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HEADING:

Seven Days in the Marlborough Sounds

(DEK) The Marlborough Sounds are one of New Zealand’s best-kept secrets. Located at the top of the South Island, these Sounds encompass 20 percent of New Zealand’s total coastline. Deep seas reach like ribbons between the hills, it’s a maze of waterways dotted with small bays and tiny Sounds.

The waterways consist of three large Sounds – Queen Charlotte Sound, Kenepuru Sound and the Pelorus Sound. The Marlborough Sounds have abundant indigenous forest home to native wildlife, while the deep waters are rich with varieties of dolphins and seals. Two of New Zealand’s most tasty treats come from the Marlborough region, the green lipped mussel and sauvignon blanc wine. Of the 550 mussel farms on more than 4,500 hectares, most are farmed in the Marlborough Sounds. The Marlborough wine region is inland and there are more than 55 wineries for crew and guests to visit and taste the famous Marlborough sauvignon blanc.

DAY 1: PICTON / TAWA BAY

Picton, a small harbor-side township at the top of the South Island, is appropriately termed “the gateway to the Marlborough Sounds.” This is the ideal spot for a yacht to provision and pick up guests who can fly in directly from Auckland, Wellington or Christchurch international airports to the Blenheim Airport, 20 minutes from the marina. If guests wanted to start their adventure in an outlying area like D’Urville Island, for example, they could fly by helicopter to join the yacht. After sampling some of the local wines, collect the guests and leave to explore

the 1,760 kilometers of coastline – an amazing fusion of land, sheltered waterways and bush in the sunniest climate of the country.

After departing Picton Marina, cruise down Queen Charlotte Sound, sightseeing among the numerous bays and inlets before anchoring in Tawa Bay in the Endeavour Inlet. This is a great spot for an afternoon kayak exploration. Many of the place names in this region, like Endeavour Inlet and Ships Cove, reveal a connection to Captain Cook, who discovered New Zealand and used the Sounds as a base from which to explore the Southern Ocean.

DAY 2: SHIPS COVE / KETU BAY

Guests may hike a stretch of one of New Zealand's great walks – the Queen Charlotte Track from Resolution Bay to Ships Cove, where Captain Cook set up a camp on his voyages to New Zealand. Serve your guests a designer picnic lunch here as they enjoy observing various local birds, oyster catchers, paradise shell ducks and pied shags. Guests may also attract and interact with the weka, a flightless native bird with a very curious nature. After lunch, re-board the yacht and leave Queen Charlotte Sound to head around Cape Jackson and proceed through Allen Strait into Forsyth Bay, anchoring for the night in Ketu Bay.

DAY 3: TENNYSON INLET

Cruise down the Pelorus Sound – which is like a long, drowned valley extending some 31 miles inland – while keeping an eye out for dolphins and mussel farms. Head to Tennyson Inlet and an area called “World's End,” where three inlets terminate. At the head of the inlet is a well-kept trail that provides an invigorating hour-and-a-half climb through the forest to a ridge overlooking Nydia Bay to the south – perhaps a good idea for walking off a decadent lunch.

DAY 4: STEPHENS ISLAND / D'URVILLE ISLAND

In the morning, continue back up the Popoure Reach to the Waitata Reach in the Pelorus Sound, passing the wildlife sanctuaries of the Chetwood Islands and the Tiro Islands. Go through Stephens Passage between D'Urville Island and Stephens Island, which has a lighthouse, and is a wildlife sanctuary and home to the tuatara, a type of gecko native to New Zealand and only found naturally on Stephens Island. Anchor for the night in Port Hardy, a natural harbor on D'Urville Island, which is the eighth largest island in New Zealand and is named after a French explorer who was a specialist in botany and linguistics.

DAY 5: GREVILL HARBOUR / GUARD’S BAY

After leaving the spectacular Port Hardy, proceed down the rugged coastline of D’Urville Island, perhaps taking the time to stop in for lunch in Grevill Harbour before continuing on to Current Basin and passing through the narrows of French Pass. The water in French Pass moves along at eight knots at each tide; several vortices occur near this passage, which D’Urville investigated and incurred some damage to his ship. Sail on around Clay Point, then Culdaff Point into Guard’s Bay to anchor in what is locally known as the “Punt Rails.” Pull out the water toys here for the guests.

DAY 6: MOTUARA ISLAND / BAY OF MANY COVES

You can then retrace your course back around Alligator Head, and if desired, call into Port Gore where *Mikhail Lermontov*, the biggest cruise ship to sink since *Titanic*, is open for diving. Cruise on to Cape Jackson and return to the Queen Charlotte Sound and anchor at Motuara Island, famous for its native birds and wild penguins. The island, a bird sanctuary, offers an interesting walk to a lookout platform atop the island, which provides a panoramic 360-degree view of the sound, including Cook Strait. Next door to Motuara Island is Long Island, a marine reserve with awesome diving and snorkeling. Anchor the night in the Bay Of Many Coves, which has an excellent resort/restaurant if the guests choose to have a meal ashore. Here the chef prepares the menu daily to reflect local and seasonal foods, using seafood available in Marlborough. The region produces a fine harvest – from green lipped mussels and plump, succulent scallops to cherries, stone fruits, olives and grapes. There is also an extensive cellar list that highlights some of New Zealand’s best vintage wines and most famous labels.

DAY 7: THE BROTHERS ISLANDS / TORY CHANNEL / LOCHMARA BAY

Sail to the head of the Queen Charlotte Sound to Cape Koamaru, into Cook Strait and past The Brothers Islands, another wildlife sanctuary. The islands are very rugged with a prominent lighthouse on top and buildings that used to house the families who ran the light before it was automated. This is a good place to fish for one of New Zealand’s best fish – the blue cod. Cruise down the rugged coastline and enter Tory Channel, where the inter-island ferries enter and depart when traveling to and from the North Island. Guests can visit one of New Zealand’s first whaling stations here, which are perfectly preserved. Finally, cruise leisurely back down the sound to Lochmara Bay, where the yacht can moor for guest departure and transport to Picton Marina.

Note: All anchorages mentioned throughout are suitable for water sports, such as waterskiing, towing inflatables, kayaking, snorkeling/scuba diving and swimming.

Know Before You Go

Entry requirements

There are many entry requirements for yachts entering New Zealand that captains and crew need to be aware of – from customs and immigration, agriculture and fisheries to tax and maritime regulations. The best place to source arrival information and entry requirements is: www.nzmarine.com/nz_entry.php. This page also provides links to further information.

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