hold:

- Downstream and just below the point where a small back eddy forms
- Along current seams where slow and fast water meet – classic feeding lanes

- A common misconception is that trout never hold in the still water directly behind a bar. They actually do sit there at times, mostly to rest, though the feeding lanes are usually along the seams on either side.

Rock ledges – trout position themselves:

- Downstream behind the obstacle in slack water
- Sometimes slightly off to the side, where a side current brings food

Coves or small pockets – trout may hold:

- Along current edges
- Or use them as resting areas

Fishing still waters and spring creeks

Although rivers may appear more complex, their structure is often easier to read than that of lakes or springs. Still, the same core principles apply if you know what to look for.

In lakes, focus on broad shallow zones, knee- to waist-deep. Brown trout patrol these flats in search of food. Rainbow trout are often found along drop-offs near the shore. Stream inlets and outlets are prime feeding areas, with higher oxygen and food concentration.

Spring creeks may look calm and simple but can be deceptive. With fewer defined pools or riffles, you must focus on subtle features. Trout often use small bank edges or undercuts as shelter from the current, allowing them to feed with minimal effort.

Good spots include overhanging branches, undercut banks, submerged logs or roots. Aquatic vegetation also provides cover and channels food flow. Recognising and targeting these features will lead to success even in still or gentle waters.

Special conditions

Coloured water usually means it has rained recently or we're near flood conditions. This affects both feeding behaviour and visibility. You'll need to simplify your

approach and rely on what you can still see or remember from clearer days. It's often worth taking a photo or sketch of your fishing section from an elevated point in good weather.

If not, focus on what's visible: flow lines, eddies, backflows. Trout will retreat to safe zones such as:

- Deep, slow-moving water
- Bank eddies
- Behind large structures
- Tributaries

In such cases, stay where you are or target these spots – several fish often gather there. Use heavy, bright nymphs or streamers with reflective materials, or fish methodically in 90-degree arcs from the lower end of the stretch. Be aware that fishing in some tributaries may be prohibited if they're designated as refuge or spawning zones.

Low water level

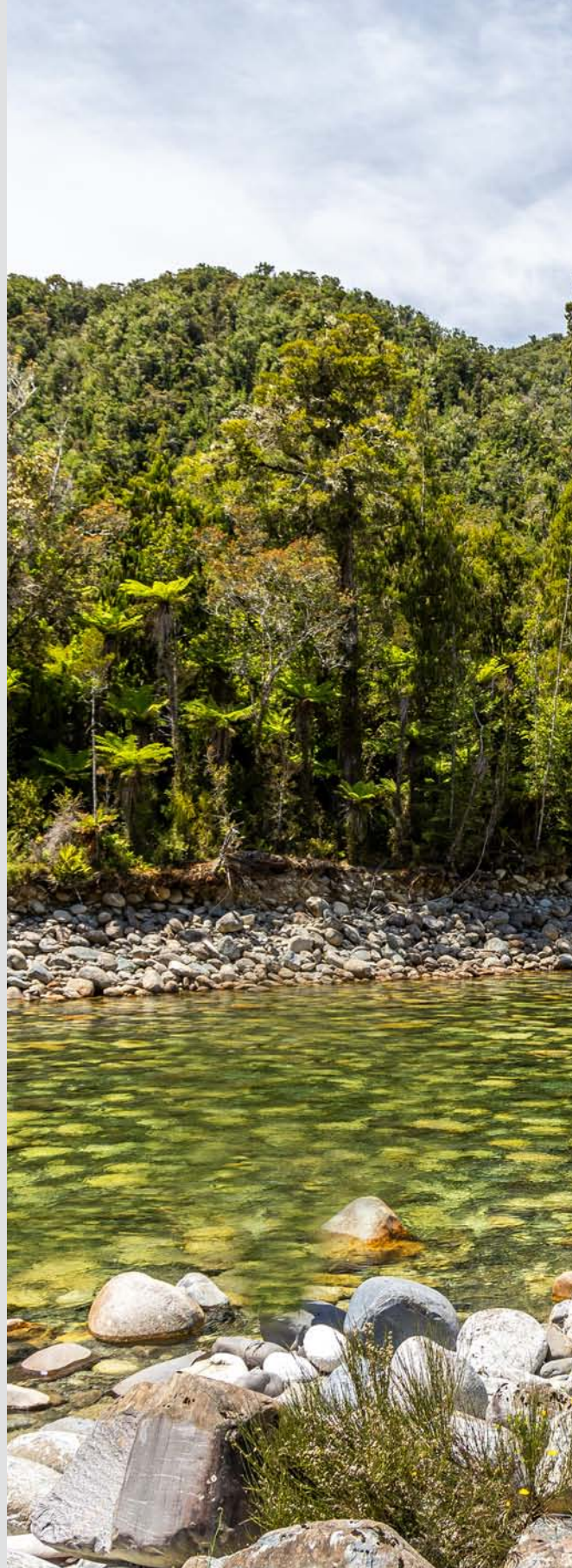
Low water, especially in narrow or braided rivers, can lead to isolated pools where many trout gather. When fishing these, cover every metre carefully. Once you hook a fish, lead it quickly downstream and away from the pool – sometimes under firm pressure – to avoid spooking the others.

Ensure safety

For safety, I only fish rivers when I can see roughly one metre into the water, or two to three days after a flood without further rain.

If you notice the water rising or turning cloudy, it may already be too late to cross. Move as soon as you detect rising levels – not when visibility is gone. Once you can't see the riverbed, do not attempt to cross.





Tony Entwistle



*It's time to give something back to the things
that have made me the man I am today. And
I can say that it fills me with satisfaction.*

Fly fishing on large rivers

by Tony Entwistle

Big rivers present a daunting prospect for most anglers compared to the intimate nature of small streams. They have strength of character, impose barriers, and command respect, confronting us with varying degrees of intimidation, both physical and psychological.

But while big waters may challenge anglers physically, emotionally and demands a wider range of skills, mixed with their magic of uncertainty, they also provide great opportunity. Whatever trout like or need, big rivers provide it in greater volume.

Which rivers will we encounter?

While most of New Zealand's trout streams are not 'as big' on the world scale of rivers, we are blessed with plenty that engage the essence of big water, whether through the width of their beds or the force of their flow. Fishing big waters presents very real problems of scale, access, and technique, compounded by genuine danger. It's often tough to get an overview of what confronts you.

One of the key frustrations associated with bigger rivers is that, while they provide a greater volume of productive water, there are also significant areas of unproductive water to avoid. The art of recognising high percentage water and dismissing low percentage water is one of the greatest skills in productive flyfishing and is particularly relevant in any approach to bigger water.

How do we get an overview?

Firstly, a broad overview of the river is needed to narrow down the options, and some simple things are worth doing that will minimize the legwork.

Google Earth and topographic maps are very helpful. Field research on big rivers involves a lot of driving, looking for physical vantage points from which to visually assess the nature of the river; elevated roadside cuttings, nearby hills, and old logging skid sites can all provide good river views.



Fig. above: On the way from Christchurch to Greymouth, we encounter this beautiful river delta, which varies in width from narrow to extremely wide depending on the season.

How do I read a large river?

On big rivers, there are often combinations of several ‘productive parcels’ in one area and a target hot spot is where the number of productive parcels is maximized and the distance between them minimized.

These are worth searching for, and on rivers with well-defined courses, prize water may remain relatively stable from year to year. However, on many of the South Island’s big, braided rivers, the quest for productive water generally begins again each season.

As with other angling, consideration of the habits of your quarry is essential and the key is to concentrate your angling on the prime water that gives the trout what it needs.

Most of the time we are trying to catch feeding trout, so sort out the prime feeding areas. If you are trying to tempt trout that are not feeding (e.g. on a spawning run), sort out the prime sheltering lies. Fishing the right water will always provide a head start on those who may have impressive mechanical skills, but don't take the time to study the water.

Arguably, anglers don't simply fish a river, but rather approach it to fish different water types. That's why reading water is the most elemental skill.

River fishing, regardless of the size, is a combination of fishing the different "parcels" of water comprised of **runs, pools, riffles, pocket water, backwaters, flats, edges, eyes, and tailouts**. Being able to identify water types and recognize their opportunities refines your approach and narrows the choice of techniques. This information needs to be further modified by considerations of the time of year and the fundamentals of water temperature, clarity, and flow.

Regardless of the size of a river, trout are very much **"creatures of the margins"**.

The American author John Gierach puts it very aptly in Trout Bum (Gierach, J., 1986, S.47, Trout Bum. New York: Simon & Schuster).

They operate at the edge of things: fast and slow currents, deep and shallow water, air and stream, light and darkness, and the angler who understands that is well on his way to knowing what he is doing.

For the walk and wade fly angler, the most obvious limitation to water that can be fished is casting distance. Pragmatically, when the water exceeds wading depth, anything beyond casting distance is purely of aesthetic value.

Where are the trout?

However, it is a misconception (probably born from the limitations of fly-casting distance) that on the biggest rivers, trout avoid the central areas because of the weight and depth of the water, and only stick to areas close to the structure of the banks.

Aerial and drift surveys by Otago Fish & Game on the Clutha River (New Zealand's largest mean flow) reveal that trout are quite evenly spread across most of the river, favouring, if anything, the centre of the river more during the daytime.

Surface flow characteristics do not represent a fish's immediate holding environment. River trout in New Zealand generally inhabit moderate water velocities with research from **Dr. John Hayes** suggesting that brown trout prefer 'on the nose' velocity limits of between 0.2 - 0.3 metres per second but will move briefly to feed in water column velocities of 0.3 - 0.5 metres per second. These velocity ranges are



Fig. above: Clutha River on the way to Queenstown. This large river offers packrafters in particular the opportunity to fish in many places that can only be reached by raft.

safely achieved among the bottom structure of most of our boulder-strewn, free-stone rivers, regardless of size.

Differences in locations according to trout species

The physiology of brown and rainbow trout is quite different. Rainbows are adapted to spending more time in the water column than browns and accordingly are better able to utilise faster water velocities.

This is reflected in the observed difference in distribution of rainbows and browns across a river, with larger resident browns particularly frequenting the shallower,

quieter margins of a river, while rainbows stick to the deeper, faster water further out.

Deep holes and water over 4-5 metres look very attractive to new chums, but it is what I regard as **“one percent”** water. It presents serious practical problems for any fly angler to catch fish. While these areas may provide **“shelter water”** for some trout, they are unlikely to support much algal growth (due to the lack of light to promote photosynthesis) and, therefore, don't hold the grazing invertebrates that make up most of our trout's diet.

Practically, especially where surface water velocities far exceed trout holding velocities, drag also makes it difficult for flies to sink deep enough or drift naturally in this water, regardless of how heavily nymphs are weighted.

Do sinking lines or sinking tips help here?

While modern sink-tip and sinking line technology offers some options, this isn't top **“feeding water”**. Unless trout are visible cruising on the surface (generally only in slow currents) and present obvious opportunities for dry fly, emerger, or lighter weighted nymph tactics, I suggest skipping these areas, although I regularly see huge amounts wasted on it.

There is a temptation with big rivers to take a more brutal approach than on small streams. But while there may be a bit more latitude in approaching the water, care still needs to be taken not to unnecessarily scare the fish.

Approaching the fish

Any approach to a potential fishing area should be conducted quietly and conservatively, because the same rule applies everywhere – **“spook one fish, maybe spook the lot”**. On big water that is likely to equate to a lot more fish, with the downside that, as mentioned earlier, it is probably going to be quite a hike to the next parcel of productive water.

Sight fishing and blind fishing

It is generally harder to spot fish on big rivers, particularly on windy or overcast days, because of the wider expanses of water and the frequent lack of a dark back-

ground. When it isn't possible to spot easily, focus on any limited areas that have a backdrop of trees or high banks.

The high banks are also useful for spotting with the advantage of height, which eliminates glare. Ultimately, however, to become a consistently successful fisher of big waters, an angler will require the development and refinement of good blind (imaginative) fishing techniques.

When stalking, spotting, and casting to sighted trout, it often begs the question:

“Did you simply spot the fish, or did your eyes confirm what you expected to see?” Mostly I suspect it is the latter, in which case intelligent blind fishing is a lot less about chuck and chance and more about testing an angler's suspicions and aspirations.

The better an angler gets at reading water, the more imagination can be applied and more successful they become.

It is perhaps worth noting that the most successful blind fishermen I know are, without exception, also the best trout spotters. Both approaches are complementary, especially when fishing big rivers.

Influence of the seasons

The time of year significantly influences what types of **‘water parcels’** to focus on. Early season is the toughest time to successfully fish big rivers, with angling opportunity limited by high water levels, cold water temperatures, and difficult wading. Fish will tend to hold in slightly deeper water, so it is best to concentrate on areas of slower flows in the established holding water, such as mid-depth pools and big runs.

The best places are where the river meanders and flows into features, such as bedrock cliffs and high banks, or along areas of riverbank stabilisation, with extended areas of willows or riprap.

Big water presents the opportunity to use a much wider variety of techniques than is typical of small streams, especially downstream techniques.

Downstream fishing – techniques for nymph and streamer fishing

Where the water depth is generally less than two metres (most river trout are caught from water that is less than 2m), standard heavily weighted nymphing techniques,



Fig. above: On flat stretches, which can be seen on large rivers, especially in summer, it also makes sense to enter the river, as the fish are often in the middle.

using floating lines and indicators, will probably be most productive.

However, where the water is deeper, or coloured, or if temperatures are cold (below 7°C), time spent fishing streamer flies, using sinking line technology (from sink-tips through to deep-water express shooting heads), is also worthwhile.

Sinking line techniques, using streamers and nymphs, can be effective on big waters throughout the season and more anglers should use them, especially when trout are clearly not evident in the more easily visible shallow water.

Development of a range of downstream techniques will also help extend an angler's time on big water, especially when confronted with strong afternoon headwinds typical of most exposed big valley systems, which severely handicap standard upstream dead-drift techniques.

Most anglers would also do better using heavier-weight rods (#7 to #8) during the early part of the season to better cope with winds and heavy nymphs.

The summer season begins

Bigger rivers come into their own as the season progresses and by mid-summer can become the hot spots in many areas. As river flows drop and water temperatures climb, fish become more active for longer periods and start spreading around.

Areas of pocket water, most usually associated with the narrowing or gorging of a riverbed, will now be worthy of interest and expect brown trout at least to move to shallower water (0.4-1.5m).

Floating lines, fished using heavily and medium weighted nymphs, will be productive. Look for the start of good dry fly action too, especially during the **Coloburiscus hatches** characteristic of most New Zealand rivers from mid-November through to mid to late December.

By January, the strong equinox winds that plague the exposed valleys of large rivers will have started to ease and, if an angler is lucky, they won't become too much of a casting hazard until mid-late afternoon.

From summer to autumn

During the height of summer and early autumn when river flows drop to their lowest, more fishable water is exposed and many big rivers are less intimidating. As they become more benevolent and easier to get around on, big rivers have real appeal, especially as fishing on small streams often deteriorates as their trout populations become stressed from low flows and warm water.

When water temperatures rise, focus on the prime feeding areas created by shallow riffles (**sexy water**). These are associated with ledges and drop-offs at the heads of pools and adjacent to deep runs and will hold good concentrations of active trout.

Areas of a river that favour riffle development generally occur in association with the widening of the riverbed. Another largely overlooked '**productive parcel**', which frequently presents itself to the walk and wade angler when big rivers drop to their lowest levels, is found in any extensive area of flat water that were unwadeable earlier in the season due to water depth and force of current.

These large areas of flats are characterised by relatively even water depth and laminar surface flow and, in brown trout territory at least, are often favoured by good numbers of trout.

The smallest fish will tend to congregate in small pods and are usually impossible to approach, but the better fish will spread and hold in association with any slightly



Fig. above: Waiau River, Southland, South Island. A mighty river that can carry a lot of water depending on the season. However, it is easy to fish from the bank.

larger stones or depressions in the substrate that create a break in the bottom current velocity.

Tactics for fishing in shallow water areas

Here the best approach is to work slowly and quietly upstream, zig-zagging across the water as far as safe wading allows, searching for individual fish. Because these areas require stalking and spotting, success tends to be limited to calm, bright, sunny days with a high sun angle from behind and to areas with a backdrop of trees to facilitate spotting the fish.

The smooth water characteristics created by the laminar surface flow require **fine 5x-6x tippets (fluorocarbon provides significant benefits in this situation)** and

small #16 to #20 flies, with my preference being small **bead caddis nymphs** or **parachute dries**.

The prospects of stalking this sort of previously unfished water in high summer are always a tantalising prospect. So, look for these areas during any early season excursions, making mental notes of potential prospects when the water level drops sufficiently. Good flats will often provide several hours of fishing in a relatively short distance for the careful and patient angler.

January to February is cicada time throughout most New Zealand regions and, where they exist, it is a special time of excitement and opportunity on big water, with many otherwise seemingly untouchable trout appearing.

Fish will position adjacent to prominent current lines, and it pays to work those big dries along any tree-lined runs or areas flanked with riprap and grassed banks. Often good feeding lines lie on the far side of the current from the angler and it is not possible to change banks to attack rising fish in the conventional manner.

How do I reach fish on the opposite side?

The problem with trying to attack any fish from a downstream position across a current is that there will be almost instant drag on the fly.

An excellent technique in these circumstances (where it is possible to wade into a position upstream of the drift line and cast the necessary distance across the river) is to cast the cicada slightly downstream on an angle (**30– 45 degrees**), incorporating an upstream reach and then start walking the fly downstream.

It is essentially the same technique employed from a drift boat, without the obvious advantages of a secure flotation device ... so be wary of any sudden changes in depth!

With the inclusion of some slack line and regular mending, it is possible to achieve regular floats of 20 metres or more before having to recast. The bonus is picking off some trout that are usually safe on the far side of the current.

Fishing with spinner imitations

At the other extreme of summer dry fly fishing, big water also frequently provides wonderful opportunities for early morning spinner falls, when trout feed profusely on the fallen bounty in the slower waters of any extensive flats and broad tailouts.

These trout seldom hold a position and actively range across wide areas, hovering the small, spent mayflies off the surface. It is not uncommon to see a dozen or more trout on the surface at the same time, but success can be elusive.

Small low-profile dries, such as a **Parachute Adams**, or specialist **spinner patterns** in **sizes #14 to #20** are usually effective. The secret is to target an individual fish, waiting until it rises before immediately dropping the dry fly only centimetres directly ahead of its feeding path.

Long drifts are seldom desirable, because before your fly reaches the rising position the fish is likely to have moved several metres away again on another tack. Water that often appears smooth also can be notoriously difficult to maintain a drag-free drift for any distance.

When trout come up on a spinner fall, they are seldom up for more than an hour (**two at the most**) and often much less, so casting becomes a precision game, if the angler is to maximize the opportunity.

Role of water temperature in summer

A common problem on big open waters from early January to early March is for water temperatures to quickly climb out of the productive fish catching range (11–17°C).

When the temperature climbs to 19°C (which is not uncommon on big, braided riverbeds like Marlborough's Wairau River between 1330–1530 hrs.), trout will very quickly go off the feed until the water temperature starts to drop again. This means successful angling is most likely limited to early morning or late evening.

Caddisfly population and their hatch

Big rivers support huge caddis populations and prolific evening hatches are often a feature. This is a time when trout, that have been lying low under the shelter of the deeper water in the centre of large rivers, move into the shallower margins to chase hatching **caddis**.

Once again, big water lends itself to downstream techniques and traditional the down-and-across small wet-fly (**soft-hackle**) techniques can prove very effective in these circumstances, especially on trout rising in the more boisterous water, where it is not possible to keep track of a dead-drifted dry fly.



Fig. above: Matukituki River, Otago, South Island. One of the most beautiful bodies of water in this region, nestled in breathtaking scenery. It is also very navigable by packraft.

The correct casting distance increases your chances of success

Because of their size, and because regular success will require improved blind fishing techniques, big waters start to place a premium on casting skills.

I often hear the obviously self-limiting excuse

“I catch all my fish within 10 metres anyway, so I don’t have to cast a long way”.

But undoubtedly, improving your ability to handle a longer line will open up more angling opportunities on big rivers. If you struggle to cast a line longer than 10–15m, then swallow your pride and get some tuition... you will be amazed at the progress within even one lesson.

There is a point where rivers, particularly in their lower regions, become so big that bank fishing and wading opportunities become limited. Generally, these areas become the preserve of live-bait anglers or spin fishermen, but the fly angler, who can sort out a point and work a streamer fly down the current line and along the banks, still has an opportunity, especially early and late in the season when a few sea-run trout are present.

As rivers grow in size, the use of a boat significantly expands opportunities and is ideal where access is difficult, or few bank or wade fishing opportunities exist. Over time, boats will play a bigger part in our fishing scene.

Everything in a nutshell

Success on big water is fundamentally about approach, not simply mechanics. Ultimately, successfully fly fishing big rivers depends as much on attitude as the depth of angling skills, and managing and overcoming the psychological intimidation is the priority.

An old timer once put it to me that when approaching a big river, ***“just think of it as two small rivers...one up either side”***. While this is a bit of a simplification, his advice encouraged me to look at big water differently and gave me a focus.

What this old chap was really suggesting was to minimize the uncertainty of big water by breaking the river up into familiar ‘parcels’ and then concentrate on what was in front of me.

This is, after all, the simple essence of flyfishing any water.

Learn fly fishing from Tony and his team

Today, Tony Entwistle runs his fly fishing school, ***“Fly Fishing with Tony”***, with great dedication and passion, passing on all his knowledge to fly fishing enthusiasts. Here, fly fishers of all levels, from beginners to advanced, can learn fly fishing at the highest level in several specialised courses. These include the basics of fly fishing, fly casting lessons, personal skill development, reading the river and all the skills required to handle nymphs, dry flies and



Fig. above: If you want to learn fly fishing properly in New Zealand, book a course with Tony and his team. This is the surest way to achieve success as quickly as possible.

land insects when trout fishing. His fly fishing school is located in Nelson on the South Island, in one of the most beautiful places in New Zealand.

You can reach Tony Entwistle at the following contact details:

Tony Entwistle

5 Mason Place, Richmond,

Nelson, New Zealand

Phone: +64 274732483

E-mail: tony@flyfishingwithtony.com

Website: flyfishingwithtony.com





Temperate rainforest, North and South Island



Rob Vaz



The hunting instinct is everything – but the real beauty lies in the moment of release: the feeling of deep satisfaction, knowing that the trout will return to the wild to challenge another angler one day.

Fishing in the Backcountry of the North Island

by Rob Vaz

I feel deeply connected to nature and live for sharing my fly-fishing experiences with the people I guide and with my friends. This freedom is both a pleasure and a lifelong journey of learning.

The open outdoors gives me an inner peace that money cannot buy and memories for which I will always be grateful.

As an artist, fly fishing fits perfectly with my passion for art, photography and music (guitar). Fly fishing has made me a better person, it gives me balance and helps me appreciate the simple things in life.



My life as a guide

As a professional fly-fishing guide with over 25 years of experience, I live in the central north of New Zealand's North Island. My goal is to give my guests an unforgettable experience, where they can learn new skills and have a lot of fun along the way.

I have had the honour of representing New Zealand in national and international fly-fishing competitions, including the World Championships, and I have also won the title of New Zealand Fly-Fishing Champion.

Fig. left: When Rob is on an adventure with his customers and a raft, camping in the backcountry is also part of the experience, depending on what they want.

I am passionate about sharing the knowledge I have gained both in New Zealand and abroad with anglers of all experience levels.

On my days off, I enjoy fishing the lakes of the central plateau for large fish, especially in summer when dragonflies and midge larvae are plentiful. Patience and persistence are part of the game.



Fig. below: Having the right and varied selection of flies is crucial, not the quantity. However, you should always have the best patterns ready several times over and in the right sizes.

Fig. above: Before each cast, I check my leader and flies.



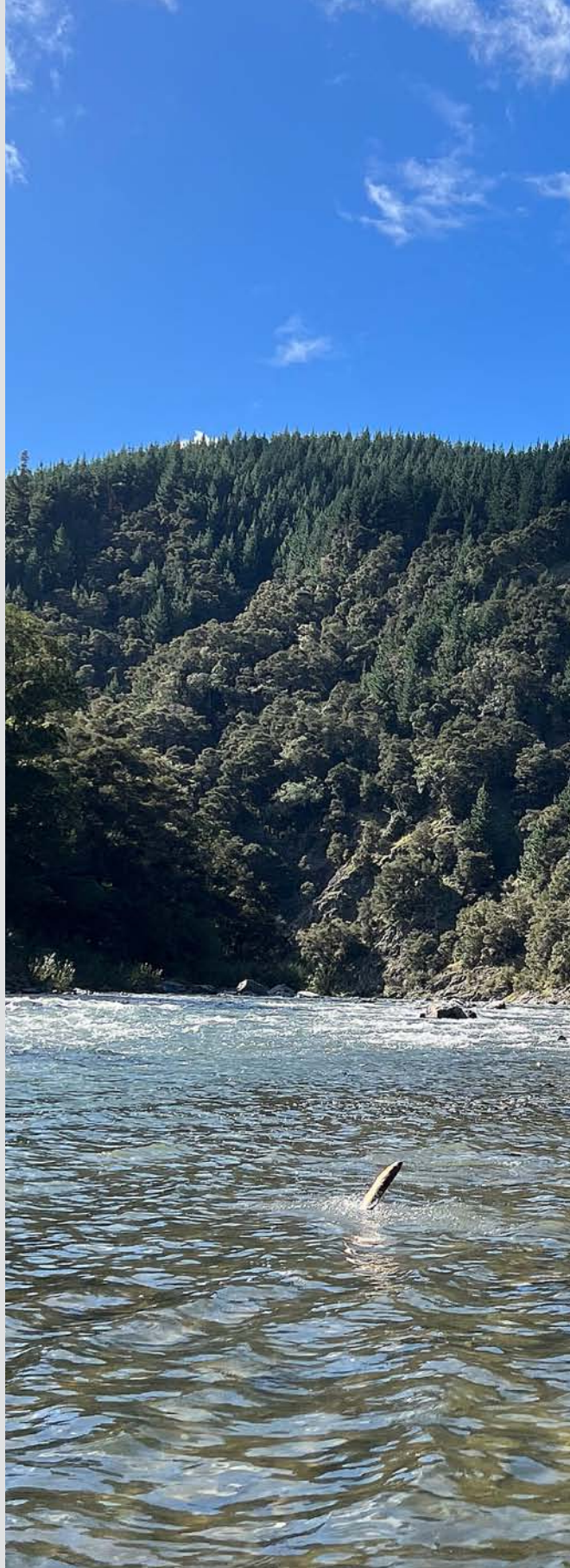






Fig. left: A beautiful brown trout, caught under cover of night with a size 8 black streamer. A gentle cast into the tail of a calm pool brought an unexpected thrill – and an unforgettable catch in the dark.

Night fishing for New Zealand trout

Night fishing in New Zealand offers passionate anglers a unique and thrilling experience. While trout fishing during the day has its advantages, stalking large brown and rainbow trout under the cover of darkness is a completely different challenge, and often leads to much bigger fish.

Night fishing requires patience and preparation. Catches can be rare, but the reward is well worth the effort. To stay comfortable and safe, I always take warm clothing, a thermos, a reliable headlamp and a sturdy wading staff. Safety comes first, and I never fish at night without first scouting the spot in daylight. I also always fish with a partner, since an extra pair of eyes and ears makes a big difference once darkness falls.



Fig. right: This large male brown trout with a slight hookbill was caught in good company on a dark early summer night. An unforgettable evening!

From my experience, nights with little or no moonlight are usually the most productive. Bright full-moon nights can make wary trout even more cautious, so I prefer darker conditions when the fish feel more confident to feed.

Large trout are often nocturnal, and although the takes can be subtle, the fish themselves are usually anything but. Because visibility is limited, you fish more by feel than by sight, and every twitch or tug on the line could be a trophy brown or rainbow trout.

I have spent countless hours along lakeshores and riverbanks, and my preferred setup is a medium sinking line combined with a black streamer. I like to cast downstream and across, fishing with a tight line or using a slow figure-eight retrieve. The method is simple, but when it works, it can produce explosive results.

My approach during the day

Before casting a line, I take in visual cues, water levels, bug hatches, terrain. Stealth is key. Trout are masters of their environment; I am the student.

After fishing many rivers across various countries, I've learned it's all about survival and finding good "holding water." I always start light and then add weight as needed. Adjust, adjust, and adjust! Even the smallest weight change can make a big difference in presentation depth.

Tips:

- Follow the sun, especially in pocket water.
- Increased sunlight warms the water and activates mayflies and caddisflies.
- Look for "smudges" or shapes that resemble trout.
- Your eyes are your biggest asset – see them before they see you.

In NZ, you must be ready to fish in all conditions. Get comfortable casting in wind and using weighted flies. Much of the CNI water is pocket water, requiring short drifts and precise nymphing.

Trigger flies can entice curious fish. Small red, pink, or lime-green tags often work well for rainbows. For backcountry browns, I prefer dull and natural patterns.

Some people have a natural **"*hunting instinct*,"** others don't. Fly fishing is about feeling and reading the environment. Slow down. Observe. The river has a heart-beat – listen to it.

Backcountry buddies and trip preparation

I love solo missions but equally value great company especially when exploring remote places. Sharing stories and a quiet whiskey with mates is part of the journey.

Safety is paramount. Choose buddies who walk and fish at a similar pace and take safety seriously. Share gear lists to avoid doubling up (like pots and pans). Each person should carry a PLB (Personal Locator Beacon).

Prep Tips:

- Check your first aid kit
- Pack extra food
- Have an escape plan for rising rivers or incoming weather
- Share trip details with someone back home
- Make sure both of you know where the car keys are!
- Exchange family contact details
- Verwenden Sie einen Wanderstock als Watstock
- Use a hiking pole as a wading stic

I prefer using huts over tents when possible, but that hasn't stopped me and friends from camping when needed.

Philosophy & relating to others

My multicultural background helps me connect with people from all walks of life. I also hold a diploma in intercultural studies and have worked for the New Zealand Red Cross, supporting former refugees and Māori youth.

I never take for granted the privilege of having access to New Zealand's beautiful backcountry. For many, it remains a distant dream. That's why I'm passionate about sharing the physical and mental health benefits of fly fishing and nature.

Young people today are increasingly disconnected from nature. In a world full of artificial messages and digital noise, many have lost touch with basic outdoor skills. Teaching survival and outdoor knowledge in a structured environment is essential for developing resilience and balance.

I am grateful for the friends and clients I have met along the way, some of them have opened doors to fishing destinations abroad, including Iceland, Slovakia and Mongolia.

Many of my clients and friends share a deep connection with nature and a desire to protect the future of this sport. Over the years, I have sought out fly-fishing

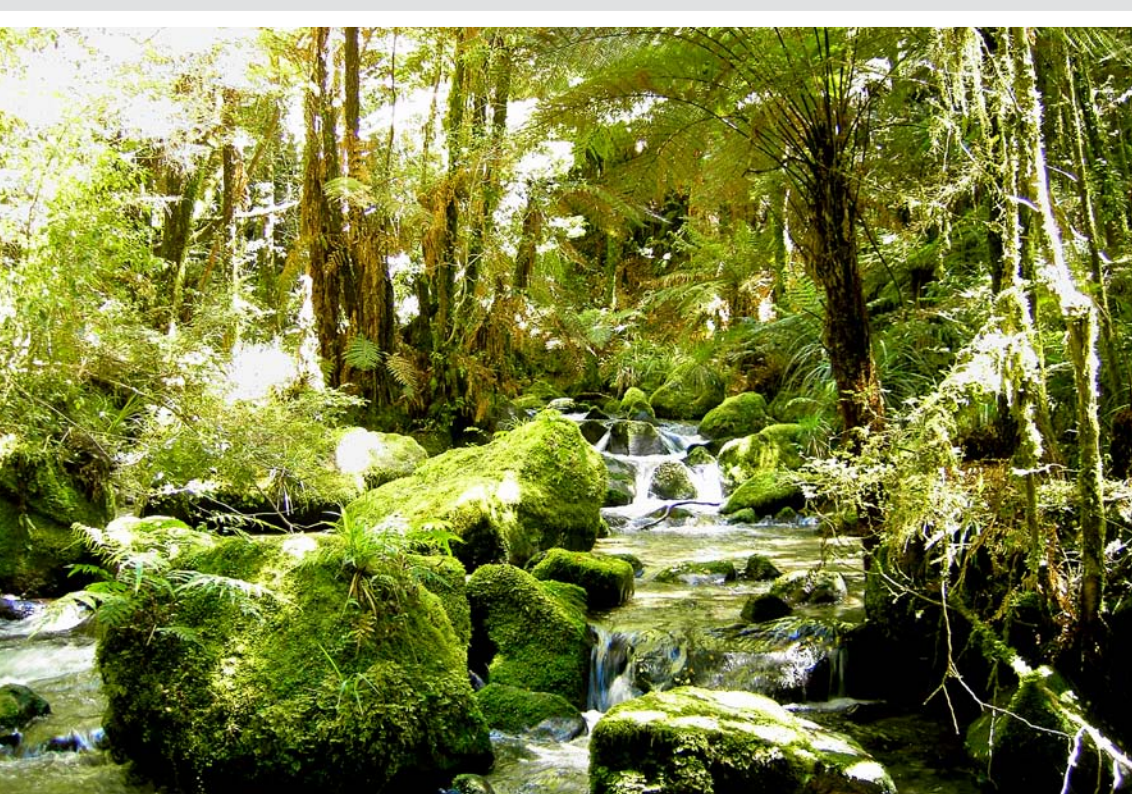


Fig. left: The spawning grounds of Central Island are beautiful (fishing is not permitted here). Often accessible only after a strenuous hike.

experts to keep learning. There is nothing better than sitting by a campfire and swapping stories about real fishing adventures.

Central North Island – Variety at your fingertips

From my base in Turangi, I can quickly reach a range of backcountry locations. One day I might be chasing big brown trout with you in spring creeks, and the next we could be casting into alpine lakes. The summer hatches of dragonflies and chironomids are remarkable, and it takes real patience to tempt trout with the right imitations.



Fig. right: The rivers, streams and lakes of Central North Island are surrounded by volcanic landscapes, subtropical vegetation or vast forest areas, where you can take home a breathtaking photo of your dream trout.

Access options:

- Helicopter access – Rangitikei River: Breathtaking, crystal clear water. Limited landing rights.
- Access by raft: Lower Rangitikei, Mohaka, Upper Tongariro.
- Access by off-road vehicle: Upper Whanganui River, volcanic plateau – yes.

Terrain:

- Limestone, papa (slippery), and boulder-strewn rivers
- Watch for floating pumice during rising rivers – it's a sign to get out
- Some gorges lose light quickly – layer your clothing
- Good boots are essential

Wildlife:

- Wild pigs, Red deer, and NZ's protected blue duck (Whio) – always a pleasure to see, even if it spooks your fish!

The best for my clients

Trout fishing is a journey of discovery. As a guide, it is essential for me to stay up to date and to know the waters I take people to intimately. Understanding the constantly changing conditions and having a genuine connection to each place is key, not only for success, but to create a meaningful experience.

Meeting new people from around the world is one of the great joys of this job. I love hearing about their fishing trips and cultures while showing them the beauty and uniqueness of Aotearoa, New Zealand.

When people come here to fish, they often arrive with a dream, to catch a wild trophy trout in our pristine rivers. Helping them achieve that is incredibly rewarding. But it is not just about the catch. I want to guide my clients through the entire day so that they leave with more than just a great photo. I want them to gain a deeper understanding of fishing, insight into our local ecosystems, and a greater appreciation of the importance of conservation.

Yes, catching a big trout is unforgettable, but just as memorable is learning how to care for the waters that made that moment possible. At the end of the day, I hope every client goes home with lasting memories, new skills, and a shared passion for preserving this remarkable fishery for future generations.



Sharing a fish and a moment with a customer



An aggressive shake of the head and an exciting moment



Fig. left: Pheasant Tail Nymph

My four top flies

Pheasant Tail Nymph, Size 12, 14 & 16

A simple, classic fly that has stood the test of time – effective and reliable, even for wary fish. This lightly weighted pattern is less likely to spook trout and excels at imitating mayfly nymphs and other small aquatic insects.

Its slim profile helps it sink quickly, making it ideal for reaching feeding zones. Highly versatile, it can be fished alone or trailed behind a larger beadhead nymph.



Fig. right: Tungsten BB Stealth CDC Pheasant Tail Nymph

Tungsten BB Stealth CDC PheasantTail, Size 12, 14 & 16

Tied with natural materials, this versatile nymph is a go-to trailing fly. The CDC adds lifelike movement and traps tiny air bubbles, giving it irresistible fish appeal.

Its darker profile stands out beautifully in freestone rivers, making it highly visible to trout in a natural way. Fish it beneath a small dry fly for an effective and stealthy presentation.



Fig. left: Orange-Head Olive Woolly Bugger

Orange-Head Olive Woolly Bugger, Longshank Size 8 & 6

This is a versatile, slim-profile streamer tied with UV-reactive dubbing and finished with an eye-catching orange bead. This combination not only enhances visibility in the water but also triggers aggressive strikes, especially from spawning rainbows. Designed to imitate a range of moving aquatic prey such as small baitfish, leeches, crayfish, and larger aquatic insects, this fly excels as a searching pattern. It's particularly effective when fished on the swing, allowing you to cover water quickly and draw the attention of active trout. Whether you're probing new water or targeting aggressive fish, the Orange-Head Olive Bugger earns its place in any fly box.



Fig. right: Swisher's PMX Peacock

Swisher's PMX Peacock Dry, Size 8 & 10

This versatile and buoyant attractor dry fly is a must-have in any NZ fly box. Designed by Doug Swisher to imitate a range of terrestrial and aquatic insects, stoneflies, hoppers, and especially cicadas, it excels when trout are looking up. Ideal as a searching pattern or the dry in a dry-dropper rig, the PMX Peacock Dry consistently draws aggressive takes across New Zealand waters.

The artist in me

With a background in graphic design and trade experience as a signwriter, translating nature into art comes naturally. Fly fishing in NZ's backcountry is a deeply visual experience – colours, movement, and emotion all inspire my work.

I'm particularly drawn to vivid colours that bring a space to life, often imagining the world as a trout might see it. Constantly inspired, I'm still exploring different art styles and don't like to confine myself to just one.

Let Rob be your guide

Rob's territory covers the entire **Central North Region**, which has many beautiful rivers flowing into lakes. Some places are only easily accessible by helicopter. If you want to catch large, strong rainbow trout or brown trout, this is the place for you.

You can reach Rob at the following:

Tel.: + 64 (0)27 641 4106

Email: robfishnz@gmail.com

Website: www.robfish.co.nz



Fig. left: One of Rob's commissioned paintings has found its way to the United States and now hangs proudly in a customer's home. This artwork beautifully captures the feeling and experience of fishing on the central North Island. Captured between two iconic New Zealand silver ferns.

Fig. right 1: A peaceful yet creatively charged time in the studio – away from the literal river, instead immersing oneself in the river of imagination. The idea of working on an abstract fish painting suggests a blending of memory, emotion and interpretation, rather than a strict representation of the natural world.



Fig. right 2: The scene is set against a dark, rocky riverbed, which forms a rich, shadowy background and highlights the fish and its surroundings with dramatic contrast. In the centre, a large brown trout sits gracefully, muscles tensed and scales shimmering in deep amber, olive and copper tones. Its powerful body is subtly curved, suggesting the movement of the water around it.



Fig. right 3: A lively rainbow trout takes centre stage in the dark depths of the water. Its slender, muscular body is captured in mid-motion, slightly tilted as if it were shooting forward at speed. The trout's scales shimmer in iridescent shades of green and blue and feature the characteristic pinkish-red stripe on its side.



Fig. right 4: Rob captures the essence of his subject using acrylic paints, which appeal to him because of their bold, vibrant colours and the dynamic energy they bring to the canvas. This work embodies the thrill of the catch, reinterpreted through abstract form and vivid expression.







Scott Jay Maybury with a wonderful golden brown trout



Chris Bell



I live for the protection and survival of one of the most beautiful creatures in the world, so that tomorrow I can continue to experience what connects us all: trout fishing.

My journey, my life, my calling

by Chris Bell

My name is Chris Bell and I am a fly fishing guide based near the city of Christchurch in the South Island of New Zealand. For over 12 years, I have been guiding local and international visitors to New Zealand, specializing in sight fishing for brown and rainbow trout in the Canterbury and Westland regions of the South Island.

Physically New Zealand is a diverse land mass containing a vast variety of different water types, most of which are inhabited by introduced trout. It is on many fly fisherman's bucket list, as here it is possible to find a lot of what an angler's heart desires, chasing large individually sighted fish in often beautiful scenic locations.

With respect to the South Island, Brown trout represent the main fish species targeted and caught, however Rainbow trout are also abundant in many areas, especially those headwaters draining the mighty Southern Alps mountain range. Some of our smaller lakes, and the occasional stream, also contain populations of Brook trout or char.



Packrafting is part of who I am

I've always been interested in anything to do with having fun in or on the water, and I first started white-water kayaking while at high school. Progressing into packrafting around a decade ago has opened up a whole new dimension of fly fishing for me, adding to the thrill and making wilderness missions into the backcountry more adventurous and exciting!

To reach some of the less pressured headwater fisheries it is often necessary to cover

Fig. left: Chris Bell checks his packrafts to ensure they are ready for use.

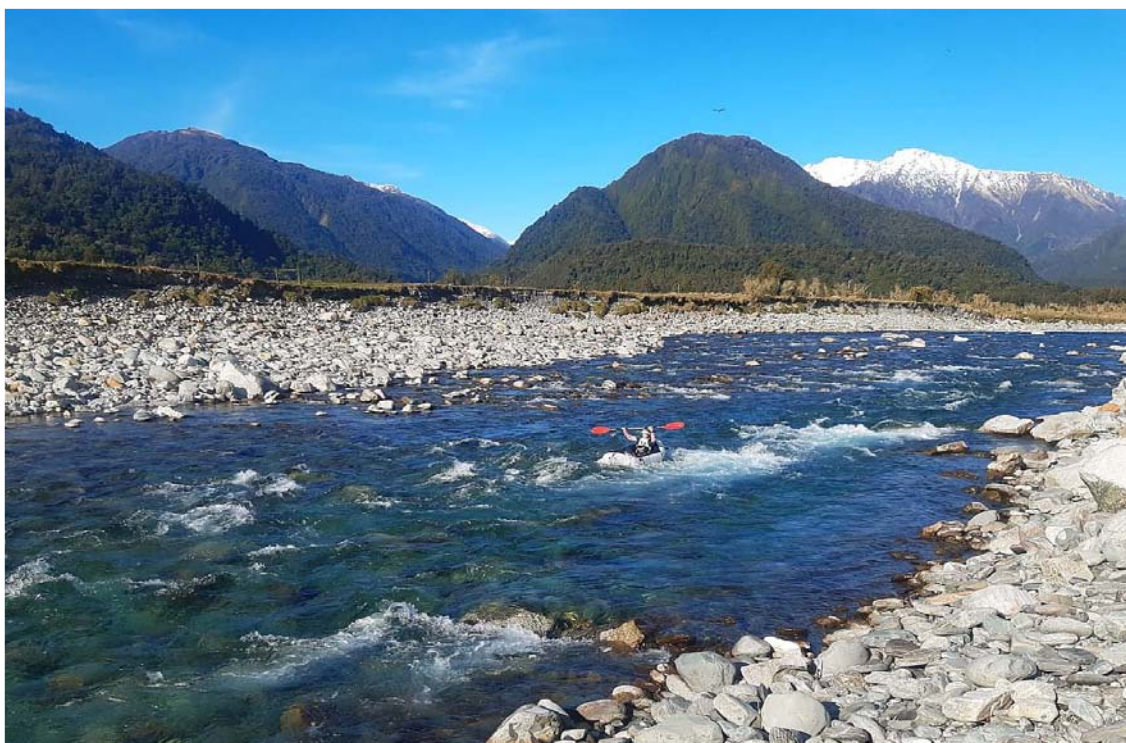
alot of ground from the nearest road end, often on foot. Where possible I regularly use my 4x4 to drive rough unmaintained tracks, then mountain bike or walk long distances on foot to reach the distant headwaters of some rivers.

Technology brings improvements to many aspects of everyday life with modern materials becoming stronger and lighter, making outdoor clothing and equipment easier to transport. One such innovation,

Fig. below: The packraft allows you to increase your fishing time by a full 6-8 hours, especially on day trips, thus compensating for almost two days of fishing in one.



Fig. above: The landscape, rivers and lakes of North Canterbury display a wide variety of colours.



TPU-coated nylon, has become an ideal material for manufacturing lightweight, robust boats, and using such materials the packraft was born. These lightweight, quick to inflate boats are stable and handle rough whitewater rapids very well, as they are much more stable than traditional plastic whitewater kayaks.

An average, a packraft with accessories adds about 4-5 kg to the weight of a backpack, which you have to carry on your back for the day while fishing up a river. Despite having to carry this extra weight, just the thought of not having to walk back every step you took upstream at the end of the day, makes carrying the extra weight somewhat more bearable.

The stability and high load capacity of these very light yet robust inflatable rafts have won me over as the best way to travel back to the vehicle after a big day on my feet walking up a river, as paddling back downstream to the vehicle at the end of the day is a fun and usually relatively leisurely affair. Paddling some of the rougher whitewater rapids is often a big highlight of my day on these back-country these trips.

‘The Kiwi way’ – build it yourself

I love using my hands to design and make new things, so I thought I would have a go at building my first packraft myself. After doing some research on the internet, I found a DIY (Do It Yourself) kit in Canada for less than 500 NZD.

Building the boat was a lot of fun, but it was quite time-consuming. However, it meant that I could go on trips with my friend Sam, who already owned a New Zealand-made “Koaro” brand packraft. I remember my first trip using the raft I had built and the satisfaction that came with using a raft that I had made myself!

It performed well despite a few minor slow air leaks, and from that point on my excitement for utilising my packraft where possible on my fly-fishing trips began. With the enjoyment that this new form of paddling rivers brought me I immediately started looking at buying packrafts for my whole family, so that they could share in the same experiences.

It didn't take long before some friends joined us as packraft owners and from then on, we planned many of our trips around rivers that could be navigated by raft. We hiked further upstream and covered longer distances every day, as mentally we only had to walk half the distance.

Our tired feet caused by carrying the rafts were usually forgotten, and it wasn't long before I upgraded my hiking backpack to have more space for all the gear required for multi-day packraft fishing trips.



Fig. above: You have to say that Chris has done a great job. It's amazing. I don't know if I would dare to build it myself. He also made the hood from an old pair of waders.

E-bikes are another alternative for getting into the backcountry

When e-bikes became trendy, I had the idea of converting my mountain bike into an e-bike, which made long distance trips much more achievable in a shorter period of time. Suddenly, a two-day trip was possible in a single 18-hour day, so I could now complete the trip in one day to take advantage of shorter fine weather windows.

On some headwater tracks closed to vehicles I would often ride my normal mountain bike upstream on dirt roads to get to remote bodies of water faster. Similar to a packraft, I recognised the potential of an e-bike to increase the speed and reduce the effort required on some routes, especially in some headwaters.

The first opportunity to try an E-bike on a backcountry fishing trip came when a road into a Canterbury headwater river was closed due to heavy rainfall having caused a large landslide across a road. After a little research, we found two e-bikes to rent and set off on a very memorable tour to a remote body of water.

I enjoyed this trip so much that I came back inspired to own my own E-bike, as I could see the potential for using these bikes on many future trips. I was able to source an E-bike conversion kit from overseas and with the help of my oldest Son George who is very electrically techy, we were able to build a large lithium-ion battery to power the bike.



Fig. left: Short lunch break at a beautiful lake in North Canterbury.

Headwaters, the beauty of being

The headwaters of the Canterbury rivers offer very different landscapes to the waters of the West Coast, but both regions contain rivers with good whitewater rapids. The smaller, steeper rivers required more technical paddling, but would often offer good fishing destinations. I remember many multi-day adventures with my friend Sam, where we carried our rafts and all our camping gear upstream on a two-day mission.

We would pitch our tents or sleep in hammocks and then scavenge for firewood to make a campfire which we would sit around and enjoy for hours into the night. Yes, these missions were usually the highlights of the fishing season for me! As a hunter, Sam would often try to shoot a deer, and I have fond memories of sitting around the campfire under the starry skies, enjoying the atmosphere of the remo-



Fig. right: The desire of many anglers to explore the headwaters and river deltas of rivers.

te locations. There were many good stories shared around the campfire which is known here as the **'bush television'**.

Having these special experiences made the trips where we didn't have much success with the fishing still very enjoyable, as just to be out amongst nature was very special, exploring the water on the way upstream and then paddling downstream.

Addicted to the world of fish

From a very young age I had a great fascination with the marine world, so much so that I decided around age 10 that one day I would aspire to become a marine biologist. My early interest in saltwater fishing was nurtured by my father who would take me fishing whenever possible. My obsession with saltwater fish quickly





Chris Bell pursuing his passion

shifted to the freshwater environment of lakes, rivers, and streams, where I became captivated by trout.

My passion for fly fishing began at the age of 12 when I first picked up a fly rod. I was fascinated by the art of presenting an artificial fly to a visible trout in the crystal-clear waters for which New Zealand is internationally renowned.

At high school, I found some like-minded fishing buddies who later became my closest friends, with whom I am still in close contact today. The four of us, Ben, Darren, Jeff, and I, would meet regularly for morning tea and lunch breaks at our “hangout,” where it didn’t take long for the conversation to turn to fishing.

Not having a drivers licence during my early high school years, my parents would drive my friends and I to the local rivers, where we would often fish all day. Reaching 17 years of age and attaining a restricted drivers licence it became easier to explore more distant waters, as my friends and I could borrow our parents’ cars to go fishing. I still remember the excitement and anticipation of our trips as we planned where we would go next in search of the elusive trout.

The natural progression of fly fishing led us to learn how to tie our own flies to deceive the trout we were so infatuated with. I remember learning all about the freshwater insects found in the waters of the South Island and how, with a limited budget for buying materials to make these insect imitations, we would use our fly-tying tools, some fluff from an old jersey or feathers we could find around home, to make these creations.

Many of these patterns rarely looked as good as they did in the books, but we learned a lot through trial and error and developed some pretty reasonable trout flies that allowed us to catch a trout or two.

Study Zoology or go fishing?

After graduating from high school, I began my studies with the goal of becoming a Marine Biologist. My enjoyment of learning during my bachelor’s degree grew the more specialized the course content became and the more my choice of subjects focused on my area of interest.

While studying in Christchurch, I worked weekends at Christchurch’s leading fly-fishing shop, The Fisherman’s Loft, where I met like-minded people and was able to share my enthusiasm for the sport. During this time, I learned a lot about the different facets of fishing from various people, and enjoyed the positive atmosphere and life being emersed in the world of fishing at the shop!

After graduating with a degree in Zoology, I continued my Master's studies in the field of Freshwater Fish Ecology, which continued to interest me the most compared to the marine environment.

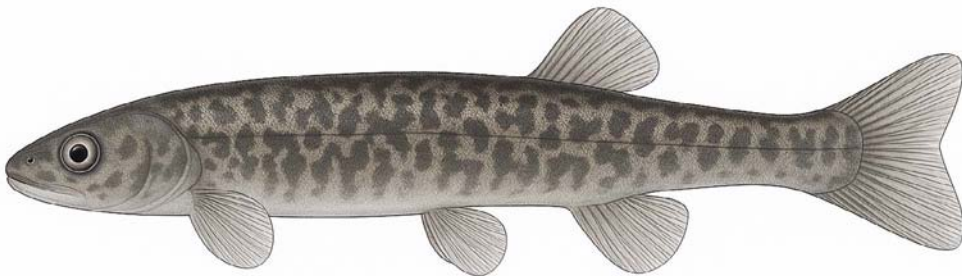
My thesis, titled "The Ecology of Koaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*) in Manson Creek, North Canterbury," focused on the better understanding and researching of adult Koaro, a fish species native to New Zealand. The juveniles of this fish species represent the second most common of the five native fish species that are caught and eaten as a delicacy known in New Zealand as Whitebait.

Koaro populations throughout New Zealand have been significantly negatively affected by various factors including habitat destruction, overfishing, agricultural influences, competition and predation by introduced fish species such as trout, as well as other environmental factors such as drought and flooding.

I look back fondly on my time as a Masters student at the University of Canterbury as a very enjoyable period in my life, as I was often able to organise my work around the weather as much as possible, to allow me to go fishing and pursue my constant yearning to fish! I remember being reminded more than once by my supervisor to focus more on my studies, and less on fly fishing.

This was often challenging, but as I spent a fair amount of my time outdoors in the mountains trapping and electro-fishing to monitor fish populations and conducting fish-related experiments, I found my life quite well balanced. I learnt to appreciate the importance of having quality time in the great outdoors and how fly fishing significantly contributed to my sense of happiness and contentment.

The illustrations depicted in this book may differ slightly from the actual living species.



*Fig. above: Illustration of a Koaro (*Galaxias brevipinnis*).*

The profession of a zoologist from different perspectives

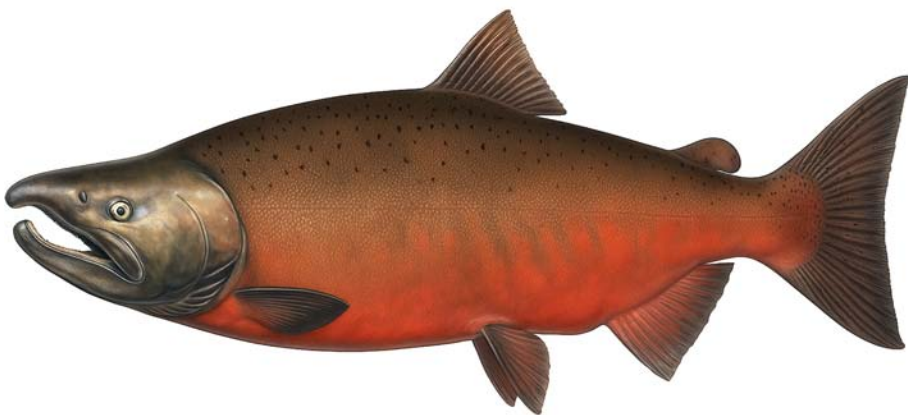
After graduating from Canterbury University in 2001, I worked in various areas of freshwater fish ecology in the Canterbury and Westland regions of New Zealand. These were special projects funded by various New Zealand government agencies and other organizations to assess fish populations, the presence of pest fish, or to monitor the spawning of adult Inanga, the most common of the five species that make up Whitebait.

After two years of working mainly temporary contracts, I took a job at a local salmon hatchery called Tentburn Hatchery, where I was involved in all aspects of raising King Salmon, also known as Chinook or Quinnot salmon. I ended up continuing to work at this job for over 10 years, as working a mix of night and day shifts gave me week days off, during which time I could be out on the water chasing trout when the waters were often less crowded.

The desire for a life path based around lifestyle rather than achieving academic career goals helped steer me in the direction to pursue my passion for fly fishing, and the natural progression with this was becoming a fishing guide.

Here I would like to show you a few illustrations of fish that can be caught, as well as a few other bait fish found in New Zealand:

Salmonids



*Fig.: Male King Salmon in spawning colours (Chinook Salmon, *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*).*

Salmonids



Fig. : Female King Salmon (Chinook Salmon, *Oncorhynchus tshawytscha*).

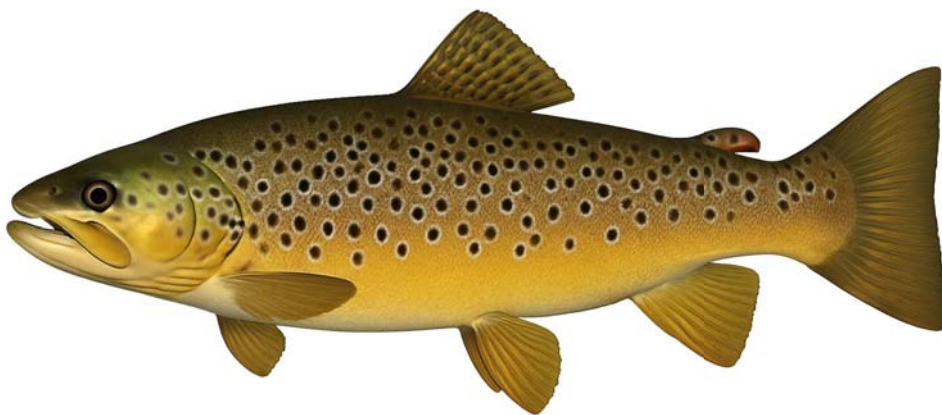


Fig.: Brown trout (*Salmo trutta fario*), North and South Islands.

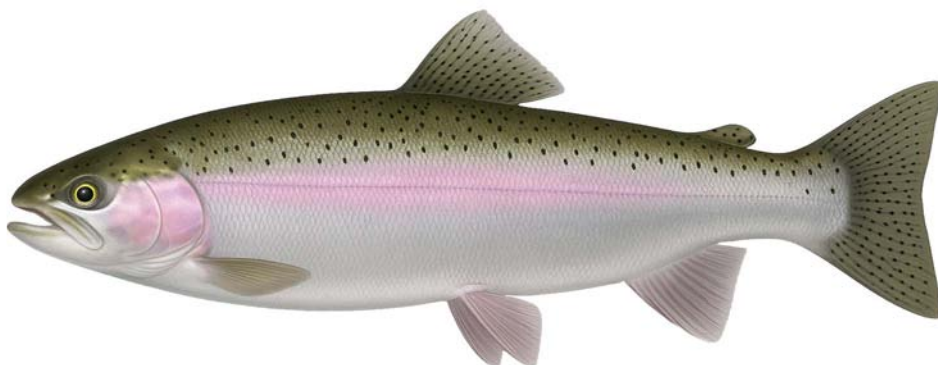


Fig.: Rainbow trout (*Oncorhynchus mykiss*) North and South Island.

Salmonids



Fig.: Char (brook trout, *Salvelinus*), South Island.

Eleotridae



Fig.: Giant Bully (*Gobiomorphus gobioides*) Found near the coast in the north and east of the South Island, north and south of the North Island, and inland. Up to 27 cm.



Fig.: Common Bully (*Gobiomorphus cotidianus*) Near the coast, North and South Island, as well as inland. 6–12 cm.

Eleotridae



Fig.: Redfin Bully (*Gobiomorphus huttoni*) Near the coast, North and South Islands, as well as inland, 10 to 12 cm.



Fig.: Highland Bully (*Gobiomorphus alpinus*), Alpine regions of the South Island and around Wellington, 8–12 cm.

Retropinnidae



Fig.: Smelt (*Retropinna retropinna*), North and South Island, lakes, coastal areas and river mouths, 6–10 cm.

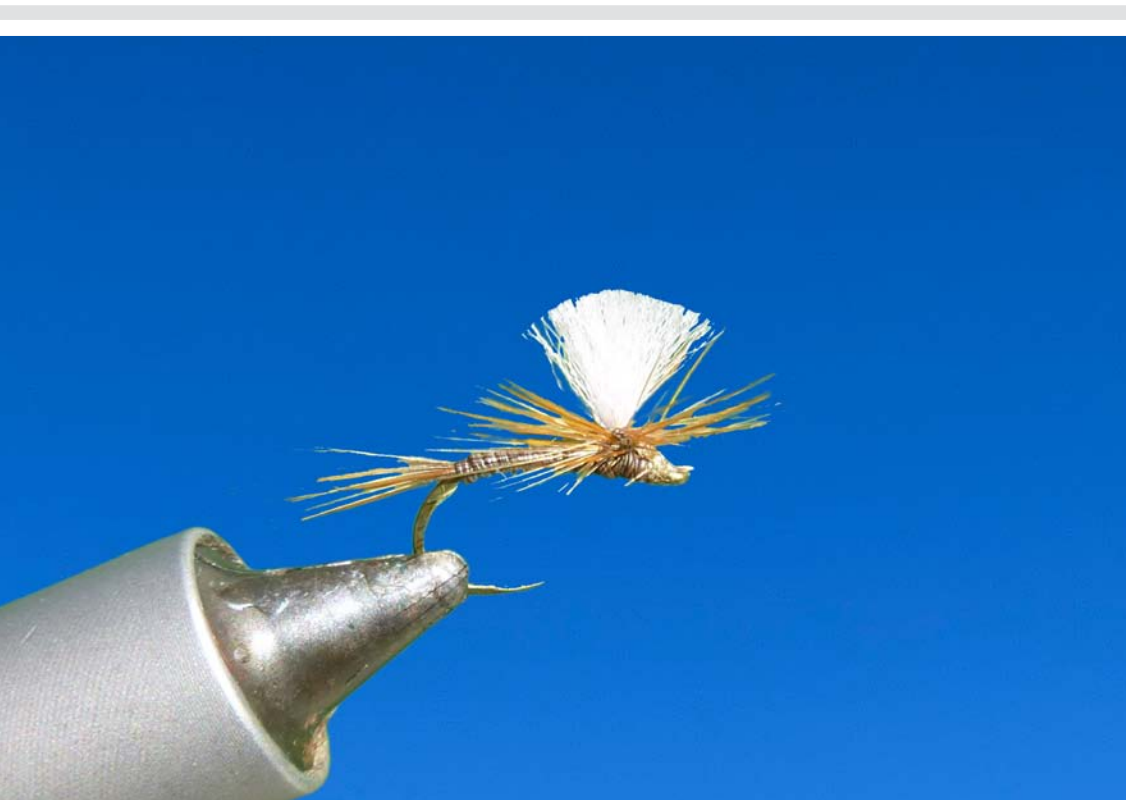


Fig. left: Parachut Mayfly

Which flies belong in the box?

Every fly fisherman has his favourites and perhaps particular success with his own patterns. In many cases, however, conventional patterns are sufficient. Here I mention the five flies that I use most often and tie myself.

Parachute Mayfly

Mayflies are the most common aquatic insects found in most stony rivers and streams in New Zealand. For this, I use a simple, sparsely tied parachute dry fly that is not too heavily dressed. This natural mayfly pattern works almost everywhere, and when tied sparsely, it often deceives the shy, experienced brown trout for which the South Island is famous. I tie most of my dry flies on strong hooks with a wide gap,



Fig. right: *Elk-Hair Caddis*, size 14 to 16

such as the Tiemco 2499Sp or Tiemco 2488H, as the larger gap usually provides a better hook hold on the big-mouthed trout we have here in New Zealand. I fish this fly pattern most often in **sizes 14 and 16**, but occasionally larger patterns in sizes 10 and 12 and smaller patterns in size 18 are also used.

Elk-Hair Caddis

Caddisflies are aquatic insects that trout regularly encounter in most waters in New Zealand. Sparsely tied with thin deer hair and lightly wrapped with grizzle hackle, this fly is an effective caddis fly pattern. I find that this caddis fly pattern is often preferred over more heavily dressed caddis fly patterns, especially in slower waters where trout have more time to inspect the fly closely before taking it.

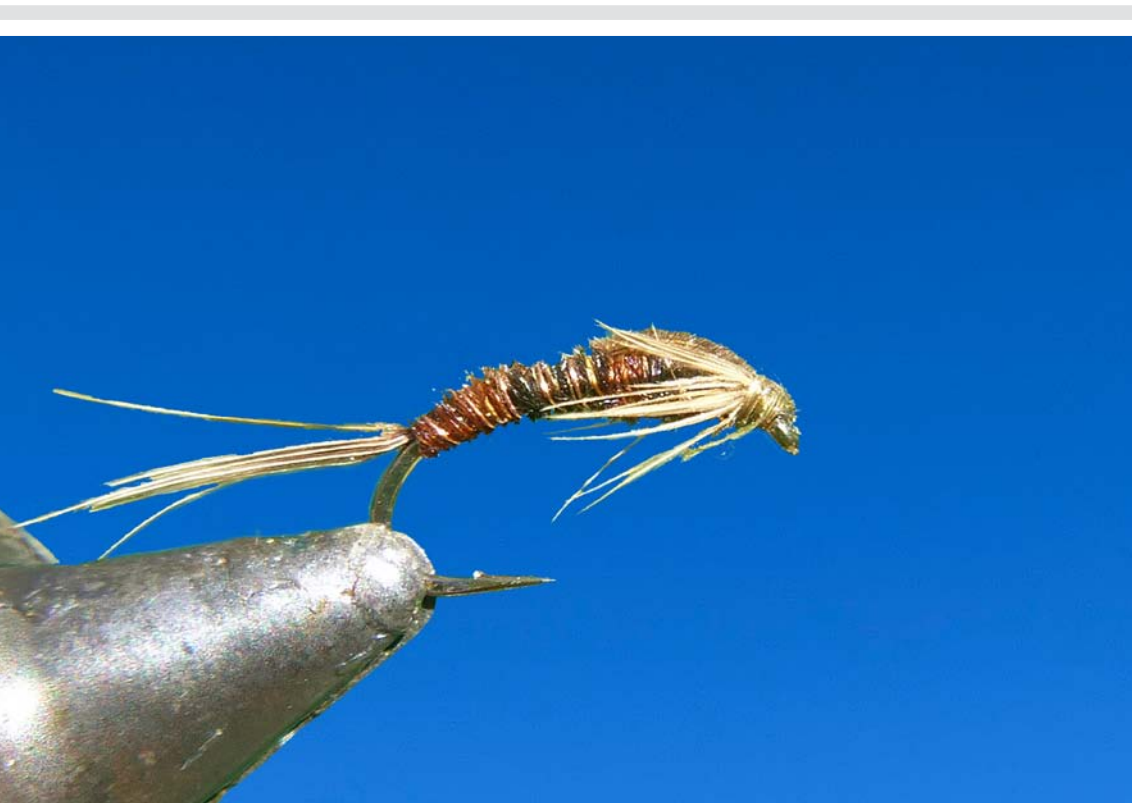


Fig. left: Pheasant Tail Nymph

The lower part of the hackle on this pattern can be shortened so that the fly sits deeper in the water film and thus looks more natural to the trout from below. This fly is also most commonly used in **sizes 14 and 16**, but sometimes larger sizes such as 10 and 12 can also be used.

Pheasant Tail

A very common nymph pattern worldwide, which is also very effective here in New Zealand. It most often imitates the *Deleatidium* mayflies that are abundant in New Zealand. I like to tie this fly sparsely with only 3 to 7 tail filaments made from pheasant feather fibres, which are much stronger and do not break as easily as



Fig. right: Wee Wet Soft Hackle Nymph

the more delicate pheasant tail fibres. I also like to use a fine, inconspicuous copper wire, which looks more natural and is therefore less off-putting to picky trout. This pattern can be tied on a straight shank hook or a curved caddis hook like the one shown in this photo, which is tied on a Kamasan B110 grub hook. I usually fish this pattern mainly in **sizes 14 and 16**, but the larger size 12 and smaller size 18 are also frequently used.

Wee Wet Soft Hackle Nymph

A simple but very effective nymph that is easy to tie and imitates a variety of different insects and different stages of insect development. These include nymphs, emergers and cripples when fished in the surface film on still waters. I prefer a light brown dubbing for the body, but natural grey and dyed green rabbit dubbing also

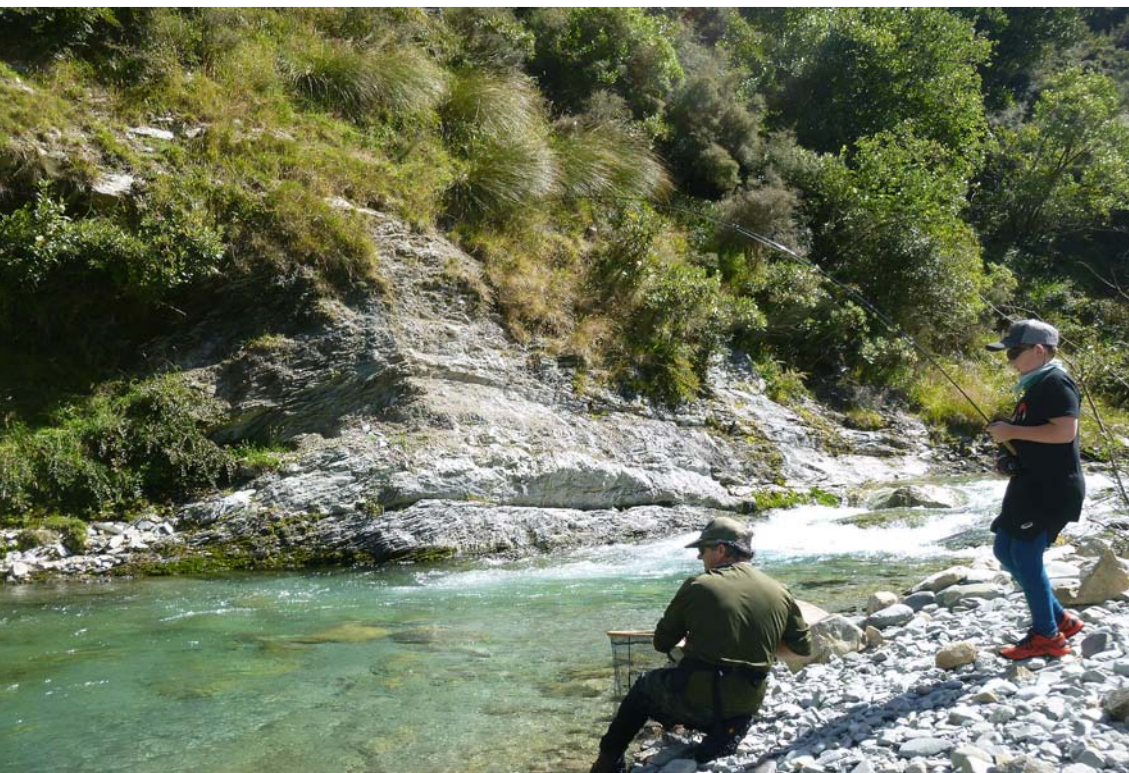


Fig. left: Chris Bell with his son Oliver. Young people also need guidance and support in handling fish correctly.

produce effective fly patterns. **Sizes 14 and 16** are the most commonly used sizes, but in some streams I also fish this pattern in size 18 and even size 20.

The next generation is already in the starting blocks

My youngest son Oliver showed a keen interest in fishing from an early age, and at 12 he took up fly fishing just like his Dad. Now, at 15, he is, as they say, like a fish in water, and takes every opportunity to go trout fishing with me or his like-minded friends.

It's so nice to see him take up such a great activity that is so close to my heart, because I see all the positive aspects that fly fishing brings being cherished by him. I know that being in the great outdoors is always positive for mental health, as is the fitness and the opportunity to spend quality time with friends and family.



Fig. right: The rainbow trout is lifted out of the water or photographed lying in the water only briefly, for a photo.

Every fish is a new challenge and an angler can be totally absorbed in this challenge, forgetting all about the problems of the world for a while! It's also true that trout live in beautiful places, and fly fishing takes you to areas with breathtaking scenery where just being there is medicine for the soul!

I am so happy that Oliver will get to experience all these positive things and to always have fly fishing there throughout his life as an activity that he can rely on when needed.

My second passion, guiding anglers

My great passion for fly fishing and the joy of helping others catch trout was a big factor influencing me to consider becoming a guide. I found that I would often





Oliver Bell has already had some good catches



Fig. left: Here, Chris Bell has guided his client to a huge trout, which they successfully landed.

find just as much enjoyment helping others achieve their goal of catching a trout, as actually catching one myself!

In 2012, I was finally motivated enough to take the exciting step and register with the New Zealand Professional Fishing Guides Association to become a guide. With the help of my family, friends, and the team at the Fisherman's Loft fishing shop in Christchurch, I was introduced to the right people who helped me join the Guides Association in 2013.

My website, www.adventureflyfishingnz.com, and the name "**South Island Adventure Fly Fishing**" that I chose are inspired by my desire to bring an element of adventure to my fly fishing. I am open to all kinds of adventures and my customers' wishes are something I always try to prioritise wherever possible!



Fig. right: Chris Bell also fishes regularly, because there is always something new to learn. He also wants to be able to call on his fly fishing skills at any time.

There are a large variety of different locations and water types that can be experienced as part of a day fly fishing in New Zealand. From the lowland rivers and streams, to the headwater spring creeks and freestone rivers that New Zealand is renowned for, not to mention the crystal clear lakes where large shallow cruising brown and rainbow trout can be sighted and cast to, New Zealand has it all!

Most of my guests prefer to where possible target Brown trout in the rivers and streams. But there are the occasional angler whose main focus is to fish for cruising trout in the stillwater environment. Casting a dry fly to individually sighted trout and seeing the fish move to, and then rise to engulf the fly off the waters surface is what most clients desire to experience. And I am here to make this possible!

Only treating trout with care will preserve their

Fly fishing has so many different aspects that make it the addictive pursuit that it is! The truly beautiful places it takes you, the amazing like-minded people you meet and spend time with, as well as the addictive challenge that every new fish presents to the angler, are all a big part of what make the pursuit of fly fishing so special! I have come to understand that anglers in New Zealand can only continue to experience all of this if our trout populations remain healthy.

In New Zealand, there are almost exclusively wild trout populations with very little stocking occurring, especially in the South Island. In some of the waters where we fish, there are very low trout numbers, and if every angler who came to fish these rivers kept just one fish, there would be no fish left to catch after just a few weeks. Without catch and release and the careful handling of the fish, we anglers would lose what makes us who we are.

My in-depth knowledge of New Zealand's freshwater fish and the factors that influence their populations that I have gained in many different areas of work and study has instilled in me a great respect for these beautiful animals. I always do my best to treat these fish as well as possible so that they have the best chance of surviving and returning to their life as normal after being caught and released, as when done correctly, the survival rate of the fish is very high.

With this in mind, I would urge every angler to prioritise how they treat their captured fish in order to cause as little harm or stress to the fish as possible, thus ensuring their survival and well-being.

Let Chris be your guide

Chris's territory covers the entire **North Canterbury and the West Coast Region**, which has many beautiful rivers flowing into lakes. Some places are only easily accessible by helicopter.

Chris Bell

6 Parkview Place

Christchurch 8042

New Zealand

Mobil: +64 27 2286 064

Email: info@adventureflyfishingnz.com

Website: <https://www.adventureflyfishingnz.com>







Samuel Harrison



The attraction that the countryside exerts on me is almost impossible to suppress. That is one of the reasons why I often dream of being in the mountains. I love the unpredictability of every single trip.

The obsession of a wild man

by Samuel Harrison

I am a self-employed artist/knife maker who has spent the last 20 years roaming the wilderness of the South Island, and hunting or fishing. In doing so, the things I have learned in the mountains have fundamentally changed my life and given me much greater resilience and ability to deal with unpleasant and stressful situations, whether in the mountains themselves or in my working life.

These are mainly unpredictable things and difficult weather conditions, such as heavy rain, snow and thick clouds on the mountain peaks, paths that are impassable, sudden flooding, blocked return routes, to name but a few. This makes me think more solution-oriented and constantly draws me out of my comfort zone.

In retrospect, however, it is precisely these moments that have stayed with me the most and really helped me grow comfortable in these extreme environments. I've always found the most challenging things in life are where the most learning and growth happens. Simply learning how to deal with these difficulties can help to put other people around the challenges of everyday life into perspective.



Hunting and fly fishing

Hunting and fishing are more than just a hobby for me, they have almost become an obsession. I find myself constantly thinking about the next adventure and studying maps of the South Island, looking for new spots to go and explore. The discomfort faced when in the hills, becomes addictive, like a craving I need to satisfy.

Fig. left: Sam Harrison with his complete fishing, trekking and packrafting equipment. Even with lightweight gear, this can quickly add up to 20 kg.

Every day, I feel the urge to expose myself to the challenges of nature in order to be part of what has given me my strength. This refreshes my inner strength every time.

Fig. below: The weather is perfect. What's more, the packraft is easy to steer thanks to the favourable current conditions. However, this is not always the case, and packrafts do have their limitations, especially when it comes to navigating white water. You should therefore find out in advance exactly what your packraft can be used for and ensure you receive adequate training.



Fig. above: Heavy rain and condensation often make it necessary to air the tent and dry equipment.





Fig. left: Goddard Caddis, size 10-18. If you want to get the most out of New Zealand, you should master fly finding. This allows you to adapt to all necessary regional adjustments at short notice.

Tying your own flies

I was fortunate enough when I started fishing to meet some amazing fly tiers. This is perhaps the greatest example of mimicking nature through a craft. There is nothing more satisfying than catching a trophy, brown trout in the middle of nowhere on a size 18 nymph that you've tied yourself. Apart from the thread and a few synthetic materials,

I've either foraged or found most of the fly-tying materials that I now use. For example, deer hair is great for making floating bodies, as the fibres are hollow. Therefore, as I am always shooting deer, I have a constant supply of different colours and shades. Another great find was a pheasant that had recently been run over on



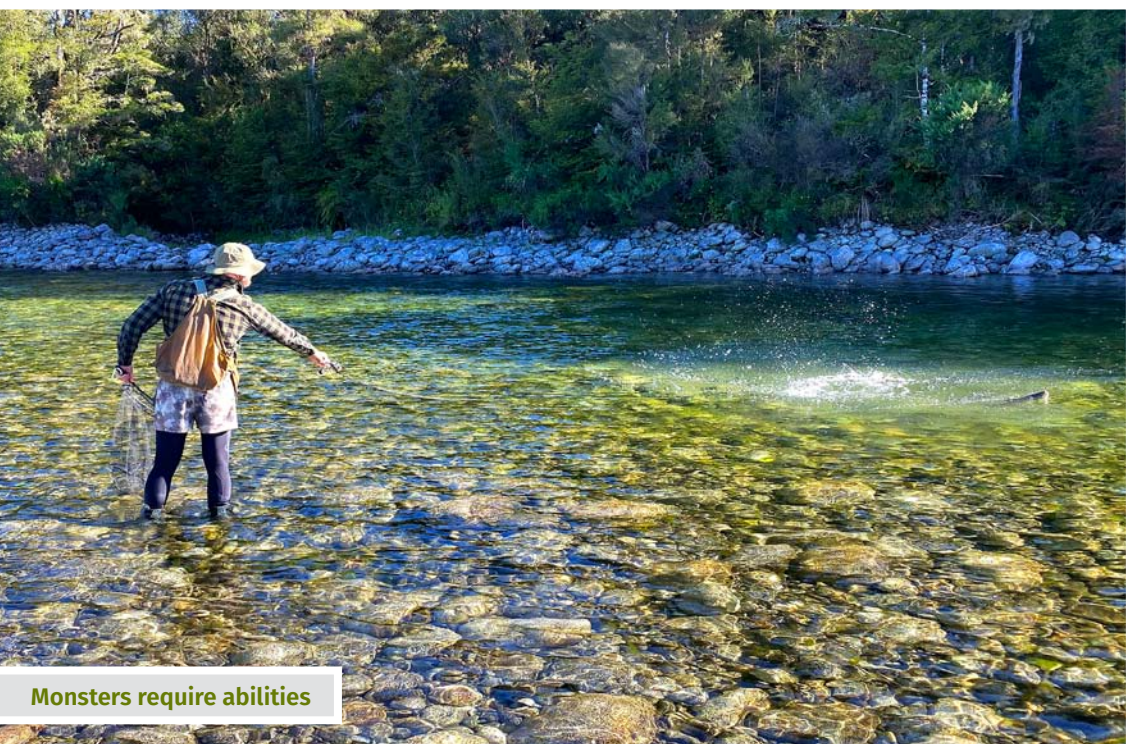
Fig. right Greenstone Fly, size 10-12. The more natural the objects of desire look, the greater your chances of success in making a good catch. Sam also ties his own flies, as you can see from these two examples.

the side of the highway. This bird has supplied me with a lifetime of feathers for flies. Almost everything I associate with nature also has some influence on my work. I enjoy and have always enjoyed immersing myself as deeply as possible in the crafts. This includes fly tying, hand loading bullets cartridge manufacturing, bow making and knife making forging.

I would now like to take you on a journey into nature, which has captivated me for many years – a world that will enchant you too if you want to experience true wilderness and adventure.



Pure sight fishing – mistakes are not forgiven



Monsters require abilities



Dangerous activities – everyday life in the backcountry



The big ones come from the depths





Large river stones make crossing difficult



Happy after an adrenaline rush



Trout at the edge of the current



Camping where it is safest



Samuel in brown trout heaven





Samuel often combines fly fishing with hunting

Blacksmithing and unique pieces

Over the last seven years, knives have become my greatest passion, and I now spend half of my working day making them. It is worth mentioning that I have worked as an artist my entire adult life. This has had a massive influence on my approach to knife making. I treat each knife as a separate work of art and an individual, without templates or patterns, so every knife is unique and absolutely one of a kind.

I started with hunting knives and quickly moved on to everything I could think of, except for the production of fantasy knives. The best thing about knife making is that you can also use the knives in practice. This is different from the products I make in my other work as an artist. You can put them through their paces and eliminate any flaws in terms of blade shape, aesthetics, portability, etc. This also serves to optimise yourself and the product. This is very helpful, as it allows me to continuously make small improvements.

When I started making knives, it was quite simple: I just removed material, i.e. I bought steel, shaped it, ground the cutting edges and then had someone else heat treat it. Over time, I started making my own steel. To do this, I forge weld mild steel and high carbonhard steel together and forge the shapes and the rough blade geometry. Now I also heat treat (harden) all my blades and carry out the entire process from start to finish.

I use different materials for my handles. Antlers found in the wild are excellent for handle material because they are very stable and durable and look stunning. fantastic. I have a few good friends who work as arborists and are always on the lookout for interesting pieces of wood for me. I prefer harder woods and like to work with large burls, as these are often much more stable and stronger. However, for maximum durability and strength, I use some synthetic materials such as Micarta and G10. These are incredibly robust and hard-wearing,



Fig. left: A hunting knife with a stag horn handle and a broad knife back.

which is very important for outdoor knives, as they are constantly wet and dry.

Fig. right 1: The blank is heated in the forge in order to be forged. To do this, it must be heated to over 1000 degrees until it is white-hot.



Fig. 2, right: Once the blank is white-hot, it is forged under pressure. The steel layers are welded together with a few powerful hammer blows.



Fig. 3, right: Forging the tapers on a Bowie knife. The forging process is complete when the steel is red-hot. At this point, the steel is soft and can be easily worked with a hammer.



Fig. 4, right: A selection of forged blades that will now undergo further processes to become one of these beautiful knives.





Fig. left: These are knife sheaths for hunting knives, which can be made in a wide variety of leather types and embossings on request.

Leather knife sheaths

When it comes to knife making, it seems incomplete to me to sell knives without a sheath. That's why I also learned to work with leather. All outdoor knives need a sheath so that they can be easily and safely transported on the body or in a pack, a rucksack. So I have greatly developed my leatherworking skills over the years.

In the beginning, I did almost everything wrong and first had to learn how to do it properly so that the sheaths would turn out really well.

A good sheath must have a belt loop so that it can be carried on the body, and the knife sheath must be made to fit perfectly and fit well in order to avoid it flapping around or falling out.



Fig. right: A Bowie knife also needs a sheath that is suited to this robust knife, which can be attached either to the hip or at chest height.

Of course, good craftsmanship comes at a price, but this pays off in the longevity of the knives. They also give you more safety when handling the knife and on your adventures. As a maker I'm always happy to fix any issues or sharpen knives for people. Through these services I have gotten to know some awesome people over the years.

Good craftsmanship pays off in terms of durability. Furthermore, a knife offers greater safety thanks to its stability when handling. I am always happy to fix any product-specific problems with your knife or to sharpen it. Through these services, I have met many wonderful people over the years.

Which knife is suitable for the backcountry?

The three most important knives I would recommend to someone wanting to explore New Zealand's backcountry are:

A slim, lightweight folding knife

This knife is incredibly handy when travelling light and can be safely stored in any pocket or bag. It is ideal for processing animals, preparing lunch or whenever you need a sharp blade.



Fixed blade hunting knife

A good all-round knife that is more durable than a folding knife and is excellent for general bushcraft work.



Bowie/utility knife/camping knife

Thanks to their robustness, these knives are ideal for setting up camp, e.g. for chopping branches and firewood, building shelters or carrying loads, as well as for clearing spaces. Not to be forgotten is food preparation, such as cutting fish, meat and vegetables, which can also be done with this knife.



Which knife you should buy depends on how you want to organise and experience your backcountry stay.

My knives are available from around 500 NZD for a simple hunting or folding knife. The large Bowie knives cost up to 2000 NZD. These prices vary depending on the handle materials used and the complexity of the steel.

Have a look on Instagram:

<https://www.instagram.com/samharrison.knives/>

I would be delighted if you would contact me:

Samuel Harrison

Email: samuelharrison@gmail.com



North Island **Eastern Region**

The best fishing trip in the North starts right here!

From the Urewera Forest to the Waikato Headwaters, this region is full of trout magic. Brown trout can be found in the clear mountain streams of the Ruakituri and Waiau, and you can catch rainbow monsters in the lakes of Rotorua.

Tarawera, Okataina and Rotoiti are home to fish weighing over 5 kg.

Those who fish here will find fish in deep lakes, in knee-deep tributaries or in the many narrow river branches.



North Island • Eastern Region • Matamata • Waihou River



GPS Data: 37° 47. 280' S, 175° 50. 380' E / 40 m

North Island • Eastern Region • Waihi • Waitawheta River



GPS Data: 37° 27. 859' S, 175° 46. 767' E / 160 m

North Island • Eastern Region • Rotorua – Ngongotaha Stream



GPS Data: 38° 06. 246' S, 176° 09. 480' E / 302 m

North Island • Eastern Region – Rotorua – Awahou Stream



GPS Data: 38° 03. 003' S, 176° 13. 363' E / 296 m

North Island • Eastern Region • Rotorua • Lake Rotorua



GPS Data: 38° 02. 99' S, 176° 15. 603' E / 297 m

North Island • Eastern Region • Rotorua • Lake Ngapouri



GPS Data: 38° 20. 247' S, 176° 20. 304' E / 478 m



North Island • Eastern Region • Rotorua • Lake Rotoiti



GPS Data: 38° 02. 026' S, 176° 29. 172' E / 276 m

North Island • Eastern Region – Rotorua – Lake Rotoehu



GPS Data: 38° 00. 732' S, 176° 32. 819' E / 304 m



North Island • Eastern Region • Rotorua • Lake Rotoma



GPS Data: 38° 03. 503' S, 176° 36. 328' E / 317 m

North Island • Eastern Region • Rotorua • Lake Okataina



GPS Data: 38° 06. 040' S, 176° 25. 766' E / 311 m



North Island • Eastern Region • Rotorua – Lake Rerewhakaaitu



GPS Data: 38° 18. 384' S, 176° 30. 163' E / 439 m

North Island • Eastern Region • Rotorua • Lake Tarawera



GPS Data: 38° 12. 388' S, 176° 22. 583' E / 298 m



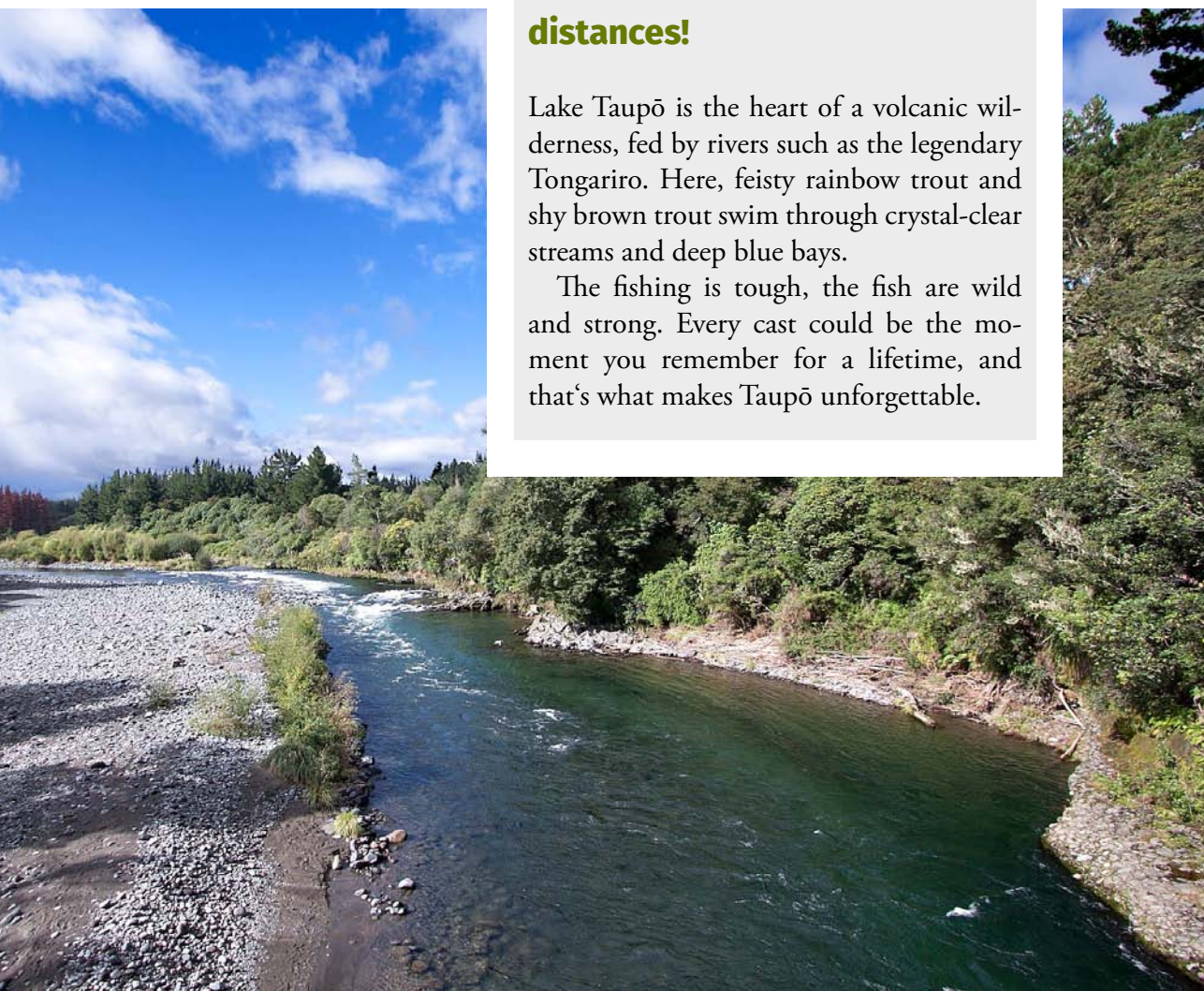


North Island **Taupo Region**

Versatile fishing, with short distances!

Lake Taupō is the heart of a volcanic wilderness, fed by rivers such as the legendary Tongariro. Here, feisty rainbow trout and shy brown trout swim through crystal-clear streams and deep blue bays.

The fishing is tough, the fish are wild and strong. Every cast could be the moment you remember for a lifetime, and that's what makes Taupō unforgettable.



North Island – Taupo Region • Taupo • Waitahanui River



GPS Data: 38° 47. 159' S, 176° 04. 652' E / 360 m

North Island • Taupo Region • Taupo • Hinemaiaia River



GPS Data: 38° 51. 354' S, 176° 02. 181' E / 360 m

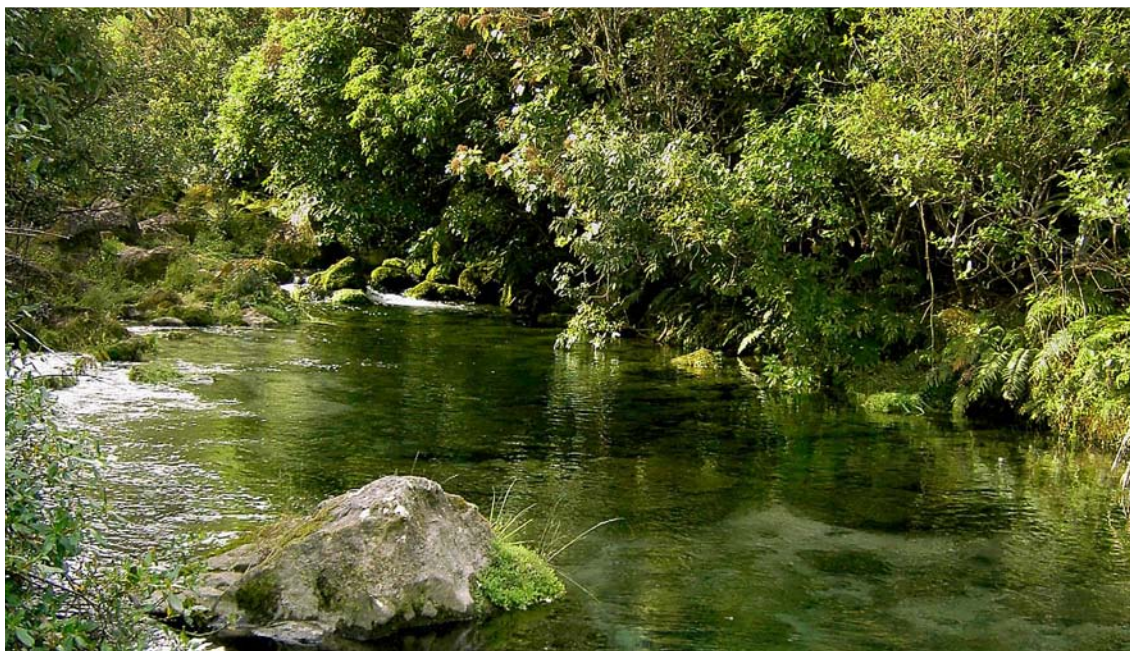


North Island • Taupo Region • Taupo • Tauranga Taupo River



GPS Data: 38° 56. 130' S, 175° 54. 696' E / 379 m

North Island • Taupo Region • Kuratau • Kuratau River



GPS Data: 38° 53. 291' S, 175° 46. 312' E / 359 m

North Island – Taupo Region – Taupo • Waihaha River



GPS Data: 38° 41. 949' S, 175° 40. 880' E / 487 m

North Island • Taupo Region • Taupo • Tongariro River



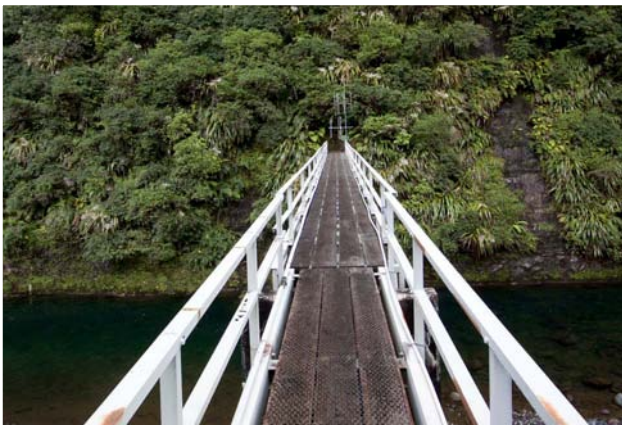
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North Island • Taupo Region • Tongariro National Park • Whakapapanui Stream



GPS Data: 39° 08. 839' S, 175° 30. 471' E / 840 m

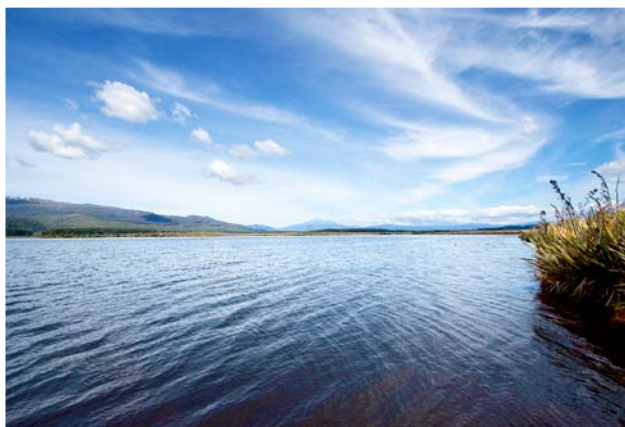
North Island • Taupo Region • Tongariro Nationalpark • Whakapapa River



GPS Data: 39° 07. 078' S, 175° 28. 053' E / 687 m



North Island • Taupo Region • Taupo – Lake Otamangakau



GPS Data: 39° 59. 968' S, 175° 37. 200' E / 620 m

North Island • Taupo Region • Tongariro Nationalpark • Lake Rotoaira



GPS Data: 39° 01. 355' S, 175° 42. 790' E / 571 m



North Island • Taupo Region • Tongariro Nationalpark • Lake Rotopounamu



GPS Data: 39° 01. 639' S, 175° 44. 725' E / 713 m

North Island • Taupo Region • Kuratau • Lake Karatau



GPS Data: 38° 52. 359' S, 175° 43. 530' E / 456 m



North Island • Taupo Region • Taupo • Lake Taupo



GPS Data: 38° 41. 628' S, 176° 04. 480' E / 456 m

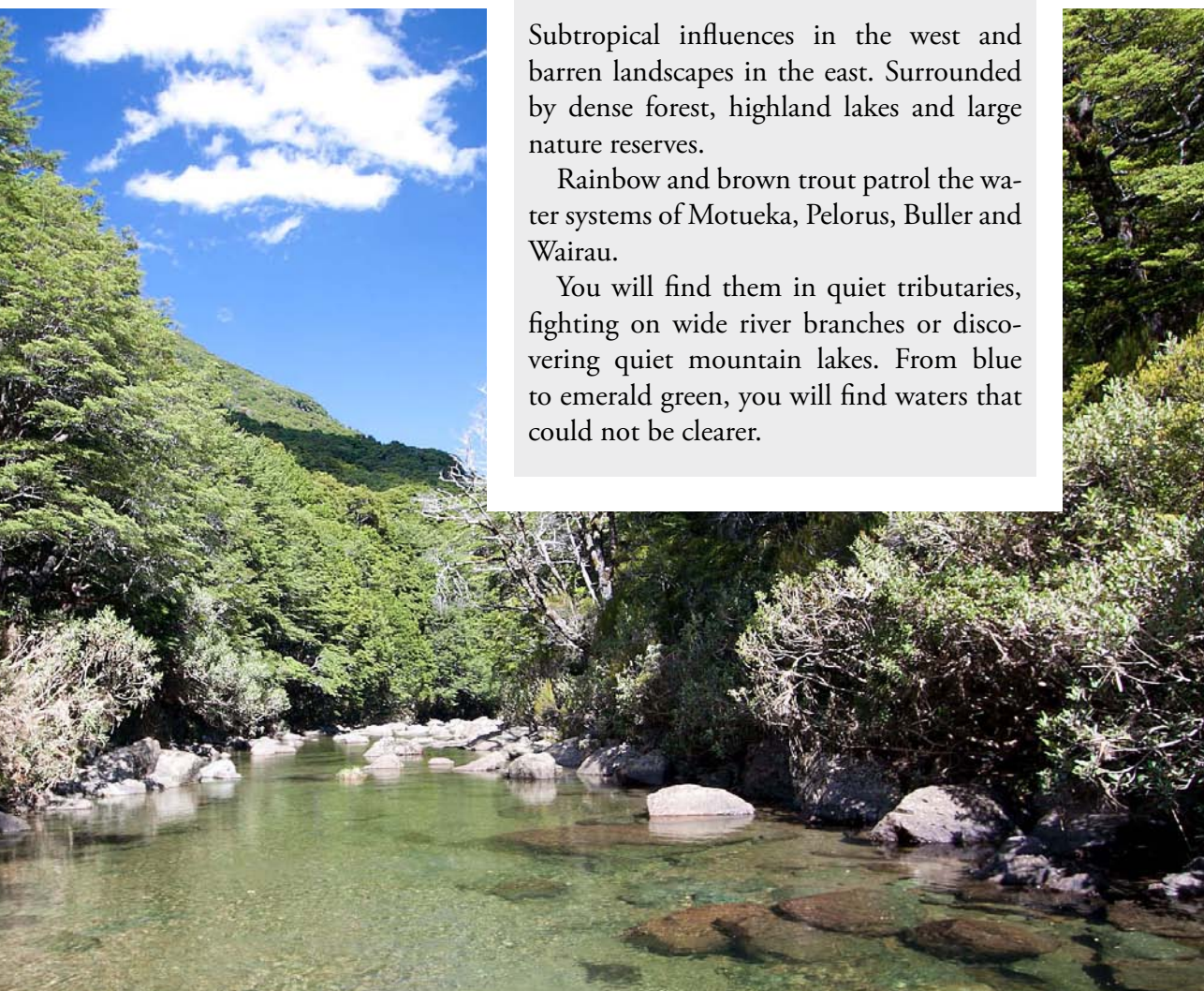
South Island **Nelson/Marlborough Region**

The best start in the south!

Subtropical influences in the west and barren landscapes in the east. Surrounded by dense forest, highland lakes and large nature reserves.

Rainbow and brown trout patrol the water systems of Motueka, Pelorus, Buller and Wairau.

You will find them in quiet tributaries, fighting on wide river branches or discovering quiet mountain lakes. From blue to emerald green, you will find waters that could not be clearer.



South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Takaka • Takaka River



GPS Data: 41° 01. 882' S, 172° 47. 506' E / 94 m

South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Havelock • Pelorus River



GPS Data: 41° 17. 885' S, 173° 34. 289' E / 39 m

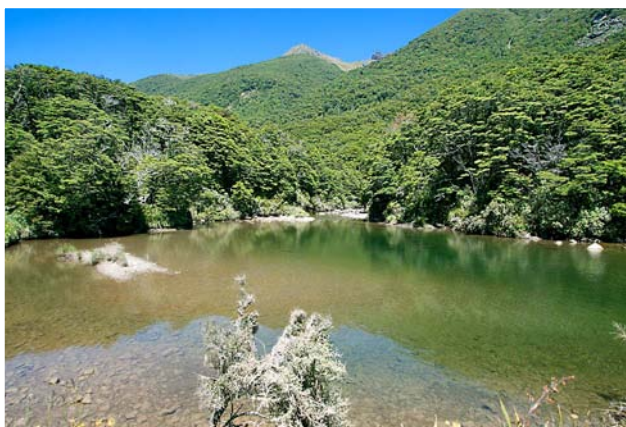


South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Motueka • Motueka River



GPS Data: 41° 16. 607' S, 172° 48. 714' E / 86 m

South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Motueka • Coob River



GPS Data: 41° 07. 707' S, 172° 36. 614' E / 817 m



South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Takaka • Pupu Spring



GPS Data: 40° 50. 883' S, 172° 46. 233' E / 17 m

South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Blenheim • Wairau River



GPS Data: 41° 33. 790' S, 173° 28. 045' E / 175 m



South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Murchison • Matakitaki River

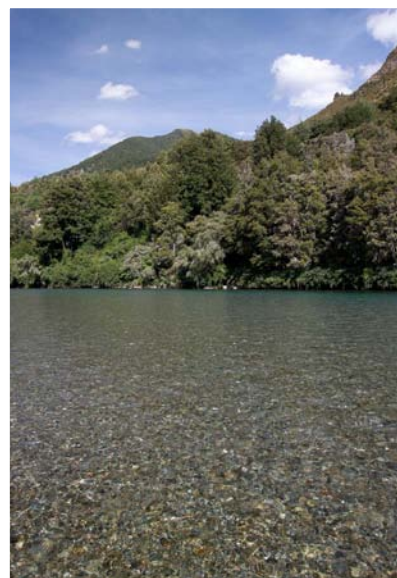


GPS Data: 42° 00. 605' S, 172° 21. 587' E / 322 m

South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Murchison • Howard River



GPS Data: 41° 44. 744' S, 172° 40. 911' E / 446 m



South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Murchison • Mangles River



GPS Data: 41° 47. 411' S, 172° 22. 364' E / 180 m

South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Murchison • Buller River



GPS Data: 41° 42. 790' S, 172° 33. 476' E / 317 m



South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Karamea • Oparara River



GPS Data: 41° 12. 619' S, 172° 09. 239' E / 23 m

South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Karamea • Karamea River



GPS Data: 41° 14. 846' S, 172° 12. 902' E / 41 m



South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Hamner Springs • Clarence River



GPS Data: 42°26. 216' S, 172° 54. 987' E / 745 m

South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • St.Arnaud • Lake Rotoiti



GPS Data: 41° 48. 415' S, 172° 50. 818' E / 618 m



South Island • Nelson/Marlborough Region • Motueka • Coob Reservoir



GPS Data: 41° 07. 963' S, 172° 37. 807' E / 818 m

South Island **North Canterbury Region**

**The beauty lies in its earthy,
sparse vegetation!**

The great Alpine rivers here are merciless. Names like Rakaia, Waimakariri, Hurunui, with their wide streams, endless channels and crystal-clear water.

Brown trout stand in them like shadows, suspicious to the last. Rainbow trout strike brutally when you finally outwit them. Add to that remote lakes with surprisingly strong fish.

North Canterbury demands everything from you, and that's exactly why you come back.



South Island • North Canterbury Region • Hanmer Springs • Hope River



GPS Data: 42° 35. 318' S, 172° 27. 146' E / 428 m

South Island • North Canterbury Region • Boyle Village • Boyle River



GPS Data: 42° 30. 903' S, 172° 23. 167' E / 579 m



South Island • North Canterbury Region • Cheviot • Hurunui River



GPS Data: 42° 50. 684' S, 172° 22. 303' E / 423 m

South Island • North Canterbury Region • Rakaia • Rakaia River



GPS Data: 43° 31. 118' S, 171° 39.435' E / 272 m

South Island • North Canterbury Region • Methven • Wilberforce River



GPS Data: 43° 15. 435 S, 171° 23. 084' E / 453 m

South Island • North Canterbury Region • Methven • Lake Coleridge



GPS Data: 43° 20. 531' S, 171° 32. 808' E / 520 m



South Island • North Canterbury Region • Methven • Lake Evelyn



GPS Data: 43° 15. 067' S, 171° 32. 074' E / 593 m

South Island • North Canterbury Region • Methven • Lake Selfe



GPS Data: 43° 14. 342' S, 171° 30. 871' E / 578 m

South Island • North Canterbury Region • Methven • Lake Georgina



GPS Data: 43° 19. 224' S, 171° 34. 212' E / 551 m

South Island • North Canterbury Region • Castle Hill Village • Lake Pearson



GPS Data: 43° 07. 104' S, 171° 46. 594' E / 613 m





South Island **Otago Region**

Rivers and lakes in breathtaking scenery!

Large lakes with great potential for regular ascents into the beautiful river landscape of Otago.

Capital rainbow trout and, above all, brown trout are found in many places. It is a guarantee to make our angler's hearts beat faster.

Rivers in shades of blue and emerald are nestled in landscapes that many only know from films. They open up direct access to the world of freshwater fishing.



South Island • Otago Region • Wanaka • Matukituki River



GPS Data: 44° 30. 592' S, 168° 44. 712' E / 372 m

South Island • Otago Region • Wanaka • Motatapu River



GPS Data: 44° 41.799' S, 168° 57.469' E / 378 m

South Island • Otago Region • Wanaka • Makaroa River



GPS Data: 44° 11. 785' S, 169° 14. 904' E / 315 m

South Island • Otago Region • Glenorchy • Caples River



GPS Data: 4° 56. 128' S, 168° 20. 714' E / 316 m

South Island • Otago Region • Wanaka • Lake Wanaka



GPS Data: 44° 39. 524' S, 169° 07. 715' E / 280 m

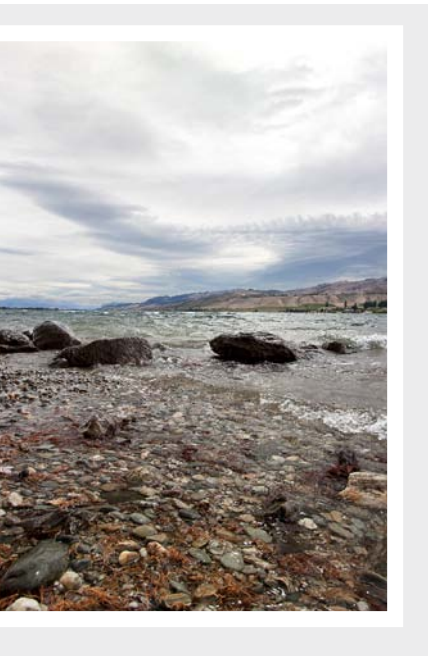
South Island • Otago Region • Hawea • Lake Hawea



GPS Data: 4° 26. 469' S, 169° 17. 400' E / 358 m



South Island • Otago Region • Cromwell • Lake Dunstan

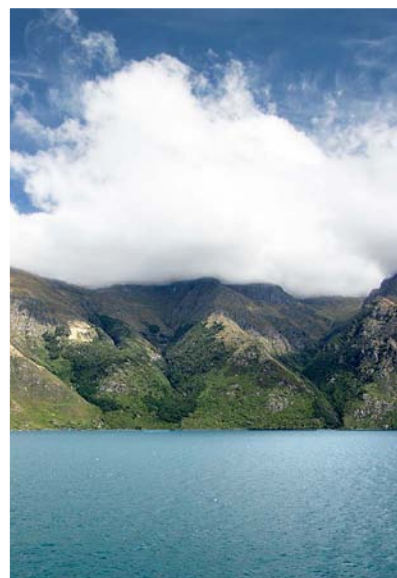


GPS Data: 44° 59. 293' S, 169° 13. 967' E / 182 m

South Island • Otago Region • Queenstown • Lake Waikatipu



GPS Data: 44° 50. 729' S, 168° 20. 980' E / 312 m



South Island • Otago Region • Queenstown • Lake Hayes



GPS Data: 44° 58. 884' S, 168° 48. 967' E / 336 m

South Island • Otago Region • Queenstown • Lake Moke



GPS Data: 44° 59. 895' S, 168° 34. 320' E / 538 m





South Island

Central South Island Region

**Here, lakes and river deltas
dominate the landscape!**

Mighty rivers such as the Rangitata and Waitaki rush from the Alps towards the sea. It is home to powerful brown trout and rainbow trout that do not forgive mistakes.

In between lie clear lakes and beautiful headwaters where trout hunt in open water. Feel the vastness, the silence, the power of the fish.

Central South Island is a pure adrenaline rush for anyone who wants to not only catch trout, but experience them.



South Island • Central South Island Region • Geraldine • Rangitata River



GPS Data: 43° 39. 151' S, 170° 56. 341' E / 459 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Duntroon • Waitaki River



GPS Data: 44° 50. 853' S, 170° 41. 202' E / 129 m



South Island • Central South Island Region • Twizel • Twizel River



GPS Data: 44° 15. 721' S, 170° 06. 730' E / 519 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Omarama • Ahuriri River



GPS Data: 44° 30. 515' S, 169° 51. 218' E / 519 m



South Island • Central South Island Region • Otematata • Otematata River



GPS Data: 44° 40. 642' S, 170° 09. 791' E / 398 m

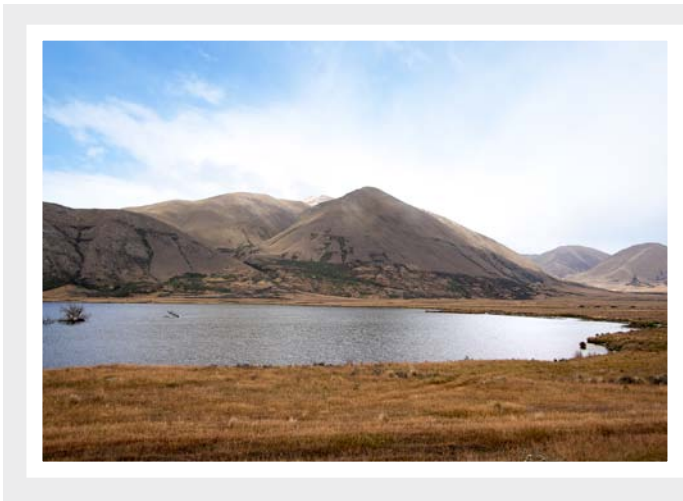
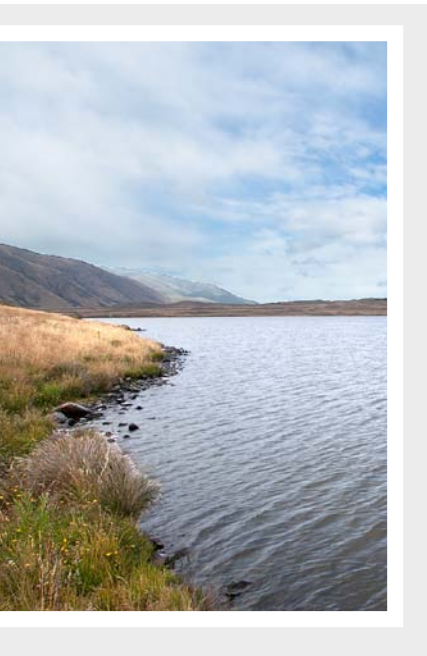
South Island • Central South Island Region • Kurow • Hakataramea River



GPS Data: 44° 33. 451' S, 170° 39. 942' E / 373 m



South Island • Central South Island Region • Methven • Lake Emma



GPS Data: 43° 37. 834' S, 171° 06. 446' E / 660 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Methven • Lake Heron



GPS Data: 43° 29. 628' S, 171° 09. 758' E / 700 m



South Island • Central South Island Region • Methven • Lake Emily



GPS Data: 43° 33. 173' S, 171° 13. 815' E / 678 m

South Island • Central South Island Region – Methven • Lake Clearwater



GPS Data: 43° 36. 333' S, 171° 03.380' E / 678 m



South Island • Central South Island Region • Tekapo • Lake Tekapo



GPS Data: 44° 60. 172 S, 170° 29. 039' E / 715 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Tekapo • Lake Alexandrina



GPS Data: 43° 58. 150' S, 170° 26. 934' E / 719 m

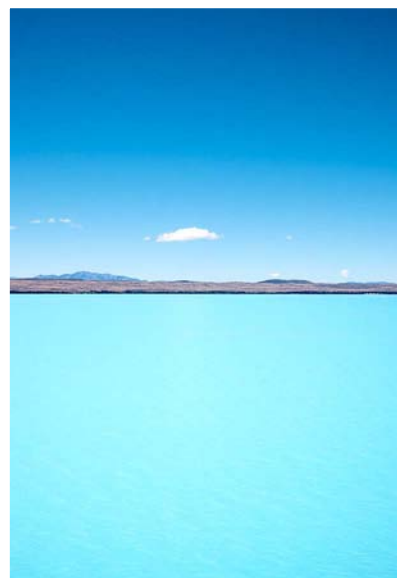


South Island • Central South Island Region • Tekapo • Lake Mc Gregor



GPS Data: 43° 56. 334' S, 170° 28. 366' E / 716 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Twizel • Lake Pukaki



GPS Data: 44° 10. 527' S, 170° 09. 780' E / 535 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Twizel • Lake Ohau



GPS Data: 44° 17. 067' S, 169° 52.805' E / 533 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Twizel • Lake Ruataniwha



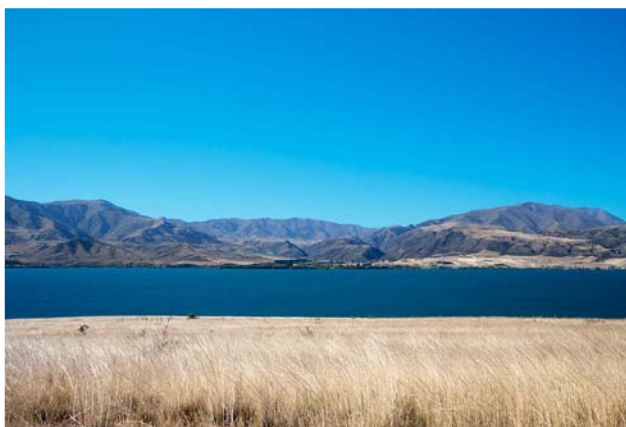
GPS Data: 44° 16. 632' S, 170° 04. 261' E / 479 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Twizel • Lake Benmore



GPS-Daten-Nord: 44° 21. 158' S, 170° 11.855' E / 375 m
GPS-Daten-Süd: 44° 31. 078' S, 170° 02.852' E / 372 m

South Island • Central South Island Region • Otematata • Lake Aviemore



GPS Data: 44° 36. 989' S, 170° 14. 463' E / 274 m



South Island • Central South Island Region • Kurow • Lake Waitaki



GPS Data: 44° 40. 984' S, 170° 24. 354' E / 242 m

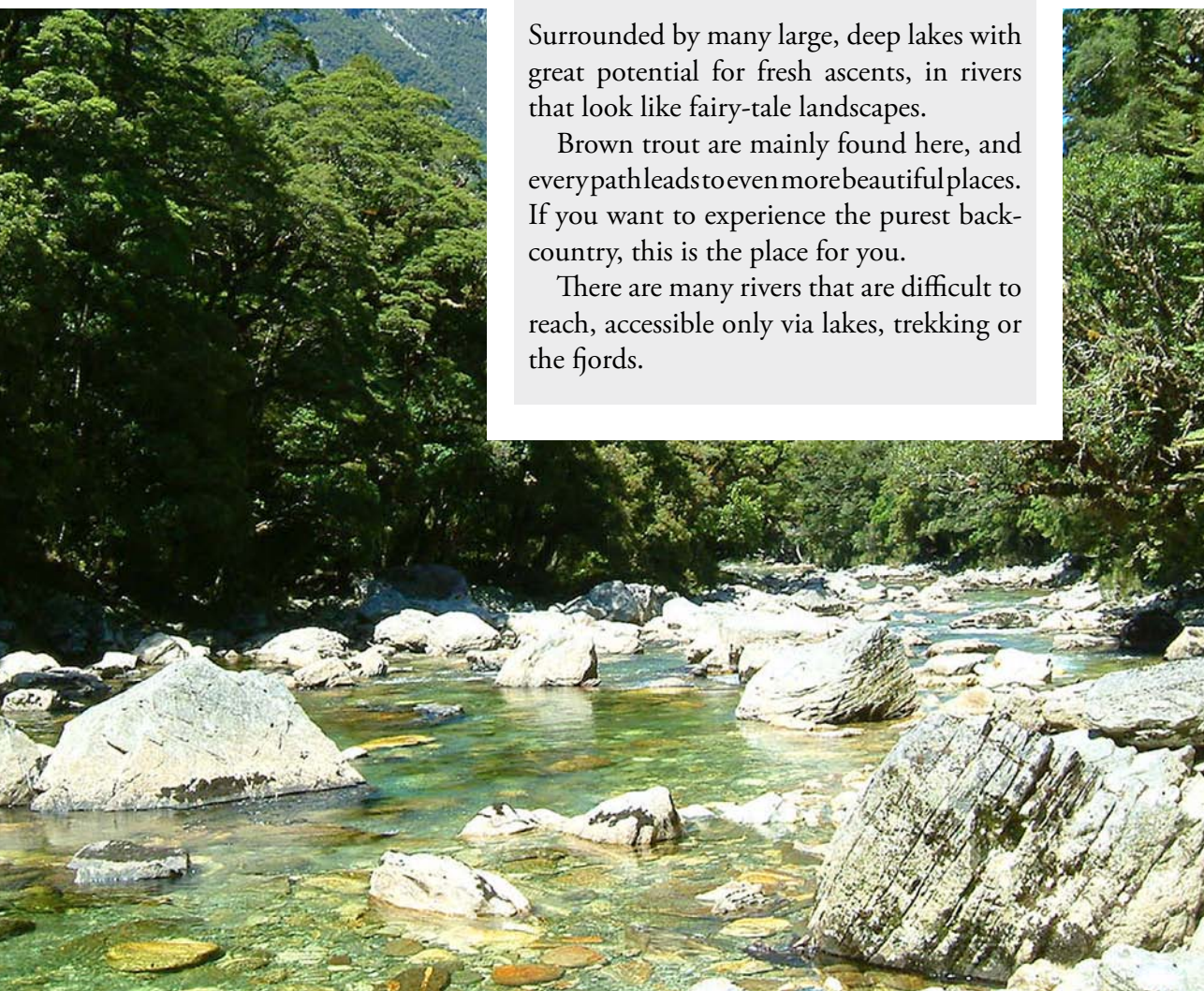
South Island **Southland/Fiordland Region**

Arriving in nature

Surrounded by many large, deep lakes with great potential for fresh ascents, in rivers that look like fairy-tale landscapes.

Brown trout are mainly found here, and every path leads to even more beautiful places. If you want to experience the purest back-country, this is the place for you.

There are many rivers that are difficult to reach, accessible only via lakes, trekking or the fjords.



South Island • Southland Region • Kingston • Mataura River



GPS Data: 45° 34. 758' S, 168° 39. 008' E / 246 m

South Island • Southland Region • Mossburn • Oreti River



GPS Data: 45° 26. 846' S, 168° 07. 529' E / 527 m



South Island • Southland Region • Mossburn • Maraoa River



GPS Data: 45° 21. 167' S, 168° 07. 947' E / 567 m

South Island • Southland/Fiordland Region • Milford Sound • Donne River



GPS Data: 44° 42. 268' S, 167° 58. 309' E / 82 m

South Island • Southland/Fiordland Region • Te Anau • Eglington River



GPS Data: 45° 02. 576' S, 167° 59. 786' E / 320 m

South Island • Southland/Fiordland Region • Te Anau • Waiau River



GPS Data: 45° 47. 683' S, 167° 37. 859' E / 137 m



South Island • Southland/Fiordland Region • Te Anau • Glaisnock River



GPS Data: 44° 59. 939' S, 167° 42. 170' E / 194 m

South Island • Southland/Fiordland Region • Te Anau • Mackenzie River



GPS Data: 45° 17. 546' S, 167° 25. 988' E / 201 m



South Island • Southland/Fiordland Region • Te Anau • Clinton River



GPS Data: 44° 55. 270' S, 167° 55. 680' E / 204 m

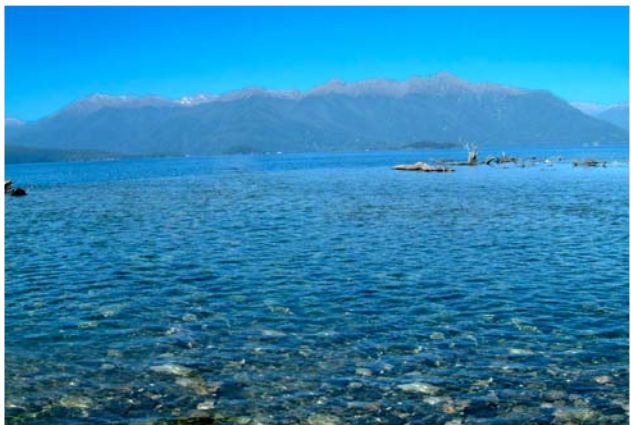
South Island • Southland/Fiordland Region • Te Anau • Te Anau Lake



GPS Data: 45° 21. 742' S, 167° 45. 249' E / 217 m



South Island • Southland/Fiordland Region • Manapuri • Manapuri Lake



GPS Data: 45° 33. 816' S, 167° 36. 627' E / 179 m

South Island • Southland Region • Mossburn • Mavora Lake



GPS Data North Lake: 45° 16. 539' S, 168° 10. 188' E / 619 m
GPS Data South Lake: 45° 17. 703' S, 168° 10. 686' E / 617 m





Book project 2026/2027

Be part of it!

We're already working on our next book – and well, maybe you should be in it.

I am always on the lookout for people with impressive photographs, unique stories or simply a new perspective on fishing in New Zealand.

Whether you are a fishing guide, experienced angler, or simply someone who has spent an unforgettable day on the water, I would love to hear from you.

Perhaps you even have an idea for a completely new book about fishing in New Zealand. If that applies to you, let's talk about it.

You must meet one of these two basic requirements:

You can write in a reader-friendly style.

and

You own all rights to your images, including those of the people you have photographed. The images must have a resolution of 300 dpi and be in focus.

I look forward to hearing from you and wish you every success with your fishing!

Your author

Steve Rebellton

