

Australia or New Zealand? On a Cruise Around Oceania, You Can See Them Both

By [Jillian Dara](#)



PHOTO: JILLIAN DARA

To someone who's never cruised before, a 19-day itinerary, halfway around the world, could seem...well, *intimidating*. To this first-time cruiser, the idea was liberating.

As a lifelong boater, I've always appreciated admiring land from the sea; sailing around Oceania aboard [Silversea's](#) newest flagship, the [Silver Muse](#), sounded like the ultimate voyage.

The all-suite *Silver Muse* can accommodate 596 passengers, and each will have their own private veranda with uninterrupted views over the water. A majority of itineraries include two to three days of sailing between ports, so these balconies are the perfect place to marvel at the coasts of Asia, Alaska, or Oceania – perhaps while savoring coffee (delivered by your around-the-clock butler) or sipping champagne during sunset on the open ocean.



Silver Muse's onboard sauna offers views of the ocean. PHOTO: JILLIAN DARA

Speaking of that butler — you'll immediately establish a relationship with yours, as they ensure everything from bathroom amenities to pillow choices are to your preference. They'll take note of your favorite beverages and snacks to maintain a stocked fridge throughout the journey, even offering to unpack your suitcase and organize your closet. Outside of your suite, the 1.5:1 guest-to-crew ratio means you'll never be left waiting for service.

This level of meticulous attention was one of the things that lured me aboard, along with the white-glove luxury of the eight restaurants, caviar and champagne service, and spa with steam room, sauna, and on-board acupuncturist. But it was also my first time to Oceania; the appeal of seeing nine ports across three new countries, while only unpacking once, was worth the 24 hours of flights from New York.

My itinerary began in Auckland. New Zealand's largest city is a gateway to some of the country's greatest offerings: a 25-minute drive to Villa Maria winery had me sipping the renowned Marlborough Sauvignon Blanc; 40 minutes and I was dancing on volcanic black sand, scorching under the southern hemisphere's late-summer sun. Less than an hour away, I hiked past waterfalls and striking terrain that had been featured in international films.



Auckland, New Zealand, as seen from *Silver Muse*. PHOTO: JILLIAN DARA

Still, once on board, it was only a matter of hours before I settled into cruise life – nibbling on the daily selection of afternoon canapes delivered to my balcony, as the ship cast the Auckland skyline in its wake. Over an al fresco dinner at [La Terrazza](#), one of two Italian venues on board, I marveled as the fiery sun dissolved into the water and melted like liquid gold.

I awoke with the sun. As I padded out to the balcony in my complimentary slippers, I saw dolphins swimming along the ship's hull, an early morning glow covering the famous Bay of Islands. We headed ashore on the ship's lifeboats, just in time for a weekend market in Paihia – where I perused [pāua jewelry](#) (made from the shimmering, teal and emerald shells of local sea snails), lip balms and body butters made with medicinal Maori herbs, and [local specialties like freshly caught New Zealand oysters](#).



Morning breaks over New Zealand's Bay of Islands. PHOTO: JILLIAN DARA

After arriving back on the ship, I felt a nagging apprehension about spending two days at sea. The feeling faded quickly, though – my time on board was, admittedly, nearly as enjoyable as time ashore. Turns out, a few days at sea isn't *enough* to fit it all in: cooking demos, reading time in the bow library, pool deck lunches featuring regional favorites like kangaroo and emu, and watching the horizon over the Tasman Sea.

"Sydney Harbor is the nicest entry of any harbor in the world," *Muse's* Master Captain, Alessandro Zanello, told me as we made our way to our next port. I made sure I was on deck to enjoy the slow sail in – passing the ritzy homes of Clifton Gardens and Cremorne Point before the ship turned, just slightly, the Sydney Opera House suddenly in full view.



Sydney Harbour and the Opera House. PHOTO: JILLIAN DARA

While Silversea offers variety of shore excursions to choose from in advance, I opted to craft my own [Sydney](#) itinerary, planning ahead with the help of the on-site cruise concierge. An afternoon in Australia's most populous city had me wandering through the artsy neighborhood of Chippendale and strolling along the affluent waterfront of Darling Harbour. I returned to the ship that evening, and on the second day, I headed to Bondi Beach – watching the waves break at the [Bondi Icebergs Club](#), visiting the resort-wear boutiques, and enjoying tacos at [Panama House](#). (FYI: they have bottomless micheladas during weekend brunch.)



The pool at Bondi Icebergs Club, in Sydney. PHOTO: JILLIAN DARA

We sailed on around southern Australia – the region that produces 60 percent of Australia's exported wines – and made our next stop in [Adelaide](#). Before our tour of wine country, Silversea had already showcased some notable local wines at their restaurants; the sommeliers incorporated New Zealand Sauvignon Blanc and Australian Shiraz and Pinot Noir into our meals. A visit to [Adelaide Hills](#) is a [must for the wine enthusiast](#), but there are also favorites closer to port – like [Penfolds](#), only a 25-minute drive away, where I got a taste of the local viticulture while also leaving time to explore downtown.

After a stop at [Kangaroo Island](#) – home to a wildlife sanctuary where we met koalas, dingoes, wallabies, baby kangaroos, and even a variety of snakes – we sailed up Australia's west coast.



Near Albany, on the southern coast of Western Australia. PHOTO: JILLIAN DARA

Two days in the port city of Fremantle allowed enough time to wander the [Fremantle Markets](#) – home every street food imaginable, from kebabs to fried rice – and take the 30-minute train into [Perth](#), capital city of Western Australia. Next, we moored in Geraldton, an industrial port but one that’s close to many areas of striking natural beauty. Planned excursions included a trip to [Kalbarri National Park](#), with its famous bubblegum-pink lakes, as well as a propellor plane tour above Geraldton’s coastline, flying over teal waters and coral reefs before landing to snorkel among them.



PHOTO: JILLIAN DARA

By the time I set sail for [Bali](#), my disembarking port, I was accustomed to the cruise lifestyle – finding myself surprisingly eager to spend three quiet days at sea. It was the best finale I could have asked for: only me, my thoughts, and the sunset.

Silversea offers [many cruise itineraries in Australia and New Zealand](#). [Booking info for the next Auckland to Bali sailing, departing in February 2021 as part of Silversea's World Cruise](#), will be released later this year.

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