



OTAGO TRAMPING AND MOUNTAINEERING CLUB



Tramping with the OTMC
Information for OTMC Trip Participants

OTMC Trip Participants Guide

Tramping is a form of recreation that offers many things to different people, and there are many different reasons trampers head away to the hills. While all OTMC trips will have a suitable leader looking after either the trip or tramping party, there is an obligation for all participants to follow the long-established principles for safe tramping.

The Land Safety Code has been developed as part of [AdventureSmart](#), who are in turn managed by the New Zealand Search and Rescue Council. The Land Safety Code has five simple rules to help keep you safe, three of these apply to all participants on all OTMC trips (*choose the right trip, pack warm clothes and extra food and take care of yourself and each other*)

OTMC Leaders Authority

On all OTMC trips, the trip leader has the authority to make decisions in all regards to the trip, and their decision is final and must be followed. This applies to any decisions to the planning stages before the trip, and during the trip itself.

If you wish to discuss any aspect of the trip, then contact the Chief Guide for weekend trips, or the Day Trip Convenor for day trips (*details are available on our [website](#)*)

Choose the right trip for you

While tramping trips have the ability to cater for all trampers, OTMC trips are generally graded to suit different fitness or experience levels. Rather than using distance or elevation, the club has chosen to use time to grade the trips we run. There are five main categories,:

- **E (Easy):** 3-5 hours tramping time per day
- **M (Moderate):** 5-7 hours tramping time per day
- **F (Fit):** 7-9 hours tramping time per day
- **FE (Fitness Essential):** 10 hours plus tramping time per day
- **C (Climbing):** Climbing trip (either rock or snow/ ice)

Attendance on **Fitness Essential** or **Climbing trips** is at the trip/party leaders discretion and should be discussed with the leader beforehand.

Sub grades are also used on our trip programme, these are defined as:

- **E/M (Easy / Moderate):** 4-6 hours tramping time per day
- **M/F (Moderate / Fit):** 6-8 hours tramping time per day

OTMC day trips will only have one trip grade available, so choose day trips that are suitable for your own fitness level. We recommend starting with the Easy and Moderate trips

first and then decide where your own comfort level is.

The weekend trips operate differently, in that you need to register (sign-up) for the trip a week or so beforehand. This time is used by the trip organiser to arrange the individual tramping parties and transport. When you sign up for a weekend trip we ask that you note your desired fitness grade - we use this to make up parties of similar fitness. This in turn avoids a fitness mis-match between party members and makes our trips safer.

The club provides information on the upcoming trips via our Thursday meetings and the Weekly Update - this is where other elements of the trip will be discussed. This may include route information such as using a track or 'off-track', elevation gain / loss, steepness, or whether huts or camping will be used.

How to participate on an OTMC Trip

- **Day Trips**

The day trips are run in a more informal format, whereas intending participants meet at the place and time shown on the Trip Programme. You will need to have the minimum gear shown on our website, and if you are not a regular the trip leader should check you are suitably equipped for the trip.

Non OTMC-Members are welcome on OTMC day trips, but must contact the leader beforehand - this is to confirm plans for the trip, discuss experience and go over the clothing and equipment required. Non financial members of the OTMC are limited to 12 days tramping per year with the club (this includes weekend trips, which would count as two days in most cases) We encourage people to join the club after completing two trips with us.

- **Weekend (and longer) Trips**

Due to the requirement to arrange tramping parties and transport the weekend trips are run differently. Intending participants need to either sign the trip list available in the OTMC clubrooms or contact the Trip Leader before the closing date, which is generally eight days before the trip departure.

The information we require for all participants includes: name, email address, phone number, OTMC member (yes or no), your preferred fitness grade, SAR contact details (see below) and optionally your preferred trip within the wider area the trip is headed for.

Registering for a multi-day trip is an obligation that you intend to go and you are liable to pay the stated trip cost - refunds will be considered by the OTMC Committee for participants who are unable to attend after the trip list has closed - in this case a written application needs to be submitted to the OTMC [email address](#).

Non members planning to join a weekend trip need to pay the stated trip cost + the current non-member surcharge when signing the trip list.

OTMC members must pay the trip cost prior to the trip departure.

Search and Rescue Contact

The OTMC have a Search and Rescue procedure for both [Day](#) and [Weekend](#) trips. The principle is that someone remaining in town knows who is on a trip, where they are going and when the trip is expected to return. In the event the trip is delayed or overdue, the contact person will contact an [OTMC official](#), who will decide what needs to be done.

Trip participants are required to supply a contact name and number - this is who we will contact if required to update them on the situation. This person can then advise family and employers as required if we are late home.

For weekend trips, you can note that your contact is 'next of kin' only - in this case we won't contact them for things like lateness, but would share the details with the Police in the event of a serious incident (*the Police have legal responsibility for Search and Rescue*)

Weekend / Multi Day Trip Preparation

Once the trip list has closed the trip leader will make arrangements for the trip based on what information has been provided on the trip list.

As it not possible for any one person to effectively lead larger tramping parties, we aim to split the entire trip into smaller self-contained parties of 4-6 people each with a suitable party leader. As much as possible the trip leader will try and place people of similar fitness into the same party. Each party is intended to be self-sufficient, and even if there are other parties doing the same route, each party should stick together.

Most arrangements will be made via email - once the trip list has closed, please keep an eye on your emails - the leader may be seeking further information, so please respond promptly if this is the case.

The party leader is responsible for making sure all required equipment is taken on the trip - this may range from a tent to stove and billies, first aid kit, map and compass, PLB etc.

If you have any questions, your first approach should be to your party leader - this includes advising the party leader if you are no longer able to go on the trip. If you do need to withdraw from the trip you are required to request a refund by writing to the [OTMC Committee](#).

You may be asked to help with transport (either providing a private vehicle, or being available to drive a rental van), or other tasks such as assisting with some of the food requirements. The club operates in a co-operative manner (i.e. we are not providing a guided trip), and all participants are expected to assist with the various tasks.

For the multi-day trips it is a good idea to have a spare set of clothes to be left in the van / car for when the trip ends. Travel to and from Dunedin can take up to six hours, so it is nice to be able to change into dry clothing when the trip finishes.

Minimum Clothing and Equipment (for all trips)

Conditions can change quickly in areas of New Zealand, and at any time of year, so you will need to have appropriate clothing and other equipment. The club website and trip programme both have our recommended minimum gear lists for both [day](#) and [weekend trips](#). The best options for clothing include the principle of layering (*using multiple thinner layers rather than a thick one*), and to avoid cotton. A good raincoat and suitable tramping boots are also required

Transport Arrangements

The club will arrange transport for both day and weekend trips.

Car pooling is used for day trips, in that vehicles are arranged by the leader at the meeting point. The cost for the trip is included on the trip programme, and this needs to be paid to the driver upon departure (don't leave it to after the trip). Having the correct amount in cash is appreciated.

For weekend trips, normally all participants (excluding those who are providing private vehicles) will pay the same amount to the club via online banking (details will be provided in the trip planning email). Note that non-members pay a surcharge calculated at 20% of the current full subscription (\$13 in 2021-22).

Non members are required to transfer the trip cost upon signing up for the trip, and OTMC members must pay before the trip departs.

During the trip

The basic principle of safety while tramping is to stick together. Statistically most 'lost person' events on any tramping trip are due to people not sticking together, and having no planned places where a party regroups in the event that the party has become stretched out.

As each OTMC party is self contained and ideally in the same fitness grade, then the best way to avoid issues is simply to remain in visual contact with each other when tramping.

In the event the party does get stretched out (*we accept this happens over tricky ground, or during ascents and descents*), it is important to have a plan on when to pause and let the party regroup. As a minimum, the front person should stop at every track junction and river (or any other risky section such as a snow or icy crossing or a large gully) and allow those at the rear to catch up.

It is recommended when traversing off-track sections for the whole party to remain within visual contact as you move. This is especially important if bush-bashing, or travelling up or down a river or creek. The same applies to tracks that are indistinct due to windfall, have poor or missing markers, or heavy undergrowth.

Weather can make a trip harder, longer or more dangerous - if tramping in poor weather (wind / rain / snow etc.), stick together and keep an eye on each other for signs of hypothermia (*lack of co-ordination, confusion or disorientation, slurred speech, irrational behaviour etc.*)

If you need to pause for a toilet stop whilst tramping, make sure you let the person in front or behind know. If you happen to be by yourself, then leave your pack on the track and make sure you continue travelling in the correct direction.

Leadership skills can be learnt from others while on a tramping trip. A good leader will give everyone a chance to lead the party - this is particularly useful when on indistinct tracks, or when off-track. Picking the easiest route from A to B is best learnt from actually doing it.

Also, make sure the whole party have a look at the map when you stop, or when checking what direction to take at junctions etc.

As a trip participant, your biggest contribution will be staying with your party. We know that there is sometimes mis-match in a parties fitness level, but your safety will come from sticking together.



In terrain such as this, keep stick together - you should remain in visual contact with each other

River Crossings

New Zealand rivers are highly variable, and always require respect. If you are following a track and there is no bridge, the track will generally lead you to an appropriate crossing place. Before you cross here, go through the three main questions you need to ask of all crossing: **Do I need to cross, if yes, where to cross and how to cross.** While the

crossing may have been the best crossing point when the track was built, the river bed may have changed due to floods - there may be a better place up or downstream.

A lot of rivers can be safely crossed individually in normal conditions, but be aware of the ability of the whole party. A crossing that may be straight-forward for one person may be terrifying for another. For this reason, always regroup at river crossings and seek advice from the most experienced river crosser (*this may not be the party leader*). Once a plan, crossing point and method has been selected, then make sure the whole party know what will be happening.

Mutual support will always be the safest method, especially with a fast current and depth of mid-thigh or deeper. Make sure you discuss what you will do if the crossing turns out to be too dangerous - have a plan to back-out and regroup.

Rivers are normally the most dangerous hazard we will encounter on our trips, always treat rivers with the respect they deserve.



What to do if your party loses the route

It is unlikely that you would lose your way on one of the Great Walks, but it is a real possibility on lesser used tracks. Growth, washouts, windfall and lack of maintenance are reasons a track becomes hard to follow.

It is common for a party to leave the front person to look out for the markers, but it is

good practise for all to do this. It is also good to look back from time to time and to identify the markers behind you.

If you do find you have lost the track, stop and take your packs off. As a group, discuss how long it has been since you have last seen a marker, and using the map, think about the terrain you have travelled since that point. Once you have worked out a plan to get back on track, travel back as a party. Avoid searching for the track separately as this can lead to further problems.

Tracks can often be hard to find where they cross large gullies - successive floods can wash away any signs such as previous tracks, footprints and cairns. Generally the track would have traversed the gully on the same line as the rest of the track, they don't often climb or descend any great distance within the gully. Keep together in situations like this, and if in front, stop and wait for the party to catch up.

What to do if you become separated from your tramping party

If you become separated from your party, then stop and think about where you last saw another party member. If you have a map, then see if you can work out where you are and where you (or your party - you may be in the correct spot) may have gone wrong. Use your whistle to attract attention.

Only move on if you are confident on where you going, otherwise stay put - it is much easier to search for someone if they are not moving. If you do move, mark your current spot, and leave signs while travelling in case you need to return (use stones, sticks or break / tie ferns etc.) Also keep all your gear with you, do not leave your pack or anything else behind.

