



Westminster School

DUKE OF EDINBURGH AWARD SCHEME NEW ZEALAND MULTI ACTIVITY EXPEDITION

In December of 2026 we are planning an exciting outdoor activities expedition incorporating the best that New Zealand can offer.

The objective of this expedition is to complete a 4-day bushwalk in the classic Young/Wilkins valleys including an alpine crossing of Gillespie Pass. The walk will give students a wilderness experience in an environment totally different to anywhere in Australia.



At the same time, we will be visiting different areas of the South Island participating in various activities that may include day walks, canyoning, white water kayaking, white-water rafting and sightseeing. It is truly a multi-faceted expedition which will prove exciting and enjoyable for all concerned.

Students who wish to apply for this trip must have completed **at least 2 multiday bushwalks through the Duke of Ed scheme** (or WestQuest) by the start of Term 4 2026, possess an adventurous spirit and be prepared to be involved in the planning and preparation required for such an expedition.

Below are some details of the trip. On the other pages you will find a proposed itinerary and other details. If your child is interested, can you complete the permission slip and return it to Julie Engelhardt at Westminster. More information will be distributed at a later date, but if you have any enquiries please contact me at the School (8276 0337) mobile (0408508051) or email : jengelhardt@westminster.sa.edu.au

DATES:	November 30th – December 9 th 2026
LOCATION:	South Island: Queenstown, Wanaka and Makarora
COST:	Approximately \$3,200
TRANSPORT:	Hire 12-Seater Vans
DEPOSIT:	<u>Non-refundable</u> \$1000 deposit on acceptance of consent to go invitation, through students' billing account. Balance to be paid in 2027 billing.
NUMBERS:	A <u>capacity</u> of 16 students
STAFF:	Julie Engelhardt, Rob McLean, Gordon Begg, and 1 other OED staff member.
FOOD:	Students are to provide most of their own food, especially for the expedition. Supermarkets will be utilised.
PASSPORT:	Students must have a current passport
EQUIPMENT:	Students must have suitable hiking footwear (no sneakers will be allowed). Most other required equipment may be borrowed from school if students can not source their own. Equipment list to follow.
TRAVEL INSURANCE:	Through Westminster School
INCLUSIONS:	Everything listed on itinerary except food.

Useful sites: 2018 Trip <https://youtu.be/d5RsNLNwo84>





Westminster School

NEW ZEALAND EXPEDITION ITINERARY - DECEMBER 2026

- Monday 30th Nov** Depart Adelaide Airport. Arrive in Queenstown.
Pick up Buses and Drive to Wanaka (one hour).
Accommodation in Lodge.
- Tues 1st Dec** Day walk in Wanaka. Shop for expedition food then bus to Makarora. Blue Pools.
Accommodation in Lodge.
- Wed 2nd Dec** 4 day walk on the Young/Wilkins Track staying in tents.
Jet boat to walk start and jet boat from walk finish.
Fantastic scenery and an alpine pass to cross and flowing rivers.
Refer to trip notes or website above.
- Sat 5th Dec** Finish walk at Makarora. Jet boat out. Drive to Wanaka.
Accommodation in Wanaka Lodge.
- Sun 6th Dec** White-Water Kayaking / Canyoning – Camp Wanaka
- Mon 7th Dec** White-Water Kayaking / Canyoning then Queenstown to camp.
- Tues 8th Dec** Day of leisure in Queenstown (optional Whitewater Rafting)
- Wed 9th Dec** Queenstown Airport by bus early departure.
Flight Queenstown to Adelaide.



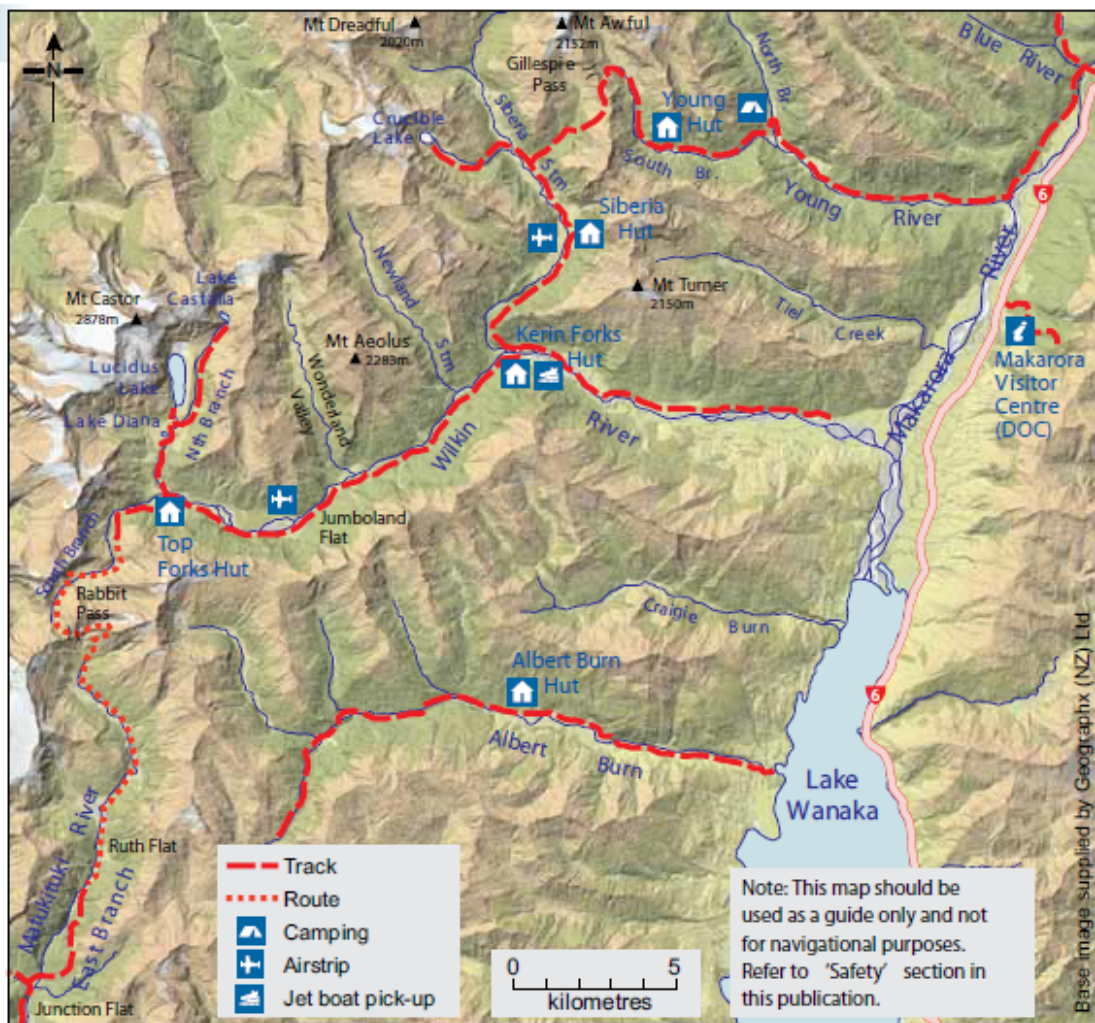
Gillespie Pass Circuit



Makarora to Young Hut 6-7 hr, 20 km

Access to the Young valley is signposted on the left, 2.5 km north of the Makarora Visitor Centre. Cross the stile and follow the orange poles to the junction of the Young and Makarora rivers. If Makarora River is too high to cross safely, there are three options: wait for the river to drop; take the Blue-Young link track (see Blue Pools to Young River below); or use a commercial jetboat. Once across the Makarora, follow Young River on the true left to a swing bridge at the junction of the North and South branches (3-4 hr).

The track divides after the bridge, and the Young Forks campsite is 200 m upstream, with an open shelter, toilet and fireplace, which campers are encouraged to use. The track to Young Hut (asl 550 m) continues downstream to cross a grassy flat then enters the forest on the true left of South Branch, just beyond the junction. The track climbs steeply for 100 m and then sidles through a series of unstable slips to reach Stag Creek. From here, it's a steady climb to the 20-bunk Young Hut.



Young Hut to Siberia Hut 6-8 hr, 12 km

Climb 1 hr to the bushline, cross the bridge over the upper Young and follow the valley floor for about 20 minutes until reaching the start of the Gillespie Pass track on your left. This is usually the last water source until well over the pass, so fill your water bottles before leaving the valley. The track climbs steeply alongside a rock bluff onto a snow-grass spur that, after 3-4 hr, veers off to the left before the pass and climbs the ridge to a height of 1600 m. From here, there's an impressive view, with Mount Awful dominating the skyline.

The track descends steeply before sidling down through a series of snow-grass basins. Take care; snow grass can be very slippery when wet. The track enters the forest on a small predominant spur and leads down to Gillespie Stream, a beautiful spot for a rest. The track continues down through the forest, sidling above Gillespie Stream before descending in a series of zigzags to Siberia Stream. On the valley floor, it's an easy 1 hr walk to the 20-bunk Siberia Hut (asl 630 m).



Siberia Hut to Lake Crucible 3-4 hr, 7 km

High above Siberia Valley, nestled under Mount Alba, is Lake Crucible, an excellent day trip from Siberia Hut. Go up the valley

flats to Crucible Stream, where the track enters the forest on the true left, climbs a narrow spur, sidles around to a river crossing and comes out on a snow-grass flat. Follow the pole markers in the upper basin and go up the flat to the lake. The tiny rock wren/pīwauwau can often be seen among the large rocks at the lake outlet. Camping is not allowed in Crucible Basin, because of its fragile alpine herb fields.



WARNING

A dam that formed in the Young valley North Branch in 2007 still poses a potential risk to trampers. We recommend that you avoid the Young valley during periods of heavy rain. If heavy rain starts during your trip, do not camp in the valley floor and move through the valley as quickly as possible. Watch for any unusual or rapid rises in water levels and move to higher ground if necessary.



Blue Pools to Young River 1.5-2 hr, 7 km

The Blue-Young link track provides alternative access to the Young valley when Makarora River is high. Starting at the Blue Pools car park (off SH6), the track passes through extensive silver beech/tawhai forest and open country and provides bridged crossings of the Makarora and Blue rivers, and the Ore and Leven streams, before reaching the Young/Makarora confluence.



Siberia Hut to Makarora

6–8 hr, 22 km

Siberia Hut to Kerin Forks

2–3 hr, 7 km

About 30 minutes down from Siberia Hut, on the true left, the track to the Wilkin valley enters the forest at the southern end of Siberia Flat. It then sidles above Siberia Gorge before descending in a series of zigzags to Wilkin River.

Kerin Forks Hut (10 bunks, asl 340 m) can be seen 400 m downstream from the Siberia Stream/Wilkin River junction, at the western end of a large flat on the other side of the Wilkin. If accessing the upper Wilkin valley, cross here, provided the river is low enough to do so safely.

Kerin Forks to Makarora—SH6

4–5 hr, 15 km

The track from Kerin Forks follows the flats and enters the forest at the bottom of Dans Flat. The track from here is rough in places—when the Wilkin is low, it's quicker to cross here, follow the flats on the other side (true right) and then cross back where the Wilkin and Makarora rivers meet.

Cross the Makarora with care, watching for soft sand, then either tramp up the open river flats or continue out to the main road, to Makarora Township. Be prepared to wait if the river is too high to cross.

It is possible to fly by plane or helicopter from both Siberia and Kerin Forks. You can also catch a jetboat from Kerin Forks. All transport needs to be prearranged with providers; the Siberia Hut warden cannot make bookings.

Wilkin valley

For directions from Makarora to Kerin Forks Hut, please refer to Kerin Forks to Makarora – SH6.



Kerin Forks Hut to Top Forks Hut

6–8 hr, 15 km

The track begins behind the hut and passes through beech/tawhai forest beside the Wilkin and over a number of slips and steep-sided ravines that require care. It comes out at Wonderland flats, halfway between the two huts and a good place for lunch

At the end of Wonderland flats, the track re-enters the

forest, climbs, then sidles above the river before descending to the Jumboland flats. From here, there is no marked track; follow the river flats to the junction of the North and South branches. A low river route follows the true right but fords the river several times before reaching the flats near the hut. In high river conditions, follow track markers leading you over a hill. The 16-bunk Top Forks Hut (asl 600 m) is above the junction, on the true right of South Branch.



Top Forks Hut to North Branch

To: Lake Diana – 1 hr, 2.5 km; Lucidus Lake – 1 hr 30 min, 3.5 km; Lake Castalia – 3–4 hr, 8 km

The North Branch is an excellent day trip. The track crosses South Branch in front of Top Forks Hut and heads up North Branch. Most of this section requires boulder hopping (slippery if wet) then crosses a small side stream that can be tricky to ford. The track enters the forest and climbs the predominant spur between the side stream and North Branch to emerge at a small lake, Disappearing Tarn. Just south of the track, 5 min further on, Lake Diana lies nestled in sub-alpine vegetation. Lucidus Lake, a spectacular moraine lake, is 20 minutes away across the grasslands. The track to Lake Castalia branches off the Lucidus Lake track just beyond the boardwalk. It crosses the outlet stream, then North Branch, to climb through alpine vegetation then re-cross to a snow-grass terrace leading to Lake Castalia's outlet. Take care on the last 200 m when scrambling over the loose rock on the true right of the stream.



Wonderland Valley

2–3 hr one way, 5 km

Although there is no marked track, this makes for an interesting day trip. Experienced trampers can bush-bash along parts of the old cattle track, sidling 30–50 m above the true left of Wonderland Stream. Above the bush, the valley opens out into beautiful alpine herb fields.

Wilkin valley – East Matukituki Traverse



This route is suitable for experienced alpine trampers and should only be undertaken in good conditions. Don't hesitate to turn back if conditions are unfavourable or if you are in doubt.

From Makarora to Top Forks Hut, refer to the Wilkin valley information.



Top Forks Hut to Ruth Flat

8–10 hr, 20 km

Follow the track behind the hut and climb, before sidling around above a gorge to the open flats of South Branch. Follow the flats until you reach the waterfall face 3–4 hours from the hut. Take care; the route up the waterfall face is extremely dangerous when wet, windy or in snowy conditions. The route starts on the western side of the face, well to the right of the falls. Climb a snow-grass fan to the ledges above and to the right. Continue in this manner until you reach a narrow sloping ledge and follow that ledge back across to the left to reach the ridge about 150 m above the waterfall.

Then follow the valley through the alpine herb fields for about an hour to Rabbit Pass (1430 m). Follow the obvious shelf east and climb towards Mount Lois for about 30 minutes until reaching a narrow rock slide leading down through the bluffs. The first 30 m of this slide are steep and dangerous, especially when wet. Beware of rockfall until well clear of the slide and follow snow-grass slopes to the valley floor.

It's an easy 1–2 hours to Ruth Flat, which has a good rock bivvy on the bush edge. This is on the true left, half way down, above a small side stream—grid ref BZ11 709 823.



Ruth Flat to Cameron Flat

7–9 hr, 18 km

The track around Bledisloe Gorge starts on the left, at the bottom of the bush spur, about 20 minutes from Ruth Flat. It climbs to the bushline, sidles through snow grass, and re-enters the bush just before Hester Pinney Creek. Here it descends to the river and Junction Flat, 4–5 hours from Ruth Flat. Cross the two 3-wire bridges to the track on the true right bank of the Matukituki River East Branch and continue down to Glacier Burn. From here, follow the flats to the Matukituki River West Branch and cross to Cameron Flat. If the river is too high to cross safely, use the bridge 1 hour upstream.

PERSONAL EQUIPMENT

The following is a list of preferred personal equipment for 4 days, advanced walking in Alpine or Remote areas. If you do not personally own any of these items they can be purchased or borrowed...

CLOTHING

- 2 shirts, one light, the other warmer. Preferably long sleeved for better sun protection. (WestQuest shirt is great).
- 1 pair of walking shorts or tights
- Walking boots/shoes, medium weight with Vibram (or equivalent) sole is best. Make sure they are WELL WORN IN!
- 3 pairs of socks. Marino wool or equivalent.
- 2 Thermal Tops
- 1 Thermal Long bottom
- Underwear + Beanie and Gloves
- Light weight Polar fleece. (mid layer)
- Down Jacket (preferrable to have a hood)
- Broad-brimmed sunhat with chin strap
- Waterproof jacket (Gore-tex or similar). School will provide unless student has theirs checked.
- Over-pants. (School will provide)
- Gaiters, canvas or proofed nylon are optional (keeps boots drier)



SLEEPING

- Sleeping bag - good quality down-filled bag with a hood. Rated approximately -5 comfort (or colder)
- Foam sleeping mat or self-inflating mat
- Head torch with spare batteries (remember to pack this in your carry on)

TOILETRIES

- Small amount of soap Small amount of toilet paper, waterproofed
- Toothbrush and toothpaste
- Towel (chamois is best, but hand towel is adequate)
- Sanitary items (girls)
- Any personal first aid equipment (i.e. Ventolin, bandaids, strapping tape for blisters etc.)
- Sunscreen and SPF Lip-balm, Insect repellent

EATING

- Light plate, bowl & mug
- Eating utensils
- 2 x 1L litre drink bottles
- Teatowel



New Zealand Expedition 2026

FROM THE OUTDOOR EDUCATION DEPARTMENT

As parent/guardian of:

(student name)

I give my consent:

(your name)

For my son/daughter to participate in:

DUKE OF EDINBURGH NEW ZEALAND ADVENTURE

at / on

30th November – 9th DECEMBER 2026

Students who have met the preparation criteria for entry will be offered a place on a first in, first served basis.

Further consent will be required through the Consent to Go platform, and upon accepting the invitation families will be charged a non-refundable deposit of \$1000.

This trip runs in accordance with the School's Trip Policy, meaning that at the time of application student's school fee payments must be up to date. The School reserves the right to preclude a student from the trip if student school fee payments fall into arrears any time before the trip. Seqta pastoral reports may also be factored into selection criteria.

Signed: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

