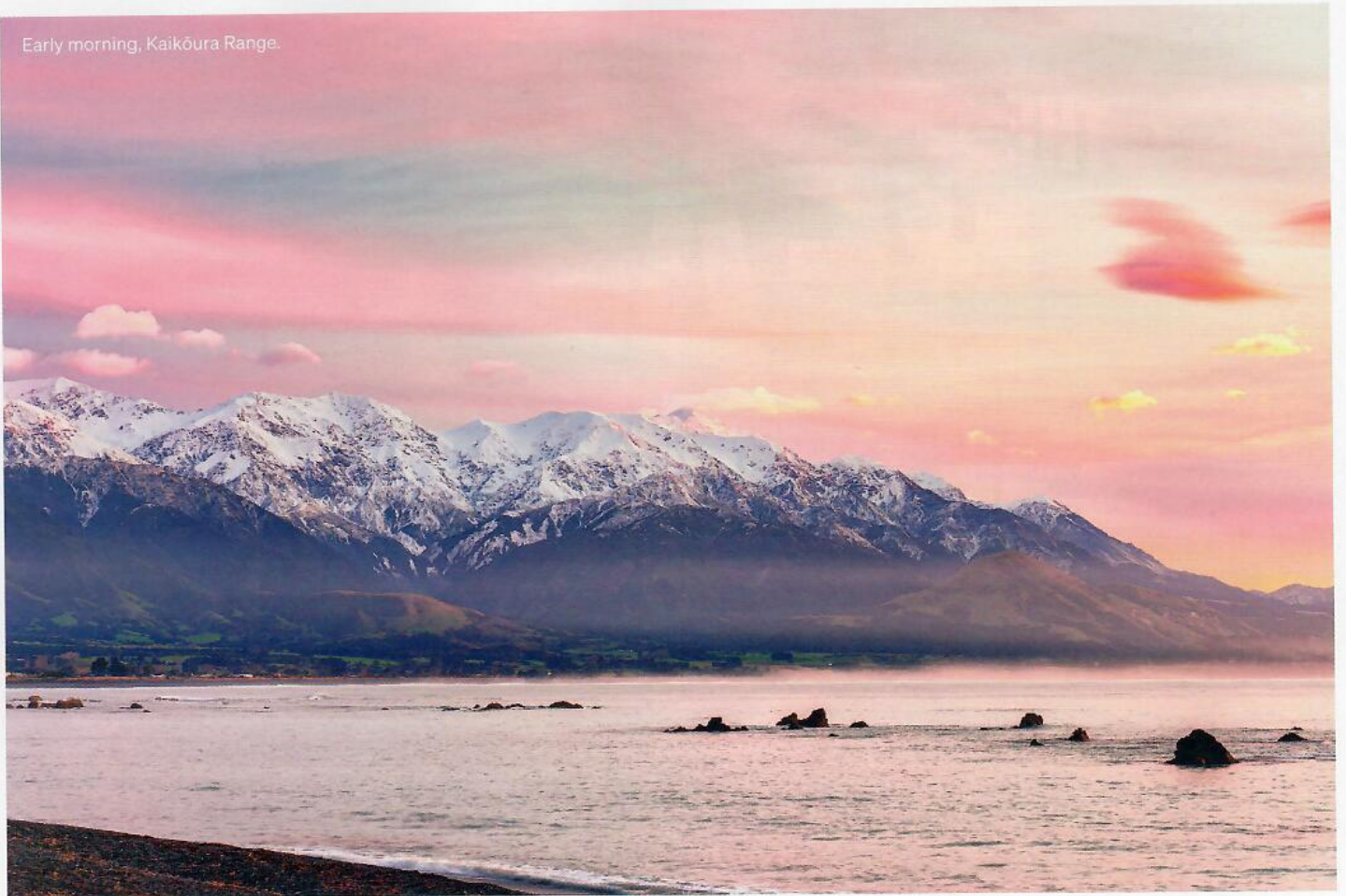


Early morning, Kaikōura Range.



My place

Self-described “slashie”, Madeleine Sami is mad about Kaikōura.

AUCKLAND-BASED Madeleine Sami describes herself as a “slashie” – an actor/writer/director/singer. She has appeared in TV shows and films including *The Breaker Upperers* and *The Great Kiwi Bake Off*.

I was born in Auckland to an Irish mother and Fijian-Indian father, the second oldest of four siblings. My two sisters and I sometimes perform as The Sami Sisters.

Mum got me started early. I was four when I modelled a pair of dungarees in a newspaper. I think I still have the advertisement somewhere.

I'm one of 23 cousins on my mother's side and we have lots on Dad's side too. We were always performing – I'm not the best actor or comedian in my family, I just do it for a job. Growing up, whenever we got together my cousins and I would have talent shows.



I'm pretty sure they all have karaoke machines in their homes.

Despite co-hosting *The Great Kiwi Bake Off*, I'm not a big foodie. But I'm getting more into it as I get older. I have a beautiful oven in my new house, so there's no excuse not to start cooking for friends. I do make a mean roast lamb.

In 2020 after the lockdowns, Tourism New Zealand asked me if I'd front their Do Something New, New Zealand campaign. I was thrilled just to be offered a job at that time, but I also jumped at the chance to travel around this great country.

We spent one night filming in Kaikōura. I'd been there once before as a child – I used to do Irish dancing and we'd driven from Auckland to Christchurch for a dance competition. Back in the day, Kaikōura was the kind of place you stopped to fill up with petrol, but didn't really spend any time there. Which is thankfully not the case today. Doing the tourism campaign was the first time I'd been back and I totally fell in love with the place. There's something incredibly magical about Kaikōura. The food is so insanely fresh, as though they caught it minutes ago, as well as the physical setting of the sea and the mountains. I have this



1. Madeleine Sami with *The Great Kiwi Bake Off* co-host Hayley Sproull. 2. Nins Bin serves sustainably caught crayfish. 3. Giant sperm whales can be spotted close to shore. 4. The Whaler Bar & Restaurant. 5. Grab a coffee at Chiwis Cafe. 6. Native fur seal.

thing about mountains, I really love them. The scenery is so dramatic, it honestly felt like we were on a movie set. We ate crayfish overlooking the water, which was one of those “life really doesn’t get much better than this” moments.

I enjoyed good, solid pub grub at The Whaler Bar & Restaurant on the main drag in Kaikōura. The seafood chowder was memorable, exactly the sort of thing you want when it’s cold. I feel like I don’t have enough pub grub in my life.

The whole crew called into Chiwis Cafe in the West End for the best coffee in town. Make mine a long black. There may also have been a couple of cheese and onion rolls in my order too.

Whoever said that the seal colony in Kaikōura was one of the best wildlife experiences in Aotearoa was right. We went out to the Kaikōura Peninsula Walkway to see dozens, if not hundreds, of seals hanging out in sun. It was an amazing experience.

I stumbled across Little Rock, a cool souvenir/craft shop in Kaikōura where I bought a lobster soft toy for my daughter. I also found a couple of wooden jigsaws – one of Jacinda Ardern and one of Ashley Bloomfield, which I bought for myself. They’re pretty cool.

I travel a bit for my job. I recently spent five-and-a-half months in Tasmania filming *Deadloch*. I’d been to Hobart once before to perform in a festival when I was 20, but didn’t get the chance to see the country. This time we filmed in a small town and I got to experience Tassie’s raw beauty.



I used to buy a fridge magnet in every place I visited, then I realised I had too many and I actually wanted to see my fridge. I still live with a mantra of buying something in each place I’ve been, even if it’s just a tea towel or postcard. ☺

Air New Zealand operates daily flights to Christchurch and Blenheim, with connections across the domestic network. Kaikōura is a two-and-a-half-hour drive from Christchurch, or one hour, 40 minutes from Blenheim.

