

fiordland cruise

Fiordland is the largest National Park in New Zealand and one of the largest in the world. It has been recognised as one of the world's foremost natural landscapes through its inclusion in Te Wahipounamu – South West New Zealand World Heritage Area.



The world's largest and only flightless parrot. Rediscovered in Fiordland and remaining population of 153 birds held on three offshore islands including Anchor Island in Dusky Sound.

Fiordland National Park stretches from Martins Bay in the north to Te Waewae Bay in the south, and from the mighty eastern lakes of Te Anau, Manapouri, Monowai and Hauroko to the 14 spectacular Fiords of the West Coast.

Fiordland stands apart as a region of distinct character, made up mainly of hard crystalline rocks which are as old as any in New Zealand.

Beginning 500 million years ago, intense heat and pressure deep in the earth's crust formed gneiss, schist and granite rocks. They have been thrust upwards by folding of the crust, fragmented by faulting and at times mixed with molten volcanic rock. Periods of submersion under the sea-bed have created areas of sandstone, mudstone and limestone such as those seen today at Te Anau-au Caves on the eastern side of Fiordland.

Over the last two million years glaciers have at times covered the area, gouging, deepening and rounding U-shaped valleys, many of which are now lakes or fiords.

Today hundreds of lakes dot the landscape, among them the deepest in New Zealand, Lake Hauroko, at 462m.

Fourteen Fiords, reaching up to 40km inland, extend from Milford Sound in the north to Preservation Inlet in the south along 200km of rugged western coastline.

Solander Island, a tiny outlier of the park 25km to the south, at the western entrance to Foveaux Strait, is the eroded skeleton of a volcano about one million years old.



A large flightless rail rediscovered in the Murchison Mountains of Fiordland in 1948. Current population is around 345 birds.

Fiordland weather is dominated by frequent westerly airflows, making it extremely changeable and often dramatic.

Moisture laden air, forced to rise over the barrier of mountains, cools quickly creating heavy rain and snow. Clearing weather often reveals thousands of waterfalls streaming from sheer-sided mountains. Annual rainfall varies from 1200mm in Te Anau in the east to 8000mm in Milford Sound to the west. Rain falls in Fiordland on over 200 days each year.

Much of Fiordland's indigenous temperate evergreen rain forest clings to steep faces of hard rock covered only by a thin layer of rich, peaty humus and moss. Tree avalanches are common.

Beech forest is dominant with red and mountain beech growing around the eastern lakes and in the Eglinton Valley. Silver beech is the most widespread beech species, sometimes growing in association with podocarps such as Hall's totara, rimu, rata and miro. On the wetter west this forest type has luxuriant understorey shrubs, tree ferns, mosses and lichens.

Above the 1000 metre treeline snow tussocks dominate with showy alpine daisies, buttercups and other herbs.

Fiordland is home to several threatened native animals. The Murchison Mountains support at least 130 takahē (out of a total population of 345), a flightless, alpine rail thought extinct earlier this century. The birds are carefully monitored in a restricted area of the park and their number boosted by an artificial rearing programme.

Fiordland was considered a stronghold for kakapo (nocturnal and flightless this is the world's largest parrot), now probably extinct on the mainland. Threatened by predators, the last few remaining birds have been transferred to offshore islands.

The population has increased to 153 over the past few years. Kakapo have been returned to Anchor Island in Dusky Sound, Fiordland.

The Eglinton Valley is a stronghold for yellow-crowned parakeets, robins, kaka, long-tailed bats and a colony of short-tailed bats.

Blue ducks and southern crested grebes are found on Fiordland lakes and streams. South Island saddlebacks, absent from Fiordland for nearly a century, have been reintroduced on Breaksea and Anchor Islands, where invasive pests have been eradicated. The rare Fiordland skink has also benefited from the removal of rats. Fiordland has many secure predator-free islands and work is ongoing to protect more islands within Southern Fiordland.

Visitors are likely to see the common forest birds like tomtits, brown creepers, grey warblers, fantails, tui, bellbirds and native pigeons. Brown kiwi are reasonably common and their calls are often heard at night.



The cheeky mountain parrot, the kea, is a regular entertainer at higher altitudes.

Introduced animals such as mice, rats, stoats, hares, deer and possums have had a detrimental effect on native animals and plants in New Zealand and control programmes are carried out in various parts of Fiordland National Park.

The marine environment of Fiordland is as unique as its land areas. Heavy rainfall creates a permanent freshwater layer above the sea water within the Fiords. Stained by tannins washed out of the vegetation, this layer cuts down the amount of light and restricts almost all of the marine life to the top 40 metres of water depth.

The 40m band is calm, very clear and relatively warm – home to sponges, corals and fish of subtropical, cool water and deep water varieties. The Fiords support the world's biggest population of black coral trees – about seven million colonies, some of them up to 300 years old. They are home also to brachiopods: primitive clam-like animals which have been bypassed by evolution, remaining unchanged in over 300 million years. Bottlenose and Dusky dolphins, Fur seals, Fiordland crested penguins and Little blue penguins are resident in the Fiords. Sometimes humpback and southern right whales are seen along the coastline. The Fiord underwater environment is not included in

the National Park although there are ten Fiordland Marine Reserves in which all life is totally protected, found from Milford Sound in the North to Preservation Inlet in the South.

Fiordland was well known to the Maori and many legends pertain to its formation and naming. Demi-god Tuterakiwhanoa is said to have carved the rugged landscape from formless rock.

Few Maori were permanent residents of the region but seasonal food-gathering camps were linked by well worn trails. Takiwai, a translucent greenstone or jade, was sought from Anita Bay and elsewhere near the mouth of Milford Sound.

Captain Cook and his crew were the first Europeans to visit Fiordland and in 1773 spent five weeks at Pickersgill Harbour - Astronomer's Point in Dusky Sound. Cook's maps and descriptions soon attracted sealers and whalers who formed the first European settlements of New Zealand. From the middle of the 19th Century explorers, surveyors and prospectors began to penetrate the unexplored interior of Fiordland.

Preservation Inlet boomed briefly in the 1890's after gold was found, but efforts to establish mines, timber mills and farms in Fiordland have generally been short lived.

Quintin Mackinnon and Donald Sutherland opened up the Milford Track in 1889 and began guiding tourists through the now world-famous route.

Richard Henry was one of the pioneers of threatened species work transferring kakapo and kiwi to islands in Dusky Sound around the turn of the century.

An area of 940,000 hectares was first set aside for National Park purposes in 1904, but it was not until 1952 that Fiordland National Park was officially constituted. Today it covers over 1.2 million hectares (3.1 million acres) – nearly 5% of the Area of New Zealand and was declared a World Heritage Area in 1986.

The Department of Conservation administers Fiordland National Park in order to preserve its natural and historic resources and to provide opportunities for recreation.

The Fiordland National Park Visitor Centre in Te Anau provide interpretation displays and information: www.doc.govt.nz

There are a number of walking tracks in the Park including the world famous Milford, Routeburn and Kepler Tracks as well as many other back country tracks and popular short walks.

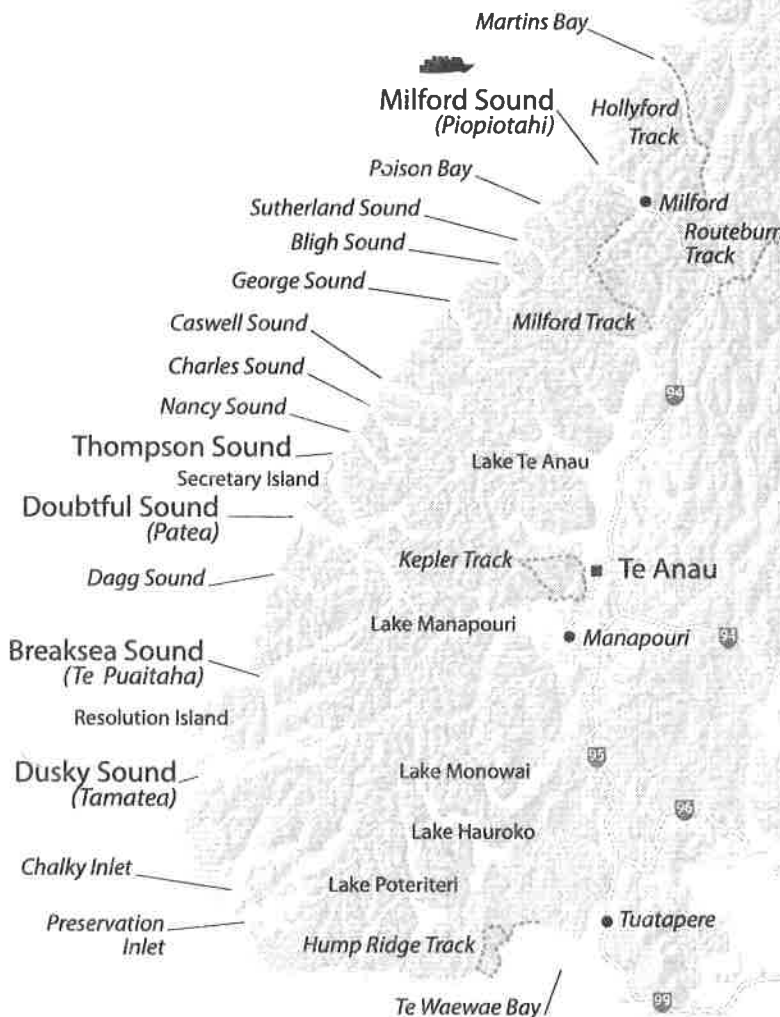
The north-eastern sector of the Park is the most accessible and intensively used. A number of commercial operators provide transport and other tourist services within the Park.

Accommodation is available in the gateway town of Te Anau and at Manapouri.

In the early 1900's red deer, wapiti and possums were liberated around Fiordland. Permits to hunt these are free and can be obtained from the Department of Conservation.

The lakes and rivers of Fiordland offer excellent fishing for brown and rainbow trout and licences must be obtained.

For further information or to purchase a special souvenir DVD of your Fiordland National Park experience visit us at www.fiordlandcruiseconsultants.co.nz/info



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