

Photograph some of the rarest bird on the planet in this ultimate New Zealand photography expedition

New Zealand is unlike anywhere else on Earth, an ancient island nation where evolution took its own extraordinary path, producing wildlife found nowhere else on the planet. For photographers, it is nothing short of a dream.

Join award-winning wildlife photographer and Arctic explorer David Gibbons, founder of Wild Lens Nature Tours Ltd, and New Zealand wildlife photographer Francine Stevens, as they guide an intimate small-group journey through the wildlife-rich landscapes of the south. Bringing deep knowledge of the species and an unwavering commitment to ethical, low-impact encounters that respect the animals and habitats you have travelled so far to photograph.

This is more than a photography tour, it is a rare opportunity to connect with one of the world's most extraordinary ecosystems, and return home with images and experiences that will stay with you for a lifetime.

Spaces are strictly limited for 04-16 October 2027
To secure your place email info@wildlensnature.tours



Little Blue Penguin (Kororā), Francine Stevens 2025

Where Rare Birds And Wild Coastlines Meet On The Most Biodiverse Island Nations On Earth

Explore New Zealand through the lens, photographing remarkable wildlife from rugged coasts to alpine peaks and ancient forests.

1. Coastal Wonders

Explore rich coastal ecosystems, home to rare and charismatic seabirds and shore species, including mainland-breeding penguins such as the Yellow-eyed (Hoiho) and Little Blue (Kororā), alongside the majestic Royal Albatross at the world's only mainland colony and the critically rare King Shag.

3. Alpine Encounters

Venture into the Southern Alps to photograph the world's only alpine parrot, the Kea, and experience dramatic fjords carved by glaciers, with towering cliffs and cascading waterfalls.

5. Native Forests

Step into lush forests alive with Tūī, Kākā, and other ancient species found nowhere else on earth. Look for the prehistoric Tuatara, and explore treasures on the forest floor, from giant wētā to colourful fungi and mosses.

Created for passionate photographers, this small-group tour combines rare species, diverse habitats, and expert guidance.



Yellow-Eyed Penguin (Hoiho), Francine Stevens 2025

What Makes This Tour Unique?

Designed first and foremost for bird photographers, this journey offers focused time with New Zealand's remarkable avian species. From coastal seabirds to forest songsters, every encounter is guided by ethical, low impact practices that places the welfare of wildlife above the shot, ensuring the animals and habitat you photograph are treated with the respect they deserve.

New Zealand's dramatic landscapes are impossible to ignore along the way, glacier carve fjords, ancient forests and sweeping coastlines provide a breathtaking canvas.

What sets this tour apart is the depth it offers beyond the lens. You will gain insight into the species, conservation and ecological forces that make New Zealand's wildlife so extraordinary, alongside an introduction to kaitiakitanga , the Māori philosophy of guardianship over the land and all living things. It is a perspective that transforms how you see, not just how you shoot.

You will leave with powerful images and a deeper connection to Aotearoa



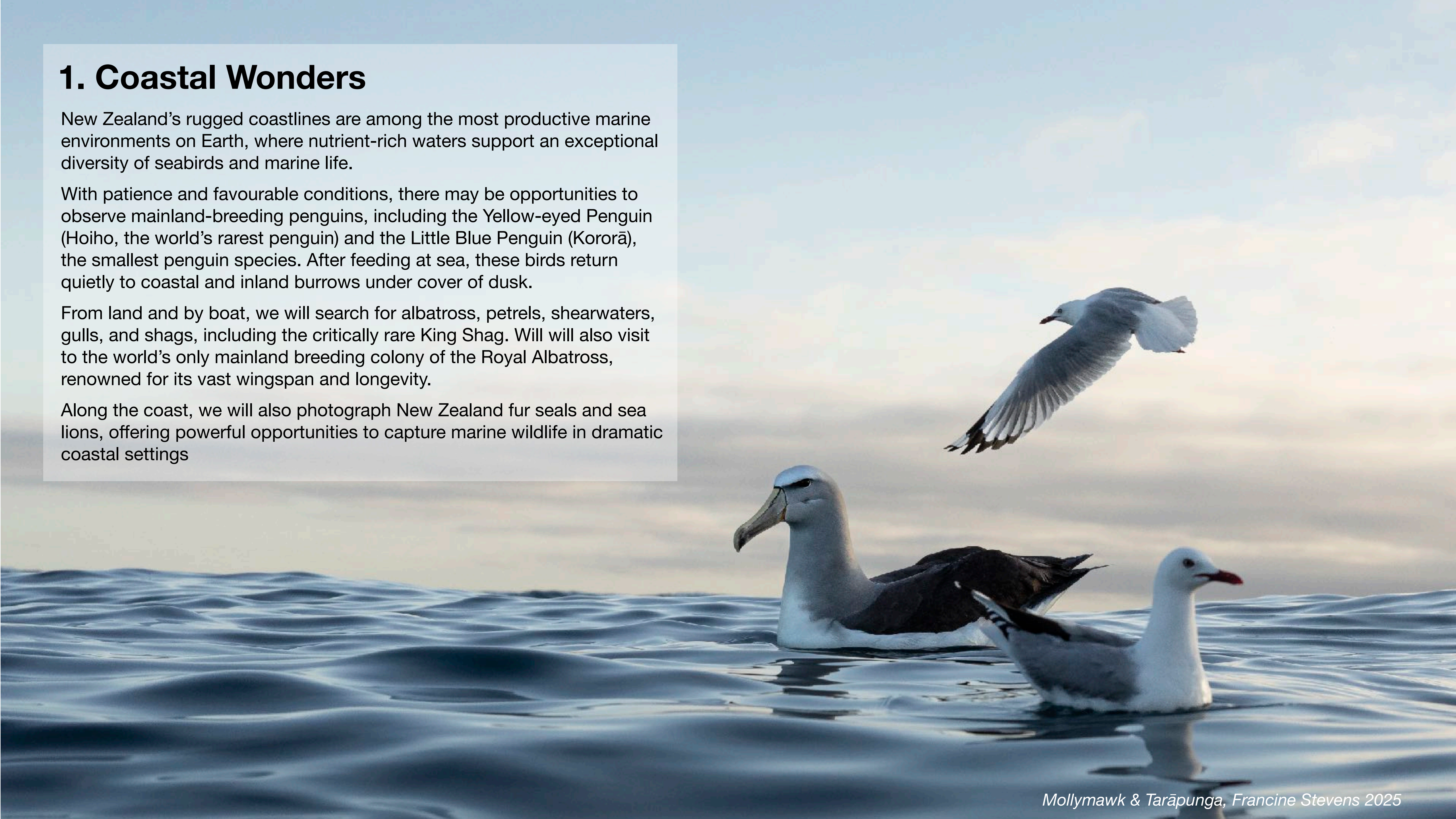
1. Coastal Wonders

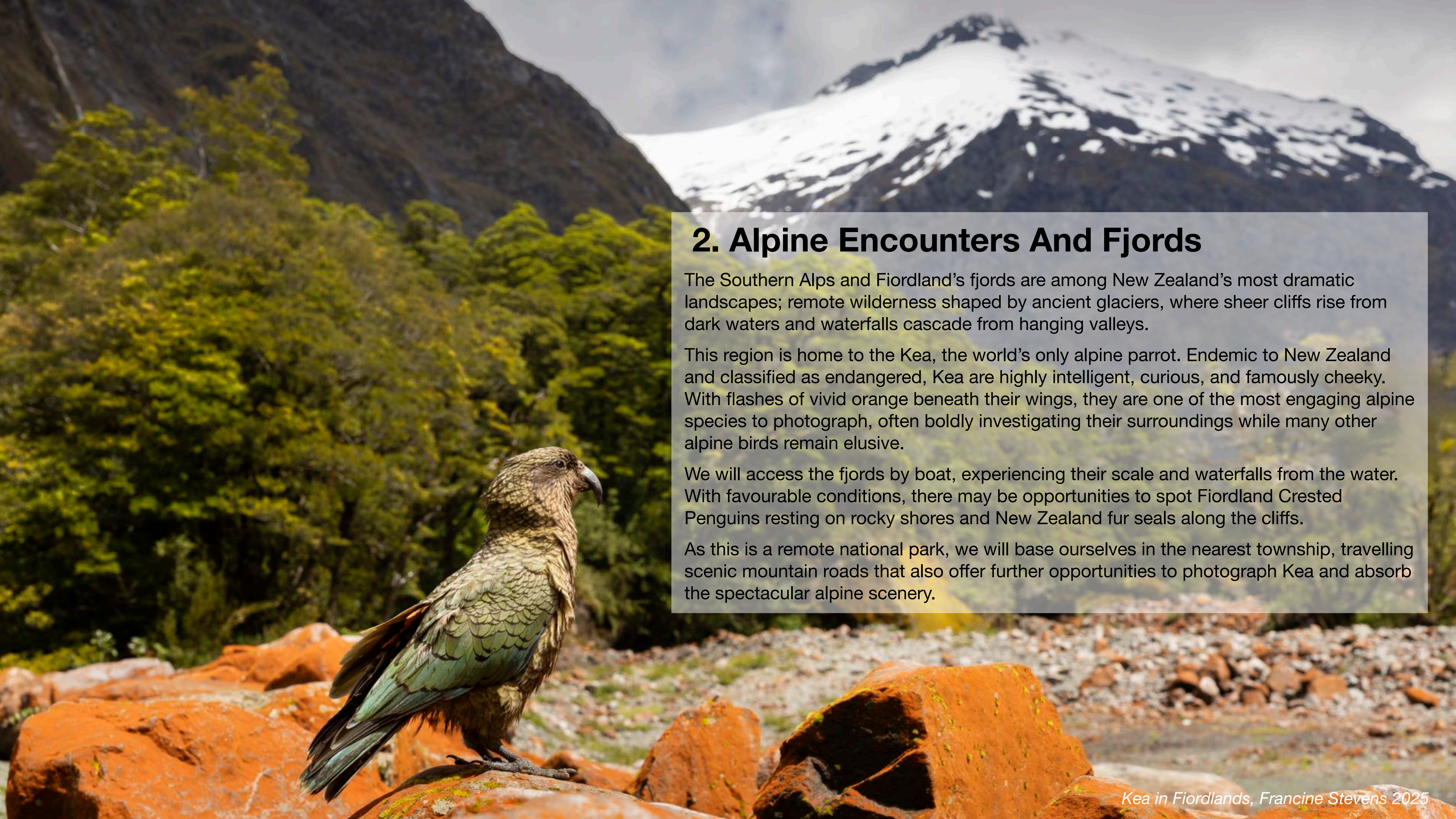
New Zealand's rugged coastlines are among the most productive marine environments on Earth, where nutrient-rich waters support an exceptional diversity of seabirds and marine life.

With patience and favourable conditions, there may be opportunities to observe mainland-breeding penguins, including the Yellow-eyed Penguin (Hoiho, the world's rarest penguin) and the Little Blue Penguin (Kororā), the smallest penguin species. After feeding at sea, these birds return quietly to coastal and inland burrows under cover of dusk.

From land and by boat, we will search for albatross, petrels, shearwaters, gulls, and shags, including the critically rare King Shag. Will will also visit to the world's only mainland breeding colony of the Royal Albatross, renowned for its vast wingspan and longevity.

Along the coast, we will also photograph New Zealand fur seals and sea lions, offering powerful opportunities to capture marine wildlife in dramatic coastal settings





2. Alpine Encounters And Fjords

The Southern Alps and Fiordland's fjords are among New Zealand's most dramatic landscapes; remote wilderness shaped by ancient glaciers, where sheer cliffs rise from dark waters and waterfalls cascade from hanging valleys.

This region is home to the Kea, the world's only alpine parrot. Endemic to New Zealand and classified as endangered, Kea are highly intelligent, curious, and famously cheeky. With flashes of vivid orange beneath their wings, they are one of the most engaging alpine species to photograph, often boldly investigating their surroundings while many other alpine birds remain elusive.

We will access the fjords by boat, experiencing their scale and waterfalls from the water. With favourable conditions, there may be opportunities to spot Fiordland Crested Penguins resting on rocky shores and New Zealand fur seals along the cliffs.

As this is a remote national park, we will base ourselves in the nearest township, travelling scenic mountain roads that also offer further opportunities to photograph Kea and absorb the spectacular alpine scenery.

3. Native Forests

We will explore predator-free native forests, where rare birds, insects, and ancient species are once again thriving.

Our focus includes forest specialists such as the Kōkako, Tīeke (Saddleback), and the forest parrot Kākā, alongside iconic mainland species unique to New Zealand. These include the chiming Bellbird, the inquisitive New Zealand Robin, the large forest pigeon Kererū, the playful Pīwakawaka, and the Tūi, renowned for its remarkable mimicry and complex song.

There will also be opportunities to photograph the Tuatara, a rare ‘living fossil’ and the last surviving member of a reptile lineage over 250 million years old, found only in New Zealand.

A guided forest walk will share key ecological insights and photography tips, followed by time to explore independently. With no native land mammals, these forests offer a safe, immersive setting rich in birdsong, ancient trees, and macro life, from mosses and fungi to giant wētā.



Logistics

This journey spans a wide section of New Zealand's South, giving access to varied habitats and exceptional native wildlife. Driving times range from approximately 30 minutes to 5 hours. You will be met on arrival in Wellington and transferred to our hotel. The following afternoon, we cross the Cook Strait by ferry to Picton and continue south by road.

Travel is in a dedicated Sprinter van with a professional driver from a certified Qualmark New Zealand operator, allowing flexibility to respond to wildlife behaviour, light, and weather, with scenic stops for landscape photography along the way. Private charter boats are used at a couple of the locations. All airport transfers are included, and a pre-departure briefing call will be held to confirm logistics and equipment guidance.



Accommodation

Accommodation is carefully selected to prioritise proximity to key wildlife sites while offering comfort and excellent value. As we move frequently between locations, most stays are limited to one or two nights to maximise time in the field.

Guests will have private rooms, staying mainly in well-located motels with kitchen facilities for flexible self-catering. Many towns also offer nearby laundromats, making it easy to refresh clothing along the way.

Food

A thermos of hot tea and coffee will be available in the vehicle each day. Breakfasts and lunches are self-catered, with options to prepare your own meals or visit nearby cafés on selected days. Regular supermarket stops are included, with a cooler in the van for your chilled items while travelling.

Evening dinners are included in the cost at local cafés and eateries. In more remote areas, options may be limited, so please advise us in advance of any dietary requirements.

We will also pass through some of the South Island's renowned wine regions, with opportunities to purchase local wines along the way.





The Itinerary

October is an outstanding time for wildlife photography in New Zealand. Flights often avoid peak-season pricing, breeding activity is underway, landscapes are vibrant, and spring's changeable weather delivers some dramatic skies.

- Day one: 04 October (Wellington)
Arrive and settle in, with time to photograph local wildlife.
- Day two - eleven: 05–14 October (South Island Expedition)
Cross the Cook Strait to the Marlborough Sounds, beginning a multi-day journey through key wildlife regions including Kaikōura, Ōamaru, Fiordland (Milford Sound), and Dunedin. The order of locations may vary to optimise conditions and wildlife activity.
- Day twelve, 15 October: (Dunedin to Auckland)
Fly north for a final night, culminating in a visit to a dramatic west coast gannet colony.
- 16 October: Departures or Extensions
International departures from Auckland, with optional North Island extensions available including conservation islands, kiwi and tuatara encounters, and coastal wetlands.

Cost

- **£7999.00 per person** (max 6 guests)
As a special introductory offer to celebrate the launch of this tour, the first 4 guests to book will receive an **exclusive early bird price of £7,499** (a saving of £500). *This offer applies only to the inaugural 2027 departure and will not be repeated.*

Payment in instalments, with all securely held in a trust account in accordance with UK travel regulations. All payments made to Wild Lens Nature Tours Ltd are protected by supplier failure insurance. In the unlikely event that the company ceases trading, you are entitled to a full refund of all monies paid.

25% non-refundable deposit required to secure your place with the remaining balance payable in scheduled instalments.

What To Bring

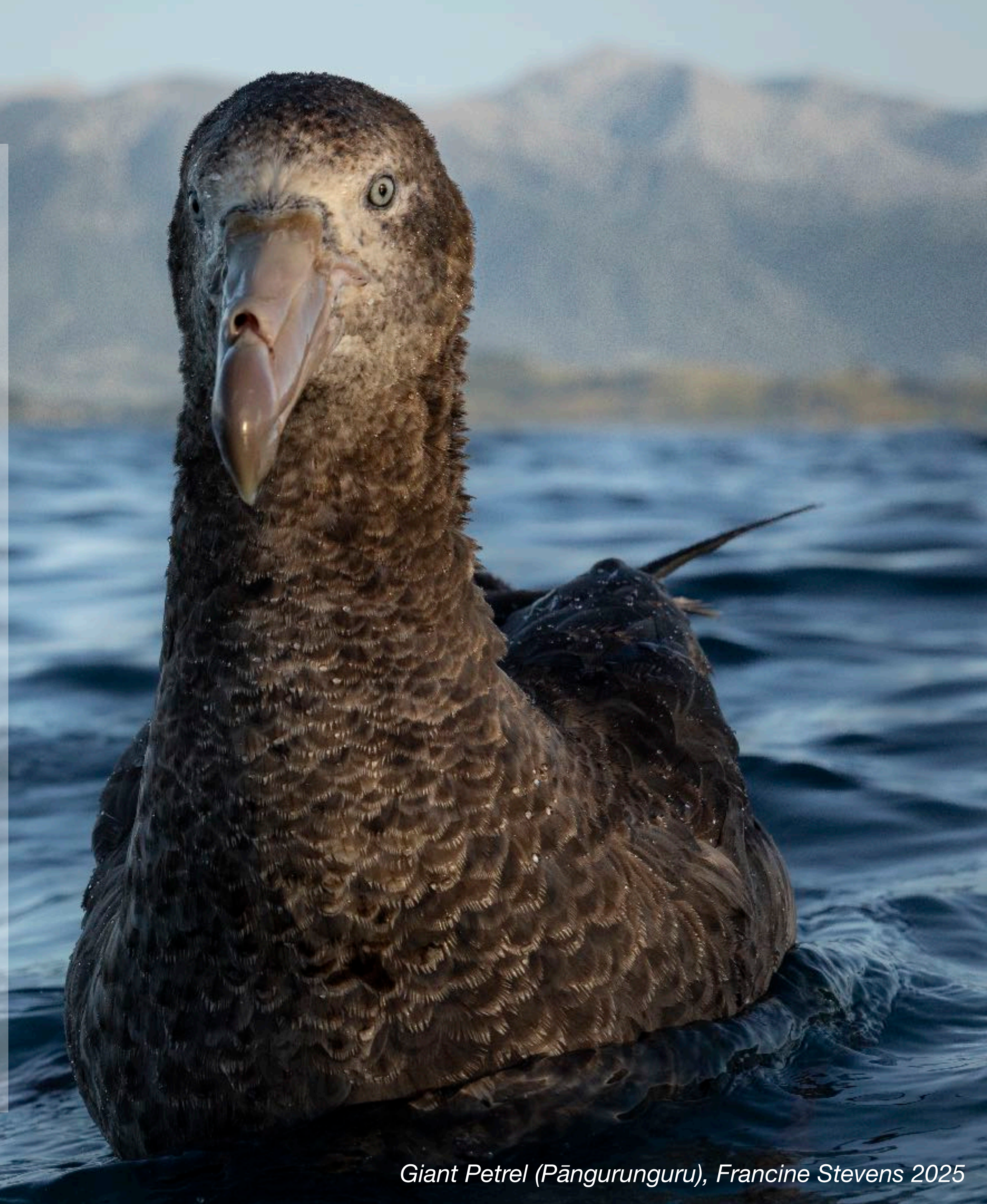
We will be travelling in late winter to early spring, when weather can be changeable.

- Quiet waterproof rain jacket is essential, as conditions may shift quickly from cool and wet to mild and sunny often within the same day.
- Layered clothing (temperatures range from 5°C to 25°C)
- Comfortable walking shoes with tread, suitable for coastal and forest terrain
- Biosecurity-ready footwear & equipment (must be thoroughly cleaned before entering New Zealand and will be inspected)
- Head torch with red-light mode only for use during dawn, dusk, and nocturnal sessions
- Pack all belongings in a one soft bag (maximum 20kg)

Camera Gear

Flash photography is not permitted at any sites due to the sensitivity of native species. Plan to work with natural light, optimising aperture, ISO, and shutter speed.

- Wildlife distances will vary, but we will often get close to our subjects. A 70–200mm lens is very useful, while a longer lens (with or without a teleconverter) is recommended for penguins and more distant wildlife, depending on your camera system.
- Wide-angle lens ideal for landscapes and seabirds that pass close to the boat.
- As we travel on domestic flights with smaller aircraft, hand-luggage allowances are limited, so very large lenses (500mm+) may be impractical.
- Bring plenty of memory cards, portable backup drive, and a small laptop or tablet for reviewing, editing, and backing up images along the way.



Giant Petrel (Pāngurunguru), Francine Stevens 2025



Included In The Cost

- All accommodation
- Ground transport
- New Zealand airport transfers
- Charter boats
- Cook Strait ferry
- Entrance fees to conservation sites and excursions
- Dinners, and light snacks, coffee & tea
- Photography tuition
- Use of professional guides and expert knowledge of New Zealand fauna

Excluded

- International flight to New Zealand
(arrival to Wellington, departure from Auckland)
- Domestic flight Dunedin to Auckland
- Travel insurance (must be obtained prior to travel)
- Photography gear
- Breakfasts and lunch (self catered)
- Alcoholic drinks with dinners
- Non-photography additional excursions at guests' own expense

Summary

Fitness Required: Reasonably fit, with some walking through hilly forest terrain. If you have any physical challenges or considerations, please reach out to Francine as accommodations can often be made and we'd love to find a way to include you.

Tour Type: Photography and Bird Watching of rare native species of New Zealand

Group Size: 6 Guests supported by 2 Guides

Temperature: Weather can be changeable and there will be some rain. Temperatures range from 5 to 25 degrees will cooler early mornings or when out on the water

Clothing: A quiet raincoat, and clothes to layer.



The Guides



David Gibbon is an award-winning wildlife photographer, best known for leading winter Arctic Fox expeditions in Iceland since 2018. He has been highly commended in Nature Photographer of the Year, with multiple awards.

David has guided some of the world's most remote and challenging photography expeditions, including a 2023 extreme winter journey to Ellesmere Island, (the closest landmass to the North Pole) where teams lived in tents at – 50°C to photograph Polar Bears, Musk Ox, and Arctic Wolves. In 2025, he led the first-ever land-based winter wildlife photography expedition across remote Greenland by snowmobile. David is the founder and director of Wild Lens Nature Tours Ltd, specialising in small-group Arctic and remote wildlife photography expeditions to destinations including Iceland, Greenland, Mongolia, Sri Lanka and now New Zealand. View his work at [@davidgibbonphotography](#)



Francine Stevens is a New Zealand-born wildlife photographer and conservation storyteller working within tourism and environmental innovation. Her work spans some of the world's most remote and iconic environments, driven by a deep

curiosity for animal behaviour, ecology, and the stories nature hold. This expedition has been personally crafted by Francine to honour her homeland and highlight conservation successes, offering intimate, small-group photographic journeys rooted in creativity, culture, learning, and respect for nature. View her work at [@fstevens_artist](#)



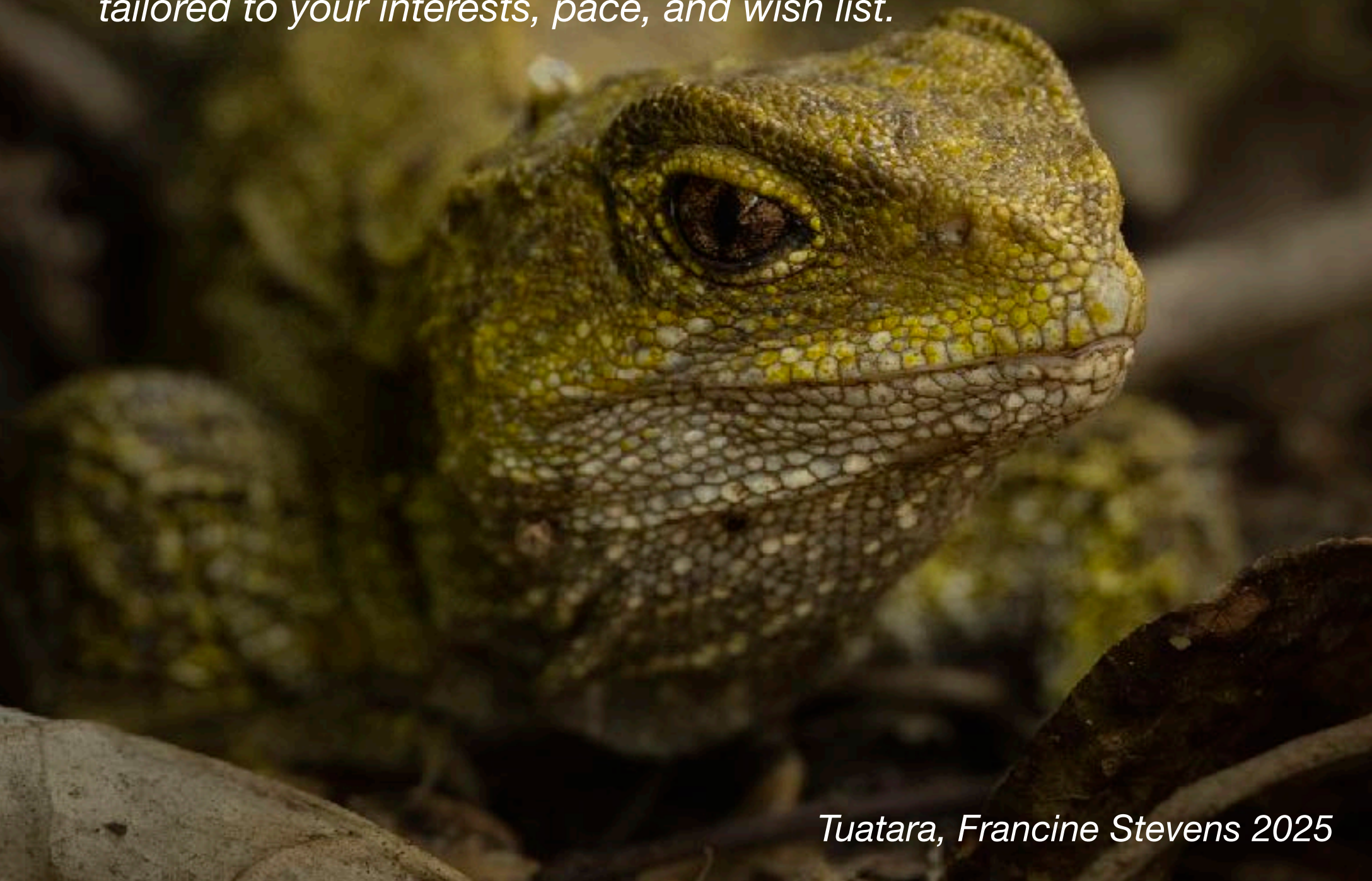
Beyond The Lens

(bookable at additional cost)

Enrich your journey with optional experiences, seamlessly accommodated around the itinerary where desired.

- Explore the Weta Workshop
- An afternoon swim with wild dolphins
- Visit an iconic, historic local Dunedin brewery
- Explore the culture, art and natural history of New Zealand at Auckland or Wellington (Te Papa) Museum
- Further immerse in nature with visit to a thriving island sanctuary Tiritiri Matangi

Dreaming of more? Ask for details of bespoke private photography extensions to key North Island destinations that can be fully tailored to your interests, pace, and wish list.



Tuatara, Francine Stevens 2025

<https://wildlensnature.tours/>



Australasian Gannets, Francine Stevens 2025