

**NEW ZEALAND'S  
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**CRAIG POTTON**

craig potton publishing

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*Maud Moreland came to New Zealand from England in the early 1900s to join her brother, the Reverend CH Moreland, who was then the principal of Christ's College in Christchurch.*

*In 1906 she and her brother undertook a remarkable five-week trip on horseback, from Christchurch over Arthur's Pass, down through South Westland, over Haast Pass and then home to Canterbury. Her account of the trip was subsequently published in a book Through South Westland, from which the following extracts have been taken.*

*They have been selected as an introduction to New Zealand's Wild Places because they so eloquently capture the sense of wonder and delight that can be had from encountering New Zealand's natural world. Though over 100 years have passed since Maud Moreland completed her journey, these wild places are still to be found in New Zealand, and are still just as extraordinary. It is my hope that New Zealand's Wild Places can serve as a reminder of, and an inspiration for your own encounters with the wild places of our country.*

Craig Potton

Out of the town and along the dusty white road lined with trim houses, and gardens aglow with colour: on to country roads less dusty and with fewer and fewer houses, we rode forth one morning. It was six o'clock. The road-side herbage was drenched with dew. A grey-blue haze lay all over the wide Canterbury plains which seemed to stretch away to the farthest horizon, tall gum trees and fir plantations round the homesteads breaking the monotony of their flatness. Everywhere the crops were ripening to harvest; another week's sunshine and the wheatfields that waved all golden now would be cut. Fruit ripened in the orchards, and summer was at its height.

It was a blue day. All objects, near and far, were tinged with blue under the New Zealand sky, and as the sun got hotter, everything shimmered and trembled in the heat.

We breakfasted at a wayside inn, and rode on again, and when it grew unbearably hot we sought shelter at a little sun-baked place called Kirwee: just a few houses beside the inn, and a cabin of a railway station alongside the road—for railways and roads share the same wide tracks in the plains. Here we dawdled away the mid-day hours till teatime, and then as a little breeze sprang up we started to finish the forty-two miles to Mt. Torlesse.

The mountains had come into sight now. At first blue and featureless, then blacker and browner, the deeper valleys like splashes of purple. The first sight of their snowy tops made one forget the plains and the dusty road; our spirits rose, and we cantered fast along the wide, grassy margin. But we had lingered too long, and as we rode over an endlessly straight stretch, marked by clumps of black fir trees at regular intervals, the sudden-falling dusk came about us. The plain spread like a tawny sea to the foot-hills pushing out their purple headlands in cape and promontory:

Darkly, like an armèd host  
Seen afar against the blue  
Rise the hills, and yellow-grey  
Sleeps the plain in cove and bay,  
Like a shining sea that dreams  
Round a silent coast.

Beyond lay a dead-white wall—a ghostly barrier of snow—between two purple ranges. All nearer objects became black and indistinct. Suddenly, behind the dead-white wall an orange light grew up, palpitating up and up past the zenith, till the night clouds overhead blazed out in gold and orange as it caught their edges. We watched it spread from bank to bank. Then came another change. The gold turned rosy red, then crimson, deeper and deeper, till all the clouds were blood-red, and we rode on in a darkening world, our eyes fixed on the glory above. It passed as suddenly as it came, and nought was left but a clear green streak of sky above the snow to show whence the glory had come; and then suddenly we realized it was dark, that we were tired, and the night grown chilly, and if we meant to arrive in any decent time that night, we must bestir ourselves. There were still seven miles to do, but we were sure of our welcome, no matter at what untimely hour we arrived. At last in the dusk we rode up to the

hospitable door, and the master of Mt. Torlesse met us with a hearty greeting and bustled off the horses... After a day's rest we were rattled up betimes, and by four a.m. the Master of Torlesse was supplying our wants with hot coffee, and lecturing us on straps and the proper rolling up of our kit; and then rode with us the first three or four miles, to put us on our way. The Torlesse range lay grey and lifeless beyond the green paddocks and the crops round the homestead, and as we got among the stony hills the mist rolled down, alternating with bursts of sunshine. Everywhere stony rivers ran at the bottom of dreary valleys, with drearier hills rising up to stonier mountains, none over 6,000 feet, and all desolate. And when the afternoon came on, the rain came too, and we rode with heads down against a tearing south-west storm, that deluged us with sheets of water. Those were forty-four long miles...

But all things come to an end, and we saw the welcome end-gable of the Bealey Hotel on a rise above us...

We made up our minds to go on next day, and, fortunately for us, the weather proved fine.

We crossed the Waimakariri in safety, getting a beautiful view of snow mountains and glaciers at the head of the wide valley—a couple of miles, perhaps, across...

Once across, we rode up the Bealey. The gorge wound among steep mountains clothed in great part with the southern beech; waterfalls were frequent, and fine views of snow-capped ranges. Then we got to the divide called Arthur's Pass where are three small tarns lying on a mass of old moraine, which seems to fill the space between two parallel ranges. From one side of this the waters flow east, and from the other west. All this alpine meadow was beautiful with flowers: giant celmisias with satiny-white petals like enormous daisies, mingled with snow-white gentians, and the wonder of the Alps—the mountain lily [*Ranunculus lyallii*]. It is a pure white kingcup with golden centre, the leaves as large as saucers, and often the flowers are two or three inches across. As usual in the New Zealand mountains, most flowers were white. The plants here are specially interesting, because of the meeting of outliers from east and west. To a very large extent the western species do not grow on the east, except in certain places such as the Kaikouras, where the forest is very like a western forest. Farther south still, tree-ferns and pines occur; but, speaking broadly, the ranges on the east have beech forest, while the west has pine forest and a sub-tropical flora of its own.

The road zig-zagged in loops down a steep descent above a torrent. Bare, forbidding rocks and screens of loose stones ran up on one side, and presently we arrived at a place where they had all run down in a terrific rock-slide. The road was gone. A forlorn coach and one or two

buggies had been abandoned there, but already a narrow track was scratched across the face of the débris. We led the horses over the sliding mass, and gained the undamaged road beyond. The road-menders told us of the violence of yesterday's storm which had wrecked the road, snapping off great forest trees, and strewing the track with wreckage. When we arrived at the Otira we found matters were in an even more congested state than at the Bealey. And still the people arrived! Not a bed or a towel was to be had, and at least sixty had slept there that night!

That was a glorious morning when we set out. The more sombre eastern colouring had given place to vivid greens; pine forest and ferns took the place of beech; above the gorge the snow peaks gleamed pure and sharp against the intense blue of the sky: it was enough to make the heart rejoice. And very joyous we were, as we rode down that sun-flecked woodland way, where the pinky track before us lay all mottled and barred with violet shadows. Bend after bend caught the morning sun as it poured a flood of golden light on tree-fern and unfamiliar foliage. Sometimes between the trees one caught sight of a snowy summit with mauve shadows on the snow, at the end of a purplish-blue vista. It was a fairyland of light and shade on dancing leaves, and on one side the river kept us company all the way: now swift and silent, eddying in blue-green streams, now tumbling over rocks in snowy foam.

Later I saw grander and more beautiful places, but the Otira taught me to love the road, wandering on and on beneath the trees, with its play of light and shade, its mystery and silence. The forest spoke then in an unknown tongue, but it was then I first heard its voice.

... We strolled away in the afternoon to see Lake Ianthe, being told it was but three-and-a-half miles off; but it seemed nearer five. At any rate it was well worth the walk. The road wound down to it through magnificent forest, where the tree-ferns expanded glorious fronds fifteen or twenty feet long, and everywhere grew a wealth of exquisite greenery. Strange new forms—new at least to our eyes—constantly attracted the attention. What the forest lacks in brilliancy of flowers, it gains in its wonderful variety of form. Except the ratas and a red honeysuckle, most of the flowers are white, or green and inconspicuous; but their perfumes are there, and every shade of green and gold and brown. Between the tall shafts of the trees we caught glimpses of a shining water, and we made our way to the shore and sat there entranced. The reflections were perfect: every leaf and twig, mountain summit, and sunset cloud lay there, as in a great looking-glass.

The snows of the distant Alps were flushing rosy-pink above the dark hills, clothed always

to their tops with trees. And as we sat and watched, the water at our feet became golden with the reflection of the rosy cloudlets floating in it. Colours like the inside of a pearl-shell blended, and faded, and the evening mists crept over all, and we turned back down the darkening forest aisles. And as we went, the moonlight laid black bars across the road, and touched the giant ferns with silver, and every sound was hushed...

... From this place, named the Forks, we had a choice of ways—either to continue to the coast, visiting Okarito on its lagoon—one of the last nesting-places in the South Island of the white crane [or rather heron (*Herodias timoriensis*)]—or to turn inland along the Southern Alps. The road leads by Mapourika, most beautiful perhaps of New Zealand lakes, lying below the jagged peaks of the Minarets. Beyond, the great Franz Josef glacier winds down from those homeless wastes of ice and snow, where the Minarets and Mount Dela Bêche rear up like islands from the white expanse of the Tasman and adjoining glaciers. From their summits one looks, on the one hand across the eastern plains, and on the other over this green Western land of streams and forests, as Moses looked from Pisgah. Verily it is a Promised Land, but as yet the inheritance has not been wholly entered upon.

Mapourika is beautiful at all times in that wonderful setting of forest and mountain, but when the sunset flush on the peaks above is mirrored in the windless lake, and every tree and fern springs from its own double along the shore, I think it comes very near being Paradise...

The bad weather had spent itself, and as we got ready early next morning, a cloudless sky above the snow-peaks betokened a glorious day. Good-byes were said, and we fared forth once more down the Main South Road. It made a brave show with wide, cleared margins for a couple of miles or so, then deserted us in a river-bed, and when we picked it up again, it had become a pack track. This very soon dwindled to a narrow footpath, winding into the heart of the hills. The sun slanted down through the great trees over head:

Their forest raiment . . . . . from crown to feet  
that clothed them royally,  
Shielding their mysteries from the glare of day.

Here, we were in a world untouched by man—save for that narrow, winding track—where the very birds seemed scarce to heed our presence, and the big bush-pigeons sat and looked at

us from the miro trees—too lazy to fly away. The very loneliness but added to the wondrous, mysterious charm of this forest world. On and on we rode in the dewy freshness: round steep mountain flanks, up deep gorges, along rock-cut ledges where the yellow sunshine lay bright and warm on the rocky way, catching at times vistas of high mountains towering above us, shrouded always in impenetrable bush—it was, above all things, a forest ride. Always there was the crowding undergrowth beneath—that riot of green-life, of forms strange to our eyes, beautiful in their infinite variety. And everywhere were ferns. Who shall tell of the exquisite beauty of that fernery? They seemed to grow in colonies, sometimes of one kind, sometimes of another; and every fallen mossy trunk was covered with delicate hymenophyllums, like green lace. They climbed along the living branches, they draped the brown stems of the tree-ferns from base to crown—there they live and die uncared for, generation after generation, perfect in their beauty ...

I had entered the promised land. I had seen a world as it was before man came there; in after years it would never be quite the same again. For if I went back to it, I might not find the Fairy Land of my dreams. The forest world must give place before the fire and the axe, but the memory of it, as I saw it in my brief sojourn, can never pass away.

So, as the sun sank behind the purple barrier of the western mountains, out-lining their edges in gold: and their long shadows stretched across the plain ... I said, Farewell.

Maud Moreland

## WILD COASTS

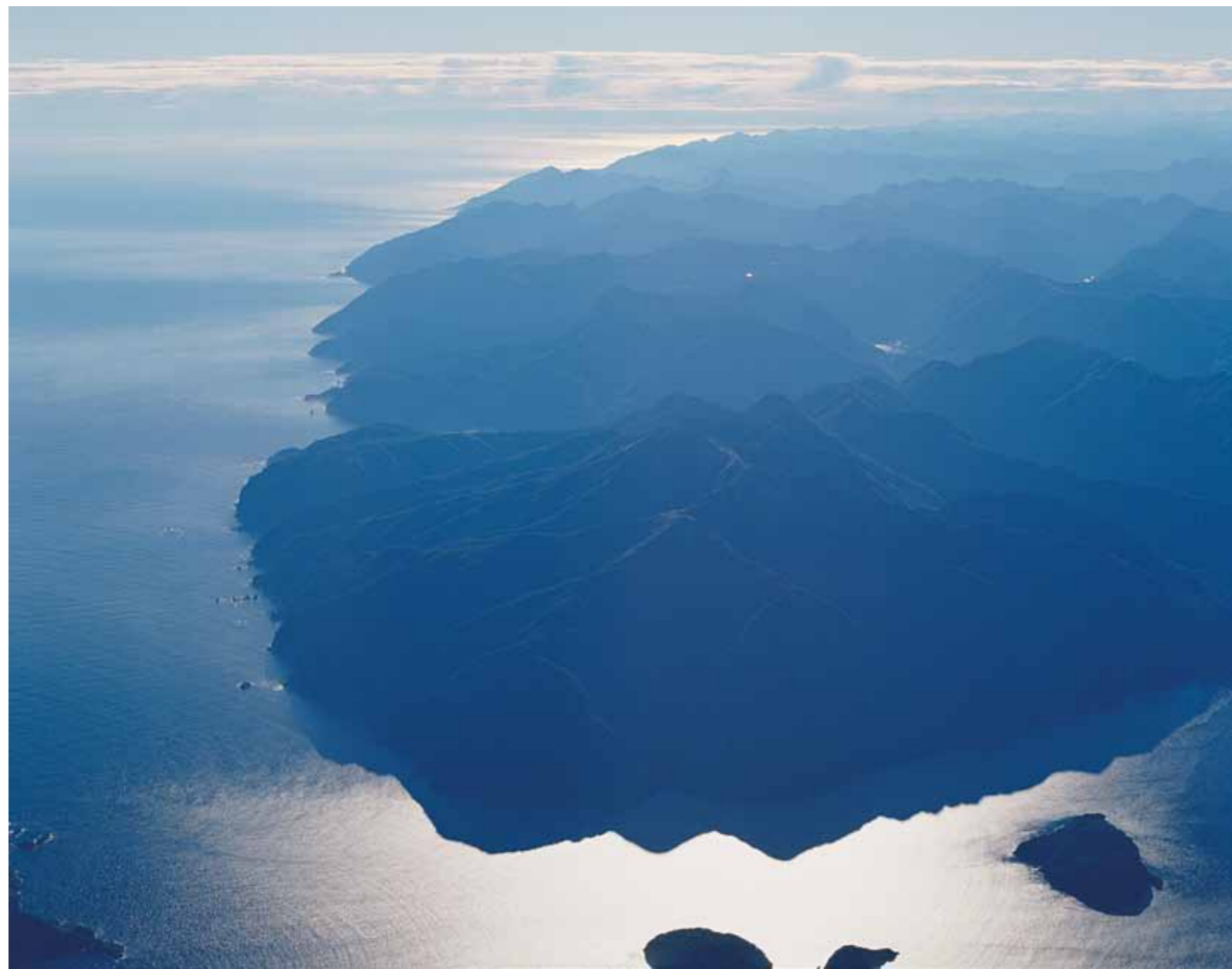
Because New Zealand has a complex geology and consists of two large, narrow islands, plus a host of smaller ones, its highly convoluted coastline is both exceptionally long and wonderfully varied. Just about every type of coastal geomorphology can be found, from fiords, sunken valleys and estuaries to sand spits, huge dune systems and quiet coastal coves and beaches. No place on the land is more than 130 kilometres from the ocean. And while most people live in cities beside the sea and travel to coastal holiday destinations, much of New Zealand's coast remains remote and pristine – nowhere more so than in South Westland and Fiordland in the South Island. Here, the primeval forests and wetlands stretch untouched from the mountains right to the ocean's edge.

To take in the full immensity and sweep of these extraordinary vistas, it is necessary to gain some elevation on a hill or coastal bluff. Two times of the day yield exquisite light for photography on these wild coasts – early morning when the sun climbs above the Southern Alps in the east, and the lingering twilight when the sun's rays streak out from beyond the horizon of the wind-tossed Tasman Sea in the west.

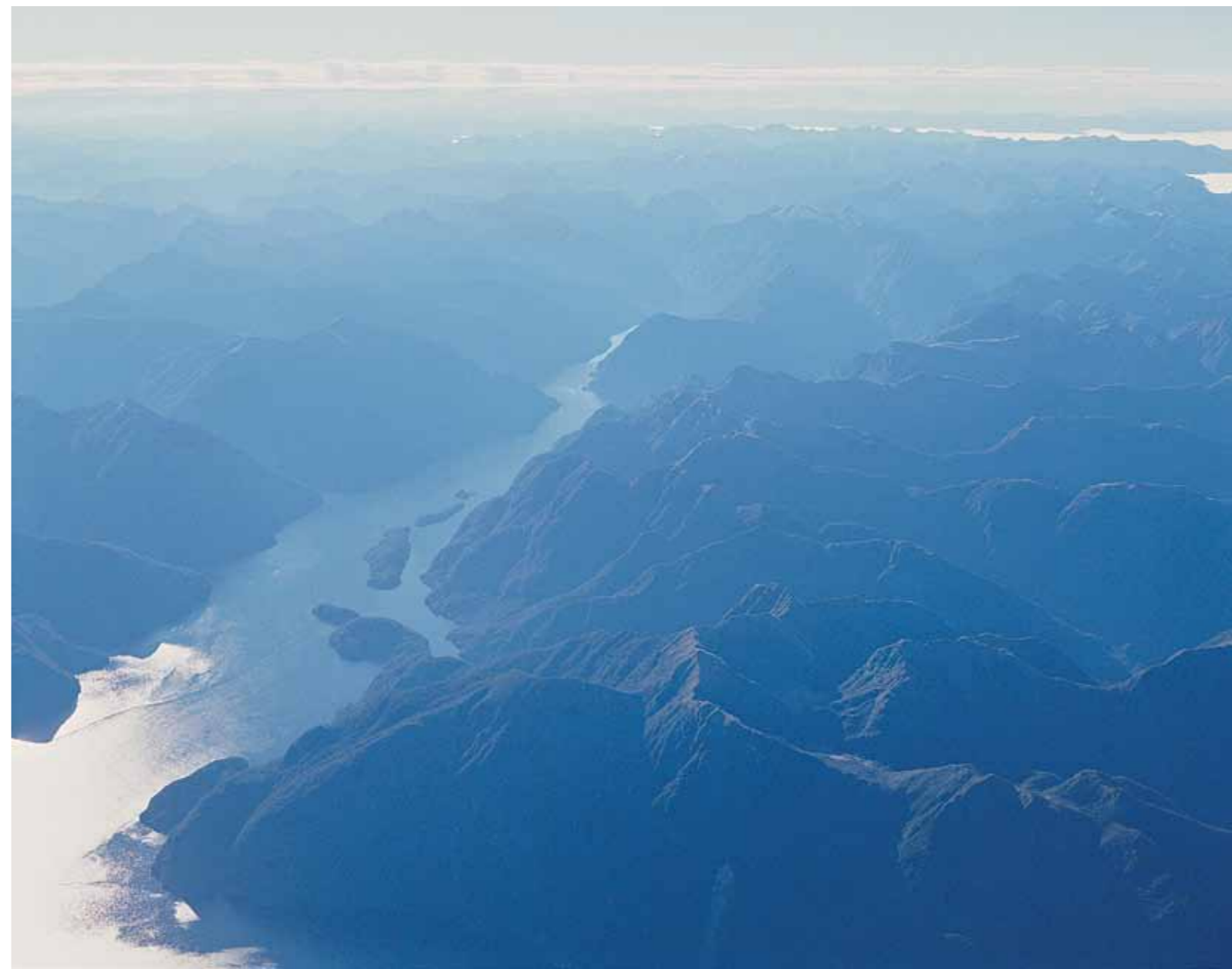


ABOVE Sea cliffs on Chalky Island, on the southwest coast of Fiordland National Park  
OVERLEAF Mitre Peak reflected in the waters of Milford Sound on a winter morning, Fiordland National Park





ABOVE AND RIGHT Aerial view over Breaksea Sound, Fiordland National Park







Gog, one of the Fraser Peaks, Rakiura National Park, Stewart Island



West Ruggedy Beach, Rakiura National Park, Stewart Island



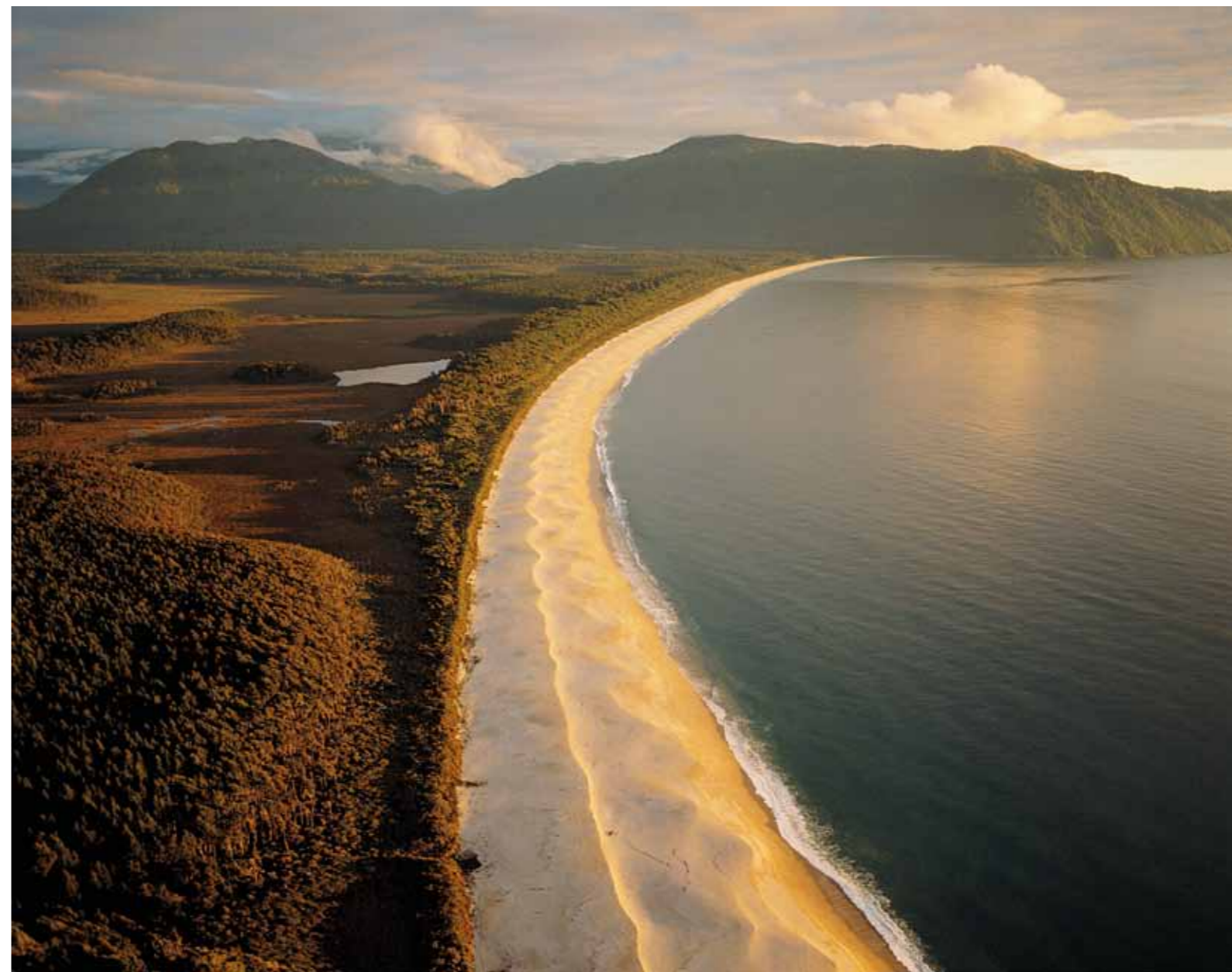
Tautuku Bay on the Catlins Coast, Southland



Black Head on the Otago Peninsula



Heretaniwha Point and Ohinemaka Beach in the evening, South Westland



Sunset at Ohinemaka Beach, South Westland



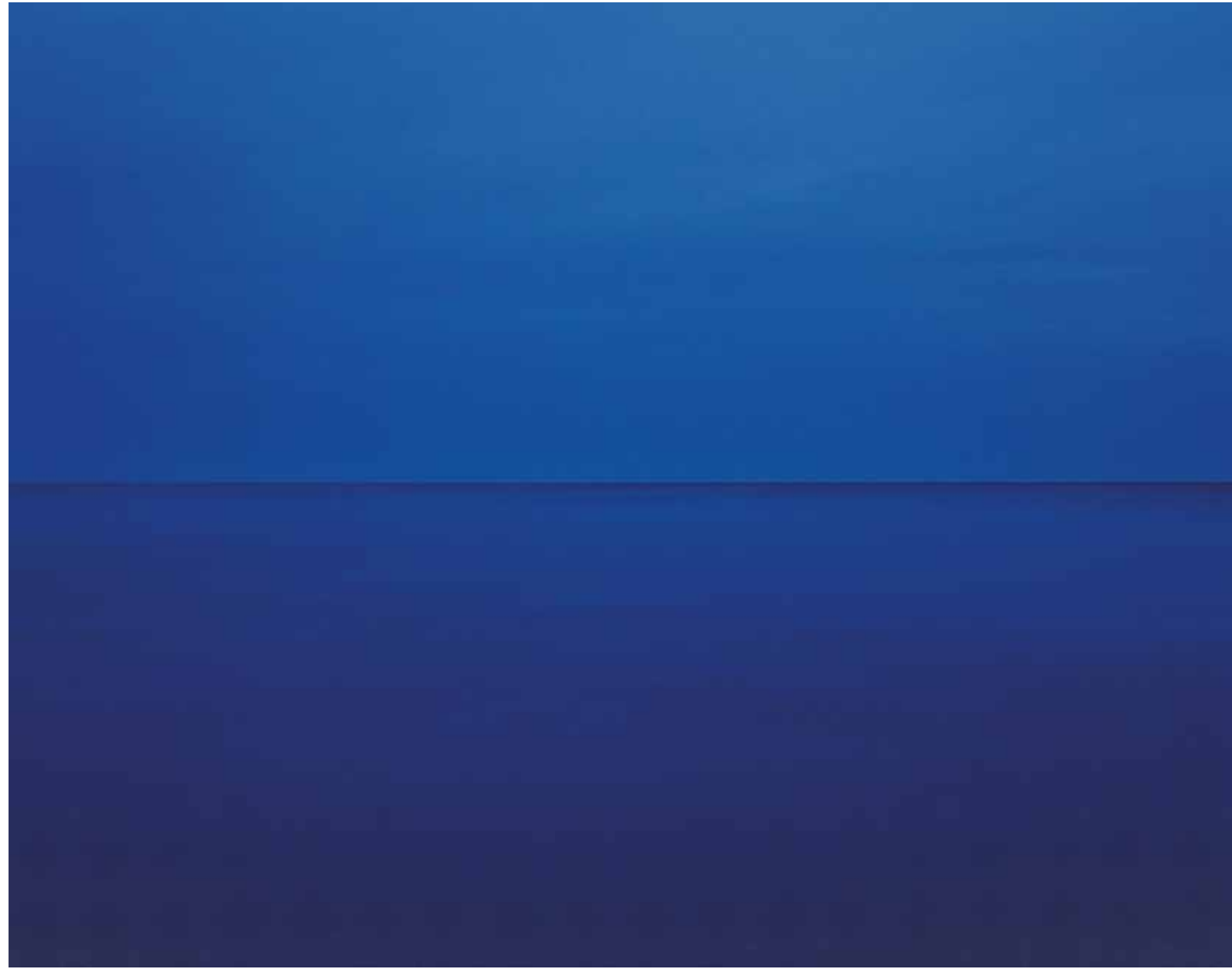
Granitic sand beach near Karamea, North Westland



Blowhole in the Pancake Rocks at Punakaiki, Paparoa National Park



ABOVE AND RIGHT Sea cliffs on the Truman Track, Paparoa National Park



Evening, Golden Bay



Moonrise, Golden Bay



Sand ripples at Awaroa Inlet, Abel Tasman National Park



Tide ripples over sand flats at Pakawau, Golden Bay