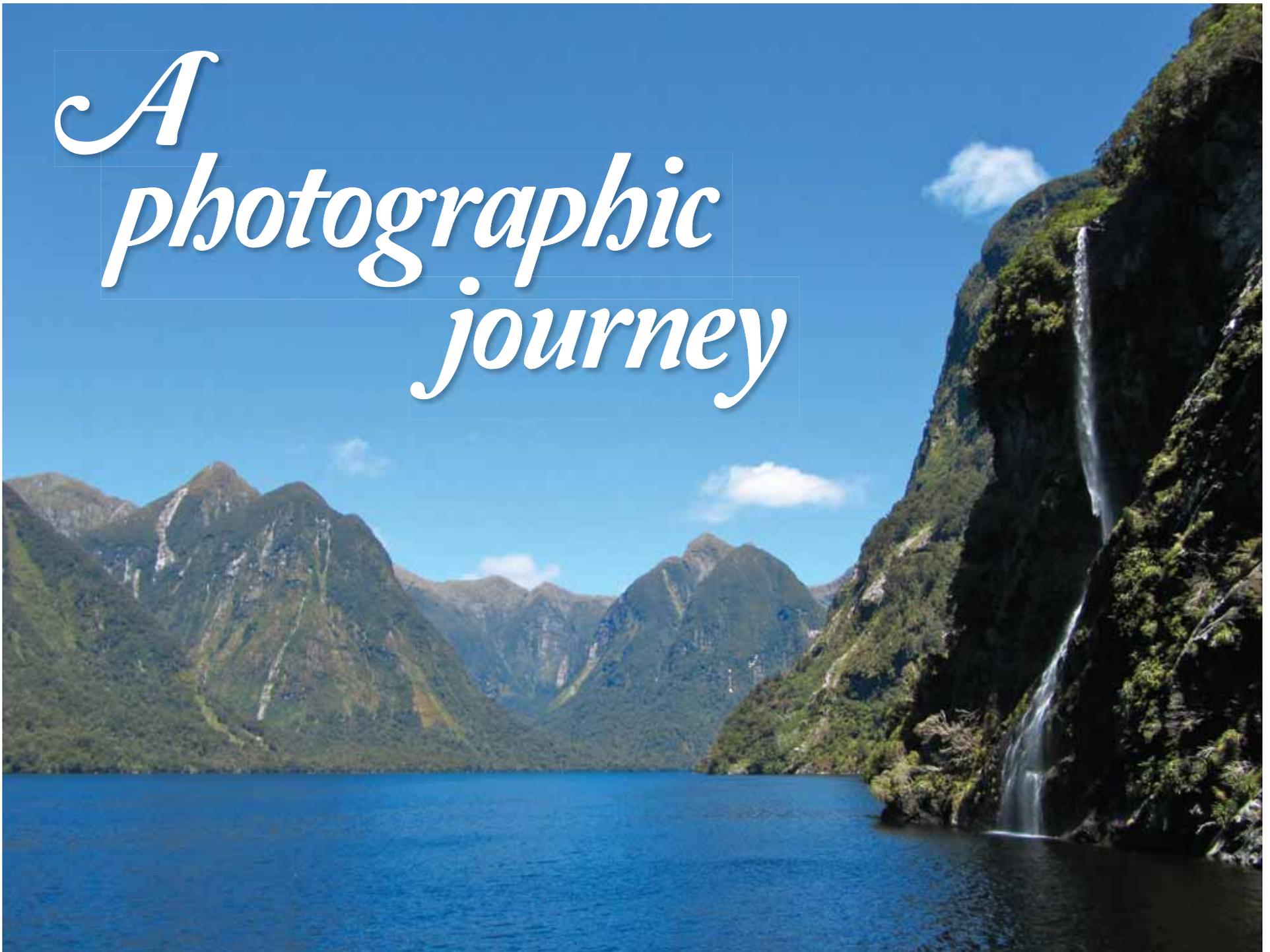


# 2 Destinations

Stories about travel and adventure by local people. ■ May 16, 2012

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## A photographic journey



The quiet waters of Doubtful Sound in Fiordland National Park.

### Menlo Park photographer explores New Zealand with the camera

Photographs and story by Frances Freyberg Blackburn

I've traveled to and written about more than 40 countries, and none has been so difficult for me to capture in words as New Zealand.

Five hundred words are not enough to explain why I love the country so deeply and will always long to return. They're also not enough to highlight the beauty, charm and excitement that enchant visitors.

This is a story better told with pictures.

My love for New Zealand stretches back to childhood, when my family would visit my grandparents over Christmas break. My happy memories are not just of the simple joys of childhood, but also of a simpler time and place, where milk was delivered in bottles, and clean laundry hung from clotheslines in every yard. Today most people buy their milk in stores, but that

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**About the author:** Frances Freyberg Blackburn of Menlo Park has photographed people, wildlife, nature and architecture from her travels to more than 50 countries. Her photographs can be found in the Portola Art Gallery at the Allied Arts Guild in Menlo Park, in private collections, and online at [francesfreyberg.com](http://francesfreyberg.com).



Sheep outnumber people in New Zealand by more than seven to one.



A trail cuts through the rainforest at Lake Matheson, West Coast.



**A PHOTOGRAPHIC JOURNEY**

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comforting, small-town feeling remains part of New Zealand's charm.

Each time I return to New Zealand, I'm struck by the variety of beautiful scenery: from golden sand beaches to snow-capped mountains; smoking volcanoes to crystal-clear fjords. It's one of the two places in the world where glaciers meet rainforest.

The scenery seems to call to Californians in particular, who already enjoy a mountain-to-sea landscape but may long for the lush, green grass that we rarely see in our state.

New Zealand's population is quite small (about 4.4 million: three-fifths the population of the San Francisco Bay Area) and concentrated (nearly one-third live in and around Auckland). As a result, it can be common to have entire beaches, lakes or mountains all to oneself, especially on the South Island or in the far north of the North Island.

This blissful solitude may also be most appreciated by Bay Area natives, who are used to sharing nature with a crowd.

With such a diverse landscape, it's not surprising that outdoor pursuits are popular with locals and visitors alike. Nearly 30 percent of New Zealand is protected park land, and hikers enjoy the well-marked trails and back-country hut system.

There are also plenty of places

to boat, kayak, sail or fish, whether on the ocean or on the country's many lakes. New Zealand has nearly 10,000 miles of coastline, and no place is more than 80 miles from the ocean.

**Closer than you think**

Many people don't realize how easy it is to get to New Zealand. Direct flights between San Francisco and Auckland take 12-13 hours — comparable to the flight time to many parts of Europe — and the time difference is only 3-5 hours, depending on daylight savings time.

Because New Zealand is in the Southern Hemisphere, you can swim at Christmas and ski in August.

The generally mild weather can change rapidly, even in summer, so come prepared with rain gear and a sense of adventure. It doesn't take long for visitors to see why the Maori (New Zealand's first Polynesian settlers) dubbed the country "Aotearoa," or land of the "long white cloud."

**MORE INFORMATION**

More of Frances' New Zealand photos can be seen in her book, "Aotearoa: A Photographic Journey of New Zealand," available online (link below), and at the Silicon Valley Open Studios, taking place May 19-20 from 11 a.m. to 5 p.m. at 856 Partridge Ave. in Menlo Park.

• Visit [tinyurl.com/Freyberg-525](http://tinyurl.com/Freyberg-525) for more information.



**Top:** Matai Bay on Northland's Karikari Peninsula. **Left:** One of New Zealand's oldest hotels in the small town of Cardrona, Central Otago. **Below:** Abel Tasman National Park, Nelson Tasman region.

