

Guides on the Milford and Routeburn Tracks

A photograph of two hikers on a suspension bridge. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a red jacket and a blue backpack, smiling. The hiker in the background is wearing a yellow jacket and a black backpack. They are surrounded by lush green forest.

Kia ora and thank you for your interest in working for Ultimate Hikes.

Annually we recruit around 150 staff for our summer hiking season. Most of them are based on the Milford, Routeburn or Greenstone Tracks.

Ultimate Hikes are guardians of the environment we operate in. We are leaders in the safety and education of visitors to the region and we are responsible for the health, safety and wellbeing of the people who live and work there on our behalf.

We take this commitment very seriously and pledge that everything we do will be in keeping with our own Tiaki Promise - caring for people and place.

Guides

Guides are the people that our walkers get to know and trust the most while they are on track. Guides accompany a group from departure in Queenstown and back. They are responsible for the safety, education, and entertainment of our guests.

Most groups have four guides. Lodge staff based at each of our lodges are responsible for the care of walkers in the lodges, but guides also continue to interact with walkers in the evenings and the mornings before departure, providing briefings and assistance.

Guides always have radio contact with each other and other guides on track, with lodges, and back to our Queenstown base.

Guides duties

The primary duty of a guide is to provide a safe and enjoyable experience for our walkers. This means having a cheerful and engaging attitude at all times. It also means being able to assess situations and act in accordance with training and advice.

The tracks are remote and situations such as extreme weather events, accidents or struggling walkers are common. It is the guide's job to ensure a safe and successful outcome is achieved.

Mostly though, the day is spent walking and talking with guests, making hot drinks in the lunch huts, and generally providing a friendly and informative presence. Guides are allocated a position for the day – such as front and back guides who have specific roles to perform. All guides will also provide introductory talks and briefings in the lodges, perform basic first aid as required, and serve guests in the dining room.

Training

Extensive training is provided for about two weeks prior to the season starting. This consists of a week in Queenstown and then out onto the tracks for six days to learn about operating and safety procedures. Once the season starts, training and self education should continue with additional focus on the interpretation side of the role.

During the season we train and assess our guides up to the NZOIA Bush Leader qualification. This involves a workbook, a day of personal skills assessment and a few hours being shadowed while guiding walkers.

Hours & Pay

Guides are paid a daily rate and the number of hours worked in a day may vary. On average you can expect to work around 11 hours a day, but there are days that may be longer, this is matched with days that are much shorter.

If you have NZOIA Bush Leader, NZOIA Bush 1, Pre-Hospital Emergency Care or a Passenger Endorsement on your licence you will receive \$2.00 extra per day on top of your standard daily rate.

Uniforms

We provide you with a uniform. There are staff laundry facilities at each lodge to wash your uniform while you are on track.

You will need to have extra thermal layers, gloves and any personal items you need. You must also provide your own pack and boots.

Discounts are offered by some retail stores and will be made available to you.

Accommodation on and off track

Guides generally have separate rooms at the Milford lodges and may have to share rooms at the Routeburn and Greenstone lodges.

Off track there are guide houses in Queenstown. These are operated similar to a hostel - rooms and beds are not allocated, but can be used for the duration of days off. Using the guide houses is optional and rent is charged to cover house expenses.

Days off

Milford Guides can work up to nine days in a row before coming back to Queenstown for days off (two trips back to back).

Routeburn Guides may work up to nine days too but they come back to Queenstown for a night after three or six days before going back out on another trip.

Days off may be required but approval is not guaranteed.

Communication while on track (phones and internet)

Personal communication is limited while you are on track. There is no cellphone reception. The internet is via satellite and available on lodge computers .

There is access to Ultimate Hikes business computers and programmes to complete admin and reporting duties while on track.