

FRANZ JOSEF

Topo50 Maps: BX15 Fox Glacier

NZTM GPS: NZTM on WGS84

How to get to START:

Best to be in the SW of the South Island and based in Franz Josef at a holiday camp or back-packers.

- From the middle of Franz Josef on SH6 head South
- Cross the bridge over the Waiho River and
- Immediately turn left
- The car park (WP006) is at the end of the road
- From the car park there is a marked track heading SW

Rough Description: This tramp was done as a guided three quarter day walk starting about 11:00am and aiming to get back to town about 5pm. Due to the party being held-up on the descent by a crevasse rescue return to town was after 6pm – more or less a full day. Boots, socks, crampons, over trousers and jackets were all supplied by the guiding company though you can wear your own.

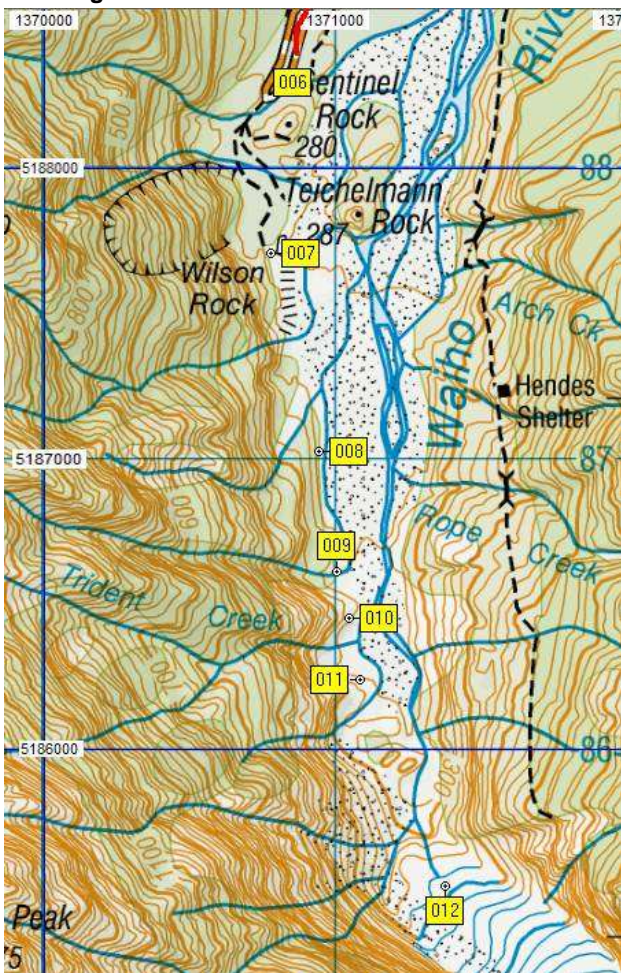
The access walk in through the woods takes just over an hour. In places it is made frustrating by the guides taking up-and-over detours away from the river when it is in flood – safety comes first. Once on the ice, after crampon fitting and technique briefing, progress is governed by the pace of the least confident / slowest member of the party as the guide makes this person follow immediately behind him.

The walk was then an uphill struggle, until the crampon style was mastered, for about 2 hours using pre-cut steps until the “ice-fall” zone was entered. Lunch was eaten just below this zone. The exit off the ice took about the same time since well over 30 minutes was spent “holding” till a rescue was performed.

Access



Map and Google with GPS data



Name	Easting	Northing	Alt...	Description
006	1370855	5188299	221	Car park at start of track into Franz Josef glacier
007	1370779	5187709	233	10min; through forest and into open, view Waiho Valley
008	1370942	5187028	247	28min; Off track to L (west) to view waterfall, looks better close up!
009	1371004	5186613	262	45min; Muddy track on up-and-over then rocky descent with rope (Slightly over the top/unnecessary)
010	1371045	5186451	270	1:01min; Just over 1hr at river edge in valley after ladders etc off the bluff
011	1371083	5186241	281	1:22min; crampons on and start walking up "snout" of glacier
012	1371376	5185535	494	2:40min; Lunch just below "ice fall" zone, go slightly higher after eating

Detail: Franz Josef Glacier can be seen from the holiday park in town. Trips are organised by Glacier Guides NZ based in the middle of town. (www.franzjosefglacier.com), the company provides suitable gear for the walk including socks, boots, crampons, Gore-Tex over-trousers and jackets though, of course, one can use one's own gear if it is suitable.

It will be noticed that no GPS track is shown for this outing since, as explained by the guides, the routes and tracks are continually changing due to the glacier shrinking – this also means that the access track from the car park can and will change alignment as the river dictates. Food for thought is that there are over 3,000 glaciers in New Zealand with Franz Josef being one of the larger ones.

Five or ten minutes in the company bus from the centre of town reaches the car park (**WP006** 221masl) from where there is a well-marked, very wide tourist track. Minutes down this there is a small branch path to the right aligned slightly further away from the river to avoid flooding and this minor path comes back to the main bed of the Waiho Valley in about 10 minutes (**WP7** 233masl). From here the glacier can be seen apparently not too far off upstream. However, it does take about 40 minutes to get to the glacier.

Around here the guide veered out into the main river bed to allow a view of a waterfall – in retrospect it was considered that waterfall looked better from close in as seen on the outwards trip. The tramp continued within the valley on pretty rough stony to bouldery ground then the first up-and-over (**WP9** 262masl) occurred on a muddy, slippery rocky track with ropes to assist in getting back down again. Soon after this there is another diversion with the final descent back down to the valley (**WP10** 270masl) being on ladders down the bluff.

Franz Josef from camp site



The first ice staircase



From here it is a short rough walk over to the face of the retreating glacier (**WP11** 281masl) where crampons are fitted and briefing given.

The ice-walk commences as shown left with an ascent up a long ice-staircase with a rope handrail, which must be used. Progress is governed by the pace of the slowest or least confident as that person is soon identified and must follow directly behind the guide for safety reasons.

In these lower reaches the ice is rather "dirty" with abundant gravel showing but the clarity and blueness improves with height and is pretty good up in the ice-fall zone.

On the descent the party was held for 30 minutes whilst the guide supervised the rescue of an elderly walker who tripped and nose-dived into a crevasse – injuries included ice burn and a damaged shoulder.

Penguin parade down-ice



Cleaner, bluer Ice further up in ice-fall zone



The rescue



Notes:

- **GPS** = Garmin GPSmap 60CSx
- **WP** = Waypoint as taken by GPS unit
- **masl** = metres above sea level as recorded by GPS