

# Photographic Locations Worth Sweating For: Brewster Hut and Mount Armstrong

by Peter Laurenson

MT BREWSTER AT SUNSET

F5.8, 1/100s, ISO125, 149mm





For the fifth article in this series let's pop over to the South Island (assuming we're not back in Covid Level 3 or 4). Te Waipounamu has many famous photogenic destinations but these are only the 'tip of the iceberg' if you're willing to get your tramping boots on.

For North Island townies like me, one of the biggest challenges in any tramp, climb, or photo shoot in the Southern Alps is getting there in time for a weather window. A climb of Mount Armstrong (2,174m), a little over 700 metres above the tramper-accessible Brewster Hut (12 bunks), is a good option when time is a limiting factor. In fine conditions, Mount Armstrong is a scramble in summer and non-technical crampon and walking axe plod in winter. The more challenging option to climb nearby Mount Brewster (alpine climbing graded two or two-plus, depending on the route chosen) is also there for those who have the necessary climbing experience to take it on.

From your home, you can fly to Queenstown, pick up a rental car, pop in to the supermarket for supplies, drive about two hours to Fantail Falls car park (450m, just two kilometres north of Haast Pass), cross the Haast River (chilly in bare feet, but usually just a short, shallow stumble) to access a very direct trail ascending south east to Brewster Hut (1,450m – about three hours), or even carry on to the top of Mount Armstrong (about three hours return from the hut), all in a day.

Whatever objectives you chose, you'll be rewarded with magnificent alpine vistas as soon as you breach the tree line below Brewster Hut. The last section of the trail approaching the hut is on a pronounced narrow ridge, offering a real alpine feeling and already impressive landscapes.

From the comfort of Brewster Hut you can admire a glowing Mount Brewster at sunset, looming overhead less than four kilometres as the kea flies, to the north east. To the west, across the Haast Valley, is a mountain wall extending from the valley floor nearly one and half vertical kilometres in some places. And the higher you get above the hut, the better the views become.

If you think the airy outlook from Wanaka's Roy's Peak is impressive, get ready to be 'blown away' when you reach the top of Mount Armstrong. While not a technical climb, the top of Mount Armstrong really looks the part – a small pyramid with enough room for you and your tripod, with slopes dropping dramatically away - a real mountain summit.

Don't forget though, Brewster Hut can fill quickly (to avoid the hassle of a full hut bring a tent) and has become popular with international visitors. However, with international travel still off the menu at the time of writing this, perhaps the time is right to make the effort to go there?!

More detail and a route map can be found [here](#).



F8, 1/1000s, ISO100, 28mm  
Stitch of 2 landscape images

Above: Mt Brewster right of centre taken near the hut.



F8, 1/250s, ISO100, 28mm -  
stitch of 3 landscape images



F7.1, 1/160s, ISO125, 53mm  
stitch of 4 landscape images

Top: Brewster Hut, left of centre, viewed from the flanks of Mt Armstrong

Bottom: On the narrow ridge below Brewster Hut looking west