



## Hiking and Packrafting the Hollyford & Pyke River (New Zealand)

The Hollyford Track, combined with the Pyke Big Bay Route, offers a world class hiking in a remote area between Fiordland and Mount Aspiring National Parks in New Zealand. The loop takes about 9 days to complete and, if done in clockwise direction, the packrafting opportunities are multiple.

### WILDERNESS

Experience New Zealand at its best. This journey takes you out of the crowds to one of the most beautiful and remote areas of the country. There is plenty to do: hiking, paddling, swimming, fishing... Discover what the Hollyford and Pyke rivers have been hiding for years.

### ALL THE DETAILS

This guide shows you everything you need to complete the journey. Topo maps, hiking & packrafting opportunities, safety concerns, points of interest, where to sleep and lots more.

### 9-DAYS ITINERARY

A day-by-day guide of a hiking & packrafting trip completed in December 2012 by the author. Read the experience of his incredible journey through the wilderness of New Zealand.



## 9-days schedule followed in December of 2012.

The track conditions we found are also shown. Although it shouldn't be used as an itinerary to replicate, as the weather conditions may vary, it provides a general idea of what you can encounter.

### DAY 1: HOLLYFORD ROAD END – HIDDEN FALLS HUT



**SLEEP:** Hidden Falls hut (Serviced, 12 bunks, 15 NZD per person)

**DISTANCE:** 9km

**TIME:** 2-3 hours

**ACTIVITY:** Hiking and packrafting (only for the very experienced)

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** Stunning hiking through tropical forest, beautiful green bush and lots of waterfalls. A 2-minute detour to Hidden Falls is very worth it.

**POSSIBLE HAZARDS:** Packrafting this section is very tricky as the water level is very high at this point and there are lots of rapids in the river.

### SAFETY CONCERNS

Due to the **remoteness** of the place, not many people are found in the area (i.e. in the Pyke river). Some backcountry skills are needed and carrying a Personal Locator Beacon (it can be hired in Te Anau for 40 NZD per week) is recommended.

**Weather** can change fast and drastically so be prepared for all weather conditions, specially for the very wet. The river's water level can rise a few meters in just a couple of hours and become impassable after the rain. In the best case scenario, you will need to camp at least one night, so carrying a tent is necessary.

Also, there are lots of **sandflies** in the park. Make sure you carry a strong insect repellent that will last for the length of the journey.

The **best time in the year** to do the loop is between December and March, when there are more sunny days, less rain and the temperatures are higher.

### DAY 2: HIDDEN FALLS HUT – MCKERROW ISLAND HUT

**SLEEP:** McKerrrow Island hut (Standard, 12 bunks, 5 NZD per person)

**DISTANCE:** 7.5km hike + 10.2 km paddle

**TIME:** 1.5 hours (hike) + 2.5 hours (paddle)

**ACTIVITY:** Hiking and packrafting

**POINTS OF INTEREST:** Stunning views of the mountain ranges at the junction of Hollyford & Pyke rivers. McKerrrow island, a beautiful place with great views of the lake, valley and mountains around.

**POSSIBLE HAZARDS:** Some rapids in the river (only at the beginning). Possible face wind when the river turns north to lake McKerrrow (we had to go back to the track). Crossing to McKerrrow island on foot may become difficult after heavy rain.





## DAY 5: MARTINS BAY HUT – BIG BAY HUT

SLEEP: Big Bay hut (Standard, 9 bunks, 5 NZD per person)

DISTANCE: 16km

TIME: 5-6 hours

ACTIVITY: Hiking along the coast. Too rough to paddle.

POINTS OF INTEREST: There is a big Seal colony at Long Reef. The breeding period is between November and February, so you can spot lots of baby seals. Penguins can also be seen at Penguin Rock and dolphins come close to the shore frequently. Green & Blue mussels can be collected from the rocks between Penguin Rock and Big Bay beach.

POSSIBLE HAZARDS: The track from Long Reef to McKenzie creek is very overgrown and unpleasant to walk. A much better option is walking on the rocks along the coast.



## DAY 6: BIG BAY HUT – 2KM SOUTH OF PYKE CROSSING

SLEEP: Camping

DISTANCE: 18 km

TIME: 4-5 hours.

ACTIVITY: Hiking. Easy way to the Pyke crossing but the track gets quite rough after that. It's interesting to do these 2 kms extra so the next day you can start paddling from the beginning.

POINTS OF INTEREST: The camping place is simply amazing. Great views, lots of wood to light a fire and soft sand to pitch the tent.

POSSIBLE HAZARDS: Keep an eye on the orange markers getting out of Big Bay hut and after the Pyke crossing, as they can be difficult to follow. The Pyke crossing can be dangerous as water level can rise fast after rain.



## DAY 7: 2KM SOUTH OF PYKE CROSSING – OLIVINE HUT

SLEEP: Olivine hut (standard, 6 bunks, 5 NZD per person)

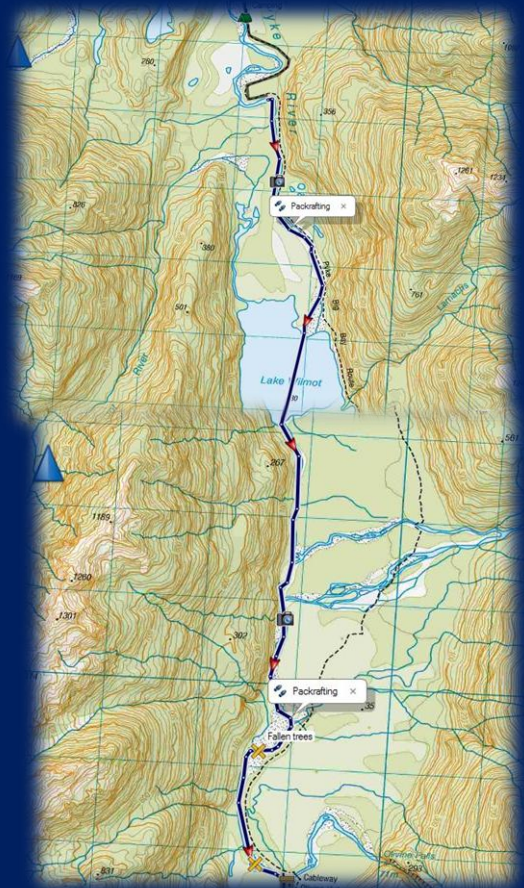
DISTANCE: 11.7 km

TIME: 5 – 5.5 hours

ACTIVITY: Packrafting all the way (crossing the Lake Wilmot)

POINTS OF INTEREST: One of the best days of the journey. Beautiful scenery with an easy and relaxing paddling. Interesting cable way over the Olivine river, I have never seen one like that before!

POSSIBLE HAZARDS: Winds can be strong in lake Wilmot, but it's usually tail wind. Waves can be big too. Some areas of the river have lots of trees in the water, so you need to walk around. See the map for details.



## DAY 8: OLIVINE HUT – ALABASTER HUT

SLEEP: Alabaster hut (serviced, 24 bunks, 15 NZD per person)

DISTANCE: 12.5 km paddle + 3.4 km hike

TIME: 5-6 hours

ACTIVITY: Packrafting and possible hiking if the wind is too strong

POINTS OF INTEREST: Another great day of paddling. Awesome views of Mount Tutoko coming down the river.

POSSIBLE HAZARDS: Some areas of the river have lots of trees in the water, so you need to walk around (See the map for details). Winds can be very strong in Lake Alabaster. In case you need to walk around the lake, put your water-shoes on and find your way around the shore walking on the rocks/water. The track is not possible to use anymore due to multiple tree falls and overgrown vegetation.





## DAY 9: ALABASTER HUT – HOLLYFORD ROAD END

SLEEP: -

DISTANCE: 19.5 km

TIME: 4-5 hours

ACTIVITY: Hiking all the way back to the road (packrafting not possible in this direction)

POINTS OF INTEREST: Same as day 1.

POSSIBLE HAZARDS: none.

## Logistics

You will need someone dropping you off and at the end of the Hollyford Road and picking you up 9 or 10 days later. There are some companies offering transport services from Te Anau, but not every day.

If you finish a day when there is not transport service available, you can easily hitch a ride, or walk for half a day to the Divide, where more transport options are available.

Another good option is to link this loop with the Routeburn Track via Deadmans Track, to make a 11-12 days journey.

## CREDITS & USAGE

Written by Antonio Cala.

Photographs by Franz Marcherhammer & Antonio Cala

Contact: [info@cyclinglemundo.com](mailto:info@cyclinglemundo.com)

You are welcome to use and share this resource as long as you don't modify the original document, state the authority of Antonio Cala and don't make any money out of it.

Please, do not put the downloaded PDF on your website. If you wish to link this resource, then please use the following link:

<http://www.cyclinglemundo.com/wp-content/uploads/2013/01/packraftguide.pdf>



**Cycling El Mundo**

[www.facebook.com/CyclingElMundo](https://www.facebook.com/CyclingElMundo)  
[www.twitter.com/CyclingElMundo](https://www.twitter.com/CyclingElMundo)

[www.CyclingElMundo.com](http://www.CyclingElMundo.com)