

Kia ora

WELCOME TO PIOPIOTAH
MILFORD SOUND, ONE
OF THE MOST BEAUTIFUL
AND ICONIC PLACES IN
AOTEAROA NEW ZEALAND

As Milford Sound’s original cruise company, Southern Discoveries has been calling this place home since it was first settled. We’re thrilled you’ve chosen us to take you on this journey of a lifetime – we can’t wait to share our local knowledge with you!

PIOPIOTAH: PLACE OF THE
SINGING THRUSH

According to Māori legend, it was the demi-god Tu-te-raki-whānoa who created the fiords. With incantations and his magic adze, Tu-te-raki-whānoa sculpted his finest work: Piopiotahi – meaning ‘one single piopio’, in reference to the native thrush-like bird (now extinct) said to have flown here in mourning when Māui died in his attempt to win immortality for mankind.



MILFORD HAVEN

Milford Sound was eventually discovered in 1823 by Welsh sealer Captain John Grono after earlier European explorers, including Captain James Cook, sailed passed the narrow entrance. Grono originally named the fiord Milford Haven after his birthplace in Wales, but in 1851 another Welshman, John Lort Stokes, anchored his ship in the fiord and changed the name to Milford Sound.

SOUTHERN DISCOVERIES

Milford Sound’s first European settler, Donald Sutherland, arrived in 1877, built a hut in Freshwater Basin and called it home for the next 42 years. Sutherland and his wife, Elizabeth Samuel, were responsible for creating the ‘City of Milford’, which included three thatched huts and an 18-room accommodation house; Milford’s first hotel. In the 1890s, Sutherland began rowing people across Milford Sound to the start of the Milford Track, an enterprise that eventually became Southern Discoveries – Milford Sound’s first cruise operator.



Milford Sound
CRUISE
HIGHLIGHTS

1 FRESHWATER BASIN

Your Southern Discoveries cruise departs from the Milford Sound Visitor Centre which is situated in Freshwater Basin. This small harbour contains more fresh water than salt water so the harbour was named accordingly.

2 DEEPWATER BASIN

The end of the world famous Milford Track.

3 SINBAD GULLY

An excellent example of a hanging valley, Sinbad Gully is enclosed by the steep slopes of Mt Phillips rising 1,445 metres on its left, Mitre Peak on its right and the Llawrenny Peaks in behind. Sinbad Gully is home to the Sinbad Sanctuary Project, a movement sponsored by Southern Discoveries to protect some of New Zealand’s most precious native species.

4 MITRE PEAK

At a height of 1,692 metres, Mitre Peak is one of the highest mountains in the world to rise directly from the ocean floor. It got its name because its shape resembles that of a Bishop’s mitre or headdress.

5 COPPER POINT

So named because of the very high deposits of copper found in the area. This is one of the narrowest sections of the fiord where wind gusts have been recorded in excess of 140 kilometres per hour.

6 FAIRY FALLS

This is one of the prettiest corners of Milford Sound and is named after the rainbows in the falls. Despite the large amount of water that cascades from these falls, they are only temporary and will dry up after a few days without rain.

7 ANITA BAY

Many years ago, local Māori people frequently visited Anita Bay for its tangiwai. Tangiwai, more commonly known as greenstone, is a precious stone that was carved for both weapons and ornamental wear.

8 ST ANNE’S POINT

This is where the automatic lighthouse for Milford Sound stands, 27 metres above sea level. It is visible from out at sea for 14 kilometres.

9 DALE POINT

Is the entrance to Milford Sound from the Tasman Sea. It’s approximately 548 metres wide and up to 300 metres deep.

10 THE ELEPHANT

This mountain is in the shape of an elephant’s head. The ‘trunk’, forming part of the hanging valley, runs up the ridge to a summit of 1,507 metres and to the top of the ‘elephant’s head’.

11 MOUNT PEMBROKE

Is one of the highest mountains adjoining the fiord at 2,014 metres and is permanently snow-capped. The glacier on Mount Pembroke is the remnant of the original glacier that carved the fiord. Several streams from the melting snow run down the mountain forming the Harrison River.

12 SEAL ROCK

Is one of the few areas in the fiord where the Southern fur seal is able to climb up out of the water onto the rocks. These seals inhabit the fiord all year round.

13 STIRLING FALLS

Dropping 155 metres, Stirling Falls is one of two permanent waterfalls in the fiord. They were originally named after Captain Stirling, one of the early explorers in the area.

14 LION MOUNTAIN

Situated on the northern side of the fiord rising to a height of 1,301 metres. The mountain’s correct name is Mt Kimberly, but because its shape so strongly resembles that of a crouching lion, this more descriptive name has been retained.

15 HARRISON COVE

The only natural anchorage in the fiord used during the early 1800s by whalers and sealers. The Milford Sound Underwater Observatory and Southern Discoveries kayaking trips are located here.

16 BOWEN FALLS

The higher of the two permanent waterfalls in Milford Sound, Bowen Falls drops 161 metres from a hanging valley in the Darren Mountain Range.



MILFORD SOUND
Pocket Guide to

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Milford Sound
adventure

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HELPING TO PROTECT MILFORD SOUND'S NATIVE SPECIES

Southern Discoveries is passionate about preserving Milford Sound's beauty for future generations. We're proud to partner with the Fiordland Conservation Trust and Department of Conservation on the Sinbad Sanctuary Project. It's a pest control programme that helps threatened native species in Sinbad Gully increase in number, with the long term aim of reintroducing species that are no longer present.

Native birds currently found in Sinbad Gully include tokoeka/kiwi, whio/blue duck, weka, kākā, kea and rock wren, as well as three species of threatened lizard: the Sinbad skink, Cascade gecko and cryptic skink. This is thought to be one of the largest alpine lizard communities in the world. Sinbad Gully is also one of the last places where kākāpō were found in their natural habitat, making this owl parrot an obvious candidate for translocation when the area is pest free.



To refer to Milford Sound as a sound is actually incorrect as it's a fiord. Sounds are valleys created by rivers. Fiords are valleys created by glaciers.

THERE'S EVEN MORE TO SEE UNDER THE SURFACE!

Discover a whole new world of local marine creatures through the large windows of the Milford Sound Underwater Observatory, suspended 10 metres below the surface of the Piopiotahi Marine Reserve.

The top few metres of Milford Sound is made up of fresh water from the mountain run-off and rivers, and the layer below is salt water from the sea. The top layer, stained dark by the tannins from the surrounding forest, decreases the amount of light that penetrates the water below. This is what is known as deep water emergence.

An amazing example of deep water emergence is black coral, which is a living colony of tiny, white anemone-like animals covering a tough black skeleton. It usually only occurs at depths of 50 metres and beyond, so it's rare to see at just 10 metres deep.



**ADD ON
TO YOUR
CRUISE**

**ASK ONE OF OUR BOAT
HOSTS ABOUT ADDING THE
UNDERWATER OBSERVATORY
TO YOUR CRUISE**



Most famous peak
**MITRE
PEAK**
— 1,692M —

LENGTH
16KM

Widest
**POINT
3KM**



Annual rainfall
**OVER
600CM**

AVERAGE
**DEPTH
330M**

**SPOT
THE
SKINK**

KIDS –
CAN YOU
FIND ALL 8
HIDDEN SKINKS?



Milford Sound is the wettest inhabited place in New Zealand and one of the wettest places on earth with an average 182 rainy days per year.



Say hello to
**The NEW ZEALAND
FUR SEAL**

I live in Milford Sound all year round. You'll find me relaxing on seal rock during the day after a busy night hunting for squid and fish. I can dive up to 380 metres deep and can spend up to 15 minutes underwater.



Kia ora from
**The BOTTLENOSED
DOLPHIN**

I'm one of the largest dolphins in New Zealand and can grow up to 3.8 metres in length. I love riding the bow wave of boats and our friends the Dusky dolphins sometimes join us.



Introducing
**The FIORDLAND
CRESTED PENGUIN**

I'm also known as a Tawaki, which is my Māori name. I'm quite rare and special so it's always exciting to see me. I breed annually and return to the same nest site and mate from year to year. My breeding season is August–November.



Meet
The KEA

I'm friendly, mischevious, smart and inquisitive. You'll sometimes find me chewing on your car along the road to Milford Sound. Even though I might seem hungry, please don't feed me because it's not good for me!

GEOLOGICAL ACTIVITY

One of the world's major plate boundary faults – the Alpine Fault – crosses the mouth of Milford Sound. The Australian plate slides sideways and is pushed beneath Fiordland at 36 millimetres per year, forcing plate rocks upwards to form the mountains.



Milford Sound has two permanent waterfalls, Stirling Falls and Bowen Falls, and hundreds of temporary falls. Bowen Falls provides hydro-electric power and water supply for all of Milford Sound.

GLACIATION

Milford Sound was carved out of the rocks by glaciers. During the most recent glaciation period, which peaked around 20,000 years ago, glaciers extended offshore beyond the fiords and only small portions of the mountains were exposed above the ice.

Global warming caused the glaciers to retreat and the sea level to rise, filling Milford Sound with water long before the first humans arrived in New Zealand.