



Marlborough Sounds

The Marlborough Sounds are undeniably picturesque, a stimulating filigree of bays, inlets, islands and peninsulas rising abruptly from the water to rugged, lush green wilderness and open farmland. Large parts are only accessible by sea, which also provides the ideal vantage point for witnessing its splendour. The area is part working farms, including salmon or mussel farms, and part given over to some fifty-odd reserve areas – a mixture of islands, sections of coast and land-bound tracts.



The Marlborough Sounds and Queen Charlotte Track, at the top of the South Island, is fast becoming the place of choice for visitors looking for wilderness and adventure - yet with all the comforts! The Sounds' nexus, Picton, is the jumping-off point for Queen Charlotte Sound where cruises and water taxis provide access to the undemanding, varied and beautifully scenic Queen Charlotte Track

History - According to Maori tradition, the South Island is the canoe of Aoraki. Its sunken prow forms Queen Charlotte Sound/Totaranui and Pelorus Sound/Te Hoiere. In earlier times, the sounds provided good shelter and food for Maori people. To avoid travelling out into the open sea to get from one sound to another, they carried their waka/canoes over low saddles.

European history of the area is considered to start with Captain Cook's visit to the sounds in the 1770s, discovering a plant (Cooks scurvy grass) high in vitamin C which helped to cure scurvy amongst his crew. On Motuara Island, Cook also proclaimed British sovereignty over the South Island. Some parts of the sounds also later developed a significant whaling history, and much of the sounds was (thinly) settled by European farmers in the late 19th and early 20th century.

Early Maori spoke of two different legends of the formation of the Marlborough Sounds and New Zealand.

One tells how Kupe, the Maori warrior god, fought with a giant octopus in the Pacific Ocean. As the battle raged, the octopus reached out with its tentacles and grasped at nearby land, gouging out all the intricate bays and coves of the Marlborough Sounds. Kupe finally overcame and slew the octopus and cut out its eyes and threw them into the sea nearby - today these are the Brothers Islands near the entrance to Cook Strait.

The other speaks of Maori gods who came down from the heavens in a great canoe and then found themselves unable to return. The canoe capsized and its keel rose to form the Southern Alps while its prow shattered and sank, its ridges becoming the network of waterways known today as the Marlborough Sounds.

Geologists tell us the Marlborough Sounds are a network of sunken river valleys, where the land has slowly sunk and the water level has risen, flooding a vast area over millions of years. This intricate land mass is not only spectacular but unique in New Zealand as it is the only large land area that is still sinking into the sea. Three main bodies of water make up the Sounds - Queen Charlotte, Kenepuru and Pelorus - and a number of islands are dotted throughout its expanse.

Maori have inhabited New Zealand for more than 1000 years and it is believed that they have had a presence in this area since that time. Mobility was crucial during this early existence as settlement followed food source. There were many small settlements throughout the Marlborough Sounds and a number of different iwi (tribes) have affiliations to this place.

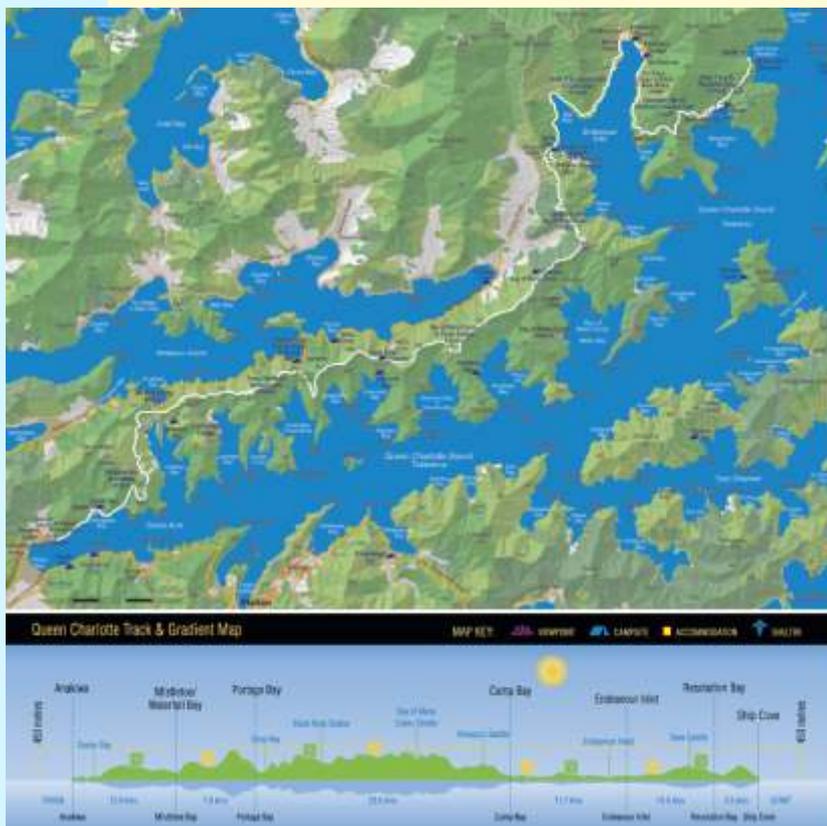


Queen Charlotte Sound is the easternmost of the main sounds of the Marlborough Sounds, in New Zealand's South Island. It is, like the other sounds, a drowned river valley (or ria), and like the majority of its neighbours it runs southwest to northeast before joining Cook Strait.

The town of Picton, the northern terminus of the South Island's railway and State Highway networks, lies near the head of the Sound. Other settlements by the sound are small and isolated - often simply individual properties. Due to the rugged nature of the coast, for many of these access is by boat only.

To the east of the sound lie Arapawa Island and Tory Channel. Interisland ferries use Tory Channel and Queen Charlotte Sound on their journeys between Picton and Wellington in the North Island.

Parallel to Queen Charlotte Sound to the northwest lies Kenepuru Sound, an arm of Pelorus Sound, Marlborough's other main sound. Some of the small side arms of the two sounds are only hundreds of metres apart, but are separated by a steep serrated range of hills. Not surprisingly, one of the settlements on this stretch of coast is called Portage, named for the simplest method of passing between the two sounds.



The Marlborough Sounds' nexus, Picton, is the jumping-off point for Queen Charlotte Sound where local companies provide access to the undemanding, varied and scenic Queen Charlotte Track. Heading west, Queen Charlotte Drive winds precipitously to the small community of Havelock, New Zealand's green-lipped mussel capital, before exploring the spectacular vistas of Pelorus Sound and perhaps taking the back roads or a boat to view the rich swirling waters of French Pass.

Stretching between the Queen Charlotte and Kenepuru Sound is the Queen Charlotte Track. A 70km track renowned for its stunning views and contrasting landscape, historical landmarks and wonderful variety of native bush and wildlife.



It was from a hill on Arapawa Island in 1770 that Captain James Cook first saw the sea passage from the Pacific Ocean to the Tasman Sea, which was named Cook Strait. Captain Cook sheltered in Queen Charlotte Sound during each of his three voyages of exploration at various points.

The area was a base for whaling throughout the 19th and early 20th centuries, notably at Perano Head on Arapawa Island.

Queen Charlotte Sound has calm water and is popular for sailing - a marked contrast to the notorious waters of Cook Strait.

