

Gold Fossicking (recreational gold panning)

Before people go gold mining or panning, they usually need a mining permit from New Zealand Petroleum & Minerals, Ministry of Economic Development.

However, to make gold panning a more accessible experience, sixteen areas have been set aside in the South Island where anyone can freely enjoy recreational gold mining without the need for a mining permit. These areas are called gold fossicking areas and have been designated under the Crown Minerals Act 1991. Fossicking generally means searching for and collecting materials from the surface of the land, or by digging by hand.

Regions

- [Nelson-Marlborough and the West Coast](#)
- [Central Otago](#)
- [South Otago](#)

Resources

- [General location map of all fossicking areas \[171 kB PDF\]](#)
- [History and chronology of gold mining \[570 kB PDF\]](#)
- [Gold Deposits Fact Sheet \[1.36 MB PDF\]](#)



All the areas are suitable for gold panning and sluice boxing, and mining is restricted to hand-held non-motorised methods only. Some of the areas are equipped with picnic, barbecue and camping facilities and have good public access.



The areas are in the Nelson-Marlborough, West Coast and Central Otago regions and are all located in historic gold mining areas. Alluvial gold is present within all the gold fossicking areas, although the concentrations are often low. A number of the areas have been mined or prospected in the past but the gold has nearly been exhausted or does not justify commercial mining.

[Top](#)

Nelson-Marlborough and the West Coast

There are twelve designated areas in the Nelson-Marlborough and the West Coast regions. There are administered by the [Department of Conservation](#), from whom more information can be obtained.


Gold fossicking area	Location	Size (ha)	Facilities	Link to PDF map



Aorere River A	15 km southwest of Collingwood	9.0	Picnic, swimming	 [199 kB PDF]
Aorere River B	30 km southwest of Collingwood	41.5	Picnic, swimming	 [199 kB PDF]
Lyell Creek	35 km west of Murchison	2.2	Picnic, camping	[203 kB PDF]
New Creek	5 km northwest of Rotoroa	9.9		 [205 kB PDF]
Louis Creek	4 km west of Howard	4.95	Interpretation panel	 [205 kB PDF]
Moonlight Creek	27 km north-northeast of Greymouth	14.0	Camping	 [371 kB PDF]
Nelson Creek	26 km east-northeast of Greymouth	5.25	Picnic, camping	 [192 kB PDF]
Jones Creek	0.5 km southwest of Ross	3.47	Picnic, camping, walkway, visitor centre	 [194 kB PDF]
Waiho River	Franz Josef National Park	17.5		[215 kB PDF]
Shamrock Creek	14 km northeast of Hokitika	8.0	Picnic, camping, shelter, fireplaces	 [211 kB PDF]
Slab Hutt Creek	7 km southwest of Reefton	3.85	Picnic, camping, fireplaces, walking tracks	 [216 kB PDF]
Stony and Britannia Streams	17 km northeast of Westport	6.4	Picnic, camping	 [338 kB PDF]

[Top](#)

Central Otago

There are four designated areas in the Central Otago region. The [Queenstown Lakes District Council](#) administers these and has more information available.

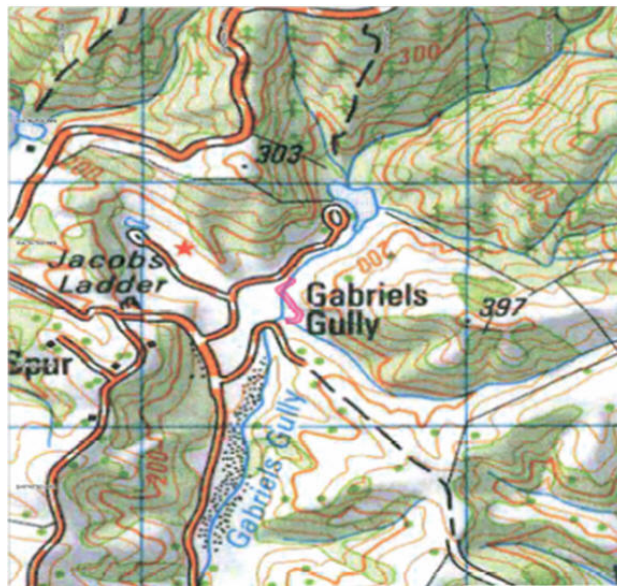
Gold fossicking area	Location	Size (ha)	Facilities	Link to PDF map
Twelve Mile Creek	10 km west of Queenstown	11.5	Picnic, historic gold workings, camping	 [232 kB PDF]

Five Mile Creek	5 km west of Queenstown	9.9	Swimming, walking	 [232 kB PDF]
Arrow River	Arrowtown	10.0		 [232 kB]
Lower Shotover River	2.5 km from Frankton	9.6	Wildlife reserve	 [205 kB PDF]

South Otago

Gabriels Gully gold fossicking area

A portion of the creek at Gabriels Gully (see the map below) was set aside for recreational gold mining without the need for a mining permit on January 12, 2005 by the Ministry of Economic Development. The area is suitable for gold panning and sluice boxing, and mining is restricted to hand-held non-motorised methods only. Alluvial gold is present although the concentrations are low.



To view or print PDF files on this page you will require PDF viewing software: [Adobe Acrobat Reader](#).

Further information

Location maps can also be obtained from the Department of Conservation, the relevant District Council office, and from the Ministry of Economic Development library at 33 Bowen Street, Wellington.

For further information on gold fossicking please [contact](#) New Zealand Petroleum & Minerals.