

Fiords eyes only in NZ

Cruise into a cool, distant land

by CAMERON WILSON

OUT here in the Acheron Passage the windspeed is nine knots and the sea choppy enough to give those of us out on the for'ard deck of the *Milford Wanderer* a good spritz.

My cabin-mate Brian tells me it's his fifth time on Real Journeys' seven-day cruise through New Zealand's southern fiords. "It's become my annual holiday – the ship, the crew, these waterways ... there's nothing like this anywhere else in the world, so I keep coming back."

Having departed the day before from Deep Cove in Doubtful Sound, we'd motored 42km to the mouth of the fiord and the Tasman Sea, before turning south, hugging the coastline on an easy-rolling swell.

Now and then a wind-buffed royal albatross would wheel across the ship's bow, or a fur seal or little blue penguin pop up alongside.

Around 5pm, skipper Roydon had eased the ship into Breaksea Sound for our first overnight anchorage, where the six-person crew busied themselves dishing up roast pork and veg then blueberry cheesecake.

Last thing before an early bedtime, each of us (32 passengers) had examined the map laid under glass, and the route we'd be following over the next six days – the same one taken in 1773 by navigator James Cook. Confusingly, the New Zealand "sounds" really are fiords – the distinction being that sounds are flooded river valleys, while fiords are carved out by glaciers. There's more resonance to "Doubtful Sound" than "Doubtful Fiord", so those inapt names are here to stay.

Which is not what's on my mind, or on Brian's, as we step ashore for our first forest foray. Fiordland in winter is cold and wet, and every tree-root a potential trip-wire, during a 30-minute gumboot-sucking walk by Herrick Creek.

Several North American moose, gifted by US president Teddy Roosevelt, were released here in 1901, along with knucklehead notions about sparking interest in game hunting. It's years since an animal has been sighted, but Herrick Creek is still subject to the attentions of enthusiasts on their annual wild moose chase.

Heading south via the Acheron Passage once more, we soon reach Dusky Sound, well sheltered from the open ocean as we slip past tiny islets on water that's bathtub clear and barely rippled.

With the ship nestled between Pigeon and Parrot islands, we go ashore on Resolution Island, the largest in Fiordland at almost 50 sq km. The island was an early prototype (1894) for rescuing endangered birds such as the kakapo and kiwi.

Although not quite successful (predatory introduced stoats had made their way across from the mainland – no one imagined they might swim two kilometres), the



IN THE WAKE OF CAPTAIN COOK – Charting the route we will follow over the next six nights. Photo: John C Smith, www.photonz.net

experiment has since been refined and there are island sanctuaries dotted around NZ cleared of rats, possums, cats and stoats, where flightless birds can go about unmolested.

Puttering back to the ship in the tender, our nature guide Richard spies four rare Fiordland crested penguins, upright and dapper with their slicked-back yellow "eyebrows", in a tiny cave just above waterline.

Fourteen cameras are trained on them when a bottlenose dolphin breaks the surface nearby, followed by a dozen more. Southern Ocean dolphins have big bodies and small dorsal fins, the better to retain body heat, and these are huge compared to

their eastern Australia cousins.

What didn't quite work on Resolution Island is working on Anchor Island, home to 45 resettled kakapo parrots. After tricky tender landings on its rocky north shore, our group trudges single file for two hours along a boggy trail that's a test of concentration, agility and trekking poles.

No predators means more birds in general, and while the kakapo stay hidden, we see plenty of yellow-heads, robins and kaka parrots, and hear the calls, whistles and trills of other species.

Our well-earned lunch is parsnip curry soup, salads, smoked salmon and prosciutto and fresh-baked bread. Further provisioned with tea and brownies, we hover

CAPE YORK, GULF & KIMBERLEY TOURS



<p>7 DAY CAPE YORK FLY / DRIVE ACCOMMODATED TOUR</p> <p>\$ 3,450 per person twin share</p> <p>Cape York Accommodated Tour with ensuite rooms, outdoor breakfast and restaurant dinners. Fly to Thursday Island, visit Cape York, Fruitbat Falls, Bramwell, Musgrave, Weipa, Lakefield, Cooktown, Cape Trib. Fully Accommodated tour with restaurant meals, \$ 3695 pp twin share.</p>	<p>9 DAY GULF SAVANNAH ACCOMMODATED TOUR</p> <p>\$ 3,795 per person twin share</p> <p>9 Day Accommodated Tour from Cairns. Visit the limestone caves at Chillagoe and the Lava Tubes at Undara. Enjoy a sunset cruise at Karumba, explore Lawn Hill National Park. Travel on the Gulflander and Savannahlander trains, and cruise the majestic Cobbold Gorge.</p>
--	---

<p>12 DAY CAPE YORK OVERLAND CAMPING TOUR</p> <p>\$ 2,880 per person twin share</p> <p>Camping Tour from Cairns to Cape York, visit Cooktown, Lakefield, Iron Range, Weipa, Bramwell, Twin & Fruit Bat Falls, Cape York, Thursday Island. Accommodation upgrade available most nights.</p>	<p>7 DAY CAPE YORK FLY / DRIVE CAMPING TOUR</p> <p>\$ 2,645 per person twin share</p> <p>Camping Tour in our Permanent Camps. Fly Cairns to Thursday Island. Includes Cape York, Bramwell, Fruit Bat Falls, Weipa, Musgrave, Lakefield, Cooktown and Cape Tribulation.</p>
---	---

<p>15 DAY KIMBERLEY CAMPING TOUR</p> <p>\$ 4,295 per person twin share</p> <p>Tour includes Gibb River Road, Kununurra, Lake Argyle, Mitchell Plateau, Bungles, Tunnel Creek, El Questro, Windjana & Geikie Gorge. Tours depart from Darwin or Broome. Limited seats available!</p>	<p>14 DAY CAIRNS TO DARWIN Camping \$ 3,999 pp twin/sh Accommodated \$ 5,250 pp twin/sh</p> <p>Tour includes Undara, Karumba Sunset Cruise, Lawn Hill, Lorella Springs, Lost City, Mataranka, Katherine Gorge, Kakadu, Gunlom Falls, Yellow Waters & Litchfield NP. Limited seats available!</p>
--	--

<p>15 DAY BROOME TO PERTH ACCOMMODATED TOUR</p> <p>\$ 5,899 per person twin share</p> <p>Explore the West Coast of Australia, visit 80 Mile Beach, Karijini, Tom Price, Coral Bay, Exmouth, Ningaloo Reef, Shark Bay, Monkey Mia. Explore Kalbarri NP, Natures Window, Z-Bend Gorge and the magnificent Pinnacles. Ensuites every night!</p>	<p>16 DAY PERTH TO ADELAIDE ACCOMMODATED TOUR</p> <p>\$ 5,999 per person twin share</p> <p>Explore the South West Corner of Australia, spectacular Tomdurrup National Park, Margaret River, Stirling Ranges, Esperance and Albany. Visit the Super Pit at Kalgoorlie, travel the Nullarbor Plain. Discover Eyre Peninsula, Streaky, Venus, Coffin Bay, Port Lincoln. Ensuites every night. Limited seats available!</p>
---	--

CALL HERITAGE TOURS ON 1800 77 55 33

FOR A FREE COLOUR BROCHURE

Email: info@heritagetours.com.au Web: www.heritagetours.com.au PO BOX 3059 CAIRNS QLD 4870 ABN: 160 65 788 070

Like us on Facebook @heritagetour Cairns

The 32nd Anniversary of CTS Australia

<p>Japan Cherry Blossom</p> <p>Tokyo, Osaka, Kyoto, Toyohashi, Hakone</p> <p>2018 Departure: 29 Mar, 29 Mar, 30 Mar, 31 Mar</p> <p>10 Days \$3200 from including Airfare & Taxes</p>	<p>The Red Experience Tour</p> <p>Beijing, Moscow, St Petersburg</p> <p>2018 Departure: 14 May</p> <p>13 Days \$3399 including Airfare & Taxes</p>
<p>Wonders of China</p> <p>Beijing, Yichang, Yangtze River, Chongqing, Shanghai</p> <p>2018 Departure: 21 Mar, 02 May</p> <p>12 Days \$1799 including Airfare & Taxes</p>	<p>India Golden Triangle SIC Tour</p> <p>Delhi, Agra, Jaipur</p> <p>2018 Departure: 06 Mar</p> <p>8 Days \$1799 including Airfare & Taxes</p>
	<p>Vietnam Highlights with Cambodia</p> <p>Hanoi, Ho Long, Hoi An, Sai Gon, Cai Be, Can Tho, Cu Chi, Phnom Penh, Siem Reap</p> <p>2018 Departure: 5 May</p> <p>17 Days \$2999 including Airfare & Taxes</p>

Call 1300 764 224 or 1800 999 689 www.chinatour.com.au
or Email: ctstours@chinatour.com.au

Head office: Level 1, Suite 3 – 7, 650 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000 * Airport taxes and fuel surcharges are subject to change without prior notice. Advertised prices based on low season. Seasonal surcharges apply. Prices and availability correct as at Feb 2017 are subject to change. Tour Details and booking conditions as per CTS Booking Form on our website.
 Retail office: Shop 2, 743 George Street, Sydney NSW 2000

www.asiadiscoverytours.com.au

ADT ASIA DISCOVERY TOURS ATAS

* Conditions apply to all our special offers

<p>14 Day Russia Waterways Tour (Special)</p> <p>*\$4,980, now fr. \$4,580 departing 13/07 & 24/08/18</p> <p>On a 4 star deluxe Russia cruise ship from St. Petersburg to Moscow.</p>	<p>17 Day South Korea, Taiwan, Hong Kong & Macau</p> <p>*\$6,480, now fr. \$4,980 departing 11/05/18</p> <p>flying Cathay Pacific Airways, including 6 days in South Korea, 6 days in Taiwan & 5 days in Hong Kong & Macau.</p>
<p>13 Day Vietnam Holiday Special Tour (Superb special)</p> <p>*\$3,480, now Fr. \$2,380 departing 15/03 & 19/04/18</p> <p>covering the must-see highlights in Vietnam from North to South.</p>	<p>13 Day China Special with Majestic Yangtze</p> <p>Fr. \$3,240, now \$2,490 departing 24/04 & 22/05/18</p> <p>including Shanghai, Wuhan, Yangtze River Cruise (balcony cabin on 5 star ship), Chongqing (Panda House), Xian & Beijing.</p>
<p>13 Day Japan Cherry Blossom Tour 2018</p> <p>*\$6,980, now \$5,480 departing 05/04/2018</p> <p>including Tokyo, Hakone, Mt. Fuji, Takeyama, Nara, Kyoto, Hiroshima & Osaka.</p>	<p>15 Day Vietnam and Cambodia Highlights</p> <p>*\$3,980, now Fr. \$3,580 dept monthly from Feb. to Nov. 2018</p> <p>including 10 days in Vietnam & 4 days in Cambodia.</p>
<p>23 Day China Silk Road & Russia Waterways</p> <p>*\$6,980, now \$6,380 departing 14/05 & 27/08/2018</p> <p>including 11 day China Silk Road & 12 day Russia Volga River cruise.</p>	<p>20 Day Best of Balkan Tour (Special)</p> <p>*\$7,680 now \$7,380 departing 14/04 & 08/09/2018</p> <p>including Croatia, Slovenia, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Albania, Macedonia, Bulgaria and Serbia.</p>
<p>23 Day Spain, Portugal & Morocco Vista</p> <p>*\$6,980, now \$5,380 departing 11/05/2018</p> <p>including many must-see highlights in Spain, Portugal & Morocco.</p>	<p>14 Day Panoramic Sri Lanka Tour</p> <p>*\$4,980, now fr. \$3,780 dept monthly until Dec. 2018</p> <p>including Colombo, Negombo, Anuradhapura, Habaran, Kandy & Nuwara Eliya.</p>

All prices include airfare, airport tax and fuel surcharge (subject to change), transfers & transport, most meals, 4 or 5* hotels, 5* cruise ship for China Yangtze, sightseeing with admission & English-speaking guide.

Brochures Free **1300 789 252 (02) 9267 7699**