

Sailing to Fiordland and Stewart Island

What you need for a successful circumnavigation of New Zealand

Sailing around the South Island of New Zealand is considered a crazy thing to do by many yachties, including Kiwis. Why leave the idyllic Bay of Islands, the plentiful anchorages around Auckland, or the balmy and beautiful bays near Nelson to sail south to Fiordland, a remote part of the country which receives more than seven meters of rain annually, has harsh, changeable conditions, and is home to hoards of vicious sandflies? Well, because the sounds, which are actually fiords, are positively breathtakingly beautiful. Yes, the word is spelled with an 'i' here.

Flooded glacially carved valleys create fourteen separate fiords. Some are narrow and steep-sided while others are wide with islands and bays. Dense forests cover the surrounding peaks as far as the eye can see while waterfalls stream down narrow chutes and spill out of hanging valleys. Rain or shine, the scenery is spectacular.

Only Milford and Doubtful sounds can be reached by land. All the others, as well as Port Pegasus at Stewart Island, are accessible only by boat. And not many boats of any sort venture into this area. For the few yachts that do, a magical experience awaits those intrepid souls who revel in solitude and natural beauty.

It is a 3,000 mile journey to circumnavigate New Zealand and weather dictates when it is safe to move. It is best to sail to South Island during a La Nina year. According to Ken Campbell of Commander's Weather:

"La Nina is when water temps are colder than normal offshore Peru and warmer than normal in Coral Sea/tropical western South Pacific. This leads to many storms forming from the northern Tasman Sea to SW of Fiji and most head S or SE towards North Island. High pressure is common over southern South Island to the Chatham Islands. NE winds are very common on the Hauraki Gulf, occurring 75% of the time from October thru March. During La Ninas I saw many storms on the Hauraki Gulf with NE winds over 60 kts.

El Nino is when water temps are warmer than normal offshore Peru. This leads to colder than normal water temps in the western South Pacific. Low pressure activity is at a minimum and high pressure dominates the central and northern Tasman Sea. NZ gets frequent cold fronts coming in from the Tasman Sea. It can be very windy from the SW during Oct and Nov and again in Mar, but Dec - Feb, North Island is frequently dominated by high pressure. It tends to be cooler than normal and windy in the southern part of South Island. Interesting, SW winds occur 85% of the time on the Hauraki Gulf from Oct - Mar, so totally opposite to La Nina.

During La Nina you go to South Island, during El Nino you spend the summer on North Island."

Lying in the heart of the Roaring Forties, sailing to South Island and Stewart Island is an exciting experience for which a crew must be well prepared. There are no good harbours or anchorages on the west coast of North Island. Beyond Golden Bay on South Island, there are no all-

weather anchorages until Milford Sound. It takes four days, more or less, to make each of these passages.

We headed out of the Bay of Islands in our 2006 40' Hallberg-Rassy on 14 January, 2012 and dropped the anchor at Tiritiri Matangi, a bird sanctuary near Auckland, on 15 April 2012. During the trip we pushed on at each weather opportunity although most times we would have preferred to linger longer exploring the remarkable places.

We suggest allowing 3 months minimum, 4 would be ideal. Be prepared to wait 1-2 weeks for good windows to sail more than 12 hours. Crew changes can be made in Nelson, Deep Cove in Doubtful Sound, Oban on Stewart Island and in Dunedin. Arrangements can be made for helicopter/seaplane transport to and from Dusky Sound. Crew changes will certainly hinder your flexibility and timing, and for that reason we are happy we did the trip alone.

Hints for sailing in Fiordland:

From Milford in the north to Preservation Inlet in the south, it is only a day sail between sounds. Most contain at least one all-weather anchorage.

The day breezes begin about 1000 and calm down in the late afternoon. Often they get up to 25 knots outside but generally ease the further inside one travels.

The winds blow 25+ knots a great deal of the time outside the sounds, changing from NW to SW, or the other way around, very rapidly. These keep the seas, with swells coming from two different directions, categorized as rough or very rough most days. Occasionally a high rests over the area long enough to allow the winds to ease and the seas to settle. We chose those times to travel outside and to cross Foveaux Strait.

Storm warnings are issued at different wind speeds in different parts of the world. In New Zealand they are: Gale Warning - winds of 34-47 knots (Beaufort Force 8-9) and Storm Warning - winds 48-63 knots (Beaufort Force 10-11).

We gathered weather information and received emails via UUPlus over our sat phone rather than our usual mode with Winlink over the SSB. It's more expensive but much faster. In the steep-sided, narrow fiords the satellites disappeared more often than usual.

Sometimes it is difficult to obtain enough GPS signals for a fix because of the steep walls. Don't panic, your chartplotter has not gone wonky.

There is no mobile phone service in Fiordland. It is very limited in Oban; only Telecom works and it is not possible to buy a SIM card there. Vodophone does not work at all. We had no phone service from the time we left Nelson until we reached Dunedin.

Correct protocol in NZ is to hail on VHF Ch 16 and move to Ch 06 or Ch 08, the two ship-to-ship channels. However, in Fiordland, ship-to-ship communications are on VHF Ch 10.

It is important to be able to easily deploy the dinghy to tie lines ashore because this is done in just about every anchorage. If, like us, you don't have davits and tie your dinghy on deck, you may opt to have a kayak for this purpose.

We bought a two-person Sea Eagle Fast Track 385 inflatable kayak and absolutely love it! Once we reached Milford Sound it was inflated and tied on top of the dingy. When we arrived at an anchorage it was eased over the side and tied at midships until we anchored. Katie paddled one stern line to shore, tied it around a tree with a bowline far enough out to be reached at low water, then repeated the process on the other side while Jim guided Tenaya, fed out the lines, and finally tightened them on a winch. By tying the sternline and the kayak's painter around her waist, Katie could quickly climb up the rocks and secure the sternline without needing to tie up the kayak. The floor is so firm that it's possible to stand up to reach an overhanging tree. Once Tenaya was invulnerable we were free to paddle around. Some places have walls that drop steeply into the sea and others have menacing rocks lurking just below the surface. In either case, we paddled right up to explore and gather all the mussels we could eat.

Be sure to check *Beneath the Reflections* for places where it is prohibited to fish for blue cod and learn the size and quantity limits for fish, crayfish and shellfish. Oyster season begins 1 March and scallop season ends 15 March. Paua (abalone) cannot be gathered using tanks or other underwater breathing devices.

Dealing with sandflies: These tiny, vicious pests are absolutely dreadful. Do not underestimate their ability to find your flesh or the misery they will inflict. Wearing long sleeves, long pants, tall socks (nylon liners work well) and shoes or boots will protect most body parts. We each had a soft, wide-brimmed hat (Katie's canvas, Jim's nylon) which we sprayed each morning with 98% DEET. That kept the flies away from our faces, necks and ears all day. Only the backs of our hands needed spraying.

If you've got a watermaker, make sure it works in fresh as well as saltwater. Our Spectra worked fine. Because of all the rain in Fiordland, the top meter or so of water is fresh. This sits on the heavier saltwater and is stained the color of tea from tannins in the soil.

If you haven't got a watermaker, don't worry. Besides all the rain you can catch, in most sounds the fishermen have strung hoses from nearby falls to beyond the edge of the water or barge to reach right into your tank. Just pull a nylon stocking over the end as a filter.

What you need:

- **Plenty of time** to wait for good weather windows
- **Plenty of New Zealand dollars** - Fuel at Milford and Doubtful Sounds must be paid in cash. Oban's service station, the hotel's restaurant, and the supermarket accept credit cards. There are no banks or money machines on Stewart Island. In addition to buying fuel, we had to pay \$800 cash for a starter as we did not have a NZ bank and credit cards were not accepted.
- **Guidebooks and reference:** www.boatbooks.co.nz www.amazon.com

- *Beneath the Reflections*, Fiordland Maritime Guardians 2008. Beautiful waterproof book explains history, physical and biological environment, marine regulations, radio stations and anchorages. Available from DOC or online at www.fmq.org.nz for NZ\$15, shops for NZ\$25 or download for free.
- *A Boaties' Guide to Fiordland*, Mana Cruising Club 1994. Dated but useful information on anchorages, history and walking tracks. No waypoints.
- *Stewart Island Cruising Guide*, Mana Cruising Club 1996. The only guidebook available.
- *Cruising Guide: South Island East Coast*, Evan Paterson 2010
- *New Zealand Cruising Guide Central Area*, Keith WJ Murray 1999
- *Hauraki Gulf Boating Atlas*, David Thatcher 2007
- *Northland Coast Boaties Atlas*, David Thatcher 2000
- *New Zealand Marine Radio Handbook*, John Allen 2009. Full of useful information including forecast areas, weather websites, VHF, HF-MF, port and marina stations, Coastguard and private stations and SSB skeds.
- *New Zealand Tidal Stream Atlas*, Hydrographic Office RNZN 1993
- *New Zealand Nautical Almanac*
- *The Boaties Book, New Zealand*, a free booklet published each year www.boaties.co.nz Received on arrival in NZ. Info on marinas, tides and marine services on North Island
- *The Rough Guide to New Zealand* or *Lonely Planet New Zealand*
- New Zealand road map

- **Charts:** www.boatbooks.co.nz
- NZ7621 - Milford Sound 2009 Edition
- NZ7622 - Milford Sound to Sutherland Sound 2009 Edition
- NZ7623 - Bligh Sound to Caswell Sound 1999 Edition
- NZ7624 - Charles Sound to Dagg Sound 2009 Edition
- NZ7625 - Thompson Sound and Doubtful Sound 2009 Edition
- NZ7653 - Breaksea Sound and Dusky Sound 2009 Edition
- NZ7655 - Breaksea Sound 2009 Edition
- NZ7656 - Dusky Sound 2009 Edition
- NZ7654 - Chalky and Preservation Inlets 2002 Edition
- NZ 76 - Western Approaches to Foveaux Strait 2009 Edition
- NZ681 - Approaches to Bluff and Riverton 2009 Edition
- NZ6821 - Bluff Harbour and Entrance 2009 Edition
- NZ69 - Stewart Island 2009 Edition
- NZ6912 - Plans in Stewart Island 2001 Edition
- NZ6823 - Paterson Inlet 2000 Edition
- NZ661 - Approaches to Otago Harbour 2000 Edition
- NZ6612 - Otago Harbour 2004 Edition
- NZ632 - Banks Peninsula 2000 Edition
- NZ6324 - Akaroa Harbour 2009 Edition
- NZ6321 - Lyttelton Harbour/Whakaraupo 2000 Edition (affected by 2011 earthquakes)

- **Electronic Charts:** Navionics Gold Electronic Chart for New Zealand 2011 edition was spot on. Along with buying the card for the chartplotter, we downloaded it to our iPad (iNavX app) as a back-up. Cannot explain why the download is so much less expensive than the card, about 10% of the price. They appear identical.
- **Sources for Weather:** VHF Ch 16 announces repeaters for weather broadcasts. Also, depending on where you are, Ch 01 at 0735 and 1740, Ch 61 at 0705 and 1730, Ch 65 at 0710, 0925 and 1725. Most sounds do not have repeaters so the best chance for hearing the forecast inside is on 4417MHz at 0715 and 2030. For overnights we consulted Commander's Weather Service www.commandersweather.com and received their messages as well as GRIB files via UUPlus on our sat phone. Forecasts can be viewed at www.metvuw.com and www.metservice.com when internet is available such as in Deep Cove and Oban.
- Meri Leask, Bluff Fishermen's Radio: +64 (0)3 212 7281 or mileask@hotmail.com Meri runs a sked on 4147MHz each day at 2030. Yachts are encouraged to join in. Call or email her once you are off the coast of South Island headed towards Milford Sound. She begins with a three day forecast for the seven areas of South and Stewart Islands (see map below) before calling each of the participating boats for their location and to make sure all is well onboard. It's nice to know others are around if a problem arises. Should you need an important part, Meri will do her best to get it to you.
- **Strong SSB and VHF antennae**
- **Iridium Satellite Phone** – This provides voice, text and data access. There is no mobile service in Fiordland and it is sporadic in Oban with Telecom.
- **At least 100 meters of chain and a beefy anchor** – We have 10mm chain and used a 25kg. anchor for our 40' 14 ton boat. Anchorages are deep in Fiordland, usually 30 meters or more.
- **Two 100 meters lines in bags on deck** – We use megabraid (US) / multiplait(Europe) in mesh top loading duffels from West Marine. These are used in nearly every anchorage in Fiordland and Stewart Island so be sure they are easily accessible but well secured on deck.
- **Sturdy, inflatable 2 person kayak** – This added loads to our enjoyment of the areas and made tying lines ashore simple. We used it to explore and gather mussels, paua and scallops.
- **Fuel cans** – In Fiordland fuel can only be obtained at the heads of Milford and Doubtful Sounds and must be paid for in cash. Fuel is available in Oban where credit cards are accepted. There is a very good chance of motoring more than usual on this trip.
- **Be sure to have enough fuel to motor 100 hours** between fill-ups. Either the winds are very light or very strong, with swells coming from two directions. Often you're going straight into one of them.
- **Mosquito netting** - Cover the vents in the washboards and any hatch or port you wish to open. Be sure it is double thickness. We attached the netting to the ports with closely spaced sticky-backed Velcro pieces (the hook part) stuck to the frames.
- **Insect repellent** with as much DEET as possible – Outdoor shops sell spray with 98%.
- **Sacrificial wide-brimmed hat** – Saturate daily with DEET to keep sandflies from face. Assumed ours were goners but they cleaned up quite nicely in the washer in Dunedin.

- **Bendryl** for relief from bites
- **Pam's brand odorless fly spray** – Kill those horrid little suckers that manage to get inside the boat or are around the companionway.
- **Some sort of shelter for the cockpit and companionway** to keep out rain, wind and some of the sandflies while at anchor, even if it is not a complete closure.
- **Warm clothes** - Best if the outer layers are synthetic since you will get wet. We hiked in our lightweight foulies a few times and were well protected from the bush. Icebreaker base layers are ideal. The merino wool is sturdy, warm and comfortable and can be worn for weeks between washings without smelling too badly. Fleece pants and tops are nice for additional warmth and are cozy alternatives.
- **Sturdy waterproof boots** for hiking. The tracks are usually boggy or muddy in places. We wore our Musto leather/Gore-tex ankle high lace-up boots as the soles are sticky on wet and dry rocks but collect less mud than our lugged, Vibram-soled hiking boots.
- **Thick rubber fishing gloves** for grabbing line and cleaning mussels
- **Warm hat and gloves** for passages
- **Plenty of food** – There is no place to buy food between Nelson and Oban on Stewart Island. You can fish and forage for seafood, but nothing else is available unless you have crew joining in Deep Cove willing to bring groceries from Te Anau. We made a lot of bread and yogurt. Yogurt makers are simple and can be bought at New World supermarket along with many flavors of powdered mix. Kumara (sweet potatoes), potatoes, onions and garlic lasted two months as did cabbage, apples, oranges and limes in the fridge. Peeled ripe bananas were stored in our tiny freezer for an alternative to regular bread. Hearty snacks of nuts, dried fruit, chocolate bars and cheese were welcome on long tramps ashore.
- **Snorkeling and/or dive gear** with gloves, hard-soled booties, a proper paua prier, a lobster measurer and a regulation ruler (get from Dept. of Conservation, DOC).
- **Large pot to cook crayfish** – Very good chance you will be given crayfish if you don't catch your own.

The route we took in Tenaya:

We sailed north from Bay of Islands around Cape Reinga, down the west coast of the North Island into Cook Strait to Golden Bay where we waited for a window at Torrent Bay in Abel Tasman National Park and in Nelson.

Then to Milford Sound, George Sound, Thompson Sound (northern entrance to Doubtful Sound Complex) Bradshaw Sound, Doubtful Sound, Breaksea Sound (northern entrance to Breaksea/Dusky Complex) Dusky Sound.

From Dusky we went directly to Stewart Island. Most yachts visit Preservation Inlet before crossing over and those that need service go to Bluff. We motor-sailed south along the western coast of Stewart Island, rounded South Cape, and pulled into the South Arm of Port Pegasus. Next we sailed up to Paterson Inlet and Halfmoon Bay where Oban, the only town, is located.

We crossed Foveaux Strait to Dunedin, then to Akaroa to wait for a weather window to cross Cook Strait to Napier. Lastly, Napier to Gulf Harbour (Auckland area) and back to Opuia.



Left Map - Land and Sea Routes



Right Map - Marine Weather Forecasts Areas

Opuia Marina: 35 18'.89S 174 07'.33E Covered in *Northland Coast Boaties Atlas*. This is a full service marina in a beautiful setting. Call on VHF Ch12 or +64 (0)9 402 7124 or email enquiries@opuamarinia.co.nz for a berth or mooring. See www.opuamarinia.co.nz for info. Most yacht services are available. There are three chandleries, one of which, Cater Marine, has the most helpful staff we've ever encountered. There is also a restaurant, a small but well-stocked grocery store, good laundry facilities (two \$2 coins for washer, combo of \$1 and \$2 for dryer). Showers cost a \$2 coin for 4 minutes. Buy coins at the marina office. A lovely track meanders along the wooded coast to Paihia, the closest town, 5k away. Diesel and water are available at the wharf. Petrol and propane are available in Paihia at the service station across from Countdown supermarket. Rental cars can be hired to provision in Paihia or at the giant Countdown or New World supermarkets in Kerikeri approx. 20k north where you'll find a large Mitre 10 hardware store as well as several auto parts stores.

There are dozens of picturesque anchorages in the Bay of Islands, a few in the Cavalli Islands, and many in the large, protected Whangaroa Harbour. Blue penguins and Australasian gannets are often seen in these waters.

Whangaroa Harbour to Golden Bay – 662 miles

Anchorage and harbours from Whangarei to Cape Reinga are covered in *Northland Coast Boaties Atlas*. Those in Golden Bay and Nelson (and over to Marlborough Sounds) are covered in *New Zealand Cruising Guide Central Area*. It's best to catch some tuna along this route as the mollymawks, which are small albatrosses, may try to snatch your squid lures further south.

Port Golden Bay (Tarakohe) Marina: 40 49'.30S, 172 53'.79E Covered in *New Zealand Cruising Guide Central Area* and *A Boaties' Guide to Fiordland*. This small, simple marina has been improved since the guidebooks were written and there are more berths. In calm conditions it is possible to anchor between the outer and inner moles, or inside the inner mole opposite the berths. Diesel and water are available at the wharf. Call ahead for a berth or pile mooring on VHF Ch 16, 60 or 68 or call +64 (0)3 525 8174 or 027 446 3891. Get the code for the showers when you check-in with Alan, the harbor master. Takaka is a delightfully artsy town with great cafes and shops 14k to the north. Our neighbor handed over the keys to his car and suggested we check it out. It's a lovely drive.

Anchorage Bay in Torrent Bay: 40 57'.19S 173 03'.44E Anchor closer inshore than we did. A fleet had congregated so we parked more in the middle of the bay than normally necessary. This is a safe and beautiful anchorage (mud bottom) at the southern end of Abel Tasman National Park with access to several walking tracks including waterfalls. Follow the track to Cleopatra's Pool for a chilly ride down a natural waterslide. Bellbirds will serenade you on the walk out to the point. There are no roads in the park so the only access to these tracks is by foot or boat. Kayaks and water taxis are plentiful. We could have spent the entire summer here kayaking and hiking.

Nelson Marina: 41 15'.63S 173 16'.89E Covered in *New Zealand Cruising Guide Central Area*. A perfect stop if you need fresh food, supplies, to do laundry, or just need a city fix. A Countdown supermarket is a 20 minute walk along the paved path next to the river into town, but the man on the boat next to us tossed us the keys to his ute when we mentioned going. People are so nice in New Zealand! On Saturdays there is a wonderful farmers market with crafts and all kinds of great stuff in the center of town. Call Nelson Marine Radio on VHF Ch 60 or ring +64 (0)3 546 7768 or 027 443 1234 for a berth.

Nelson to Milford Sound – 482 miles

There are anchorages in three bays on the west coast of the South Island north of Milford Sound but none are all-weather. They are covered in *A Boaties' Guide to Fiordland*. Anchorages in Fiordland are also covered in *Beneath the Reflections*. Not all anchorages are covered in both books, and a few have different names, so owning both books is advisable.

Deepwater Basin, Milford Sound: 44 40'.63S 176 55'.23E An all-weather anchorage. Do not attempt to enter Milford Sound in a strong westerly. Winds accelerate through the narrow throat making for a most unpleasant experience. Contact Fiordland Lobster Company on channel 67 or call +64 (0)3 249 8093 to see if a fisherman's pole mooring (pen) is available. If not, they will explain where to anchor as it is either very shallow or very deep. A commercial

mooring ball may be available. The water is shallow in the pens and the tidal range is approximately 2 meters. It is best to tie your bow to the outer end of the walkway and leave plenty of slack in all the lines to accommodate low water. Showers are available but not appealing. Water and diesel are available at the dock from Fiordland Lobster Company, cash only. Laundry can be done at the hostel nearby, but more convenient to do it in Deep Cove if you can wait. A café/bar is located at the head of Milford Sound a 20 minute walk away. This is where the famous Milford Track ends and there are several other tracks as well. A pod of dolphins live in Milford Sound as well as NZ fur seals and Fiordland crested penguins.

Deep Water Basin, Milford Sound to Alice Falls, George Sound – 48 miles

Alice Falls, George Sound: 44 45'.66S 167 26'.44E An all-weather anchorage at the head of George Sound. Have your dinghy or kayak in the water and the port sternline ready to lead out before dropping the anchor just before the waterfall. Once it's set, back toward the fixed line running across the cove taking care not to get too close as it shallows quickly. The surge from the waterfall will push the yacht to the far side so secure the line quickly. This is a beautiful and peaceful location. George Sound Hut is across the bay where a walking track leads to Te Anau. Mussels can be found on submerged limbs at low water. Water is available at Anchorage Cove, another all-weather anchorage in George Sound. Four bottlenose dolphins escorted us out of the anchorage through glassy water reflecting the surrounding peaks early in the morning.

Alice Falls, George Sound to Precipice Cove, Bradshaw Sound – 52 miles

Yachts travelling south enter the protected waters of the Doubtful Sound Complex at Thompson Sound. It is possible to explore it along with Bradshaw Sound, Gaer Arm and Doubtful Sound, including First Arm, Crooked Arm and Hall Arm before exiting to continue further south. There is a resident pod of approximately 60 dolphins in Doubtful Sound. We caught a tasty albacore outside between George and Thompson.

MacDonell Island near Precipice Cove, Bradshaw Sound: 45 15'.94S 167 08'.38E An all-weather anchorage near the head of Bradshaw Sound. A fixed line is strung across a cove which you can either: 1) tie along side, or 2) anchor in mud, back down on, and tie a sternline to. We were happy to have done the latter when Sea Finn, a charter fishing boat, arrived after dark. As we had anchored in the center, he had room to tie alongside off our SB side. The Fiordland Navigator often moors at the head of Precipice Cove disgorging a multitude of colored plastic kayaks at dusk. It is the largest overnigher out of Deep Cove and looks like an unsuccessful attempt to breed a sailing vessel with a cruise ship. Fortunately it is dark blue, not white. Nearby is Gaer Arm where it is possible to take a dinghy two miles up the Camelot River at high water. Stay to port as you work your way up the estuary.

Precipice Cove, Bradshaw Sound to Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound – 24 miles

Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound: 45 27'.70S 167 09'.77E Water, diesel and petrol are available from Billy Williams, the Deep Cove Educational Trust manager. Payment is in cash only. Call him on VHF Ch 10 after passing Elizabeth Island or email deepcove@ruralinzone.net. Should you need diesel and the Fiordland Navigator is there, you will be directed to tie in front of it.

Ease under her huge bowsprit while wrapping docklines around the wooden pilings taking care not to entangle your rigging or be pushed downstream. It's not as bad as it sounds. Existing lines on the pilings may or may not be long enough to use.

Anchor across the bay from the hostel in 30 meters, mud bottom, staying well away from the outflow from the power station. Tie a line to shore if not convinced the anchor is well set. With little scope, high winds and the current, you could drag into deeper water. Your position may disappear from your chartplotter because you're just too close to the towering wall for the GPS to get a fix.

Billy is very helpful if you need to arrange transport of something or someone to or from Te Anau or elsewhere on "the other side". He offers showers, laundry facilities and sells time for wifi and internet use in the Trust's common building. Deep Cove is the base for several charter boats and two kayaking trip operators. Most visitors reach Deep Cove by taking a boat (Real Journeys, Te Anau) across Lake Manapouri and then a bus over Wilmot Pass. Those in a hurry or flush with cash can hop on a helicopter. Several hiking tracks lead out of Deep Cove and there is excellent kayaking in Hall Arm. It is illegal to fish for blue cod here, but proper is fine.

Deep Cove, Doubtful Sound to Third Cove, Breaksea Sound – 63 miles

Breaksea Sound is the northern entrance to the Breaksea/Dusky Sound Complex which includes Breaksea Sound, Vancouver Arm, Broughton Arm, Acheron Passage, Wet Jacket Arm and Dusky Sound. This is a large, protected, beautiful area with a resident pod of about 160 dolphins. Fiordland crested penguins fish in pairs and NZ fur seals float along the surface fanning a flipper in the air.

Third Cove, Breaksea Sound: 45 31'.49S 166 52'.23E An all-weather anchorage located across from the beginning of the stunning, narrow, steep-sided Broughton Arm. Drop the anchor in the center of the cove in 30 meters, sand/mud bottom. Just swing, no need to tie lines ashore.

Muscle/Stick Cove (depending on the guidebook) Acheron Passage: 45 39'.60S 166 44'.17E An all-weather anchorage in a narrow, protected bit of water behind Stick Island at the junction of Acheron Passage and Wet Jacket Arm. Enter from the NE and either anchor where we did or go a little further in to find a buoyed line to SB. Anchor in sand/mud and tie a stern line to the buoyed line and a midships line from port to the perfectly situated tree on the island, or hang back behind the underwater rock (that scared us) and tie to trees you can reach. Beware of swarms of ravenous sandflies here. Look for mussels beyond the bow.

Outer Luncheon Cove, Dusky Sound: 45 46'.18S 166 32'.32E An all-weather anchorage with no sandflies. That alone is worth coming here, regardless of the beauty! Contrary to what the charts say, we found this cove to be 30 meters deep and Inner Luncheon Cove to have least 4.5 meters at low water.

We were nervous about going into Inner Luncheon Cove so tied to the ball in Outer Luncheon Cove. It is courteous to ask permission on VHF Ch 10 to use the mooring which has several boat names written on it. One of these told us to disregard the message written in bold letters.

When the fishing boat Miss Akaroa went inside, I followed in the kayak to see how and where they had anchored. They hadn't. They simply tied to the fixed line. So here's how you do it: Head in slowly staying slightly to SB. You'll pass a rock wall with dangling lines and a satellite dish to SB. Fishing boats watch rugby games here. Ahead you will see a fixed line running perpendicular to shore with a ball attached near the center of the cove. Position yourself alongside the line, stern to shore, but not too close as it shallows. Pull up the ball and tighten the line on your bow cleat. Then attach the stern and snug it up. It's safe in all weather but apparently northerlies aren't much fun in there, best to head elsewhere.

There is a track through the moist forest on predator-free Anchor Island leading to a lake where hundreds of shags nest. Kayaking among the tiny islands is magical as fur seals lie about the craggy edges and frolic in the clear water barely taking notice of the quietly passing humans. Paua (abalone) and crayfish can be spotted on the rocks beneath the swaying kelp and mussels cling to overhanging limbs at low water.

Pickersgill Harbour: 45 47'.75S 166 34'.45E Captain Cook anchored in this cozy all-weather anchorage in 1773 in the Resolution during his second voyage of discovery. You may even tie to the same horizontal tree he did! Drop the anchor in sand/mud just outside the cove and back down a little closer to the SB side before tying sternlines to each side. This way you leave room for charter boats to drop off passengers to wander the boardwalk to Astromoner Point. We caught tarakihi (delicious as sashimi) and blue cod from the boat and paddled the kayak in and out of all the surrounding coves and out around the island.

Cascade Cove: Dusky Sound: 45 48'.66S 166 35'.03E All-weather protection is found by tying to the outside of the floating barge. Tie as far forward as you can too allow smaller boats to come behind for water, and put fenders out if you leave. There is a long hose that flows constantly. The charter and fishing boats top off their tanks here and usually at least one boat spends the night here. If you want to stay the night, arrive early in the day. If someone bigger comes in, offer to move off if they will allow you to raft up. This place has more mussels than anyplace we've ever seen!

Dusky Sound to Port Pegasus, Stewart Island – 144 miles

We suggest making this passage in calm conditions. Timing the tides and swells and factoring in the wind direction are extremely important details when sailing through Foveaux Strait and around Stewart Island. Steep, dangerous waves can form quickly when the tide opposes the wind.

We chose not to go to Bluff for several reasons. 1) we drove there last year, 2) the commercial harbour has a lot of swell and not many places for yachts to tie up, and 3) we wanted to avoid as much of Foveaux Strait as possible. Meri, from Bluff Fisherman's Radio, does her best to find a good spot and help those that do visit, but since we didn't need any work performed, we gave it a pass. That said, there is a fabulous maritime museum there and you can get a ride into Invercargill should you need any supplies.

Stewart Island is completely different than Fiordland. Anchorages are shallow. Rolling hills are dense with scrubby brush, flax, grasses, tall rimu trees and strewn with granite outcroppings. The whole island is rugged, windswept and isolated. No roads or tracks lead to Port Pegasus, a wonderful natural harbour at the southeastern end of the island. Blue cod, paua (abalone), scallops and oysters are plentiful but the sandflies are not. The land and water are pristine. Oban, the only town on the island, is 50 miles north and most residents have never been to Pt. Pegasus.

Evening Cove, South Arm, Port Pegasus: 47 12'.41S 167 37'.03E An all-weather anchorage although a bit rough in gale and storm conditions. Drop the anchor on sand in the center of the cove and back down to set well. Prevailing winds are from the SW. Two sternlines must be tied to shore. Be sure to tie around strong trees! We tied our port side through an existing line around a tree but that line broke during a gale. After retying our sternline around the tree, we immediately added a port midships line to the other shore because the wind had moved from SW to NW and was on its way back to SW, blowing hard on the beam.

Follow the track leading out of the narrow cove adjacent to the boat and walk around to the right of the burned out campsite. When the trail ends follow cairns to a valley below the first granite topped highpoint. This is a lovely viewpoint. We picked our way across the valley and up the far side of the ridge through the dense bush to reach the summit. What a fabulous view of the harbour! Wear sturdy long pants, long sleeves and good boots for protection from the bush.

Boat Harbour Cove, South Arm, Port Pegasus: 47 14'.17S 167 36'.59E Open to northerly winds. Drop the anchor in sand about halfway inside the cove and tie sternlines to each side. This pretty anchorage supposedly has a walking track across to Broad Bay but we searched twice and did not find it. Perhaps it has grown over in the 20 years since the guidebook was written. It's a pretty but somewhat difficult walk through dense bush now. There is nice snorkeling along the edges of the cove with paua and blue cod lurking in the swaying kelp. Scallops can be found in 4-5 meters. Sea lions swam by the anchored boat several times. We were told that the track still exists from nearby, all-weather Disappointment Cove over to Broad Bay.

Ben's Bay aka Spar Cove, North Arm, Port Pegasus: 47 10'.84S 167 39'.85E An all-weather anchorage in a snug bay in shallow water. It's a good place to head to if there are gale or storm warnings. The wind howls through the trees on the surrounding hilltops but the water stays pretty calm in here. Drop the anchor towards the south shore letting out plenty of scope and making sure it's well set before tying two sternlines to the north shore, widely set. As lows pass, the winds move from the prevailing SW to NW and then back again.

There are mussels here as well as big bumble bees and a few sandflies. Take the dinghy over to Smuggler's Cove watching carefully for the narrow and mostly obscured entrance just wide enough to squeeze the dinghy between the rock walls. It opens into a misty, tropical looking hideaway covered with a lush, green canopy. Continuing north to Diprose Bay are the remains of a wharf from an old fishing and freezing operation. Further up and to the left is where Pegasus Creek cascades into the bay creating Belltopper Falls. A large Pelton wheel from the freezer compressor remains at the shore. On the eastern side of Diprose Bay is a

track that leads into the Tin Range where cassiterite was mined for a short time in the late 1880s and again from 1912-1917.

Port Pegasus to Golden Bay, Paterson Inlet – 52 miles

It is very important to consider the tides on passages around Stewart Island. Tidal streams between .5-1.5 knots are found near the coasts and up to 4 knots between islands and around headlands. Winds against the tide create dangerous waves. Be sure to consult the guidebook or, better yet, the NZ tidal stream atlas.

Paterson Inlet is the largest and safest natural harbour on Rakiura/Stewart Island. There are many anchorages in the nooks, crannies, bays and coves. We did not explore them as we chose to spend our time in more remote places and were now running late. Having been here last year, we've seen a good portion of what this delightful area has to offer.

Golden Bay, Paterson Inlet: 46 54'.28S 168 07'.23E A safe anchorage nestled between the main island and a smaller one. Just drop the anchor, snub the chain, back down and you're good as gold. The days of tying lines to shore are over! Leave your dinghy or kayak at the end of the wharf so as not to interfere with the boats that load and unload at the dock. You can stuff small bits of rubbish in the trash can there, but buy a proper council approved trash bag for leaving larger amounts alongside. It is a 1.5k walk over the hill to Oban, the only town on the island. You'll find a Four Square supermarket with fresh fruit and veggies and more groceries than might be expected. Time can be bought for wifi use at the bar of the charming South Sea Hotel. Their blue cod fish and chips are to die for and the fish chowder is fabulous as well.

92% of Stewart Island is managed by the Dept. of Conservation as the Rakiura National Park. DOC maintains several nice (but usually muddy) walking tracks around the northern end of the island. We took a water taxi to the head of Freshwater River and walked to the hut at Mason Bay for a couple of days. This is one of the best places in NZ to view kiwi birds in the wild as they appear at dawn and dusk, not only after nightfall. Contact Phillip Smith on +64(0)3 219 1144 for a nighttime guided trip to see kiwis at the beach. It is near a safe anchorage (I'm not saying which) but do not go there by yourself. It is not allowed because you may inadvertently or unintentionally bother them or cause damage to their habitat.

Oban is very small but caters to the visitors that arrive each day by plane from Invercargill or ferry from Bluff. The small and treasure filled Rakiura Museum and the informative Rakiura National Park Visitor's Centre are both must sees. The people here could not be nicer! Peter and Iris Tait run trips on their yacht to nearby Ulva Island, a bird sanctuary, where Peter has placed a mooring. He offered us the use of it for a night and invited us to his home for a visit and to use the wifi. Another couple, Annett and Phil, paddled out in their kayak, invited us to a delicious dinner and offered their wifi, shower, and laundry facilities. Both couples provide guest accommodations with lovely views of the inlet and, most likely, a visit from a kaka or two, the local parrots. They are nearly tame. One waltzed right into the house during dinner. We were told he helps himself to the basket of hazelnuts in the kitchen.

Halfmoon Bay: 46 53'.56S 168 09'.32E Fuel and water are available on the wharf. Let someone at the counter inside know you want fuel and they will call the owner of the service station to come and pump it for you from a barrel. You will have to go to the station to pay. They accept credit cards. If a fisherman is away you may be able to rent his mooring. An alternative is to anchor to the north of the wharf. Although it can get bouncy in this bay, some prefer the convenient location. Trash can be left at the bins at the head of the wharf but must be in a proper council trash bag. They are available at the Four Square market.

Stewart Island to Otago Yacht Club, Dunedin - 199 miles

A long channel leads into Dunedin and Otago Yacht Club is 15 miles up. At the entrance is Taiaroa Head, the only mainland albatross colony in the world. Before entering the channel, announce your arrival to Otago Harbour Control on VHF Ch 14 and request to wait for high water at Port Chalmers if necessary. Likewise, announce your intentions to leave. Large ships ply the channel and Harbour Control prefers to keep yachts out of their way. This can be tricky when timing the tide. We waited until we were out of the YC to announce our intentions to leave, offering to pull out of the channel when the tanker *Astrid* passed although it is plenty wide. He was not thrilled. Compared to the narrow busy channels of Holland and Antwerp where yachts are left to fearfully fend for themselves among the frightening freighters, this was almost comical.

Careys Bay/Port Chalmers: 45 48'.47S 170 37'.49E This is a good place to wait for high water to enter the Otago Yacht Club. It is about halfway up the channel just before the container port. Call on VHF Ch 14 for permission. You will most likely be instructed to tie to the wharf in the location marked 'emergency berth' just behind the fuel pumps. This is the only opportunity to buy fuel in the harbour. Have a look around the historic town with galleries and antique shops while you wait. Finally, there is mobile coverage by Vodaphone and Telecom.

Otago Yacht Club, Dunedin: 45 52'.31S 170 31'.61E Covered in *Cruising Guide South Island East Coast* and *Stewart Island Cruising Guide*. Contact Kevin Martin, YC manager on +64 (0)3 477 1255 or at oyc@xtra.co.nz. The water is shallow and subject to silting. Yachts drawing 2 meters should enter 2 hours either side of HW springs. Although we draw 2 meters, we blasted through a depth of 1.7 to leave at HW neaps but we don't recommend it. Our hearts were in our throats!

Confirm with Kevin that these instructions still apply: From the channel, just past SB mark 63 look into entrance of the YC. There is a white triangle on the third pile and another on land possibly partially obscured by trees and a little hard to spot. It is imperative that these two are lined up as you enter. Once inside stay to port and pass the row of yachts along the fairway as closely as possible until you find the boat you are to raft up to on the other side. Have your long lines accessible as they will likely be needed for added security in high winds. We often saw 30 knots, including during our arrival, a nerve-wracking experience to be sure. But, Kevin and two others were waiting to take our lines.

This is definitely a yacht club and not a marina, but the friendly and helpful members warmly welcome visitors. The man on the boat we rafted to drove us up to Signal Hill Lookout for a

marvelous view of the city, harbour and channel, and across to the Otago Peninsula. Toilets, showers and a washer and dryer occupy a small, tired building and some afternoons Kevin opens up the new club house for drinks in the bar. There is no internet service or wifi. Russell Coutts learned to race at the Otago YC. While in high school during the early 1970s he was asked his ambition. His reply, "I'd like to go to the America's Cup" was met with laughter. Recently he said, "For our country to sail in that event was roughly equivalent to us putting a man on the moon."

It's a 20 minute walk to the Octagon, the city center where you'll pass both Countdown and New World supermarkets on Cumberland Street. The public library has free internet access on the first two floors or you can buy a dongle at the Telecom shop on the nearby corner. Closer to the marina, the Otago Museum has a fabulous gallery depicting life and natural history from this region south to the sub-Antarctic islands. Here you can see how big those Royal Albatross you've seen soar by the yacht really are! The train station in Dunedin is a lovely building. From there you can catch the delightful old Taieri Gorge Railway for a spectacular ride up to Middlemarch, the start or finish, depending on direction, of the scenic Otago Central Rail Trail. We rode the trail last year and highly recommend it if you've got 3 or 4 extra days. Contact Steve at www.shebikeshebikes.co.nz to organize. His bikes are top quality and tuned perfectly.

Dunedin to Akaroa, Banks Peninsula - 202 miles

As Lyttelton was heavily damaged in the Christchurch earthquakes, Akaroa offers the best place to stop on the Banks Peninsula. It is a large, picturesque bay with several anchorages. Lots of seabirds – mollymawks, royal albatross, petrels as well as NZ fur seals and dolphins can be seen on the overnight passage. See *Cruising Guide South Island East Coast* for ideas of other anchorages along Banks Peninsula. Flea Bay, also on the southern side, looks really nice.

French Bay, Akaroa: 43 48'.32S 172 57'.68E Covered in *Cruising Guide South Island East Coast* and *Stewart Island Cruising Guide*. This is a safe anchorage in the prevailing northerly winds. Anchor north of the main wharf in 3-4 meters on mud. Diesel can be bought at the main wharf by arrangement with Black Cat dolphin/swimming trips. Tie your dinghy to the small floating pontoon on the south side of the wharf. Petrol and propane are found at the service station north of the wharf.

The Akaroa Sailing Club, down by the lighthouse, offers visiting yachties free showers, free use of a washer and dryer, water on their dock, and a pleasant place to relax. You can even race with them. At low water it is shallow around their dock so best to visit by dinghy. If nobody is around when you stop by, look for a member at the service station and he'll give you a key. He'll also take your used oil.

The tastefully touristy town of Akaroa has a plethora of shops scattered among the many fine restaurants along the shore. Peek into the eclectic hardware store. There is even a movie theater. For a brief time the French claimed Akaroa and the town still hums with a Gallic accent. The streets are 'rues' and French inspired meals are as common as fish and chips.

Cruise ships bound for Christchurch anchor here now that they can't get into Lyttelton. Buses run several times a day into Christchurch. Hector's dolphins, the smallest in the world, live in the bay and often approach slow moving boats. Keep an eye out for their little Mickey Mouse ear looking fins as you go back and forth from the Akaroa Sailing Club. They don't porpoise out of the water like bottlenose, rather they move smoothly along.

Akaroa to Napier - 472 miles

Allow some time for a weather window to make this passage across the notoriously rough Cook Strait. Some yachts choose to visit Picton and the Marlborough Sounds, and if you've got plenty of time we certainly recommend it. As we'd been there before, we took the straighter shot up to the North Island. We had no guidebook coverage for the west coast of North Island south of the Hauraki Gulf, but found information about marinas in Napier in *the Boaties Book 2011/2012*, a free booklet we were given by customs upon arrival in NZ.

Napier Sailing Club: 39 29'.02S 176 53'.52E A pleasant yacht club and marina adjacent to a bustling quayside of restaurants and bars. A supermarket and other shops are nearby. Free showers, laundry facilities and wifi are available at the club house. Call +64 (0)6 835 3811 or email Napiersail@xtra.co.nz for a berth. Short-term visitors tie along the dock in front of red-roofed club house where a bit of current runs. Take care to line up the green sector light when entering the channel as the water is very shallow in most places. Be extra careful if arriving at night - the white lights on fishing boats moored along the wall are sometimes confused with the sector light.

Large parts of Napier were destroyed by an earthquake or the fires that followed so it was rebuilt in the Art Deco style of the day. On many buildings Maori symbols were used along with the easily recognizable curves and blocks. It is a pretty city to explore by foot or bus and a convenient base from which to tour the Hawke's Bay wine country.

Napier to Tiritiri Matangi, Hauraki Gulf, near Auckland - 441 miles

Tiritiri Matangi: 36 36'.23S 174 52'.89E A predator free bird sanctuary where several tracks meander around the island under the forest canopy. Melodic birdsongs fill the air as rare and common birds flit about. Here and there benches are placed where you can rest and watch. A tame takahe named Greg wanders around outside the gift shop looking for handouts but a human escort ensures he receives none. It is a short ferry ride from Gulf Harbour 5k away and once it leaves, those in the anchorage have the island to themselves except for a handful of volunteers.

Gulf Harbour: 36 37'.33S 174 47'.29E A large, full-service marina in a planned community north of Auckland in the Hauraki Gulf. There are excellent technical services and haul-out facilities, a laundry room, free showers and a café. More restaurants, a shop selling high quality meat, fruit and veggies, another with general groceries and a liquor store are a 10 minute walk. It is a 5k walk into Manly, the closest place to find a money machine or pharmacy. The Local Café there has delicious food. Buses run every 30 minutes to Manly and to the shopping plaza in Whangaparoa where there is a large Countdown, and beyond.

Mansion House Bay, Bon Accord Anchorage, Kawau Island: 36 25'.65S 174 49'.11E

Covered in *Hauraki Gulf Boating Atlas*. 18 miles from Gulf Harbour, this is a safe and quiet anchorage beyond a former governor's mansion with lovely grounds. Part of the Hauraki Gulf Maritime Park, the tracks on the island are free for public use. The governor collected animals and we saw a wild wallaby, a peacock, and several wekas.

Tutukaka Harbour: 35 36'.96S 174 32'.16E An all weather anchorage 56 miles from Mansion House Bay and about halfway between Auckland and the Bay of Islands. It's covered in *Northland Coast Boating Atlas*. The entrance of the harbour is narrow with rocks on either side so be sure to line up and follow the leading marks carefully. There is a white post behind a shorter red post. Anchor before or to the left of the island watching the depth. For a berth, call the marina on VHF Ch 04, +64 (0)9 434 3441, 027 281 5456 or email marina@tutuka.co.nz. There are a few restaurants bordering the harbour and dive operators are based here for the Poor Knight Islands. It is a nice walk out to the point.

Opuā Marina: 35 18'.89S 174 07'.33E 45 miles from Tutukaka. The loop is complete!

Jim and Katie Thomsen
Opuā, New Zealand
June 2012

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