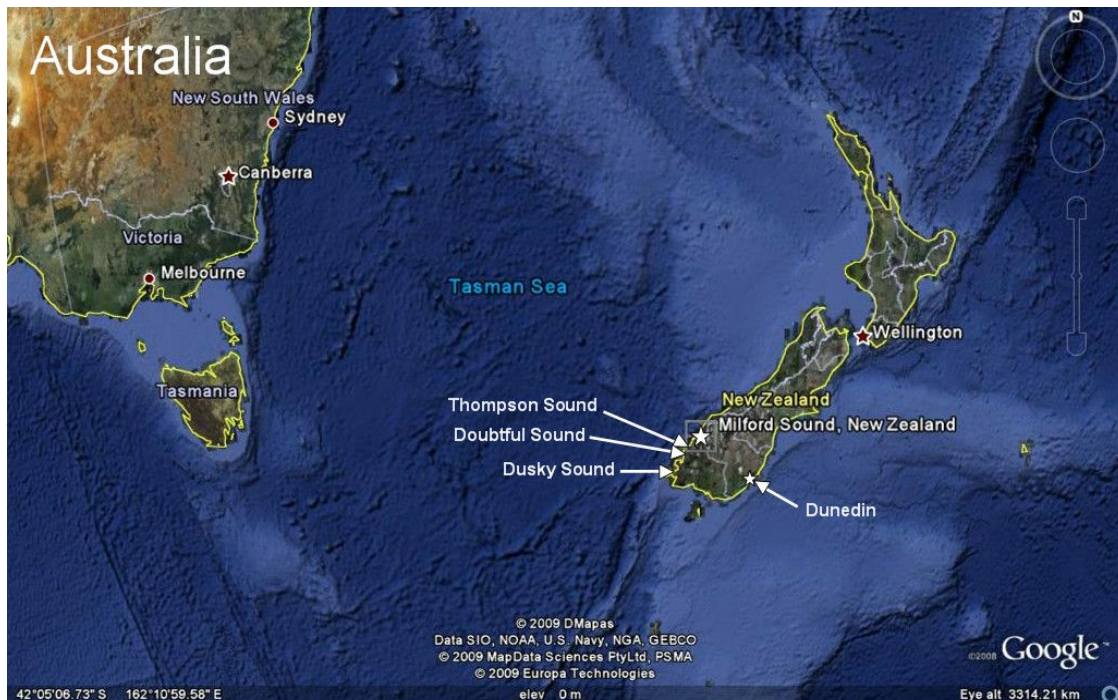


**Day 44 – At Sea - Milford Sound – Fiordland Park - 9 Nov. 09:** The day started with partly cloudy sky and moderate sea. We were off the coast of New Zealand and headed in to Milford Sound. This was our view of the mountainous New Zealand coast as the sun was just rising.



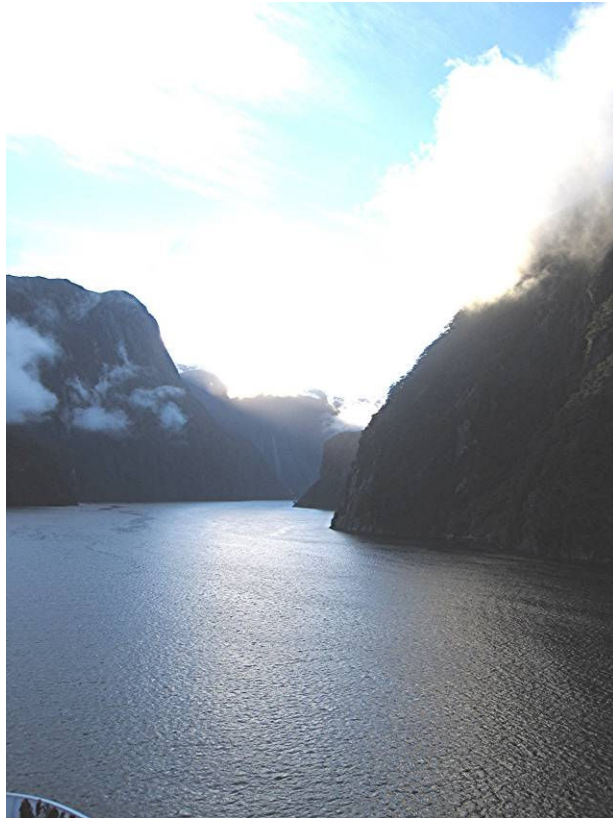
We were going to Milford Sound in order to drop off some of the ship's passengers so they could take a tour of the southern part of New Zealand. They had signed up for an overnight land tour from Milford Sound to Dunedin, New Zealand.

The map below, adapted from a Google Earth image, shows where Milford Sound is located in the nation of New Zealand. Also shown on the map are Thompson and Doubtful Sounds as well as Dusky Sound that we visited later in the day.



We went up to the Crow's Nest Lounge for a good view of Milford Sound as the Amsterdam sailed in. A picture of the Sound near the entrance is shown on the right. Barbara, the ship's tour guide, gave a running commentary about the passing scene as it unfolded.

She gave us a factoid for the curious with extra time on their hands. The Milford Sound is misnamed and it is really a fiord. A "Sound" is the result of an ancient river valley being flooded by the rising ocean. A "Fiord" is the result of a valley being gouged out to well below sea level by glacier action in past eons. Milford Sound and the other "Sounds" we will visit today were all carved out by glaciers and not a river so they are technically fiords. The misnaming was an accident of ancient charters of these waters.



Many of the passengers congregated in the Crow's Nest rather than out on the exposed deck where temperatures were in the low 50s. The picture on the right shows some of us huddled there in front of the windows which are wrapped around the front of the ship on Deck 9.



9. Barbara, of course, is busy in conversation with Sandy.



We were well served by Didi, our dining room steward, who was up early this morning and dispensing coffee from insulated urns in the Crow's Nest, as shown on the left.

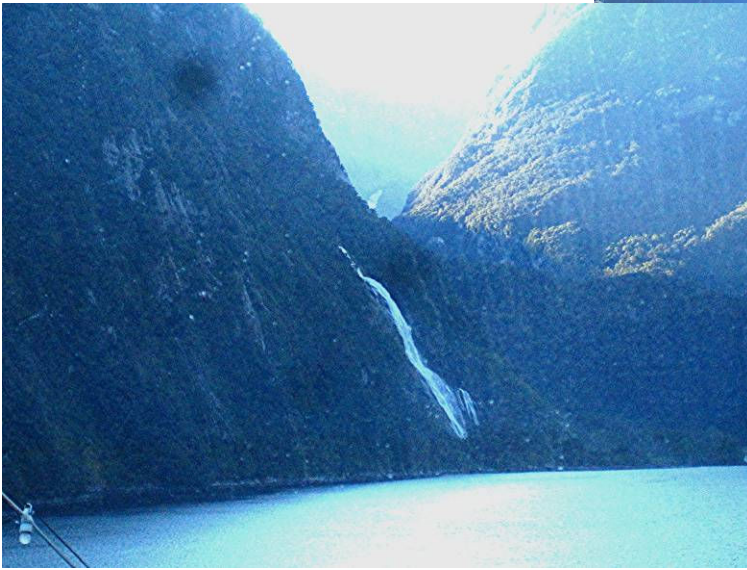
The following pictures were taken of the magnificent scenery as the Amsterdam proceeded into Milford Sound.



We were surrounded by sheer cliffs and many waterfalls as the sun was just starting to light up the walls of the fiord. Many of the mountain peaks were snow covered.



As the morning wore on the temperature out on the deck became comfortable and we got some photos from the open deck. We were awestruck by the beauty of the fiord.



After we had proceeded several miles into Milford Sound a boat came out to the Amsterdam and tied up alongside, as shown on the right. Passengers taking the land tour then transferred into the boat for a ride to shore and connection with their land tour.

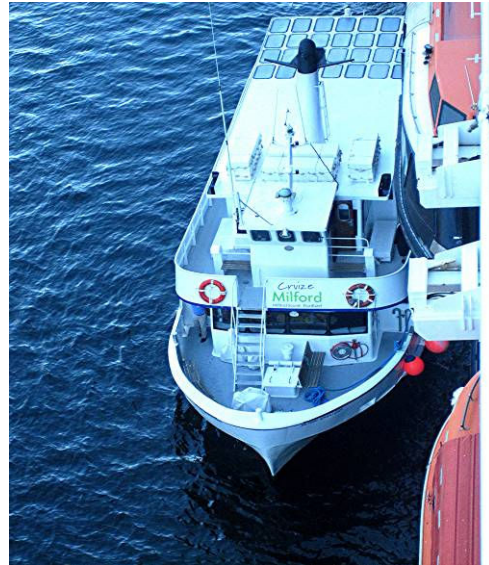
Later during the drafting of the blog Barbara took a picture of Orlin composing the scene above. It is shown on the right just for fun.



As a technical note, our digital camera has developed an annoying flaw in the panel where the image is formed. We end up with two or three circular smudges on the image on some photos. Please bear with us and don't attempt to adjust your monitor.

Soon the small boat with the tour bound passengers pulled away. The Amsterdam then retraced its path and proceeded out of Milford Sound into the Tasman Sea.

The Amsterdam sailed south along the western coast of the southern island of New Zealand for about an hour and then turned in to Thompson Sound which is shown on the map above. Thompson Sound is bordered on the north side by the New Zealand mainland and on the south side by Secretary Island. The tour consisted of passing through the two fiords, Thompson and Doubtful, that separate Secretary Island from the mainland. This is the view we got as we turned in to Thompson Sound.



The waterway in the Thompson Sound was as narrow as the one in Milford Sound and the cliffs were just as striking. Some of the views we got in the 2 hour tour are shown on the right and below.

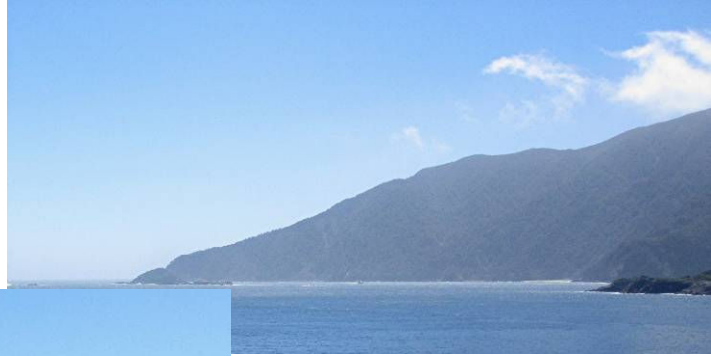




About halfway through the tour of the fiord, the Amsterdam turned right into Doubtful Sound and headed back towards the sea. The scenery remained as beautiful as before.



After we had cruised through Doubtful Sound for about an hour we came to the entrance at the Tasman Sea. We could look through the break in the mountains and see the ocean beyond, as shown on the right and below.



After exiting Doubtful Sound we proceeded south along the New Zealand coastline. After about two hours we came to the entrance of

Dusky Sound and turned in. The picture below shows the entrance to Dusky Sound.



In this photo the land on the left is the mainland of New Zealand and the land on the right is Resolution Island. The Dusky Sound route we would take today went all the way around Resolution Island and back out to sea a few miles further south.

The geography of Dusky Sound was not as

impressive as the Milford Sound or the Thompson and Doubtful Sounds. While it was beautiful, the waterway was wider and the mountains not as high nor the cliffs as steep. The pictures on the right and below are a few of those we took.





After about 2 hours we had sailed around Resolution Island and we approached the southern entrance to Dusky Sound, as shown below.



The Amsterdam passed through the entrance to the fiord into the Tasman Sea. We then turned south and continued on a track to round the southern tip of New Zealand and arrive in Dunedin, New Zealand tomorrow.

This had been a full day of cruising in waters very challenging for the Captain and navigation officers. The weather had been sparkling sunshine with a moderate breeze that allowed us to walk around the open decks whenever we wanted to take in the view. People were out on the decks taking pictures the whole day. The weather was a special gift because this region has about 200 rainy and stormy days each year so we beat the odds by having such a nice day. We couldn't help but compare these fiords with the Prins Christian Sound of southern Greenland that we had cruised through in August. We would give the Prins Christian Sound higher marks for the majesty of high sheer cliffs and mountains that we passed through. However, we thoroughly enjoyed today's cruising through these remarkable fiords of New Zealand. It was a real pleasure and privilege to experience.



By the time we finished cruising through the fiords of New Zealand it was almost time for dinner. Tonight there was a Dutch Theme in the dining room. The men got a black cap and the ladies each got a traditional Dutch white cap. The best part of the dinner was the delicious Dover Sole that was prepared. We have been expanding our rudimentary knowledge of digital cameras and recently learned about the use of the "Macro" setting to take close-up pictures of things. Barbara couldn't pass up an opportunity to try out her new skill. She took a photo of her Dover Sole dish for our "foodie" friends, as shown on the right.



We are sailing all night towards Dunedin, New Zealand. The sea is moderate so there is not a lot of rolling motion. We are scheduled to arrive in Dunedin about 7am tomorrow and we have a 6 hour private tour that was arranged by cruise critic friends Bill and Sharon (ska8teacher). We have heard many good things about the people and beauty of this land and are really looking forward to setting our feet on New Zealand soil.