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BULLETINS

## **The joy of reconnecting with nature**

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A boat trip in the Milford Sound is just one way to enjoy natural splendours of the South Island  
[image: Mary Ford]

A South Island sojourn in the right weather at the right time can be balm for the soul of the COVID-weary health worker, writes **Mary Ford**

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I recently had the opportunity to tour the South Island with my 14-year-old son in a 1998 Nissan Homy van. We drove down the West Coast, stopping at seal colonies and lighthouses, enjoying Punakaiki and the glaciers, then over Haast Pass to Wānaka and Queenstown. We were incredibly lucky with the weather and loved the quiet roads and campgrounds.

With a 14-year-old along for the ride, we had to do the touristy things in Queenstown: he went ice skating while I enjoyed a relaxing coffee. Then it was off to the Haunted House, which was amazing, I might add.

If that didn't get the heart pumping enough, we went down the luge multiple times in temperatures of about 2°C. The views from the gondola and going down the luge were stunning.

From there, we drove through breathtaking scenery to Te Anau and Milford Sound. Luckily, we had a clear day for our boat trip, even though it was cold (1°C). We didn't see any penguins or dolphins, but did get a view of seals and cheeky keas.

We made it all the way round the bottom of the South Island, including Tuatapere and Gemstone Beach in western Southland. We enjoyed oysters at Bluff (well, I did, anyway; my son had fish and chips).

Then we headed back up the East Coast to Dunedin, called into the Steampunk HQ museum in Oamaru, and drove on to Tekapo Star Gazing. It was an incredible experience. Even the cloudy weather wasn't an issue – we switched to virtual reality. The knowledge of the staff at this facility was astounding.

From there it was off to Christchurch for a few days at the RNZCGP Conference then to Hanmer Springs, Kaikōura and the long drive back to Taranaki.

### **High quality and good timing**

All of the campgrounds we stayed at were clean and tidy, with high-quality facilities. It was a perfect time to travel as there weren't many tourists on the road, which meant we didn't hold anyone up with the old van going up the hills. We met some great people on our trip and saw how beautiful our country truly is.

It had been about 15 years since I had a full three weeks off work and was away from home for the entire time. It was special to spend quality time with my son, one on one in the campervan.

I felt refreshed and rejuvenated going back to work, able to handle whatever was thrown at me.

The past few years of lockdowns and increased workload with COVID-19 have taken their toll on everyone. It's extremely important to get proper breaks to refresh your body, mind and soul.

Too often we take short breaks, sometimes because there is no one to cover for us or to actually do our work. We feel indispensable and short breaks are all we can afford to take. There are definite advantages to taking a decent break and putting things into perspective.

e have an incredible country and we should all try to take the time to see what's out there, spend some time with our loved ones and reconnect with nature.

*Mary Ford is treasurer of the Practice Managers and Administrators Association of New Zealand*

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