

Tramper's glossary

Bedroll – A sleeping mat, rolled up when carried. Used when sleeping under a tent, fly, rock bivvy or out in the open. Its main function is to insulate the body from heat loss. Some are inflatable, others made of closed cell foam.

Billy – A light metal bucket for boiling water or cooking. Often battered, buckled, blackened by woodsmoke and with an ill-fitting lid.

Bivvy – Bivouac. Small shelters scattered around the hills. Some are old and decrepit, but others are newer and well constructed.

Bivvy bag – A waterproof cover for a sleeping bag, for sleeping in the open.

Blaze – Chop marks on trees to mark a trail. An outdated method that opens tree trunks to infection. Many tracks are now marked by plastic orange triangles nailed to trees.

Brew – A hot drink, usually tea or coffee.

Bushline – Maximum altitude at which the bush grows; varies according to the species, climate and other conditions, but is generally about 1,100 metres in New Zealand.

Cairn – Pile of stones that marks a route on the tops and in riverbeds.

Col – A high pass.

D.O.C. – Department of Conservation. The government agency that manages wild lands on behalf of all New Zealanders.

Emergency locator beacon – An electronic device carried by trampers that can be activated in an emergency. It sends a signal that can be picked up by aircraft.

Fly – A sheet of nylon used in place of a tent.

Flying fox – A river-crossing device. Trampers sit in a steel cage hanging below a steel cable stretched between the banks. Also referred to as a cage.

Gaiters – Usually made of nylon or canvas, these are wrapped around the boot tops to keep out leaves, gravel, snow. There are various ways of fastening them, but Velcro and domes are probably best.

Ground sheet – A sheet of plastic or other impermeable sheet placed on the ground under a fly.

Hogsback – Oval or cigar shaped, hard-edged clouds (lenticulars), usually signalling bad weather. Also nicknamed fog dogs and Huey's henchmen.

Huey – God of weather. Responsible for the rain and wind, the mists that descend on the tops, and the clouds that blot out the sun on a sunbathing day. His importance and lack of predictability have led to other nicknames, generally unprintable.

Hut – Backcountry shelter – from two-roomed tin shacks, to large multi-roomed cabins on popular

tracks.

Hut book – Books in which trampers write down their intended route.

Hut tickets – Tickets bought from the Department of Conservation for staying in huts. Money goes toward hut maintenance.

Nor'wester – The wind that brings the most rain to the Southern Alps.

Mountain radio – A two-way radio about the size of a block of butter, with aerials that are strung up above the ground. Allows trampers to listen to weather forecasts, give and receive messages and call for help.

N.Z.F.S. – New Zealand Forest Service. Predecessor to the Department of Conservation, this government department built many huts and tracks during deer-culling operations from the 1930s.

Pack – A backpack, for all tramping gear.

Pass – Low point between mountains giving access between different catchments.

Permolat markers – Strips of aluminium Venetian blind material about 10 cm long to mark tracks; usually red, white or a combination. (Being replaced by plastic orange triangles on maintained tracks.)

Piker – Someone who finds the urge to relax greater than doing a trip they have committed to.

Pit – A piker's best friend, his sleeping bag. A pit day is an enforced day of rest in a tent or hut due to bad weather.

Polypropylene – A synthetic fibre that repels water and insulates the body, used in many outdoor clothes.

Rockbivvy – Boulder overhang providing shelter. Good ones remain dry and are often used by tramping groups overnight. Some have developed quite a reputation, e.g. Arawata Rock in South Westland.

S.A.R. – Search and (hopefully) Rescue.

Scroggin – Trampers' lucky dip – peanuts, raisins, dehydrated apricot pieces, chocolate and everything else. A natural source of energy, handy in difficult situations.

Sidle – To traverse a contour, usually above the bushline.

Swing bridge – The most common type of bridge spanning rivers. Constructed from steel cables stretched between banks. The sides are covered with steel netting. Usually weight limits mean that one person crosses at a time.

Tararua biscuits – Nutritious snack from the early 1900s, baked as a bread replacement for longer trips. Four or five, buttered, are usually enough. Slow baking hardens them for the rough life in a pack.

Three-wire bridge – A river bridge of three steel cables stretched between the banks. Some have just two wires. Increasingly uncommon, due to safety concerns.

True right and left – A system giving left and right banks to any river to avoid confusion in route description. Always given looking downstream.

Tops – Land above the bushline, usually covered in tussock.

Track – The path you follow to get from one place to another. Tracks are clear and easy to follow, with markers nailed to trees.