

VISITING PIOPIOTAHİ/MILFORD SOUND MARINE RESERVE

NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS



Photo: S. Hayes

Key information




Piopiotahi (Milford Sound) is one of our most scenic and spectacular marine reserves both above and below the water.

The steep sides of Piopiotahi/Milford Sound were carved out by glaciers thousands of years ago. This breath-taking, unique marine environment with its dark, deep waters, surrounded by huge rock faces and peaks, is a very popular international tourist attraction. The rock walls host an amazing range of deep water species. This is the only location in our marine reserves where you can see black and red coral.

This reserve was established in 1993 by a group of concerned local fishermen. It is 16 km long and covers an area of 690 hectares. It is situated along the northern side of the fiord and covers a range of habitats.

For more information and a map of this reserve, see:  www.doc.govt.nz/piopiotahi-marine-reserve.

For more information about Fiordland's network of marine reserves, see:  www.doc.govt.nz/fiordland-marine-reserves-brochure.



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Piopiotahi/Milford Sound Marine Reserve

VISITING MARINE RESERVES: NOTES FOR SCHOOLS AND EDUCATORS

Visitor facilities and parking

There are public toilets at Milford Sound. You can purchase refreshments and drinking water at the cafes. Information displays can be found at the Discover Milford Sound Information Centre, at the end of Milford Sound Highway.

Cruises and scenic flights can be booked from Milford Sound.


Take a boat trip or visit the underwater observatory to experience the fiord and see black coral and other marine species.

For a map of the reserve, see:  www.doc.govt.nz/piopiotahi-marine-reserve.


Suggested self-guided activities for school groups


Milford Discovery Centre and Underwater Observatory

Visit the underwater observatory in Harrison's Cove (within the marine reserve) and descend under the water, without getting wet, to see the strange deepwater creatures that live in the fiords. You may even see a shark or stingray glide past. The observatory has many facilities and educational information displays. Here you can learn about the geology, history, culture and wildlife of Milford Sound.


 www.southerndiscoveries.co.nz/milford-sound/milford-discovery-centre-underwater-observatory.

Litter survey


Perform a litter survey at Milford Sound to see what impact people have on this reserve. See page 9 of the DOC *Habitat Heroes: Explore your local marine environment* resource for instructions:  www.doc.govt.nz/habitat-heroes-marine-resource.pdf.

Survey sheets and guidance for beach clean-ups and litter audits are available at  www.loveyourcoast.org.nz/learn (Love Your Coast/Sustainable Coastlines).

Short walk

- **Lady Bowen Falls Walk (30 mins):** Take a short, affordable boat trip across the basin and then walk up to the 162 m Lady Bowen Falls, which have only recently been re-opened.
- See  www.doc.govt.nz/milfordroad for other walks in the area.

Health and safety considerations

- Fiordland is well known for its high rainfall so make sure that all visitors have a good raincoat.
- Snorkelling or swimming in the marine reserve is not recommended for students. The water is very cold and dark so proper exposure protection is necessary.
- Teachers should also consider general risk management around water and rock shelves. See also general health and safety considerations for schools in marine environments:  *Activity 8: Visiting Marine Reserves*.

Please note: These notes are not a substitute for school safety planning.

Staff, students and the Board of Trustees of a school will need to consider other factors before conducting a visit outside the school and follow school procedures. Identifying and managing risks before the trip is essential, therefore a prior site visit is highly recommended.




Habitats and species in the reserve


Underwater habitats in this reserve include: deep muddy fiord basin, deep reef and a small section of shallow rock wall along the shore.


The steep rock wall on the inner northern side of Piopiotahi/Milford Sound hosts a range of deep water invertebrates such as encrusting tubeworms, soft corals, black coral, sponges, colonial sea squirts, and anemones.

Heavy rainfall washes tannins from the leaf litter of the steep forested slopes which form a dark freshwater surface layer. This significantly reduces light penetration to the waters below, allowing species which would usually live in deeper waters, such as red coral/punga kura, black coral and sea pens, to be seen in easily diveable depths.

Other species which can be seen in this rich and unique environment include butterfly perch/oia, sea perch/pūaihakarua, tiger shells, urchins/kina, Jason's nudibranch, snakestars, rock cod/taipua and dogfish/mango tara. Marine mammals also inhabit the fiords including New Zealand fur seals/kekeno and a resident population of bottlenose dolphins/aihe. See:  www.doc.govt.nz/piopiotahi-video for more information about species and habitats in this reserve.

Other education experiences

A range of boat cruises is available at Milford Sound. For options see:  www.fiordland.org.nz/activities-and-tracks/boat-cruises.

Information on other activities and walks in the area is available at:  www.doc.govt.nz/milfordroad.

PROTECT OUR MARINE RESERVES

They are special places that protect the species and habitats within them.

- No fishing of any kind
- Don't take or kill marine life
- Don't remove or disturb any marine life or materials
- Don't feed fish – it disturbs their natural behaviour
- Take care when anchoring to avoid damaging the sea floor
- Call **0800 DOC HOT** (0800 362 468) to report any illegal activity.

