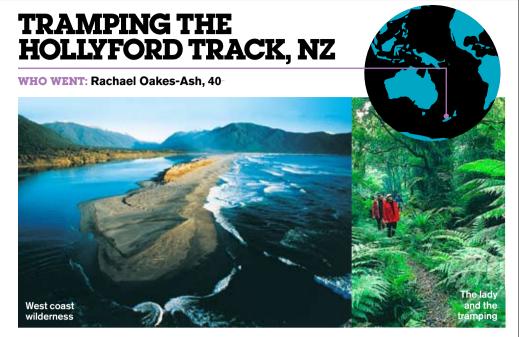
YOU & IMPROVED



INTO THE JUNGLE

My idea of tramping is to cross the road for a latte, but there are no cafes to be found on the Hollyford Track in the glacial valleys of the South Island. I've signed up for the three-day Hollyford Wilderness Journey, and in day one we're expected to do 17 kilometres. Yikes.

On the upside, who knew this was a way to meet men? Seven, to be precise, from various parts of the North and South Island and a couple from across the ditch. As the sole girl (now dubbed Snow White), I reckon things are looking up.

The rugged Hollyford Valley was first explored by Europeans in the 1860s and settled by a complete madman, Davey Gunn, in 1926. Bard (our guide, and the keeper of cake) tells tales of Davey sewing his torn scrotum together with nylon



before rowing 16 kilometres and then trekking another 20 to save victims of a plane crash in this area in 1936. As you do.

The gushing waters of the Hollyford River are pure enough to drink from the bank. As rain sets in, I dream of dry beds and open fires.

Thank the river gods for the home-baked buns and German-inspired stew at Pyke Lodge. It sits on the banks of the river and is said to be haunted. If there are ghosts running along the corridors, I don't hear them through a sound slumber.

WILD RIDES

Day two and more tramping, though only a mere 12km before we board a jetboat to cross Lake McKerrow and the tectonic plates deep below. Glacial waterfalls tumble over sheer cliffs into the lake like giant crystal earrings, and Bard steps in with stories of Jamestown, an abandoned European settlement close by.

Soon we reach the rugged west coast of Martins Bay, home to the Fiordland crested penguin and New Zealand fur seal. Did I mention it's raining again? That, and the black sand, adds to the windswept atmosphere of the bay. We navigate the boulder homes of penguin families, keep our



TRIP NOTES

Getting there

The trip starts with a private bus pick-up in Queenstown or Te Anau and a drive to the Fiordland National Park. Air New

The cost

\$1655 for an adult (\$1235 for a child). This includes all meals, guided walk, jetboat, accommodation, transfers Hollyford Valley Guided Walks at hollyfordtrack.co.nz or phone 0800 832 226.

When to go

The guided walk runs from October to April. The minimum

distance from the seals, and fight over the fire when we reach Martins Bay Lodge.

A new day brings beach exploration and a chopper ride out of here. I shotgun the front seat for a bird's-eye view of the glaciers on top of the peaks leading into Milford Sound.

I'm no Davey Gunn, but I return with the proud smell of an adventurer and, thankfully, no stitches. Will

STOCKISTS

You can do this: sailing

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On your marks

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Don't sweat it

Page 43

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Lights, camera, action

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