

Aspiring Hut, Mt Aspiring National Park

The West Mātukituki Valley offers easy entrance to the heart of one of our largest national parks, which is centered on the soaring summit of Mt Aspiring / Tititea (3033m) – surely one of the finest-shaped peaks in Kā Tiritiri o te Moana / the Southern Alps.

Some early Pākehā mountaineers nicknamed Aspiring 'The Matterhorn of the south', but in my opinion the Māori name Tititea, 'the glistening one', is the most beautifully apt name.

After World War II the New Zealand Alpine Club (NZAC) decided to build a hut in the Mātukituki and named it after the nearby peak. Thanks to the generosity of the Aspinall family, who for generations have farmed the valley, the NZAC was able to site the hut on a pleasant flat with glorious views up the valley. Echoing the grand surroundings, they built a grand hut with stone walls, big windows and sufficient space for large parties. Aspiring Hut was completed in 1949 and quickly became a magnet for mountaineers, trampers and day-walkers.

As well as making a great destination in its own right, the hut is conveniently positioned for trips to French Ridge, Liverpool Hut, Cascade Saddle or the valley head itself.

However, not even a grand hut can survive the rigours of time. Over the past few years the NZAC has embarked on a major restoration project and has made a fine job of retaining elements of the hut's original character while undertaking significant strengthening and adding improvements such as double-glazed windows, separate bunkrooms and a shared communal space. Funding support came from the Tupiki, Backcountry and FMC Forest and Mountain trusts. The refurbished hut was officially opened on March 31, 2023.

Access is as easy as ever. From the Raspberry Flat car park, it's a simple wander along a farm track up the lower Mātukituki Valley (which is still farmed), following a gentle incline, negotiating a bit of mud in places, and avoiding a few cows (leave gates as you find them).

After about 30 minutes, the Rob Roy Track branches off on the right. Continue up the valley alongside the Mātukituki River West Branch. After 3.1km the track passes the route to Shotover Saddle. Further on there's a bridged crossing of Red Rock Stream, and 400m later the NZAC's Cascade Hut appears on the edge of a grassy flat. From there it's another 30 minutes of easy tramping across more flats to reach Aspiring Hut, which sits dwarfed below a plethora of peaks.

This grand location beneath some of Otago's finest peaks is all the inspiration most trampers will ever need to visit.

Wild File

Access Mātukituki Valley, Wānaka–Mt Aspiring Road

Grade Easy

Time 2.5hr

Distance 9km to hut

Total ascent 205m

Accommodation Aspiring Hut (serviced alpine, 32 bunks)

Map CA11

