

## Mataketake Hut, West Coast

Access the route from SH6, 40km north of Haast, where there is a modest roadside car park. The route begins on the well-benched, wide and very gentle cattle track, and within an hour brings you to a bridge over the Moeraki River. A side track offers a diversion to Blue River (Blowfly) Hut (5–10min).

Another hour of easy travel leads to the junction with the Mica Mine Tops Route, a track built by mica miners in the Second World War that has been restored to provide access to the new hut. However, DOC recommends ascending via the Maori Saddle Route further along so you can assess the conditions on the tops and retreat to Māori Saddle Hut if need be. The Mataketake Range is prone to fog and cloud that can make navigation difficult.

Continue on the cattle track towards Maori Saddle Hut. A signpost at the junction indicates three hours to the hut, but 1.5hr is more realistic given the easy nature of the track. Between here and Maori Saddle Hut there are several side streams that could become tricky in heavy flow. At the first of these (the only stream on the topo that drains from a tarn), after the Mica junction and around 460m, cross the stream and ascend a rocky bed on the true left, where several large orange triangles higher up will eventually highlight the way. On this section, remnants of an old telegraph line can be spotted and the birdsong is strong.

The turn-off to Maori Saddle Hut is on the right (one minute's walk to the hut – it's a good spot to bunk down if conditions on the tops don't suit). Beyond here, the cattle track south is closed due to a slip at Chasm Creek (hut book entries describe it as 'one slip and it's all over').

Continue beyond the hut for 5–10 minutes, and at the junction take the track towards Mataketake Hut. This heads straight up as the hill becomes a defined ridge. A direct climb of 600m (around 1.5hr) delivers you to scrub at 1100m then continues directly up and veers northeast at 1220m and across to the hut.

The route from here undulates over the tops and in between tarns for around 4km, offering views to the coast in good weather. The track hasn't yet bedded in, but the poled markers are consistent. It then descends a noticeable ridge into the bushline, at first directly, then as a zig-zag track from around 940m. After 1.5hr of zig-zag descent, the track rejoins the cattle track and the going is easier as you retrace your steps towards SH6.

Note that DOC times indicate 8 hours via Mica Mine Route and 9 hours via Maori Saddle route. Feedback from trampers so far is that these times are "well overcooked" and most people take 5 hours; times cited in this trip were for a vertically challenged tramp of moderate fitness and allowed for several short breaks.

### Wild File

**Access** SH6, 40km north of Haast

**Grade** Moderate

**Time** 5–7hr each way

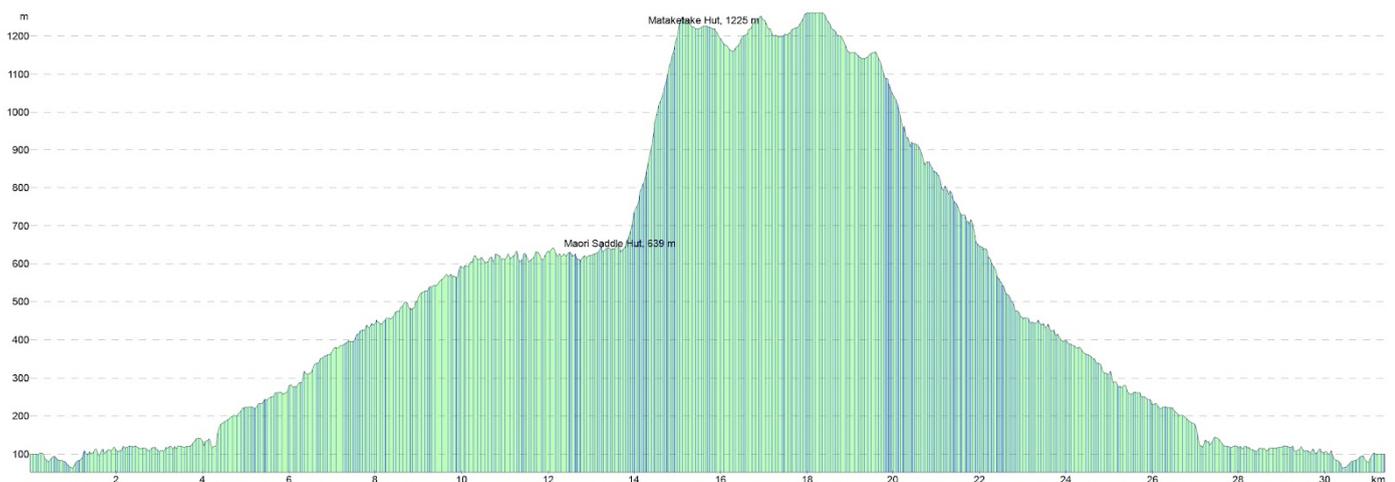
**Distance** 32km total

**Total ascent** 2078m

**Accommodation** Mataketake Hut (\$25, eight bunks)

**Map** BY13

**Elevation**



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