

McKellar Hut via Key Summit, Fiordland National Park

Key Summit is one of the most popular day walks in Fiordland. It offers 360-degree panoramic views over Fiordland mountains and alpine lakes. Not many realise though, that an unmarked track continues along the ridge to reveal even more amazing scenery and also to provide access to McKellar Hut in the Greenstone Valley.

From the car park at The Divide (the starting point for the Routeburn, Greenstone and Caples Tracks) head up the well-trodden track to Key Summit. Above the bushline, the view of the Hollyford Valley opens up.

The DOC track ends at the Lake Marian lookout, where most hikers stop, but it's possible to continue along the ridge following an unmarked, yet clearly visible route. It's easy walking, mostly open grassland and climbing a gentle slope, leading past alpine tarns and bogs.

Walk amongst hebes, tussocks, grasses and Spaniards, keeping an eye out for kea, pipit, seagulls, several types of native orchids and lots of mountain daisies.

Moving south, the views become more spectacular. On the left, first Lake Howden, then Lake McKellar come into view with McKellar Saddle (the highest point on the Caples Track) above it. On the right, Lake Gunn and Lake Fergus will be in full view. From this vantage, it's possible to see the Hollyford, Routeburn, Caples and Greenstone Tracks.

Further along the track are several pretty tarns snuggled in a dip between two rocky humps. A sheltered beach on the bank of the largest tarn provides a perfect lunch spot.

Continue straight up the rocky hump which can provide shelter from the wind. From its top, it's possible to see McKellar Hut. It might be tempting to walk straight down what seems the shortest route to the hut. But that is not the safe option. Instead, carry on to the highest point on the ridge, Pt1543m, before sidling down to a saddle between the source of Cascade Creek, which drains west to the Eglinton River, and Duck Creek, which flows east into Lake McKellar.

Bash your way down the spur that runs parallel to Duck Creek, walking straight down until the bush line where an orange triangle marks the beginning of the track to the hut. Back on the well-defined track, descend a staircase to reach McKellar Hut.

Make it a loop by returning via Lake McKellar on the Greenstone Track to where it meets the Caples. Continue on the Caples Track to Lake Howden, and at Lake Howden Hut join the Routeburn Track, which climbs up towards Key Summit and down to The Divide.

Wild File

Access From The Divide car park on the Te Anau-Milford Highway

Grade Moderate

Time The Divide to McKellar Hut, 8hr; McKellar Hut to The Divide via Howden Hut, 3hr

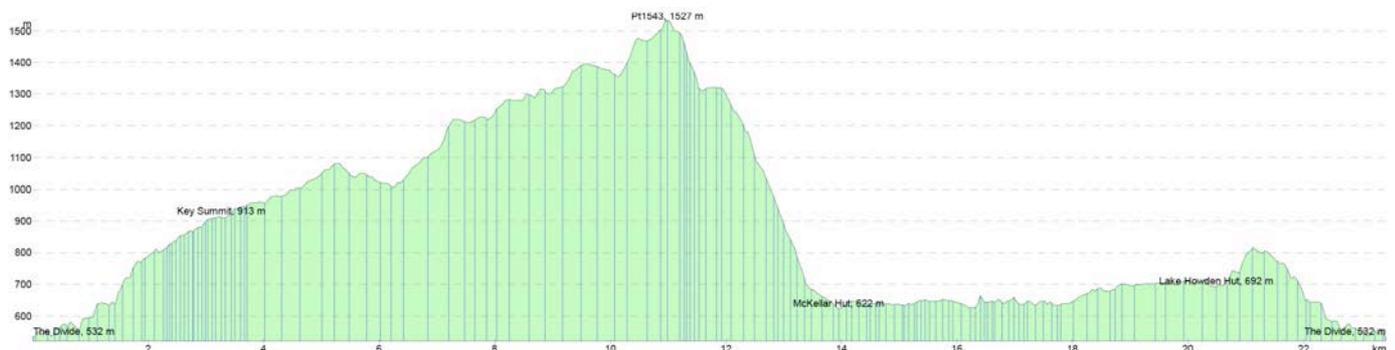
Distance 14km to hut, 23.4km loop

Total Ascent 1716m

Accommodation McKellar Hut (\$15, 24 bunks); Lake Howden Hut (\$54, 28 bunks)

Map CB09

Elevation Profile



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Disclaimer: While every effort has been made to map this route correctly, *Wilderness* does not accept responsibility for any errors. Users should plan their routes and gather as much information as possible before departing. The GPX file associated with this route has been drawn using Memory-Map software, version 6. Use discretion when following the route, especially when no track is marked on the map. The GPX file in these cases are a 'best guess' of the route only. Users should use a combination of GPS, visual observations, maps and compass to find the best possible route. Memory Map shows purple tracks and hut icons as verified routes and huts. Red or blue routes are those drawn by Wilderness.

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