

Tasmania



Forever the butt of mainland jokes, Tasmania has shrugged off the stigma of its isolation – the whole world seems to be discovering the physically dazzling, unique and accessible island. Suitably impressed, and a tad sheepish, the rest of Australia has finally stopped laughing.

'Tassie' (as it's affectionately known) has it all: vast, uninhabited slabs of wilderness, bountiful wildlife, gourmet food and wine, a thriving arts scene and new-found urban cool. So why have locals been so slow to cash in? The answer's buried in a grim colonial and indigenous history. Don't be surprised if you find yourself crossed with a mournful spirit or an inexplicable sense of sadness. The ghosts of the past are real but it's taken until now for Tasmania to face them.

This legacy takes the form of gracious guesthouses, intriguing archaeological sites and an independent 'islander' sensibility. City-slickers will find urban virtues (plush hotels, gastronomic temples, rockin' music rooms) delivered with less attitude and more charm than most mainland cities. Foodies will weep over the wine, cheer for the cheese and sing about the seafood.

Out and about, the island's natural treasures live up to the hype – bushwalking, cycling, rafting and kayaking opportunities abound. Don't miss curvaceous Wineglass Bay, craggy Cradle Mountain and the heaven-sent Huon Valley. Wild places like these are the essence of Tasmania, and their silent, forgiving presence is slowly liberating the island from the binds of history.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Elbow through the crowded stalls at Hobart's Saturday morning **Salamanca Market** (p619)
- Disappear into the wilderness along the **Overland Track** (p694), the essential Tasmanian bushwalk
- Pay your respects at **Port Arthur** (p649), the island's infamous convict site
- Sweat it out on the hike into **Wineglass Bay** (p656), Australia's most photogenic beach
- Ponder the kooky geology and bucolic splendour around Wynyard's **Table Cape** (p682) and **The Nut** (p683) at Stanley
- Hover high over Launceston's gorgeous **Cataract Gorge** (p662) on the chairlift
- Wobble through the vineyards of the **Tamar Valley** (p669)
- Overdose on historic sandstone buildings in the **Midlands** (p650)



■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ POPULATION: 484,700

■ AREA: 68,332 SQ KM

HISTORY

The first European to spy Tasmania was Dutch navigator Abel Tasman, who bumped into it in 1642. He named this new place Van Diemen's Land after the Dutch East Indies' governor. European contact with Tasmania increased after the British arrived at Sydney Cove in 1788 – Van Diemen's Land was a convenient pit-stop en route to New South Wales. In 1798 Matthew Flinders circumnavigated Van Diemen's Land, proving it was an island.

In 1803 Risdon Cove, on the Derwent River, became the site of Australia's second British colony. One year later the settlement moved to the present site of Hobart, where fresh water ran plentifully off Mt Wellington.

Convicts accompanied the first settlers as labourers, but penal settlements weren't built until later: on Sarah Island in Macquarie Harbour in 1822, on Maria Island in 1825 and at Port Arthur in 1830. In subsequent decades, Van Diemen's Land loomed apocalyptically in British convicts' minds – the most fearsome, terrible of destinations. By the 1850s, every second islander was a convict, and Hobart Town and Launceston festered with disease, prostitution and drunken lawlessness.

In 1856 convict transportation to Van Diemen's Land was abolished. In an effort to escape the stigma of its horrendous penal reputation, Van Diemen's Land renamed itself Tasmania, after the Dutchman.

Gold was discovered in the 1870s, fevered prospectors exploring much of the state in search of glimmering wealth. So began the

exploitation of Tasmania's natural resources, a pattern locked on a collision course with environmental concerns. In the 1960s and '70s bushwalkers and conservationists fought unsuccessfully to stop the hydroelectric flooding of Lake Pedder. In the 1980s this issue flared again – this time the fledgling Green movement successfully campaigned against flooding the Franklin River for similar purposes. The tug-of-war between conservation and industry (especially logging and mining) remains *the* most divisive issue on Tasmanian political, economic and social agendas. See the boxed text (p692) for information on deforestation in Tasmania.

Indigenous History

The story of Tasmania's indigenous people since European settlement is a tragic one. Isolated when the land bridge to Victoria drowned beneath rising sea levels 10,000 years ago, the island's Aborigines developed a distinct, sustainable, seasonal culture of hunting, fishing and gathering.

When European pastoralists arrived, they fenced off sections of fertile land for farming. As the Aborigines lost more and more of their traditional hunting grounds, battles erupted between blacks and whites, the so-called 'Black Wars'. In 1828 martial law was declared by Lieutenant-Governor Arthur, and Aboriginal tribes were systematically murdered, incarcerated or forced at gunpoint from districts settled by whites. Many more succumbed to European diseases.

TASMANIA FACTS

Eat Sunset fish 'n' chips anywhere by the water (trevalva, of course)

Drink A 10-ounce (285mL) glass of beer (Cascade in the south, Boag's in the north) or a perky bottle of Tasmanian Pinot Noir

Read Richard Flanagan's *Death of a River Guide*, Henry Reynolds' *Fate of a Free People* and David Owen's *Thylacine*

Listen to Monique Brumby's *Thylacine*, Australian Crawl's 'Errol' (after local lad, Errol Flynn) off *Sirocco* and Augie March's 'Mt Wellington Reverie' from *Moo You Bloody Choir*

Watch *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1998), *For the Term of His Natural Life* (television series, 1983), *The Tale of Ruby Rose* (1988)

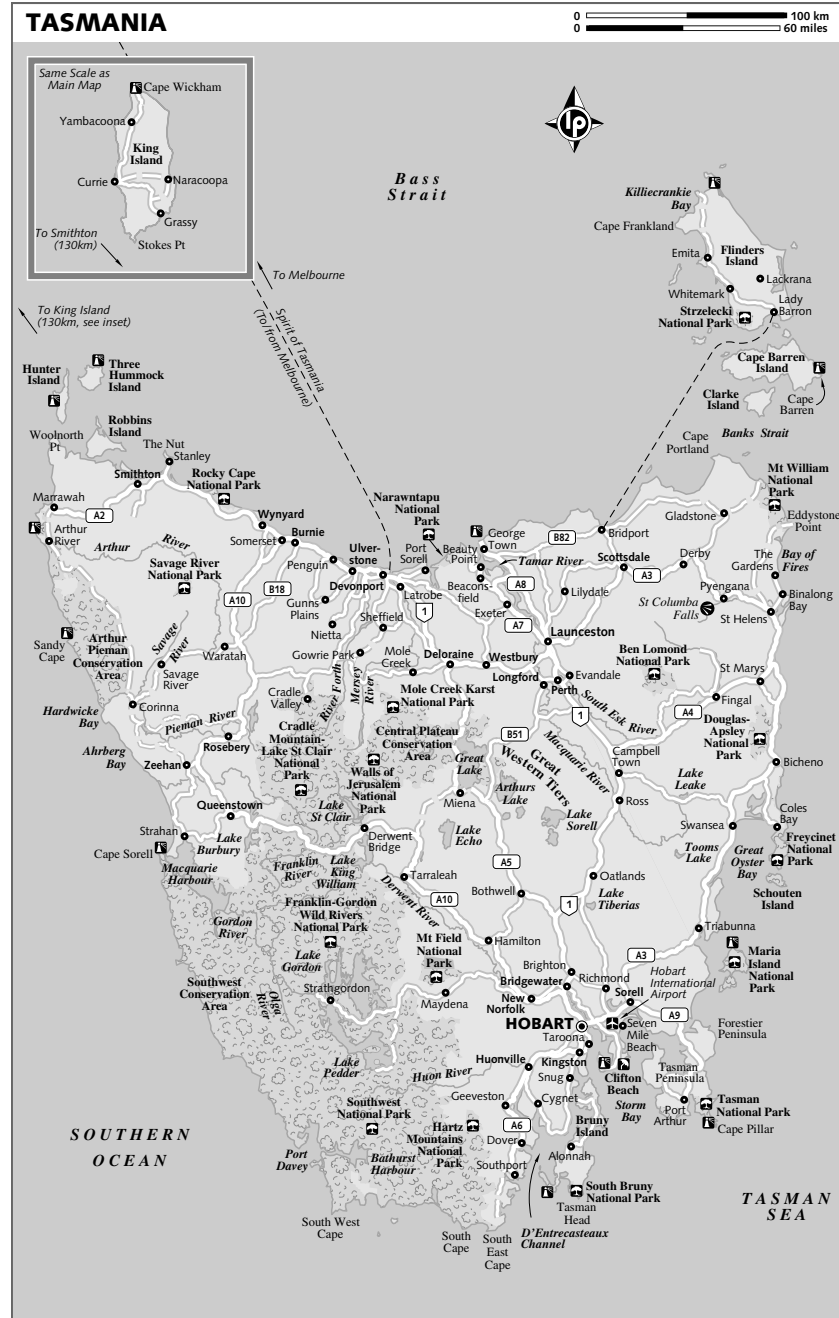
Avoid Log trucks, road kill, forgetting your wetsuit

Locals' nickname Taswegians

Swim at Wineglass Bay (p656) in Freycinet National Park (as if you could *not* come here!), Binalong Bay (p659) and Boat Harbour Beach (p682)

Strangest festival The National Penny Farthing Championships at Evandale (p672) – dozens of enthusiasts race in the face of sensible cycling

Tackiest tourist attraction The Smurf-like model village of Lower Crackpot at Tasmazia (p678)



Between 1829 and 1834, a misguided attempt to resettle, 'civilise' and Christianise Tasmania's remaining indigenous population on Flinders Island occurred. Most of them died of despair, poor food or respiratory disease. Of the 135 taken to the island, only 47 survived to be transferred to Oyster Cove in Tasmania's south in 1847. Within 32 years, the entire Aboriginal population at Oyster Cove had perished.

European sealers had been working in Bass Strait since 1798 and, although they occasionally raided tribes along the coast, their contact with Aboriginal people was mainly based on trade. Aboriginal women were also traded and many sealers settled on Bass Strait islands with these women and had families.

By 1847 an Aboriginal community, with a lifestyle based on both Aboriginal and European ways, had emerged on Flinders and other islands in the Furneaux Group. Although the last full-blooded Tasmanian Aborigine died in the 19th century, the strength of this community helped save the race from oblivion. Today, thousands of descendants of this community survive in Tasmania.

For more information contact the **Aboriginal Heritage Office** (☎ 1300 135 513, 03-6216 4471; www.tahl.tas.gov.au), or see the excellent *Deep Time: Continuing Tasmanian Aboriginal Culture* brochure available at the Hobart Visitor Information Centre (p616).

GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

Tasmania's population is concentrated on the northern and southeastern coasts, where fertile, undulating countryside and accessible harbours invited European settlement. By contrast, the southwest and west coasts are wild, desolate and remote – monstrous seas, howling winds and endless rains pummel the shore. Inland, the southwest's rainforests and mountains form one of the world's last great wilderness areas, almost all of it World Heritage-listed. Over on the east coast it's dry, sunny and crowded with holidaymakers.

Tasmania has four distinct seasons, although storms can deliver wintry conditions at any time of year. Summer days are warm rather than hot; nights are cool rather than balmy. Autumn days are crisp and sunny, with occasional frosty nights. Winter is wet, cold and stormy, particularly in the west. Overcast skies cloak the east, despite its lower rainfall, but in the north and south, clear, windless

winter days sparkle with promise. Snow settles on the higher peaks but it's usually only deep enough for the state's two ski resorts to operate spasmodically. Spring is windy and storms still sweep the island, but the sun shines between showers and hints at returning summer.

INFORMATION

The main tourism authority is **Tourism Tasmania** (☎ 1300 655 145, 03-6230 8235; www.discovertasmania.com), which disseminates loads of information and has a useful website. The government-operated **Tasmania Travel Centre** (☎ 1300 780 867; www.tastravel.com.au) provides information on all things Tasmanian and books accommodation, tours and transport.

In Tasmania itself, there are helpful **visitor information centres** in most major towns, overflowing with brochures including the free newspapers *Tasmanian Travelways*, *Treasure Island* and *Explore Tasmania*, all containing state-wide listings of accommodation, events, public transport and vehicle hire.

Accommodation around the state is clearly signposted with blue and yellow signs; major sights adopt brown and white signs.

Other useful information sources: **Parks & Wildlife Service** (☎ 1300 315 513; www.parks.tas.gov.au) Details walks, camp sites, activities and facilities in the state's magical national parks and reserves. **Royal Automobile Club of Tasmania** (RACT; ☎ 13 27 22; www.ract.com.au) Roadside automotive assistance, road weather updates and general travel information.

NATIONAL PARKS

If you want high-quality national parks, you're in the right state! Tasmania has a greater percentage of land that is national park or reserve than any other Australian state. Tasmania currently has 19 national parks, comprising more than 1.4 million hectares – nearly 21% of the island's land area.

In 1982 Tasmania's four largest national parks (Southwest, Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers, Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair and Walls of Jerusalem) and much of the Central Plateau were placed on the Unesco World Heritage list. This listing acknowledges that these parks combined are one of the last great temperate wilderness areas left in the world.

An entry fee is charged for all of Tasmania's national parks; passes are needed whether there's a collection booth or not. Passes are available at most park entrances, at many visi-

VOLUNTEERING WITH THE PARKS & WILDLIFE SERVICE

The Tasmanian government's **Parks & Wildlife Service** (www.parks.tas.gov.au/volunteer) runs extensive volunteer and community partnership programs throughout the state, generally involving maintenance work in Tassie's national parks. Tasks range from building repair and renovation to wildlife management, weed control, replanting and track maintenance. Interested? Check out the Volunteer Calendar on the website, or contact the Volunteers Facilitator in your region (north, south or northwest).

tor information centres, on board the *Spirit of Tasmania* ferries, and at the state-wide offices of **Service Tasmania** (☎ 1300 135 513; www.service.tas.gov.au).

At the time of research, a 24-hour pass to any number of parks costs \$20 per car (including up to eight passengers) or \$10 per individual (arriving by bus, or for bushwalkers, cyclists and motorcyclists). The best value for most travellers is the eight-week pass, which costs \$50 per vehicle or \$30 per individual.

The **Parks & Wildlife Service** (www.parks.tas.gov.au) website is loaded with information. In the peak season (mid-December to mid-February) rangers run free family-friendly activities at the major national parks, including walks, talks and slide shows.

ACTIVITIES

For information on activities, adventure tourism and tour operators, see the following websites:

Networking Tasmanian Adventures (www.tasmanianadventures.com.au) Lists operators and activities, categorised as either 'wild' (scuba diving, white-water rafting, abseiling etc) or 'mild' (fishing, scenic flights, river cruises etc).

Parks & Wildlife Service (www.parks.tas.gov.au) Click on 'Outdoor Recreation'.

Tourism Tasmania (www.discovertasmania.com) Click on 'Things to Do & See'.

Bushwalking

The best-known of Tasmania's many superb bushwalks is the six-day, 65km Overland Track through Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park (p694). Another epic is the six-to eight-day, 85km South Coast Track.

Lonely Planet's *Walking in Australia* has info on some of Tasmania's best (longer) walks. Even if you're not growing a beard and going bush for weeks on end, you can still experience Tassie's famed wilderness on foot – the Parks & Wildlife Service's *60 Great Short Walks* brochure (free from visitor information centres) lists the state's best quick ambles, with durations from 10 minutes to all day. Check the **Parks & Wildlife Service** (www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/bushwalking.html) website for more info.

On long walks remember that in any Tasmanian season a beautiful day can quickly turn ugly, so warm clothing, waterproof gear, a tent, map and compass are essential. Tasmap produces excellent maps available from visitor information centres. In Hobart you'll also find them at **Service Tasmania** (Map p618; ☎ 1300 135 513; www.service.tas.gov.au; 134 Macquarie St; ☎ 8.15am-5pm Mon-Fri) and the **Tasmanian Map Centre** (Map p618; ☎ 03-6231 9043; www.map-centre.com.au; 100 Elizabeth St; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat), as well as state-wide outdoor stores.

Shelves full of books have been written specifically for walkers in Tasmania, while shops selling outdoor gear proliferate in Hobart and Launceston. Some youth hostels also hire out equipment and/or run guided bushwalking tours.

Fishing

For all things fishy in Tasmania, go to www.fishing.tas.gov.au.

The sparsely populated Lake Country on Tasmania's Central Plateau features glacial lakes, crystal-clear streams and world-class trout fishing. There are dozens of operators that can help you organise guides, lessons or fishing trips – **Trout Guides & Lodges Tasmania** (www.troutguidest Tasmania.com.au) is a great starting point.

Meanwhile on the east coast, ocean charter fishing is big business. See www.fishnet.com.au for a directory of operators.

Rafting & Sea-Kayaking

Tasmania is famed for white-knuckle, white-water rafting on the Franklin River (p691). See the 'Franklin River Rafting Notes' at www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/boating for a raft of priceless advice. Other rivers offering rapid thrills include the Derwent (upstream from Hobart) the Picton (southwest of Hobart) and the Mersey in the north.

Sea-kayaking centres include Kettering southeast of Hobart (p641), from where you can explore the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, Bruny Island and the southwest coast; and Coles Bay, the launching place for Freycinet Peninsula explorations (p656). You can also have a paddle around the Hobart docks (p621). See the 'Leave No Wake' notes at www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/misk for how to tackle sea-kayaking sustainably.

Sailing

The D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Huon River south of Hobart are wide, deep and tantalising places to set sail, with more inlets and harbours than you could swing a boom at. For casual berths in Hobart (overnight or weekly), contact the **Royal Yacht Club of Tasmania** (☎ 03-6223 4599; www.ryct.org.au) in Sandy Bay, or the **Hobart Ports Corporation** (☎ 03-6235 1000; www.hpc.com.au), which manages berths in the city.

If you're an experienced sailor, hire a yacht from **Yachting Holidays** (☎ 03-6224 3195; www.yachtingholidays.com.au), based in Hobart. Charter of a six-berth vessel is \$700 per day, with reduced rates for long rentals or in the off-peak (April to November) period. Skippered charter is also available.

Scuba Diving

There are some eye-popping dive sites on the east coast, including a new artificial site created by the scuttling of the *Troy D* off the west coast of Maria Island; see www.troyd.com.au for updates. Rocky Cape on the north coast offers marine life aplenty, while shipwrecks abound around King and Flinders Islands.

Tasmanian diving courses are considerably cheaper than on the mainland. Contact operators in Eaglehawk Neck (p648), Bicheno (p658), King Island (p697) and Flinders Island (p699). Equipment can be hired from licensed divers from dive shops around the state – **Dive Tasmania** (www.divetasmania.com.au) lists accredited operators and shops.

Surfing

Tasmania has dozens of wicked surf beaches, but the water is (pardon our French) bloody cold – steamer wetsuits mandatory! Close to Hobart, the most reliable spots are Clifton Beach and Goats Beach (unsigned) en route to South Arm. The southern beaches on Bruny Island (p643), particularly Cloudy Bay,

SYDNEY TO HOBART YACHT RACE

Arguably the world's greatest and most treacherous open-ocean yacht race, the **Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race** (www.rolexsydneyhobart.com) winds up at Hobart's Constitution Dock around New Year's Eve. As the storm-battered maxis limp across the finish line, champagne corks pop and weary sailors turn the town upside down. On New Year's Day, find a sunny spot by the harbour, munch some lunch from the Taste of Tasmania food festival (p623) and count spinnakers on the river. New Year's resolutions? What New Year's resolutions?

offer consistent swell. The east coast from Bicheno north to St Helens has solid beach breaks when conditions are working. At Marawah (p684) on the west coast the waves are often towering – hardcore corduroy all the way to South America! Australia's heaviest wave, Shipstern Bluff off the south coast, isn't recommended for anyone other than serious pros. Gnarly...

Websites with surf reports and conditions updates include www.surftasmania.com and www.tassiesurf.com.

Swimming

The north and east coasts offer sheltered, squeaky white-sand beaches with excellent swimming, although the water can be a tad nippy. Our favourite beach-bumming spots include Wineglass Bay (p656), Binalong Bay outside St Helens (p659), and the small (but perfectly formed) Boat Harbour Beach (p682).

For safe sea swimming around Hobart, skip the urban beaches and head south to Kingston or Blackmans Bay beaches (p641), or east to Seven Mile Beach (p641). On the west coast, the surf can be ferocious and the beaches aren't patrolled – play it safe.

TOURS

Travel agents can arrange package deals from the mainland including transport to Tasmania (by air or sea), car rental and accommodation. Contact Tourism Tasmania or the Tasmania Travel Centre (p608).

Once you're on the island, tour operators can shunt you around to the highlights or provide you with authentic wilderness or activity-

based experiences. Most trips depart from Hobart, but some operators use Devonport or Launceston as a base. Businesses are listed in the relevant sections of this chapter. Some other suggestions:

Bottom Bits Bus (☎ 1800 777 103, 03-6224 2316; www.bottombitsbus.com.au) One- to 10-day small-group trips out of Hobart, most of which take in the far south. Affiliated with Smash & Grab (see below).

Escape Tours Tasmania (☎ 1800 133 555, www.escapetourstasmania.com.au) One-, four- and five-day tours of essential Tassie highlights (Cradle Mountain, Freycinet National Park, Port Arthur etc).

Island Cycle Tours (☎ 1300 880 334, 03-6234 4951; www.islandcycletours.com) Hobart-based guided cycling trips – Mt Wellington descents, day trips, combined walking/cycling and cycling/sea-kayaking tours, and gourmet bike rides. Affiliated with Under Down Under (see below).

Smash & Grab (☎ 1800 777 103; www.tourstasmania.com.au) Hobart-based one-, two-, three- and five-day tours to the hot spots (Port Arthur, Cradle Mountain, Wineglass Bay etc) with multilingual guides.

Tasmanian Expeditions (☎ 1300 666 856, 03-6339 3999; www.tas-ex.com) Excellent range of state-wide activity-based tours, from half-day to 16 days: bushwalking, river-rafting, rock climbing, cycling and kayaking, or a combo of these.

Tasmanian Safaris (☎ 1300 882 415, 03-6395 1577; www.tasafari.com.au) Eco-accredited three-day eastern tours (from Hobart), five-day western tours (from Launceston), or nine-day combined tours from either city.

Tiger Trails (☎ 03-6234 3931; www.tigertrails.green.net.au) Green-focused group offering guided walks in the Tarkine wilderness, the Walls of Jerusalem and the Overland Track.

Under Down Under (☎ 1800 064 726, 03-6362 2237; www.underdownunder.com.au) Nature-based, backpacker-friendly trips, including two- to nine-day tours of the east coast, west coast and the Tarkine wilderness. Tour fees refunded for photographed thylacine sightings!

TASTE OF TRAVEL

A highlight of any Tasmanian trip is sampling tasty local fare, especially the fresh seafood, luscious fruits, dairy products and excellent cool-climate wines. If you intend expanding your waistline while you're here, three recommended publications are Graeme Philip's *Eat Drink Tasmania*, updated annually (\$15 from visitor information centres, newsagents and bookshops) and *Tasmania's Cellar Door & Farm Gate Guide*, plus *Cool Wine & Food*, *Cool Wilderness* – a series of free Tourism Tasmania brochures that are available at visitor information centres and online (www.discovertasmania.com); click on 'Things to Do & See', then 'Wine & Food'. These publications detail the best restaurants, cafés, wineries and farm stores around the state, classified by region, along with info on annual foodie/boozy events. The Cellar Door brochure also has a helpful chart detailing when particular foods are in season. Tasty...

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Stringent rules are in place to protect the disease-free status of Tasmania's agriculture. Visitors must discard all plants, fruit and vegetables prior to their arrival (even if you're only travelling from mainland Australia), or face the wrath of keen-nosed quarantine beagles.

Air

There are no direct international flights to/from Tasmania. Airlines flying between Tasmania and mainland Australia:

Jetstar (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) Direct flights from Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane to Hobart and Launceston.

Qantas (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) Direct flights from Sydney and Melbourne to Hobart, and from Melbourne to Launceston. Qantalink (the regional subsidiary) flies between Melbourne and Devonport.

Regional Express (REX; ☎ 13 17 13; www.regionalexpress.com.au) Flies from Melbourne to Burnie and King Island.

Virgin Blue (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) Direct flights from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Adelaide to Hobart, and from Melbourne and Sydney to Launceston.

Regular domestic fares are available on Qantas, while Virgin Blue and Jetstar offer some bonza fares, usually (but not always) cheaper than Qantas.

Boat

The two ferries operated by **Spirit of Tasmania** (☎ 1800 634 906; www.spiritoftasmania.com.au) cruise nightly between Melbourne and Devonport in both directions (passing like ships in the night), usually departing at 9pm and taking 10 hours shore to shore. Additional daytime sailings are scheduled during peak and

shoulder seasons. Fares depend on whether you're travelling in peak (mid-December to late January), shoulder (late January to April, and September to mid-December) or off-peak season (May to August). There's a range of cabin and seat options, and child, student, pensioner and senior discounts apply. Some cabins are wheelchair-accessible. And you can bring your car! If you're prone to seasickness, be warned that Bass Strait ain't no millpond.

The Devonport terminal is on The Esplanade in East Devonport; the Melbourne terminal is at Station Pier in Port Melbourne. Note that the Sydney-Devonport service ceased operating in mid-2006. Standard one-way adult fares are as follows; limited 'Ship Saver' fares are cheaper.

Fare type	Peak (\$)	Shoulder (\$)	Off-peak (\$)
Cruise seat	160	130	123
Business-class seat	198	173	163
4-berth cabin	230	211	202
Twin cabin	275	235	225
Daytime sailings (seats only)	160	114	109
Standard vehicles & campervans up to 5m length	69	69	69
Bicycles	7	7	7

GETTING AROUND

Air

Air travel within the state isn't common, but bushwalkers sometimes use air services to/from the southwest. **Par Avion** (☎ 1800 144 460, 03-6248 5390; www.paravion.com.au) and **Tasair** (☎ 1800 062 900, 03-6248 5088; www.tasair.com.au) fly between Hobart and remote Melaleuca (for the South Coast Track) for \$155 and \$175 one way respectively.

There are also air links from mainland Tasmania to King Island (p698) and Flinders Island (p699).

Bicycle

The weather can be hit-and-miss, but Tasmania is a manageable size for exploring by bicycle; you can hire touring bikes in both Hobart (p638) and Launceston (p668). If you plan to cycle between Hobart and Launceston via either coast (the east coast is a cycling favourite), allow 10 to 14 days. For a full 'Lap of the Map', allow 18 to 28 days.

WARNINGS FOR DRIVERS

There are a few road hazards to keep in mind as you trundle around the Apple Isle. Watch out for wildlife and, if possible, avoid driving between dusk and dawn when marsupials are most active (road kill in Tasmania is an omnipresent misery). If you do hit and injure an animal, contact the Parks & Wildlife Service's **Nature Conservation Branch** (☎ 1300 135 513, 03-6233 6556) for advice.

One-lane bridges on country roads, and log trucks piled high and speeding around sharp corners, also demand caution. In cold weather, be wary of 'black ice': an invisible layer of ice over the bitumen, especially on shady mountain passes.

If you're planning a trip on the island, **Bicycle Tasmania** (www.biketassie.org.au) is a solid source of information, including state-wide bike shop listings.

Bus

Tasmania has a reasonable bus network connecting major towns and centres, but the weekend services are infrequent. The main bus lines are **Redline Coaches** (☎ 1300 360 000, 03-6336 1446; www.tasredline.com.au) and **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520, 03-6230 8900; www.tassielink.com.au) – between the two of them they cover most of the state. Tassielink's *Main Road Express* aligns with Bass Strait ferry schedules; an early-morning express bus service runs from Devonport to Launceston and to Hobart, returning in the opposite direction in the afternoon to meet the evening boat departures. Some other typical one-way fares appear below.

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hrs)
Devonport-Launceston	\$20	1½
Hobart-Launceston	\$31	2½
Hobart-Strahan	\$68	6-7
Hobart-Dover	\$20	1¾
Hobart-Bicheno	\$32	3
Launceston-Bicheno	\$30	2½
Launceston-Strahan	\$74	7-8

Smaller operators service important tourist routes (eg between Bicheno and Coles Bay, or within the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair region); see the relevant chapter sections for details.

TRAVEL PASSES

Tassielink has an *Explorer Pass* for seven/10/14/21 days that must be used within 10/15/20/30 days and costs \$172/205/237/280. Available from travel agents or directly from Tassielink, the pass is valid on all scheduled services for unlimited kilometres. Ask for timetables in advance or check Tassielink's website to plan your itinerary.

Similarly, Redline offers the *Tassie Pass* for unlimited travel for seven/10/14/21 days at a cost of \$135/160/185/219. The Redline network isn't as comprehensive as Tassielink's, so compare timetables and assess your options.

Car, Campervan & Motorcycle

Travelling by car is the way to go in Tasmania. You can bring vehicles across on the ferry from the mainland, but renting may be cheaper (particularly for shorter trips); rates are usually more affordable here than on the mainland. If you're renting, always ask if you'll be covered for driving on unsealed roads (quite a few of Tasmania's natural attractions are dirt-road destinations).

Big international players like Avis, Budget, Europcar and Thrifty have booking desks at airports and in major towns, with standard rates from \$70 to \$80 for high-season, multi-day small-car hire. By booking well in advance, rates can plummet to \$60 per day for one week's hire (outside high season).

Small local firms rent older cars for as little as \$29 a day, depending on season and rental length. They'll often ask for a bond of upwards of \$300. Some companies let you collect your car from the airport or ferry terminal. Operators include: **Lo-Cost Auto Rent** (www.locostautorent.com) Hobart (Map p618; ☎ 03-6231 0550; 105 Murray St); Launceston (Map p664; ☎ 03-6334 3437; 80 Tamar St); Devonport (Map p674; ☎ 03-6427 0796; 5 Murray St) **Rent-a-Bug** (www.rentabug.com.au) Hobart (Map p618; ☎ 03-6231 0300; 105 Murray St); Launceston

(Map p664; ☎ 03-6334 3437; 80 Tamar St); Devonport (Map p674; ☎ 03-6427 9034; 5 Murray St)

Selective Car Rentals (Map p618; ☎ 1800 300 102, 03-6234 3311; www.selectivecarrentals.com.au; 47 Bathurst St, Hobart)

Motorcycling in Tassie is a blast, with well surfaced roads and relatively light traffic. Contact **Tasmanian Motorcycle Hire** (☎ 03-6391 9139; www.tasmotorcyclehire.com.au) if you're getting that *Born to be Wild* feeling.

Campervanning is hugely popular in Tasmania, with hundreds of white vans careening around the roads. A bed and a bus rolled into one, they're an economical option (from around \$80 per day). See *Driving Australia* (p73) and the boxed text (below) for more information. Reliable rental companies include:

Britz (☎ 1800 468 082; www.britz.com.au)

Maui (☎ 1300 363 800; www.maui.com.au)

Tasmanian Campervan Hire (☎ 03-6248 9623; www.tascamper.com)

HOBART

☎ 03 / pop 202,138

Australia's second-oldest city and southern-most capital, Hobart lies in the foothills of Mt Wellington, humping reluctantly down to the slate-grey waters of the Derwent River. The town's rich colonial heritage and natural charms are accented by a spirited, rooty atmosphere: festivals, top-notch restaurants and hip urban bars abound. Laid-back to near-horizontal, Hobartians hang out in cafés joking about the daily rush-minute, dressed ready to plunge into the wilderness at any moment. On summer afternoons the sea breeze blows and yachts tack across the river; on winter mornings the pea-soup 'Bridgewater Jerry' fog lifts to reveal the snow-capped summit of the mountain.

CAMPERVANNING IN TASMANIA

Check your rear-view mirror on any far-flung Tasmanian road and you'll likely see a shiny white campervan packed with liberated travellers, surfboards and portable BBQs cruising along behind you. Campervanning around Tassie has really taken off – it's flexible, affordable, you can leave the trampled tourist trails behind and crank up the AC/DC as loud as hell! Most towns have a campground or caravan park where you can park for around \$20 a night, or seek out a remote beach/mountain/valley and dream in isolation. One warning: some rental companies aren't thrilled about their vehicles traversing unsealed roads (Bruny Island, Friendly Beaches, Mt William National Park etc). To avoid any acrimony, read the fine print and discuss your itinerary with them first.

HISTORY

The original inhabitants of the area were the semi-nomadic Mouheneer tribe. Van Diemen's Land's first European settlers pitched tent at Risdon Cove on the Derwent's eastern shore in 1803, but relocated a year later to the site of present-day Hobart.

When Britain's gaols overflowed with sinners in the 1820s, Hobart's isolation loomed as a major selling point. Tens of thousands of convicts were chained into rotting hulks and shipped down to Hobart Town to serve their sentences in vile conditions. In the 1850s, Hobart's sailors, soldiers, whalers and rascallions boozed and brawled shamelessly in countless harbour-side pubs.

The city has only ever partially sobered up, but today's criminals are more likely to be white-collared than bad company at the bar. Skeletons rattle in closets, but Hobart's shimmering beauty and relaxed vibe make it easy to forget they're there.

ORIENTATION

The city centre is compact and navigable, with a grid of one-way streets encircling the Elizabeth St Mall. The visitor information centre, banks and the main post office are on Elizabeth St; the main shopping area extends west from the Mall.

Salamanca Place, an impressive row of sandstone Georgian warehouses, lines the southern fringe of Sullivan's Cove, the city's harbour and social epicentre. Just south of Salamanca Place (usually just called 'Salamanca') is Battery Point, Hobart's increasingly gentrified early colonial district. South of Battery Point is cashed-up Sandy Bay, home to the University of Tasmania and the landmark/eyecore Wrest Point Casino.

The northern side of the city is bounded by the Queen's Domain (usually just called 'The Domain'), a bushy hillock that harbours the Botanical Gardens. From here the Tasman Bridge arcs across the river to the eastern shore and the airport (16km from the CBD).

Maps

The visitor information centre supplies basic city maps. For more comprehensive coverage try the *Hobart & Surrounds Street Directory* (\$18) or the UBD *Tasmania Country Road Atlas* (\$31), available at larger newsagents and bookshops. Travellers with disabilities should

check out the useful *Hobart CBD Mobility Map* from the visitor information centre.

Maps sources in Hobart:

Hobart Visitor Information Centre (Map p618; ☎ 6230 8233; www.hobarttravelcentre.com.au; cnr Davey & Elizabeth Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, Sun & public holidays; ⓘ) Brochures, maps and information.

Service Tasmania (Map p618; ☎ 1300 135 513; www.service.tas.gov.au; 134 Macquarie St; ☎ 8.15am-5pm Mon-Fri)

Tasmanian Map Centre (Map p618; ☎ 6231 9043; www.map-centre.com.au; 100 Elizabeth St; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) Bushwalking maps and Lonely Planet guides.

INFORMATION

Bookshops

Fullers Bookshop (Map p618; ☎ 6224 2488; www.fullersbookshop.com.au; 140 Collins St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Great range of literature and travel guides, plus a café upstairs.

Hobart Book Shop (Map p618; ☎ 6223 1803; www.hobartbookshop.com.au; 22 Salamanca Sq; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) Tasmania-centric titles, Tassie writers and second-hand selections.

Wilderness Society Shop (Map p618; ☎ 6234 9370; www.wilderness.org.au; Shop 8, The Galleria, 33 Salamanca Pl; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun) Environmental publications, wildlife posters, DVDs, maps and calendars.

Emergency

Hobart Police Station (Map p618; ☎ 6230 2111; www.police.tas.gov.au; 43 Liverpool St; ☎ 24hr)

Police, fire & ambulance (☎ 000)

Internet Access

Expect to pay \$5 to \$6 per hour at internet cafés:

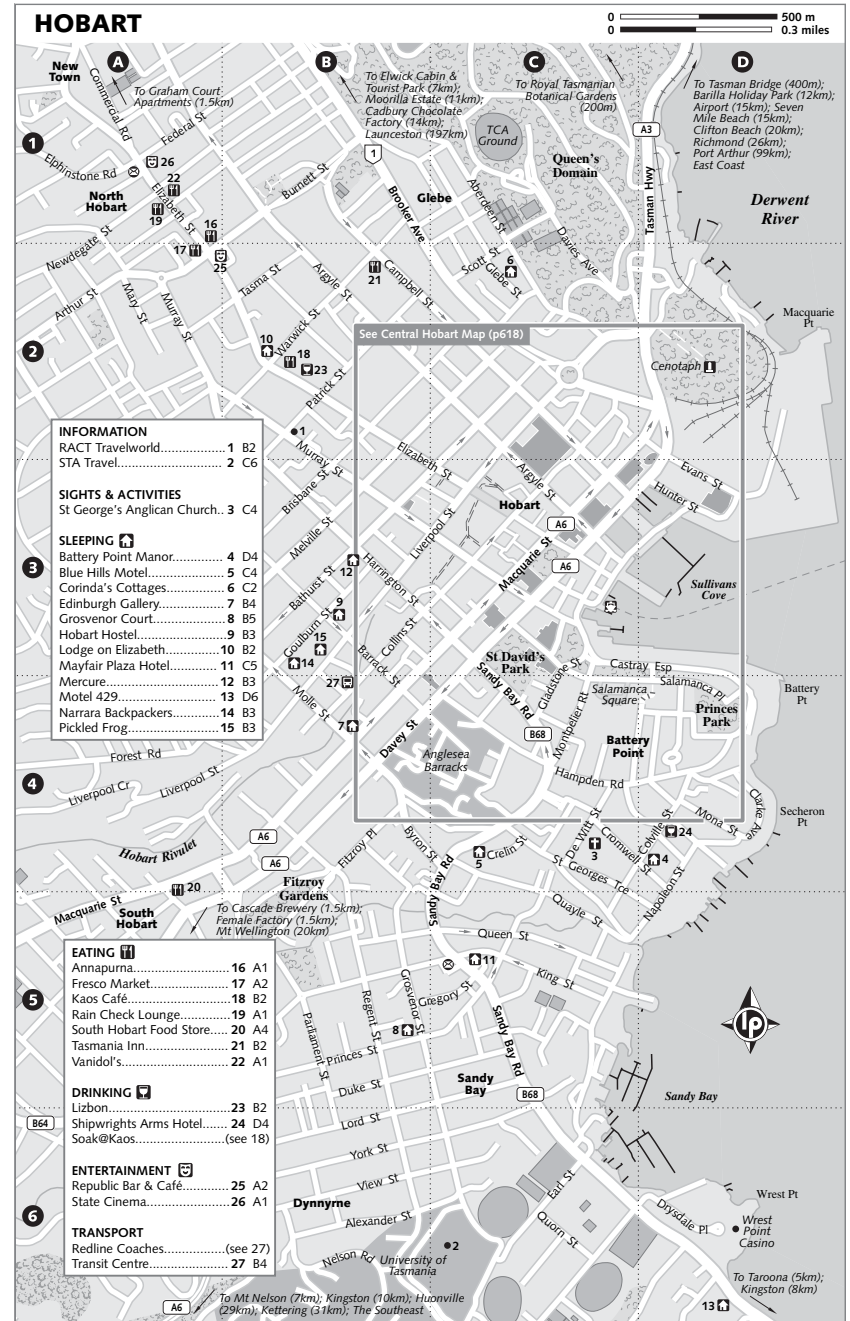
Drifters Internet Café (Map p618; ☎ 6224 6286; www.erofflynn.com.au; Shop 9/33 Salamanca Pl; ☎ 9am-6.30pm)

Mouse on Mars (Map p618; ☎ 6231 5421; www.mouseonmars.com.au; 1st fl, 112 Liverpool St; ☎ 10am-10pm) State-wide wi-fi hot spots.

Pelican Loft (Map p618; ☎ 6234 2225; 1st fl, 35a Elizabeth St; ☎ 8.30am-7pm Mon-Fri, noon-4pm Sat & Sun)

Service Tasmania (Map p618; ☎ 1300 135 513; www.service.tas.gov.au; 134 Macquarie St; ☎ 8.15am-5pm Mon-Fri) Free 30-minute access.

State Library (Map p618; ☎ 6233 7529; www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au; 91 Murray St; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Thu, to 9pm Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) Thirty minutes free for Australians; \$5.50 for international visitors.



Internet Resources

Hobart City (www.hobartcity.com.au)

Tasmania's South (www.tasmaniasouth.com)

Media

The visitor information centre stocks free Tasie tourist publications highlighting Hobart's attractions. Hobart's long-running newspaper, the *Mercury* (aka "The Mockery") is thin on quality global reportage but handy for discovering what's on where – the Thursday edition lists entertainment options. The free monthly *Sauce* entertainment rag provides detailed arts listings.

Medical Services

Chemist on Collins (Map p618; ☎ 6235 0257; www.chemistoncollins.com.au; 93 Collins St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Thu, to 6pm Fri, 9.30am-4pm Sat)

City Doctors & Travel Clinic (Map p618; ☎ 6231 3003; www.citydoctors.com.au; 93 Collins St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Standard consultation \$60.

Royal Hobart Hospital (Map p618; ☎ 6222 8423; www.dhhs.tas.gov.au; 48 Liverpool St; ☎ 24hr) Argyle St emergency entry.

Money

The major banks have branches on or near the Elizabeth St Mall, with additional suburban branches.

Post

General Post Office (GPO; Map p618; ☎ 13 13 18; www.austpost.com.au; cnr Elizabeth & Macquarie Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri)

Tourist Information

Hobart Visitor Information Centre (Map p618; ☎ 6230 8233; www.hobarttravelcentre.com.au; cnr Davey & Elizabeth Sts; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, Sun & public holidays; ⓘ) Brochures, maps, information and state-wide tour and accommodation bookings.

YHA (Map p618; ☎ 6234 9617; www.yha.com.au; 1st fl, 28 Criterion St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) YHA's Tasmanian HQ.

Travel Agencies

Qantas Travel Centre (Map p618; ☎ 6237 4900; www.qantas.com.au; 130 Collins St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

RACT Travelworld (Map p615; ☎ 13 27 22, 6232 6300; www.ract.com.au; cnr Murray & Patrick Sts; ☎ 8.45am-5pm Mon-Fri)

STA Travel (Map p615; ☎ 1300 360 960; www.statravel.com.au; Student Union Bldg, University of Tasmania, Sandy Bay; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

SIGHTS

Most of Hobart's big-ticket sights are in or near the city centre and waterfront area, within easy walking distance of each other. On the city outskirts are historic houses, wineries and the famous Cascade Brewery, plus the stoic bulk of Mt Wellington.

Salamanca Place

This picturesque row of four-storey sandstone warehouses on Sullivans Cove (Map p618) is a classic example of Australian colonial architecture. Dating from the 1830s whaling era, Salamanca Place was the hub of Hobart Town's trade and commerce, but by the mid-20th century, many of the buildings had fallen into ruin. The 1970s saw the dawning of Tasmania's sense of 'heritage', from which flowed a push to revive the warehouses as home to restaurants, cafés, bars and shops – an evolution that continues today. The development of the quarry behind the warehouses into **Salamanca Square** has bolstered the atmosphere.

Operating behind the scenes here is a vibrant and creative arts community. The non-profit **Salamanca Arts Centre** (Map p618; ☎ 6234 8414; www.salarts.org.au; 77 Salamanca Pl; ⓘ) shops & galleries 9am-6pm) occupies seven Salamanca warehouses and is home to 75-plus arts organisations and individuals, including shops, galleries, studios, performing arts venues and public spaces.

To reach Salamanca Place from Battery Point, descend the well-weathered **Kellys Steps**, wedged between warehouses halfway along the main block of buildings.

Battery Point

An empty rum bottle's throw from the once notorious Sullivans Cove waterfront, the old maritime village of **Battery Point** (Map p618; www.batterypoint.net) is a nest of tiny lanes and 19th-century cottages, packed together like shanghaied landlubbers in a ship's belly. Its name derives from the 1818 gun battery that stood on the promontory, protecting Hobart Town from nautical threats both real and imagined.

While away an afternoon exploring on your own, or follow our walking tour (p621). On **Hampden Rd**, slick cafés and restaurants cater to a more dignified clientele than the ale houses of the past. Stumble up Kellys Steps from Salamanca Place and dogleg into **South St** where the red lights once burned night and day and many a lonesome sailor sheltered

from the storm. Spin around the picturesque **Arthur Circus**, check out **St George's Anglican Church** (Map p615) on Cromwell St or shamle down **Napoleon St** to the waterfront where yachts strain against their moorings in the tide. For a fortifying stout, duck into the salty **Shipwrights Arms Hotel** (p628).

Narryna Heritage Museum (Map p618; ☎ 6234 2791; www.nationaltrust.org.au; 103 Hampden Rd; adult/concession/child/family \$6/3/5/12; ☎ 10.30am-5pm Tue-Fri, 2-5pm Sat & Sun, closed Jul) is a stately Georgian sandstone-fronted mansion (pronounced 'Narina') built in 1836, set in beautiful grounds and containing a treasure-trove of domestic colonial artefacts.

Historic Buildings

Hobart's cache of amazingly well-preserved old buildings makes it exceptional among Australian cities. There are more than 90 buildings classified by the National Trust here – 60 of these are on Macquarie and Davey Sts. The intersection of Macquarie and Murray Sts features a gorgeous sandstone edifice on each corner. For detailed information contact the **National Trust** (Map p618; ☎ 6223 5200; www.nationaltrust.org.au; cnr Brisbane & Campbell Sts; ☎ 9am-1pm Mon-Fri), or pick up the *Hobart's Historic*

Places brochure from the Visitor Information Centre.

Ruminating over the court rooms, cells and gallows of the **Penitentiary Chapel Historic Site** (Map p618; ☎ 6231 0911; www.penitentiarychapel.com; cnr Brisbane & Campbell Sts; tours adult/concession/child/family \$8/6/6/16; ☎ tours 10am, 11.30am, 1pm, 2.30pm), writer TG Ford mused: 'As the Devil was going through Hobart Gaol, he saw a solitary cell; and the Devil was pleased for it gave him a hint, for improving the prisons in hell.' Take the excellent National Trust-run tour, or the one-hour **Ghost Tour** (☎ 0417 361 392; www.hobartghosts.com; adult/concession/family \$10/8/25; ☎ 8.30pm) held most nights (bookings essential).

Finally being recognised as an important historic site (one in four convicts transported to Van Diemen's Land was a woman!), the **Female Factory** (☎ 6223 1559; www.femalefactory.com.au; 16 Degraaves St, South Hobart; tours adult/concession/child/family \$10/8/5/25; ☎ 9am-4pm, 1hr tour 9.30am, extra 2pm tour Dec-Apr) was where Hobart's female convicts were incarcerated. Tour bookings are essential. It's 2.5km southwest of the city centre.

Presiding over an oak-studded park adjacent to Salamanca Place is the low-lying, sandstone **Parliament House** (Map p618; ☎ 6233 2200; www.parliament.tas.gov.au; Salamanca Pl; 45min tours

HOBART IN...

Two Days

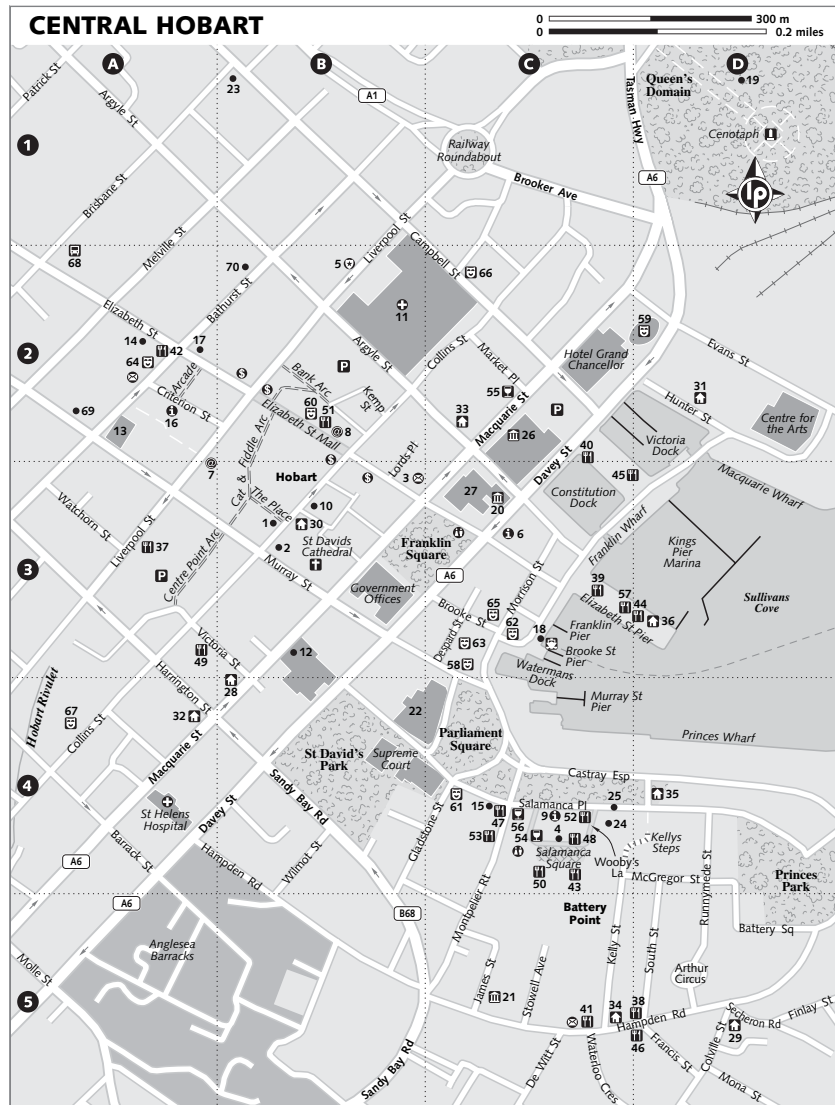
Get your head into history mode with a stroll around **Battery Point** (opposite); coffee and cake at **Jackman & McRoss** (p627) will sustain your afternoon explorations of nearby **Salamanca Place** (opposite). Bone up on maritime history at the **Maritime Museum of Tasmania** (p619) before a promenade along the Sullivans Cove waterfront and fish 'n' chips for dinner from **Flippers Fish Punt** (p626) on Constitution Dock. Wash it down with a few Cascades at **Knopwood's Retreat** (p628), the quintessential Hobart pub.

On day two, recuperate over breakfast at **Retro Café** (p627) then blow out the cobwebs with a ramble around the rocks on **Mt Wellington** (p620) – on a clear day the views are jaw-dropping. Come down to earth with dinner, drinks and some live music at **Republic Bar & Café** (p637) in North Hobart.

Four Days

If you have a bit more time on your hands, take a **river cruise** (p622) north to the **Cadbury Chocolate Factory** (p619), followed by a wine-splashed lunch at **Moorilla Estate** (p620). Alternatively, cruise south down the D'Entrecasteaux Channel to **Peppermint Bay** (p623). Snooze the afternoon away on the sunny lawns of the **Botanical Gardens** (p620) before a classy dinner at **Marque IV** (p627).

Feeling energetic? On day four take the **Pedal 'n' Paddle** challenge (p621) – plummeting down the flanks of Mt Wellington on a bike, followed by sea-kayaking around the Hobart docks. If you're just not Iron Man material, take a photo-inducing day trip to nearby **Richmond** (p639) or the waterfalls and peaks of **Mt Field National Park** (p639).



free; ☞ tours 10am & 2pm Mon-Fri), completed in 1840 and originally used as a customs house. Tours don't run when parliament is in session. Take a backstage tour of Hobart's prestigious **Theatre Royal** (Map p618; www.theatreroyal.com.au; 29 Campbell St; 1hr tours adult/concession/child \$8/6/6; ☞ tours 10.30am & 2pm Mon, Wed & Fri), built in 1837 and Australia's oldest continually operating theatre.

There are free 20-minute tours of Hobart's **Town Hall** (Map p618; ☞ 6238 2711; www.hobartcity.com.au; 50 Macquarie St; ☞ tours 2.45pm Tue, 10.45am Thu), built in 1864, which takes its architectural prompts from the stunning Palazzo Farnese in Rome. Tours depart from the Macquarie St foyer – arrive five minutes before kick-off to secure your spot.

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- Drifters Internet Café.....(see 15)
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- Hobart Book Shop.....4 C4
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- Hobart Visitor Information Centre.....6 C3
- Mouse on Mars.....7 A3
- Pelican Loft.....8 B2
- Port Arthur Region Travel Shop.....9 C4
- Qantas Travel Centre.....10 B3
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- Wilderness Society Shop.....15 C4
- YHA.....16 A2

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- TassieLink.....(see 68)

Museums

The rewarding **Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery** (Map p618; ☞ 6211 4177; www.tmag.tas.gov.au; 40 Macquarie St; admission free; ☞ 10am-5pm) incorporates Hobart's oldest building, the Commissariat Store (1808). The museum features Aboriginal displays and colonial relics; the gallery curates a collection of Tasmanian colonial art. There are free guided tours at 2.30pm from Wednesday to Sunday (hordes of school kids might be a little less interested in proceedings than you are). There's a cool café here, too.

Celebrating Hobart's unbreakable bond with the sea, the excellent **Maritime Museum of Tasmania** (Map p618; ☞ 6234 1427; www.maritimetas.org; 16 Argyle St; adult/concession/child/family \$7/5/3/16; ☞ 9am-5pm) has a fascinating, salt-encrusted collection of old photos, paintings, models and relics. You just try to resist ringing the huge brass bell from the *Rhexenior*. Upstairs you'll find the **Carnegie Gallery** (admission free; ☞ 9am-5pm) with its exhibitions of contemporary Tasmanian art, craft, design and photography.

Tastes of Hobart

CADBURY CHOCOLATE FACTORY

A must-see for sweet-tooths and Willie Wonka wannabes is the **Cadbury Chocolate Factory** (☞ 1800 627 367, 6249 0333; www.cadbury.com.au; Cadbury Rd, Claremont; tours adult/child/concession/family \$12.50/6.50/9/31.50; ☞ tours every 30min 8am-2.30pm Mon-Fri except public holidays), 15km north of the city centre. Tour participants enjoy samples

SALAMANCA MARKET

Every Saturday morning since 1972, **Salamanca Market** (Map p618; ☞ 6238 2843; www.hobartcity.com.au; ☞ 8.30am-3pm Sat) has lured hippies and craft merchants from the foothills to fill the tree-lined expanses of Salamanca Place with their stalls. Fresh produce, secondhand clothes and books, tacky tourist souvenirs, CDs, cheap sunglasses, antiques, exuberant buskers, quality food and drink – it's all here, but people-watching is the real name of the game. Rain or shine – don't miss it!

at the start and end of the tour, and can invest in low-priced choc products. Tours are subject to demand; fully enclosed footwear is required and bookings are essential. Some companies offer day trips and river cruises incorporating the Cadbury tour (see p622), or book directly with Cadbury and make your own way there.

CASCADE BREWERY

Around a bend in South Hobart, standing in startling, gothic isolation, is the **Cascade Brewery** (☎ 6224 1117; www.cascadebrewery.com.au; 140 Cascade Rd, South Hobart; 1½hr tours adult/concession/child/family \$18/14/7/42; ☎ tours 9.30am, 10am, 1pm & 1.30pm Mon-Fri except public holidays, additional summer tours). Australia's oldest brewery, it was established in 1832 next to the clean-running Hobart Rivulet, and is still pumping out superb beer and soft drinks today. Tours involve plenty of stair climbing, with tastings at the end (including Cascade Premium, the global sales smash!). Wear flat, enclosed shoes and long trousers (no shorts or skirts); bookings are essential. You can take a tour on weekends, but none of the machinery will be operating (brewers have weekends too). See also the boxed text (p651)

MOORILLA ESTATE

Moorilla Estate (☎ 6277 9900; www.moorilla.com.au; 655 Main Rd, Berriedale; tastings free; ☎ 10am-5pm) occupies a saucer-shaped peninsula jutting into the Derwent River 12km north of Hobart's centre. Founded in the 1950s, Moorilla plays a prominent and gregarious role in Hobart society. Stop by for wine and beer tastings (ooooh, the Pinot Noir...), have lunch or dinner at the outstanding restaurant **The Source** (mains \$25-33; ☎ lunch & dinner), catch a summer concert on the lawns (Grinspoon, Cat Empire, The Pretenders et al) or splash some cash for a night in the uberish accommodation (doubles \$350). Note that the museum here is closed for long-term redevelopment.

Outdoor Stuff

Cloaked in winter snow, **Mount Wellington** (www.wellingtonpark.tas.gov.au) peaks at 1270m, towering above Hobart like a benevolent overlord. The citizens find reassurance in its constant, solid presence, while outdoorsy types find the space to hike and bike on its leafy flanks. And the view from the top is unbelievable! Don't be deterred if the sky is overcast – often the peak

rises above cloud level and looks out over a magical ocean of rolling white cloud-tops.

Hacked out of the mountainside during the Great Depression, the 22km road to the top winds up from the city through thick temperate forest, opening out to lunar rock-scapes at the summit. If you don't have wheels, local buses 48 and 49 stop at Fern Tree halfway up the mountain, from where it's a five- to six-hour return walk to the top. Pick up the *Mt Wellington Walks* map (\$4.10 from the visitor information centre) as a guide.

Some bus-tour companies include Mt Wellington in their itineraries (see p622); another option is the **Mt Wellington Shuttle Bus Service** (☎ 0408 341 804; per person return \$25), departing the visitor information centre at 9.30am and 1.30pm daily. City pick-ups by arrangement; bookings essential. See Cycling (below) for information on bike trips down the mountain.

A lower-altitude version of the view is from **Mt Nelson**, where there's an old signal station, a café, barbecues and picnic tables. To get here drive up Davey St then take the Southern Outlet towards Kingston and turn left at the top of the hill. Local buses 57, 58 and 156-8 also come here.

The small but beguiling **Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens** (☎ 6236 3076, tours 6236 3075; www.rtbg.gov.tas.au; Queens Domain; admission free, 1hr tours per person \$5; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Oct-Mar, 8am-5.30pm Apr & Sep, 8am-5pm May-Aug, tours 11am Mon, Tue & Thu), established in 1818, features more than 6000 exotic and native plant species. Explore the flora in detail at the **Botanical Discovery Centre** (admission free; ☎ 9am-5pm), which also houses a gift shop, kiosk and restaurant. Don't miss TV icon Peter Cundall's veggie patch!

ACTIVITIES Cycling

A useful navigational tool is the *Hobart Bike Map* (\$4 from the visitor information centre and most bike shops), detailing cycle paths and road routes.

Island Cycle Tours (☎ 1300 880 334, 6234 4951; www.islandcycletours.com) organises a range of guided bike trips around the state, including the popular three-hour Mt Wellington Descent (\$65 per person, including hotel pick-ups, transport, bikes and safety equipment), departing daily at 9.30am and 1.30pm. You can also combine this with a sea-kayaking experience around the Hobart docks.

Bike hire:

Bike Hire Tasmania (Appleby Cycles) (Map p618; ☎ 6234 4166, 0400-256 588; www.bikehiresatmania.com.au; 109 Elizabeth St; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-4pm Sat) Quality mountain/road bikes from \$35/45 per day.
Derwent Bike Hire (Map p618; ☎ 6260 4426, 0428-899 169, www.derwentbikehire.com; Regatta Grounds Cycleway; ☎ 10am-4pm Sat & Sun Sep-Nov, Apr & May, daily Dec-Mar) Mountain and touring bikes from \$20/125 per day/week.

Sea-Kayaking

Kayaking around the docks in Hobart, particularly at twilight, is a lovely way to get a feel for the city. There are a couple of operators: **Blackaby's Sea-Kayaks & Tours** (☎ 0418-124 072, 0438-671 508; www.blackabyseakayaks.com.au) Morning, afternoon and sunset paddles around the Hobart waterfront, running on demand (\$50 per person). Ask about paddling adventures further afield (Port Arthur, Fortescue Bay, Gordon River).

Island Cycle Tours (☎ 1300 880 334, 6234 4951; www.islandcycletours.com) Combines its Mt Wellington Descent (see opposite) with a two-hour paddle around the docks, either before or after the cycle. Departures are at 7.30am and 9.30am daily; breakfast or lunch included (\$90 per person).

WALKING TOUR

Old-school versus new-world – ready for a Hobart history lesson? Launch your expedition at **Franklin Square (1)**, where skaters collide with canoodling school kids beneath the bird-poo-stained statue of Governor Sir John Franklin. Track northeast down Macquarie St past the 1906 sandstone clock-tower of the **General Post Office (2)**; p616), the 1864 **Town Hall (3)**; p618) and into the **Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery (4)**; p619). Soak up some culture for a while, or duck through the café, out into the courtyard and across the car park. Navigate across Campbell and Davey Sts and shuffle around **Victoria Dock (5)** where the fishing boats bump and sway.

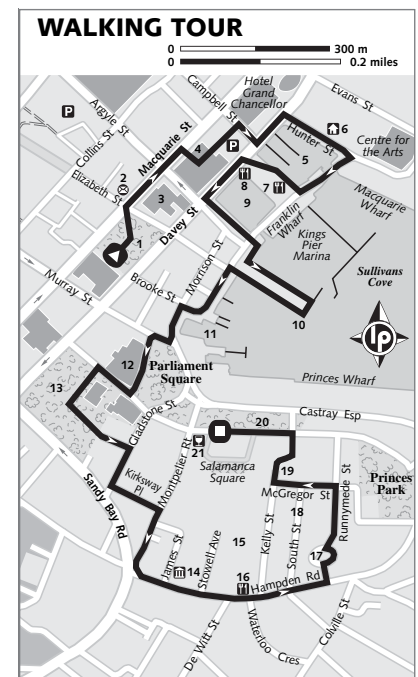
Have a quick sticky-beak at the renovated **Henry Jones Art Hotel (6)**; p625). Formerly the IXL jam factory headed by the entrepreneurial Henry Jones (who did indeed excel), it was

WALK FACTS

Start Franklin Square
Finish Knopwood's Retreat
Distance 3km
Duration three hours

once Tasmania's largest private employer. Cross the swing bridge and fishtail towards **Mures (7)**; p626) or **Flippers Fish Punt (8)**; p626) for a sea-sourced lunch by **Constitution Dock (9)**. This place is party-central for yachties celebrating the finish of the famous Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race (p610) around New Year's Eve.

Next stop is the slickly reworked **Elizabeth St Pier (10)**, jutting into Sullivan's Cove – classy accommodation upstairs; restaurants and bars downstairs. If the tide is out, take the low-road steps around **Watermans Dock (11)**. Cross Morrison St then wander through the acorn-infested Parliament Sq in front of **Parliament House (12)**; p617). Resist the photogenic façades of Salamanca Place for now, turning right instead to detour through **St David's Park (13)**, with its picturesque pergola, undulating lawns and walls of colonial gravestones. Hobart Town's original cemetery, it became an overgrown eyesore and was converted into a park in 1926. Cut through Salamanca Mews, jag right onto Gladstone St, left onto Kirksway Pl then right onto Montpellier Retreat, arcing uphill towards the colonial delights of **Narryna Heritage Museum (14)**; p617), built in 1836.



WHALES IN THE DERWENT

In the 1830s Hobartians joked about walking across the Derwent River on the backs of whales and complained about being kept awake at night by whales cavorting offshore. In typical Tasmanian style, the ensuing whaling boom was catastrophic, driving local populations of southern right and humpback whales to near extinction. Though still endangered, the occasional foraging whale returns to the Derwent during June–July (northbound) and October–November (southbound) migration. If you spy one, call the Parks & Wildlife Service whale hotline (☎ 0427-WHALES, 0427-942 537).

Hampden Rd leads you into the heart of **Battery Point (15; p616)**, Hobart's oldest 'hood. Reconstitute with a coffee and croissant at **Jackman & McRoss (16; p627)**, then turn left into Runnymede St to check out **Arthur Circus (17)**, an improbably quaint roundabout lined with eave-free Georgian cottages. After a play on the swings, continue down Runnymede St and turn left into McGregor St, casting an eye up well-preserved **South St (18)** – take away the BMWs and power lines and this could easily be 1856! Turn right onto Kelly St and bumble down **Kellys Steps (19)**, an 1839 sandstone link between Battery Point and the redeveloped warehouses of **Salamanca Place (20; p616)**. Not far along is Hobart's best pub, **Knopwood's Retreat (21; p628)**. Settle into a couple of quiet Cascades and regale the locals with tall tales of your adventures.

HOBART FOR CHILDREN

Parents won't break the bank keeping the troops entertained in Hobart. The free Friday-night music in the courtyard at the **Salamanca Arts Centre (p637)** is a family-friendly affair, while the street performers, buskers and visual smorgasbord of Saturday's **Salamanca Market (p619)** captivate kids of all ages. There's always something interesting going on around the waterfront – fishing boats chugging in and out of Victoria Dock, yachts tacking and jibbing in Sullivan's Cove – and you can feed the whole family on a budget at the **floating fish punts (p626)** on Constitution Dock.

Rainy-day attractions to satisfy your child (or inner child) include the **Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery (p619)**, the **Maritime Museum of**

Tasmania (p619), the **Cadbury Chocolate Factory (p619)** and the Discovery Centre at the **Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens (p620)**.

Hobart is a naturally active kinda town: take a boat cruise up or down the river; assault the heights of Mt Wellington or Mt Nelson, rent a bike and explore the cycling paths, or pack the teens into the Kombi and go surfing at **Clifton Beach (p610)**. The minute you head out of town the child-friendly options increase, with an abundance of animal parks, beaches, caves, nature walks and mazes to explore; see **Around Hobart (p638)**.

TOURS

Most cruises, bus and walking tours run daily during summer (December to February), but schedules and prices vary with the seasons – call in advance to confirm.

Bus Tours

Gray Line (☎ 1300 858 687, 6234 3336; www.grayline.com.au) City tours on a kitsch bus-dressed-as-tram (adult/concession/child \$39/29/20), plus longer tours to destinations including Mt Wellington (\$40/38/20), Mt Field National Park (\$121/116/61) and the Huon Valley (\$115/110/58). Free hotel pick-ups.

Red Decker (☎ 6236 9116; www.reddecker.com) Commentated sightseeing on an old London double-decker bus. Buy a 20-stop, hop-on-hop-off pass (adult/concession/child \$20/18/10) or do the tour as a 90-minute loop. Pay a bit more and add a Cascade Brewery tour (\$38/36/19) or river cruise (\$40/38/19) to the deal.

TassieLink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) Full- and half-day bus tours in and around Hobart. Half-day trips include jaunts to Mt Wellington and various city sights (adult/child \$51/31) and Richmond (\$65/39). Full-day destinations include Port Arthur (\$85/51), Bruny Island (\$145/90), Mt Field National Park (\$110/66) and the Tahune Forest AirWalk (\$99/60).

Cruises

Several boat-cruise companies operate from the Brooke St Pier and Watermans Dock area (Map p618), cruising around the harbour and up and down the river.

Captain Fell's Historic Ferries (☎ 6223 6893; www.captainfellsistoricferries.com.au) Good-value lunch (from \$24 per adult) and dinner (from \$37) cruises on cute old ferries. They also run coach or double-decker bus sightseeing trips around town and to Mt Wellington and Richmond.

Cruise Company (☎ 6234 9294; www.cadburycruise.com) The Cruise Company's enduringly popular four-hour Cadbury Cruise (adult/child \$55/25) takes you upriver for a tour of the Cadbury Chocolate Factory (p619).

Navigators (☎ 6223 1914; www.navigators.net.au) Slick ships sailing north to Moorilla Estate (adult/child \$22/11), and south to Port Arthur (\$149/110 including site entry and return coach trip) and Storm Bay (\$35/18). Also Derwent River cruises (\$22/12).

Peppermint Bay Cruise (☎ 1300 137 919; www.hobartcruises.com) A five-hour float down the D'Entrecasteaux Channel to the sassy Peppermint Bay development at Woodbridge (p644). Prices start at adult/child \$78/48 including lunch on board; cruise only from \$48/28.

Walking Tours

Hobart Historic Tours (☎ 6278 3338; www.hobarthistorictours.com.au) Conducts the highly informative 1½-hour Hobart Historic Walk (10am) and the beery Old Hobart Pub Tour (5pm). Tours cost \$25 per person; winter hours vary.

Louisa's Walk (☎ 6230 8233; www.livehistory.com.au) Getting rave reviews from readers, these engaging 1½-hour tours take in Hobart's female convict heritage at the Female Factory (p617), interpreted through 'strolling theatre'. Tours depart Cascade Brewery at 10.30am and 2pm (adult/concession/family \$25/20/60).

Mt Wellington Walks (☎ 0439-551 197; www.mtwellingtonwalks.com.au) Four-hour 'easy' or 'adventurous' mountain tours (adult/concession \$70/60). Minimum age 10; hotel pick-ups 11am daily.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

December–January

Falls Festival (www.fallsfestival.com) The Tasmanian version of the Victorian New Year's Eve rock festival is a winner! Three days of live Oz and international tunes (Wolfmother, John Butler Trio, M Ward etc) at Marion Bay, an hour south of Hobart.

Hobart Summer Festival (www.hobartsummerfestival.com.au) Hobart's premier festival – two weeks of theatre, kids' activities, concerts, buskers, New Year's Eve shenanigans and the Taste of Tasmania.

Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race (p610; www.rolexsydneyhobart.com) Yachts competing in this annual race start arriving in Hobart around 28–29 December – just in time for New Year's Eve! (Yachties sure can party...)

Taste of Tasmania On either side of New Year's Eve, this week-long, harbourside event is a celebration of Tassie's gastronomic prowess. The seafood, wines and cheeses are predictably fabulous, or branch out into mushrooms, truffles and raspberries. Stalls are a who's who of the Hobart restaurant scene.

February

Australian Wooden Boat Festival (www.australianwoodenboatfestival.com.au) Biennial event (odd-numbered years) to coincide with the Royal Hobart

Regatta. The festival showcases Tasmania's boat-building heritage and maritime traditions.

Royal Hobart Regatta (www.royalhobartregatta.com) Three days of aquatic yacht-watching and mayhem on the Derwent River.

March–April

Ten Days on the Island (www.tendaysontheisland.com) Tasmania's premier cultural festival – a biennial event (odd-numbered years, usually late March to early April) celebrating island culture at state-wide venues. Concerts, exhibitions, dance, film, theatre and workshops.

June

Antarctic Midwinter Festival (www.antarctic-tasmania.info) Celebrate the winter solstice at this 10-day Hobart festival, designed to highlight and celebrate Tasmania's connection with the Antarctic.

October

Royal Hobart Show (www.hobartshowground.com.au) Enduring rural-meets-urban festival showcasing the state's primary industries. Show bags, hold-onto-your-lunch rides and the fecund aromas of nature.

SLEEPING

The most engaging areas to stay in Hobart are the Sullivan's Cove waterfront and Salamanca Place (and to a lesser extent Battery Point) though prices here are high and vacancy rates low. The CBD area has less atmosphere, but most hostels and midrange hotels are here. To the north of the city centre are suburban North Hobart and New Town, where apartments and B&Bs are within walking distance of the North Hobart restaurants. Accommodation in waterside Sandy Bay is surprisingly well priced, but it's a fair hike from town. Most of Hobart's motels are out of town along the Brooker Ave heading into the city from the north (those listed below are closer in).

Despite Tassie's obvious suitability for camping, there are no camp grounds within walking distance of the city centre (now *there's* a business opportunity!). Aside from what's listed below, see **Seven Mile Beach (p641)**.

Top-end Hobart accommodation can be quite reasonable – if your budget stretches to \$200 you can afford something quite special: designer hotels, historic guesthouses and modern waterside apartments.

Like the rest of Tasmania, midrange accommodation here isn't exactly a bargain. If you're visiting in January, book as far in advance as humanly possible!

Budget HOSTELS

Narrara Backpackers (Mapp615; ☎ 62313191; www.narrara-backpackers.com; 88 Goulburn St; dm/s/d/tr \$19/44/48/63; ☑) In a three-level townhouse on the city fringe, casual Narrara has the cheapest beds in town, but attracts mixed reports from readers. Travellers slump on couches in front of the TV, working through the pain of last night's efforts.

Hobart Hostel (Map p615; ☎ 62346122; www.hobart-hostel.com; cnr Goulburn & Barrack Sts; dm/tw/d from \$19/30/60; ☑) In a former pub (the ever-rockin' Doghouse!) Hobart Hostel offers clean, cheap but cram-'em-in dorms, with better value twins and doubles upstairs. Take up smoking on the tiny deck overlooking Hobart's city rooftops.

Pickled Frog (Map p615; ☎ 62347977; www.thepickledfrog.com; 281 Liverpool St; dm \$22-24, s \$55, d & tw \$60; ☑) Not for the moderate or meek, this huge, ramshackle hostel fills an old pub on the CBD fringe with party vibes. Cheap beer, big-screen TVs, pool table, shaggy backpackers – you get the picture.

Central City Backpackers (Map p618; ☎ 1800 811 507, 6224 2404; www.centralcityhobart.com; 138 Collins St; dm \$22-26, s/d \$49/62; ☑) Smack-bang in the middle of the city, this maze-like hostel has loads of communal space, a great kitchen, OK rooms, friendly staff and extras such as baggage storage and tour desk. Bathrooms a tad shabby; linen extra.

Montgomery's Private Hotel & YHA (Map p618; ☎ 6231 2660; www.montgomerys.com.au; 9 Argyle St; dm \$26, s & d with/without bathroom \$91/71; ☑) Attached to Montgomery's pub, this YHA offers clean, bright, secure accommodation right in the middle of town. Spread over three levels are dorms of all sizes, and nifty en suite singles and doubles. A solid, conservative option.

Midrange

GUESTHOUSES & B&BS

Battery Point Manor (Map p615; ☎ 6224 0888; www.batterypointmanor.com.au; 13-15 Cromwell St, Battery Point; s/d incl breakfast from \$85/95; ☑) Absorb the magical river views from the outdoor terrace at this homely manor, built c 1834. There's a range of large rooms here, all with en suites and some with king-size beds, as well as a separate two-bedroom cottage. The rates listed above almost double during summer.

Edinburgh Gallery (Map p615; ☎ 6224 9229; www.artaccom.com.au; 211 Macquarie St; s \$90, d \$100-180; ☑)

This funky, art-filled boutique hotel puts an eclectic stamp on an old Federation home, just to the west of the CBD. Some rooms share immaculate bathrooms, and all have quirky, artsy décor (try for a veranda suite). Excellent winter reductions and help-yourself breakfast bar. Gay-friendly, too.

Lodge on Elizabeth (Map p615; ☎ 6231 3830; www.thelodge.com.au; 249 Elizabeth St, North Hobart; s/d incl breakfast from \$120/140, self-contained cottage from \$160; ☑) Built in 1829, this old-timer has been a school house, a boarding house and a halfway house, but now opens its doors as a value-for-money guesthouse. Rooms are dotted with antiques (not for the modernists); all have en suites. The self-contained cottage overlooks the courtyard out the back (two-night minimum).

HOTELS

Astor Private Hotel (Map p618; ☎ 6234 6611; www.astorprivatehotel.com.au; 157 Macquarie St; s/d without bathroom from \$55/68, d \$120-160) A rambling, downtown, 1920s charmer, the Astor retains much of its character: stained-glass windows, old furniture, ceiling roses and the irrepressible Tildy at the helm. Older-style rooms have shared facilities; newer en suite rooms top the price range – both include continental breakfast. Strict 'No bogans' policy!

Prince of Wales (Map p618; ☎ 6223 6355; www.princeofwaleshotel.net.au; 55 Hampden Rd, Battery Point; r \$99-115) A severe '60s glitch in Battery Point's urban planning (would Prince Charlie approve?), the POW is nonetheless exquisitely located and offers cheery, spotlessly clean pub-style rooms, all with en suite. Breakfast included; off-street parking.

Leisure Inn Hobart Macquarie (Map p618; ☎ 6234 4422; www.leisureinnhotels.com; 167 Macquarie St; d from \$127; ☑) The architecture here is funky (c 1968), but the ongoing makeover shifts the interior design forward 40 years: coffee-and-cream colours, dark timber floors, flat-screen TVs and natty bathrooms. A great location too, close to the city and waterfront (views to either from most rooms). Internet deals sometimes include breakfast.

Mercure (Map p615; ☎ 6232 6225; www.mercure.com.au; 156 Bathurst St; d \$134-204; ☑) A fave with blow-in yachties, touring rock bands and business bods, the demure Mercure looks a bit 'prison block' but delivers 140 stylishly updated rooms in the middle of town, each with a little semi-circular balcony overlooking the rooftops.

MOTELS

Mayfair Plaza Motel (Map p615; ☎ 6220 9900; www.mayfairplaza.com.au; 236 Sandy Bay Rd, Sandy Bay; r \$110-150; ☑) The redevelopment of the Mayfair in the '90s sent Sandy Bay into an architectural tailspin, but if that doesn't bother you, these cavernous modern rooms are well located and pretty good value. There are lots of eating options in the 'hood, and plenty of parking.

Blue Hills Motel (Map p615; ☎ 1800 030 776, 6223 1777; www.bluehills.bestwestern.com.au; 96a Sandy Bay Rd, Battery Point; d from \$114) Before they painted this modern gem cream and blue, it was a stark and stunning white. There's just no accounting for taste. The same applies inside where it's all a bit 1994, but it's in a stellar location on the fringe of Battery Point, and B&B internet deals are solid value.

Motel 429 (Map p615; ☎ 6225 2511; www.motel429.com.au; 429 Sandy Bay Rd, Sandy Bay; d \$115-155; ☑) Not far from the casino, this motel's recent facelift has tarted things up externally but fails to deliver inside, where the rooms remain shamelessly middle-aged. That said, the staff are friendly and everything's clean and shipshape. Deluxe rooms lift the bar a little.

APARTMENT HOTELS & SERVICED APARTMENTS

Grosvenor Court (Map p615; ☎ 6223 3422; www.grosvenorcourt.com.au; 42 Grosvenor St, Sandy Bay; d \$100-140, q \$150-290; ☑) Grosvenor Court is a strange mix of good and evil: quiet street, obnoxious tiling; lovely linen, ugly brickwork; exciting leather lounge suites, weary kitchens. As is often the case in Hobart (and indeed Tasmania), friendly owners lessen any disappointment and make things feel homey. Wireless internet access.

Graham Court Apartments (☎ 6278 1333, 1800 811 915; www.grahamcourt.com.au; 15 Pirie St, New Town; d \$100-141, extra person \$25) Probably Hobart's best-value self-contained option, this block of 23 well-maintained apartments sits amid established gardens in the subdued northern suburbs. Units range from one to three bedrooms (décor from '70s to '90s), with a playground and cots, high chairs and babysitters on call. Wheelchair-accessible units available.

Avon Court Holiday Apartments (Map p618; ☎ 1800 807 257, 6223 4837; www.avoncourt.com.au; 4 Colville St; d \$130-180, extra adult/child \$35/18) Overlook the ugly nouveaux-sandstone exteriors and bland, motel-style interiors and you'll find yourself brilliantly poised in a spacious apartment,

right in the heart of Battery Point. Larger apartments sleep up to six. Off-street parking is a bonus.

Top End

Ourpick Corinda's Cottages (Map p615; ☎ 6234 1590; www.corindascottages.com.au; 17 Glebe St, Glebe; d from \$220) Gorgeous Corinda, a renovated Victorian mansion with meticulously maintained parterre gardens, sits high on the Glebe hillside a short (steep!) walk from town. Three self-contained cottages (garden, coach house or servants' quarters) provide contemporary comforts with none of the twee, olde-worlde guff so many Tasmanian accommodations wallow in. Breakfast is DIY gourmet (eggs, muffins, fresh coffee etc). Cheaper rates for longer stays. Outstanding.

Somerset on the Pier (Map p618; ☎ 1800 766 377, 6220 6600; www.staysomerset.com.au; Elizabeth St Pier; apt from \$250; ☑) In a definitively Hobart location on the upper level of the Elizabeth Pier, this stylin' complex offers luxurious apartments with beaut harbour views and breezy, contemporary design. You'll pay more for a balcony, but with these views, you won't need to do any other sightseeing! Somerset on Salamanca (8 Salamanca Pl) is booked through the same management.

Henry Jones Art Hotel (Map p618; ☎ 6210 7700; www.thehenryjones.com; 25 Hunter St; d \$260-350, ste \$390-850; ☑) Since opening in 2004, super-swish HJs has become a beacon of sophistication. Absolute waterfront in a restored jam factory, it oozes class but is far from intimidating (this is Hobart after all, not Sydney). Modern art enlivens the walls, while facilities and downstairs distractions (bar, restaurant, café) are world class.

Camping

Barilla Holiday Park (☎ 1800 465 453, 6248 5453; www.barilla.com.au; 75 Richmond Rd, Cambridge; unpowered/power sites \$20/25, cabins \$68-140; ☑) A decent option for those with wheels, Barilla is midway between Hobart (12km) and Richmond (14km), close to the airport and some great wineries. The river-plains grounds are dotted with well-kept cabins, plus mini-golf and an on-site restaurant serving wood-fired pizzas.

Elwick Cabin & Tourist Park (☎ 6272 7115; www.islandcabins.com.au; 19 Goodwood Rd, Glenorchy; unpowered/power sites \$20/25, cabins \$85-92, 3br house per d \$125) The nearest camping area to town (about

8km north of the centre), it has a range of cabins but limited powered sites (book ahead). The three-bedroom houses sleep eight (extra adult/child \$25/20). Tight security and roaming bull mastiff.

EATING

Downtown Hobart proffers some classy brunch and lunch venues, but when the sun sinks behind the mountain, the city streets are overrun with 'bogans' (Hobart's version of standard, low-IQ, pugilistic hoons), stuck on endless petrol-wasting loops of the city block – head for the harbour or North Hobart without delay!

The waterfront streets, docks and piers are the collective epicentre of the city's culinary scene – quality seafood is everywhere you look. Salamanca Place is an almost unbroken string of excellent cafés and restaurants, especially busy during Saturday morning market festivities. Battery Point's Hampden Rd restaurants are always worth a look, while Elizabeth St in North Hobart has evolved into a diverse collation of cosmopolitan cafés, multi-cultural eateries and improving pubs. Pub meals city-wide are dependable (if somewhat predictable), and are usually big enough to keep you walking for a week.

City Centre

La Cuisine (Map p618; ☎ 6231 1274; 85 Bathurst St; meals \$5-8; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) When La Cuisine opened its doors in the mid-80s, no-one in Hobart had seen a croissant before. With Basque house cakes, stuffed sourdough rolls, juicy quiches and sensational salads, La Cuisine dragged the city out of the white-bread culinary quicksand. Also at 108 Collins St (☎ 6224 2587).

Undertone (Map p618; ☎ 6234 1033; 37a Elizabeth St; meals \$5-10; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Dig it! Underground Undertone is a hip new record bar/café attracting wired-for-sound city workers and students looking for something different. The hip young staff make a mean coffee, and serve a small but tasty section of salads, frittatas, toasted sandwiches, rolls and gluten-free cakes.

South Hobart Food Store (Map p615; ☎ 6224 6862; 356 Macquarie St, South Hobart; meals \$6-13; ☺ breakfast & lunch) OK, so it's a little way out of the city centre, but any trip to the Food Store will reward the intrepid traveller. It's an old shopfront café full of booths, bookish students, brunching

friends and kids under the tables. A mod-rock soundtrack competes with the coffee machine, running at fever pitch.

Sirens (Map p618; ☎ 6234 2634; 6 Victoria St; mains \$17-19; ☺ dinner Mon-Sat) Sirens serves up creative vegetarian and vegan food in a warm, welcoming space, offset by excellent service and impeccable ethics. But it's not all earnest long-hairs stirring lentils – there's some sophisticated cooking going on in the kitchen! Try the three-cheese beetroot ravioli in champagne, dill and pink peppercorn cream (\$18).

The most central self-catering option is **City Supermarket** (Map p618; ☎ 6234 4003; 148 Liverpool St; ☺ 8am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, noon-5pm Sun).

Waterfront Area

Flippers Fish Punt (Map p618; ☎ 6234 3101; Constitution Dock; meals \$5-11; ☺ lunch & dinner) With its voluptuous fish-shaped profile and alluring sea-blue paint job, floating Flippers is a Hobart institution. Not to mention the awesome fish and chips! Fillets of flathead and curls of calamari – straight from the deep blue sea and into the deep fryer.

Mures (Map p618; ☎ 6231 2121; www.mures.com.au; Victoria Dock; ☺ lunch & dinner) Mures and Hobart seafood are synonymous. On the ground level you'll find a fishmonger (selling the Mures fleet's daily catch), a sushi bar, ice-cream parlour and the hectic, family-focused bistro Lower Deck (mains \$7 to \$13), serving meals for the masses (fish and chips, salmon burgers, crumbed scallops etc). The Upper Deck (mains \$20 to \$28) is a sassier affair, with silvery dockside views and à la carte seafood dishes.

Jam Packed (Map p618; ☎ 6231 3454; 27 Hunter St; mains \$8-18; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Inside the redeveloped IXL Jam Factory atrium next to the Henry Jones Art Hotel, this café is jam-packed at breakfast time. If you're sporting a hangover of some description, the BLT (\$10) is the perfect reintroduction to life, while the prawn *puttanesca* spaghetti, simmered in olive, tomato and caper sauce (\$17), makes a filling lunch.

Fish Frenzy (Map p618; ☎ 6231 2134; Elizabeth St Pier; meals \$9-23; ☺ lunch & dinner) A casual, waterside fish nook that's overflowing with fish fiends and brimming with deliciously prepared fish and chips, fishy salads (spicy calamari, smoked salmon and brie) and fish burgers. The eponymous 'Fish Frenzy' (\$15) delivers a little bit of everything. No bookings.

Marque IV (Map p618; ☎ 6224 4428; Elizabeth St Pier; mains \$32-35; ☺ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) High-class dining hits waterfront Hobart at Marque IV, a discreet food room halfway along Elizabeth St Pier. You could start with an 'amuse', but at these prices, it doesn't pay to dally. Begin with a *carpaccio* of cured Marrawah beef on a warm nicoise salad (\$19), followed by caramelised pork belly with Granny Smith dumplings, walnuts and sage gnocchi (\$33). Deserts? Sensational. Wine list? Superb. Service and décor lag very slightly behind.

See also T-42° (p628).

Salamanca Place

Retro Café (Map p618; ☎ 6223 3073; 31 Salamanca Pl; mains \$6-18; ☺ breakfast & lunch) So popular it hurts, funky Retro is ground zero for Saturday brunch among the market stalls. Masterful breakfasts, bagels, salads and burgers interweave with laughing staff, chilled-out jazz and the whirl and bang of the coffee machine. A classic Hobart café.

Vietnamese Kitchen (Map p618; ☎ 6223 2188; 61 Salamanca Pl; mains \$8-13; ☺ lunch & dinner) With slick waterfront eateries closing in on all sides, it's refreshing to discover this cheap, kitsch kitchen, with its glowing drinks fridge and plastic-coated photos of steaming soups and stir-fries. Eat in or takeaway.

Sugo (Map p618; ☎ 6224 5690; 9 Salamanca Sq; mains \$9-15; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Tomato-red walls, serious coffee and a menu heavy with Italian influences (pasta, pizza, risotto, panini) make this a *perpetto* café choice. Kudos to the semi-dried tomato and mozzarella scrambled eggs on cornbread (\$12). Oz wines by the glass or bottle.

Machine Laundry Café (Map p618; ☎ 6224 9922; 12 Salamanca Sq; mains \$9-16; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Hypnotise yourself watching the tumble-dryers spin at this bright, retro-style café, where you can wash your dirty clothes while discreetly adding fresh juice, soup or coffee stains to your clean ones. \$5 per load.

Sals on the Square (Map p618; ☎ 6224 3667; 55 Salamanca Pl; mains \$15-28) Is it a bar? Is it a café? Is it a food court with occasional live music? Sals somehow manages to be all of the above. Walk past the Salamanca Place takeaway counter into the wider café-bar fronting Salamanca Sq, where pastas, risottos, steaks, burgers and salads rule the roost.

Gourmet self-caterers should head to **Wursthaus** (Map p618; ☎ 6224 0644; 1 Montpellier Retreat;

☺ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 9.30am-4pm Sun) for superb deli produce, or the **Salamanca Fresh Fruit Market** (Map p618; ☎ 6223 2700; 41 Salamanca Pl; ☺ 7am-7pm) for fruit and groceries.

Battery Point

Jackman & McRoss (Map p618; ☎ 6223 3186; 57-59 Hampden Rd; meals \$7-11; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Be sure to swing by this conversational, neighbourhood bakery-café, even if it's just to gawk at the display cabinet full of delectable pies, tarts, baguettes and pastries. Early-morning cake and coffee may evolve into quiche or soup for lunch. Staff stay cheery despite being run off their feet.

Da Angelo (Map p618; ☎ 6223 7011; 47 Hampden Rd; mains \$17-27; ☺ dinner) An enduring (and endearing) Italian *ristorante*, Da Angelo presents an impressively long menu of homemade pastas, veal and chicken dishes, calzone, and pizza with 20 different toppings. Colosseum and Carlton Football Club team photos add authenticity. Takeaway and BYO.

Restaurant Gondwana (Map p618; ☎ 6224 9900; cnr Hampden Rd & Francis St; mains \$26-34; ☺ lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) This corner cook-house has seen a few comings and goings over the years, but Gondwana seems to have put down roots. Discerning Hobartians laud the contemporary Mod Oz menu, which utilises local produce for dishes like roasted rabbit loin, twice-roasted duck and Barilla Bay oysters. Lunch is easier on the wallet; bookings recommended.

See also Shipwrights Arms Hotel (p628).

North Hobart

Kaos Café (Map p615; ☎ 6231 5699; 237 Elizabeth St; mains \$5-19) A few blocks south of the main action, this laid-back, gay-friendly café busies itself with a tasty assortment of dishes (burgers, salads and risottos), serving until late (usually around 11.30pm). Soak@Kaos bar is next door (p628).

Tasmania Inn (Map p615; ☎ 6234 8986; 172 Campbell St; bar menu \$7-13, mains \$12-23; ☺ lunch Wed-Fri, dinner daily) Once the seediest, sticky-carpet booze room in town, the old Tasmania Inn has been gutted by savvy new Canuck owners who've introduced a good-bang-for-your-buck bar menu, upmarket Mod Oz mains and carefully edited live music. Nice work!

Rain Check Lounge (Map p615; ☎ 6234 5975; 392 Elizabeth St; mains \$12-27; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri, brunch Sat & Sun, dinner Wed-Sat) A slice of mainland urban

cool (straight out of Fitzroy or Darlinghurst), Rain Check's cool Moroccan-hewn room and sidewalk tables see punters sipping coffee, re-constituting over big breakfasts and conversing over impressive Mod Oz dinners.

our pick Annapurna (Map p615; ☎ 6236 9500; 305 Elizabeth St; mains \$13-15; ☎ lunch & dinner) It seems like half of Hobart lists Annapurna as their favourite eatery (bookings advised). Northern and southern Indian options served with absolute proficiency – the best Indian meal you'll have on the island, guaranteed! The *masala dosa* (south Indian crepe filled with curried potato) is a crowd favourite. BYO; takeaway available.

Vanidol's (Map p615; ☎ 6234 9307; 353 Elizabeth St; mains \$16-24; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun) A pioneering North Hobart restaurant (both in location and cuisine), Vanidol's' simple purple walls belie a complex menu – a creative confluence of Asian-fusion dishes like beef and vegetables stir-fried in Thai green curry paste with Indian spices (\$16). Oodles of vegetarian options; BYO.

Self-caterers should find most of what they need at **Fresco Market** (Map p615; ☎ 6234 2710; 346 Elizabeth St; ☎ 8.30am-8pm).

See also Republic Bar & Café (p637).

DRINKING

Hobart's pretty young drinkers are 10,000 leagues removed from the rum-addled whalers of the past, but the general intentions remain true: drink a bit, relax a lot and maybe take someone home. Salamanca Place and the waterfront host a slew of pubs and bars – outdoor imbibing on summer evenings; open fires in winter. North Hobart is another option. See p623 for information on a guided pub tour, with lots of historical tales and drinking involved.

Knopwood's Retreat (Map p618; ☎ 6223 5808; 39 Salamanca Pl; ☎ 11am-late) Adhere to the 'When in Rome...' dictum and head for 'Knoppies', Hobart's best pub, which has been serving ales to sea-going types since the convict era. For most of the week it's a cosy watering hole with an open fire; on Friday nights the beautiful people swarm and the crowd spills across the street.

T-42° (Map p618; ☎ 6224 7742; Elizabeth St Pier; ☎ 9am-late) Waterfront T-42° makes a big splash with its food (zingy new-world fusion dishes, heavy on the game and seafood), but also draws late-week barflies with its minimal-

ist interior, spinnaker-shaped bar, ambient tunes and Charlie, the quintessential Hobart barman. If you stay out late enough, they do breakfast too.

Shipwrights Arms Hotel (Map p615; ☎ 6223 5551; 29 Trumpeter St, Battery Point) Bend your elbow with the yachties at this beloved 1834 pub, bedecked with nautical paraphernalia and known affectionately as 'Shippies'. A generous seafood counter meal + beer garden = the perfect summer afternoon.

Hope & Anchor Tavern (Map p618; ☎ 6236 9982; 65 Macquarie St; ☎ 11am-late) It wasn't that long ago that you wouldn't be caught dead in here (for fear of ending up that way), but these days it's an atmospheric place, cashing in on its 1807 origins. The downstairs bar has pool tables, lounges and regular acoustic acts; upstairs is an amazing, museum-like bar and dining room.

Lizbon (Map p615; ☎ 6234 9133; 217 Elizabeth St, North Hobart; ☎ 4pm-late Tue-Sat) A cool wine bar, Lizbon lures a late-20s crowd with excellent wines by the glass, antipasto platters, smooth tunes, a pool table and intimate nooks and crannies. Occasional live jazz.

Soak@Kaos (Map p615; ☎ 6231 5699; 237 Elizabeth St, North Hobart; ☎ 10am-2pm) Perfect for an intoxicating urban afternoon or evening, gay-friendly Soak is a cloistered little lounge bar attached to Kaos Café (p627). Consume burgers and cakes from the café alongside handsome cocktails, while listening to the resident DJ on Friday and Saturday nights.

Bar Celona (Map p618; ☎ 6224 7557; 23 Salamanca Sq; ☎ 10am-late) The impressive renovation is almost irrelevant here, the main focus drifting between divorcees eyeing each other across the crowd and the effervescent staff, bubbly as champagne in tight yellow t-shirts. The tapas menu deserves scrutiny; DJs on Saturday nights.

ENTERTAINMENT

The *Mercury* newspaper lists most of Hobart's entertainment options in its Thursday edition. The free monthly *Sauce* entertainment rag provides detailed arts listings. The online gig guide at www.nakeddwarf.com.au is also worth a look.

No-one comes to Hobart for the clubs, but the action is there if you know where to look. Anyone wanting to tap into the gay and lesbian scene should head to Kaos Café (p627).

(Continued from page 628)

Live Music

Republic Bar & Café (Map p615; ☎ 6234 6954; www.republicbar.com; 299 Elizabeth St, North Hobart; ☎ 11am-late) The Republic is a raucous Art Deco pub hosting live music every night (often free entry). It's the No 1 live-music pub in town, with an always-interesting line-up (Holly Throsby, Sarah Blasko) and an understandably loyal following. Some say the pub food is the best in Tasmania.

New Sydney Hotel (Map p618; ☎ 6234 4516; www.newsydnehotel.com; 87 Bathurst St; ☎ noon-10pm Mon, to midnight Tue-Sat, 4-9pm Sun) Low-key folk, jazz, blues and comedy playing Tuesday to Sunday nights (usually free), with the occasional pub-rock outfit and end-of-week crowds adding a few decibels. With 12 beers on tap, it's a sociable place for a drink or three.

Salamanca Arts Centre (Map p618; ☎ 6234 8414; www.salarts.org.au; 77 Salamanca Pl; ☎ 5.30-7.30pm Fri) Every Friday year-round there's free live music in the SAC courtyard, just off Wooby's Lane – expect anything from African beats to rockabilly, folk or gypsy-latino. Drinks essential (sangria in summer, mulled wine in winter); dancing optional.

Irish Murphy's (Map p618; ☎ 6223 1119; www.irishmurphys.com.au; 21 Salamanca Pl; ☎ 11am-late) Pretty much what you'd expect from any out-of-the-box Irish pub – crowded, lively, affable and dripping with Guinness. Free live music of varying repute from Wednesday to Sunday nights; original acts on Thursdays.

Other rowdy bar/pub rock options (all free) include the Art Deco **Telegraph Hotel** (Map p618; ☎ 6234 6254; telegraph.hotel.hobart@gmail.com; 19 Morrison St; ☎ 11am-late) and the nearby **Customs House Hotel** (Map p618; ☎ 6234 6645; www.customshousehotel.com; 1 Murray St; ☎ 11am-late), where live music raises the rafters from Wednesday to Sunday nights.

Theatre & Concerts

Theatre Royal (Map p618; ☎ 1800 650 277, 6233 2299; www.theatreroyal.com.au; 29 Campbell St; shows \$20-60; ☎ box office 10am-5pm) This venerable old stager is Australia's oldest continually operating theatre, actors first cracking the boards back in 1837. Expect a range of music, ballet, theatre, opera and university revues. See p618 for backstage tour information.

Federation Concert Hall (Map p618; ☎ 1800 001 190, 6235 3633; www.tso.com.au; 1 Davey St; ☎ box office 9am-5pm

Mon-Fri) Welded to the Hotel Grand Chancellor, this concert hall resembles a huge aluminium can leaking insulation from gaps in the paneling. Inside, the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra do what they do best (tickets from \$51).

Cinema

State Cinema (Map p615; ☎ 6234 6318; www.statecinema.com.au; 375 Elizabeth St, North Hobart; tickets adult/concession \$14.50/12; ☎ box office noon-10pm) Saved from the wrecking ball in the '90s, the State shows independent and art-house flicks from local and international filmmakers. There's a great café and bar on site (you can take your wine into the cinema).

Village Cinemas (Map p618; ☎ 6234 7288; www.villagecinemas.com.au; 181 Collins St; tickets adult/concession/child \$14.50/11/10; ☎ box office 10am-10pm) An inner-city multiplex screening mainstream releases. Cheap-arse Tuesday tickets \$9.

Nightclubs

Mobius (Map p618; ☎ 6224 4411; 7 Despard St; admission free-\$10; ☎ 9pm-late Thu-Sat) A pumping clubby dungeon behind the main waterfront area, Mobius (hey wasn't he the guy in *The Matrix*?) is a going concern. Breakbeats, hip-hop, drum and bass – the crowd gyrates in unison.

Halo (Map p618; ☎ 6234 6669; 37a Elizabeth St, access off Purdy's Mart; admission \$5-10; ☎ 10pm-late Wed-Sun) Hobart's best-credentialed club is Halo, which sees touring and local DJs spinning acid, hard trance, electro and hip hop.

Syrup (Map p618; ☎ 6224 8249; www.syrupclub.com; 39 Salamanca Pl; admission free-\$12; ☎ 9pm-late Thu-Sat) Spreading syrup-like over two floors above Knopwood's Retreat (p628), this is a great place for late-night drinks and DJs playing to the techno/house crowd.

Isobar (Map p618; ☎ 6231 6600; www.isobar.com.au; 11a Franklin Wharf; admission Wed free, Fri & Sat \$5-\$8; ☎ 10pm-5am Wed, Fri & Sat) Downstairs here is a shmick bar (open from 5pm Fridays, 7pm Saturdays), while Isobar itself – the club upstairs – plays commercial dance and blows hot and cold with the locals (most of whom seem to be there to pick up).

SHOPPING

Shopping in Hobart tends to be a utilitarian and practical experience rather than frivolous or indulgent (particularly when it comes to fashion – it seems most people here dress in preparedness for impromptu wilderness experiences), but speciality shops

(Continued on page 637)

selling Tasmanian crafts and produce are definitely worthwhile. Head to Salamanca Place for shops and galleries stocking Huon Pine knick-knacks (see the boxed text, p640), hand-knitted beanies, superb local cheeses, sauces, jams, fudge and assorted edibles. The hyperactive Salamanca Market (p619), held here every Saturday, overflows with gourmet Tasmanian produce and sassafras cheeseboards.

The CBD shopping area is the place for less specialised needs, extending west from Elizabeth St Mall through the inner-city arcades. On Elizabeth St between Melville and Bathurst Sts is a swath of stores catering to the abovementioned outdoors types.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

There are no direct international flights to/from Tasmania. Airlines with services between Hobart and the mainland are **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au), **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) and **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au).

Bus

See p612 for information on intrastate bus services.

The main bus companies (and their terminals) operating to/from Hobart are **Redline Coaches** (Map p615; ☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au; Transit Centre, 199 Collins St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat, to 4pm Sun) and **Tassielink** (Map p618; ☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au; Hobart Bus Terminal, 64 Brisbane St; ☎ 7am-6pm Sun-Fri, to 4pm Sat).

Additionally, **Hobart Coaches** (☎ 13 22 01; www.hobartcoaches.com.au) has regular services to/from Richmond, New Norfolk and Kingston, south along the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and to Cygnet. Timetable and fare information is available online or from Metro Tasmania's Metro Shop (right).

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

The airport is 16km east of the city centre. The **Airporter Shuttle Bus** (☎ 0419 382 240; 199 Collins St; one way adult/concession/child \$12/6/6) scoots between the Transit Centre and the airport (via various city pick-up points), connecting with all flights. Bookings essential.

A taxi between the airport and the city centre will cost around \$33 between 6am and 8pm weekdays, or \$38 at other times.

Bicycle

See p620 for details of bicycle rental options in Hobart.

Bus

Metro Tasmania (☎ 13 22 01; www.metrotas.com.au) operates the local bus network, which is reliable but infrequent outside of business hours. The **Metro Shop** (Map p618; ☎ 8.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri), inside the main post office on the corner of Elizabeth and Macquarie Sts, handles ticketing and enquiries. Most buses depart this section of Elizabeth St, or from nearby Franklin Sq.

One-way fares vary with distances ('sections') travelled (from \$1.90 to \$4.30). For \$4.80 (or \$12.80 per family), you can buy an unlimited-travel Day Rover ticket, valid after 9am Monday to Friday, and all day Saturday, Sunday and public holidays. Buy one-way tickets from the driver (exact change required) or ticket agents (newsagents and most post offices); day-passes are only available from ticket agents.

Car

Timed, metered parking predominates in the CBD and tourist areas like Salamanca and the waterfront. For longer-term parking, large CBD garages (clearly signposted) offer inexpensive rates, often with the first hour for free.

The big-boy rental firms (Avis, Budget, Thrifty et al) have airport desks. Cheaper local firms with city offices offer daily rental rates starting at around \$30; see p613 for details.

Taxi

You'll have no trouble hailing a cab in the busy, touristed areas. Fares are metered.

City Cabs (☎ 13 10 08)

Maxi-Taxi Services (☎ 6234 8061) Wheelchair-accessible vehicles.

Taxi Combined Services (☎ 13 22 27)

AROUND HOBART

You won't have to travel too far from Hobart to swap cityscapes for natural panoramas, sandy beaches and historic sites. Reminders of Tasmania's convict history await at Richmond, and the waterfalls, wildlife and fantastic short walks at Mt Field National Park are an easy day trip away.

Without your own wheels, day trips around Hobart are offered by a number of companies (see p622).

RICHMOND

☎ 03 / pop 750

Straddling the Coal River 27km northeast of Hobart, historic Richmond was once a strategic military post and convict station on the road to Port Arthur. Riddled with 19th-century buildings, it's arguably Tasmania's premier historic town, but like The Rocks in Sydney and Hahndorf in Adelaide, it's become a parody of itself with no actual 'life', just a parasitic tourist trade picking over the bones of the colonial past.

That said, Richmond is undeniably picturesque, and kids love chasing the ducks around the riverbanks. It's also quite close to the airport – a happy overnight option if you're on an early flight. See www.richmondvillage.com.au for more information.

Sights & Activities

The chunky but not inelegant **Richmond Bridge** (Wellington St) is the town's proud centrepiece. Built by convicts in 1823, it's purportedly haunted by the 'Flagellator of Richmond', George Grover, who died here in 1832. The northern wing of the remarkably well-preserved **Richmond Gaol** (☎ /fax 6260 2127; 37 Bathurst St; adult/child/family \$5.50/2.50/14; ☎ 9am-5pm) was built in 1825, five years before the penitentiary at Port Arthur. Like Port Arthur, fascinating historic insights abound, but the mood is pretty grim.

Other interesting historic places include the 1836 **St John's Church** (Wellington St), the first Roman Catholic church in Australia; the 1834 **St Luke's Church of England** (Edwards St); the 1825 **courthouse** (Forth St); the 1826 **post office** (Bridge St); the 1888 **Richmond Arms Hotel** (Bridge St); and the 1830 **Prospect House** (Richmond Rd), an historic B&B just south of town.

Richmond is also the centre of Tasmania's fastest-growing wine region, the Coal River Valley, with wineries popping up in all directions. Overlooking the Mt Pleasant Observatory 9km southwest of Richmond, **Meadowbank Estate** (☎ 6248 4484; www.meadowbankwines.com.au; 699 Richmond Rd, Cambridge; tastings free-\$5, mains \$14-21; ☎ 10am-5pm) has an acclaimed restaurant serving lunch daily, an art gallery, kids play area, tastings and sales. Be sure to check out *Flawed History*, an in-floor jigsaw by local artist Tom Samek.

Sleeping & Eating

There's precious little budget lodging in Richmond; the majority of accommodation is self-contained historic cottages.

Richmond Cabin & Tourist Park (☎ 1800 116 699, 6260 2192; www.richmondcabins.com; 48 Middle Tea Tree Rd; unpowered/power sites \$18/24, cabins \$60-110; ☎) Over the back fence of Prospect House, this park is 1km south of town but provides affordable accommodation in neat, no-frills cabins. Kids will be happy with the indoor pool and games room.

Richmond Colonial Accommodation (☎ 6260 2570; www.richmondcolonial.com; 4 Percy St; d \$130-160, extra adult/child \$25/15) Manages three well-equipped, family-friendly historic cottages (Willow, Bridge and Poplar) around town. All are self-contained with a roll-call of colonial touches.

Ma Foosies (☎ 6260 2412; 46 Bridge St; dishes \$5-11; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Cosy tearoom serving breakfast till 11.30am (pancakes, stuffed croissants, bacon and eggs) and an array of light meals, including ploughman's lunch, grilled panini, quiche and lasagne. Gluten-free menu available.

Richmond Arms Hotel (☎ 6260 2109; 42 Bridge St; mains \$13-22; ☎ lunch & dinner) This laid-back sandstone pub, popular with day-tripping, moustachioed bikers, has an uncreative but reliable pub-grub menu (plus a kids' menu). The streetside tables are where you want to be. Coal River Valley wines available.

Getting There & Away

The **Richmond Tourist Bus** (☎ 0408-341 804; return \$25 per person; ☎ 9.15am & 12.20pm) runs a twice-daily service from Hobart, with three hours to explore Richmond before returning. Call for bookings and pick-up locations.

A cheaper option is **Hobart Coaches** (☎ 13 22 01; www.hobartcoaches.com.au), running three buses per day (Monday to Friday only) to/from Richmond (adult one way/return \$7/11, 25 minutes).

MT FIELD NATIONAL PARK

☎ 03 / pop 170 (National Park township)

Mt Field, 80km northwest of Hobart, was declared a national park in 1916 and is famed for its spectacular mountain scenery, alpine moorlands and lakes, rainforest, waterfalls and abundant wildlife. On the way here you might want to stop at **New Norfolk**, an industrial river town making something of a revival.

YELLOW GOLD

Prized for its rich golden hue, rot-resistant oils and fine grain, Tasmania's Huon Pine (*Laurostrobus franklinii*) is one of the slowest-growing and longest-living trees on the planet. Individuals can take 2000 years to reach 30m in height and live to be 3000, a situation overlooked by 19th-century loggers and ship builders who plundered the southwest forests in search of 'Yellow Gold'. Fortunately it's now a protected species – most of the Huon Pine furniture and timberwork you'll see around the state is recycled, or comes from dead trees salvaged from riverbeds and hydro-electric dams.

The park's **Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6288 1149; www.parks.tas.gov.au; 66 Lake Dobson Rd; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Nov-Apr, 9am-4pm May-Oct) houses a café and displays on the park's origins, and provides information on walks. There are excellent day-use facilities in the park, including barbecues, shelters and a children's playground.

Skiing here is sometimes an option, when nature sees fit to deposit snow (infrequently in recent years). Snow reports are available online at www.ski.com.au/reports/mawson, or via a recorded message service (☎ 6288 1166).

Don't miss the magnificently tiered, 45m-high **Russell Falls**, an easy 20-minute return amble from behind the visitor information centre. The path is suitable for prams and wheelchairs. There are also easy walks to Lady Barron and Horseshoe Falls, as well as much longer bushwalks.

On the Tyenna River 4km east of Mt Field is **Something Wild** (☎ 6288 1013; 2080 Gordon River Rd; www.somethingwild.com.au; adult/concession/child/family \$13/11/6.50/39; ☎ 10am-5pm), a wildlife sanctuary that rehabilitates orphaned and injured wildlife, and provides a home for animals unable to be released. Visit the animal nursery, see native wildlife (devils, wombats, quolls) and maybe spot a platypus sniffing around the grounds.

Sleeping & Eating

Russell Falls Holiday Cottages (☎ 6288 1198; fax 6288 1341; 40 Lake Dobson Rd; d \$140, extra adult/child \$20/15) In a super location next to the park entrance, these spotless, self-contained cottages have been the happy recipient of a slick makeover. Buy your food in New Norfolk before you arrive, or go hungry.

National Park Hotel (☎ 6288 1103; 2366 Gordon River Rd; mains \$14-26; ☎ dinner) This rural pub 300m past the park turn-off cooks up mixed grills, chicken and steak. The barmaid shakes her head and says, 'They love their meat round here...'. Skip the ordinary pub accommodation.

Giants' Table & Cottages (☎ 6288 2293; www.giants-table.com.au; 9-13 Junee Rd, Maydena; d \$140-150, extra person \$30) Around 12km east of Mt Field at Maydena, these revamped workers' cottages are snagged somewhere between snazzy and rustic. They're a bit pricey for two, but great for groups – four- to five-bedroom houses sleeping up to 10, with open fires and breakfast provisions supplied. Also here is a restaurant (two/three courses \$30/35), open nightly Tuesday to Saturday, and serving huge portions from a creative menu. Seasonal hours apply; bookings required.

Land of the Giants Campground (☎ 6288 1526; unpowered/power sites \$16/25) A privately run, self-registration campground with adequate facilities (toilets, showers, laundry and free barbecues) just inside the park gates. Bookings not required. Site prices are additional to national park entry fees. Further into the park, Lake Dobson Cabins are rustic six-bed huts for \$40 per night. No gas, electricity or showers; book at the visitor information centre.

Getting There & Away

The drive to Mt Field through the Derwent River Valley and Bushy Park is an absolute stunner: river rapids, hop fields, rows of poplars and hawthorn hedgerows. Public transport connections to the park are limited to **TassieLink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) services, running on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (\$30, 3½ hours) from December to March. Year-round day tours are also run by TassieLink and Gray Line (p622).

TAROONA & KINGSTON

☎ 03

These two suburbs are part of Kingborough, Tasmania's fastest-growing municipality (population 30,500). Tarooma, 10km south of Hobart, is a bush-meets-beach hippie 'burb that peaked in the '70s but has lost its community vibe. It's famously home to **Crown Princess Mary of Denmark** (aka Mary Donaldson of Tarooma High School).

On Tarooma's southern fringe stands the **Shot Tower** (☎ 6227 8885; fax 6227 8643; Channel Hwy, Tarooma; admission adult/child \$5.50/2.50; ☎ 9am-5pm), a

48m-high, circular sandstone turret built in 1870 to make lead shot for firearms. The river views from atop the 318 steps are wondrous.

Sprawling Kingston, 12km south of Hobart, is headquarters for the **Australian Antarctic Division** (☎ 6232 3209; www.aad.gov.au; 203 Channel Hwy; admission free; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri), the department administering Australia's 42% wedge of the frozen continent. There's a small display on Antarctic exploration and ecology.

Kingston Beach is a popular swimming and sailing spot, with steep wooded cliffs at each end of a long arc of sand. Further south by road are **Blackmans Bay**, another swimmable beach, and **Tinderbox Marine Reserve**, where you can snorkel along an underwater trail marked with submerged information plates.

For sleeping and eating options, you'll be far better off back in Hobart. Local buses 56 and 61 run from Hobart through Tarooma to Kingston.

SEVEN MILE BEACH

☎ 03 / pop 450

Out near the airport 15km east of Hobart is this safe swimming beach (seven miles long!), backed by shacks, a corner store and pine-punctured dunes. When the swell is working, the point break here is magic.

A two-minute walk from the beach, **Seven Mile Beach Cabin Park** (☎ 6248 6469; www.comfycabins.com.au; 12 Aqua Pl; unpowered/power sites \$15/20, cabins \$55-100; ☎) is a spacey patch with blue-painted corrugated iron cabins and free gas BBQs – as low-key as can be.

Follow Surf Rd past the runway and around to the left for 2km and you'll come to **Barilla Bay Oyster Farm** (☎ 6248 5458; www.barillabay.com.au; 1388 Tasman Hwy, Cambridge; tours adult/child \$9.50/5, mains \$27-32; ☎ lunch & dinner). Hit the slick restaurant, or grab a dozen shucked oysters (\$9) washed down with some Oyster Stout, brewed on site. Tours daily; call for bookings and times.

To get to Seven Mile Beach, drive towards the airport and follow the signs. Local buses 191, 192, 291 and 293 also run here.

THE SOUTHEAST

The quiet harbours and valleys of the southeast have much to offer, particularly if you enjoy driving through serene, green countryside and snacking from roadside produce stores. Once the apple-shaped heart of the Apple Isle, the

area has diversified into cherries, apricots, Atlantic salmon and wines, catering to burgeoning tourist traffic. Here, the fruit-filled hillsides of the Huon Valley give way to the sparkling inlets of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Bruny Island waits enticingly offshore, the Hartz Mountains National Park not far inland.

For further regional low-down see www.huontrail.org.au and www.farsouth.com.au.

Getting There & Around

The southeast has three distinct areas: the peninsula, including Kettering and Cygnet, Bruny Island, and the Huon Hwy coastal strip linking Huonville with Cockle Creek.

Hobart Coaches (☎ 13 22 01; www.hobartcoaches.com.au) runs several weekday buses from Hobart south to Kettering (\$9, 50 minutes) and Woodbridge (\$8.70, one hour). A bus from Hobart also runs once each weekday to Snug then inland across to Cygnet (\$11, one hour).

TassieLink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) buses tootle along the Huon Hwy from Hobart through Huonville (\$10, one hour) several times a day (once on Saturday and Sunday), some continuing to Geeveston (\$15, 1½ hours) and Dover (\$20, 1¾ hours, not Sundays). Check the website or call for departure times.

From December to March on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, TassieLink also runs buses from Hobart all the way to Cockle Creek (\$65, 3½ hours), returning to Hobart on the same days.

For Bruny Island ferry service details, see p644.

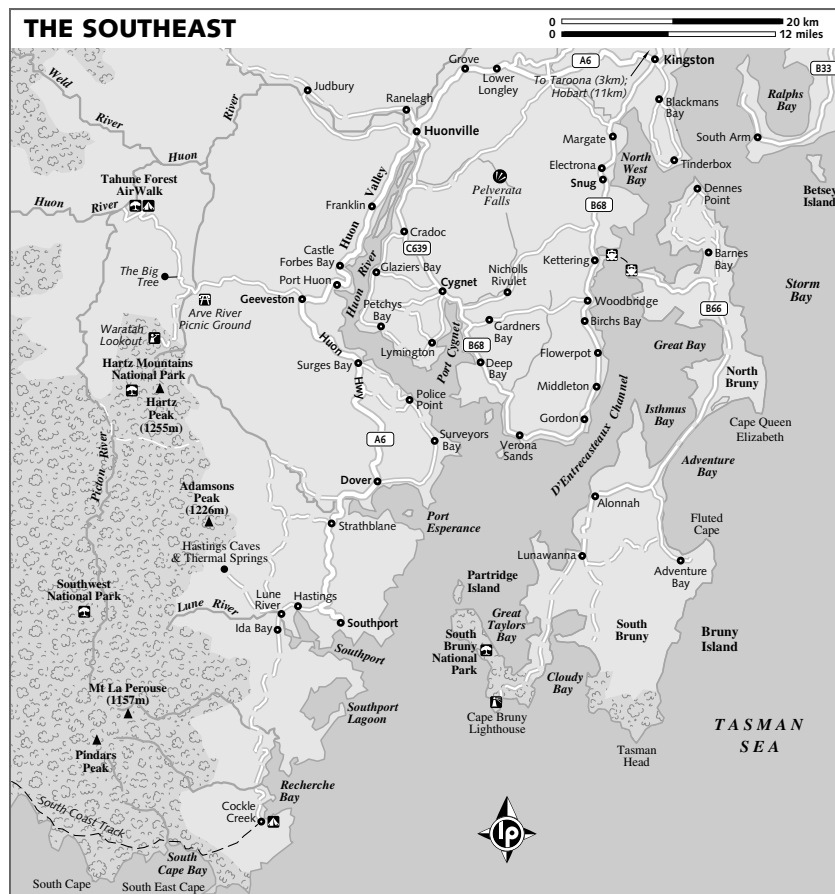
KETTERING

☎ 03 / pop 300

Blessed with the photogene, the snoozy port of Kettering shelters fishing boats and yachts in its marina, next to the Bruny Island ferry terminal. Most folks just blow through here en route to Bruny, but it's an essential stop for sea-kayakers.

The **Kettering Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6267 4494; www.tasmaniaholiday.com; 81 Ferry Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) by the ferry terminal has information on accommodation and services on Bruny Island, including notes on walks and a self-guided driving tour. There's also a café here.

At the marina is **Roaring 40's Ocean Kayaking** (☎ 6267 5000; www.roaring40skayaking.com.au; Oyster Cove Marina, Ferry Rd), Tassie's leading sea-kayaking



tour operator. The company offers gear rental to kayakers, and organises a smorgasbord of kayaking trips to suit all levels of experience. A half-day paddle around Oyster Cove costs \$90; a full day on D'Entrecasteaux Channel costs \$155, including lunch. Overnight trips at venues such as Lake St Clair, Lake Pedder and Maria Island are also available, plus three- or seven-night trips around the southwest wilderness (p641).

Serving pizzas and hot takeaways, the **Ferry Road Store** (☎ 6267 4474; 40 Ferry Rd; mains \$5-15; ♿) has 'As Seen On TV!' cred – Channel 7 recently profiled the 'seachanger' Victorian owners.

A cream-coloured monolith presiding over the boat-cluttered harbour, **Oyster**

Cove Inn (☎ 6267 4446; www.view.com.au/oyster; 1 Ferry Rd; s/d without bathroom from \$45/90) is a large pub with budget singles, twins and doubles upstairs. Kooky carpet, ill-matched linen, raggedy bathrooms – talk about 'no-frills'! The restaurant (mains \$10 to \$25) raises the standards a little at dinnertime, with an extensive menu, local wines, a casual bar and outdoor deck.

Just north of town, **Heron's Rise Vineyard** (☎ 6267 4339; www.heronrise.com.au; 1000 Saddle Rd; d \$130-160, extra person \$30) has two upmarket, self-contained cottages set in lush surroundings among the vines (the third is being built above the Pinot-stacked wine cellar), each featuring a log fire. Breakfast provisions are supplied.

BRUNY ISLAND

☎ 03 / pop 600

Bruny Island, named after French explorer Bruny D'Entrecasteaux, is almost two islands, joined by a narrow, sandy isthmus called The Neck. Renowned for its wildlife (fairy penguins, echidnas, mutton birds), it's a windswept, sparsely populated retreat, blown-over by ocean rains in the south, dry and beachy in the north. For info, visit www.brunyisland.net.

Too many visitors try unsuccessfully to cram their Bruny experience into one day, but you really need two or three to explore the island's coastal enclaves, swimming and surf beaches, forests and walking tracks within **South Bruny National Park**.

Tourism is key to the island's economy, though as yet there are no large resorts – just self-contained cottages and guesthouses. A car or bicycle is essential for getting around. Supplies are available at the well-stocked Adventure Bay general store and small shops at Alonnah and Lunawanna. There are no shops in the northern part of the island. Many island roads are unsealed – not all car rental companies are cool with this concept.

The curiosity-arousing **Bligh Museum of Pacific Exploration** (☎ 6293 1117; 876 Main Rd, Adventure Bay; adult/child/family \$4/2/10; ♿ 10am-4pm) details the local exploits of explorers Bligh, Cook, Furneaux and, of course, Bruny D'Entrecasteaux. Also worth visiting is the 1836 **Cape Bruny Lighthouse** (☎ 6298 3114; tours adult/child \$5/2) on South Bruny. Take a tour (one day's advance booking required) or wander the surrounding **reserve** (♿ 10am-4pm), which has impressive panoramas of the rugged coast.

From October to April, **Bruny Island Charters** (☎ 6293 1465; www.brunycharter.com.au) operates highly recommended three-hour tours of the island's awesome southeast coastline, taking in rookeries, seal colonies, bays, caves and towering sea cliffs. Trips depart Adventure Bay jetty at 11am daily from October to May, and cost \$95/50 per adult/child. Alternatively, take the tour as part of a full-day trip from Hobart (\$155/110), including lunch and transfers.

Travellers without wheels could try Bruny Island Charters' **Bruny Island Bus Service** (\$45; ♿ 8am) – a return bus trip from Hobart to Adventure Bay, with admission to the Bligh Museum of Pacific Exploration and four

hours' exploring time (hike the Fluted Cape Walk, or bum around on the beach).

Sleeping

Self-contained cottages are plentiful on Bruny. Bookings are essential, as owners/managers and their keys aren't always easily located – the Kettering Visitor Information Centre (p641) is a good starting point. Adventure Bay has the lion's share of accommodation, but there are places at Alonnah (the other main settlement on South Bruny), and at Barnes Bay and Dennes Point (pronounced 'Denz') on North Bruny.

Bruny Beach House (☎ 5243 8486, 0419-315 626; www.brunybeachhouse.com; 91 Nebraska Rd, Dennes Point; d \$125, extra person \$20) Above the sandy sliver of Nebraska Beach in the north is this large, good-value beach house sleeping four. It's got all the requisite facilities, a wood heater and a super deck on which to sip and scan. BYO supplies; two-night minimum stay.

Explorers' Cottages (☎ 6293 1271; www.brunyisland.com; 20 Lighthouse Rd, Lunawanna; d \$140, extra person \$25) Just south of Lunawanna on the way to the lighthouse, these bright, beachy, self-contained cottages sleep four with lounge areas, log fires, board games and outdoor decks.

Wainui B&B (☎ 6260 6260; www.wainuibandb.com; 87 Main Rd, Dennes Point; r \$150) Two large, attractive rooms and outdoor deck views are main selling points of this modern B&B at Dennes Point in the island's north. The owner is ex-Merchant Marine, and keeps things shipshape.

Captain James Cook Memorial Caravan Park (☎ 6293 1128; www.capcookoldid.com.au; 786 Main Rd, Adventure Bay; unpowered/powered sites \$16/20, on-site caravans \$37-45, cabins \$100-110; ♿) Right by the beach, this grandly named park could do with a few trees, but has welcoming owners and decent facilities (including wheelchair-accessible cabins). Bruny's cheapest accommodation. Fishing charters available.

There's free bush **camping** in South Bruny National Park (national park fees apply) at Jetty Beach, a sheltered cove 3km north of the lighthouse, and at surf-battered Cloudy Bay. There's free camping outside the national park at Neck Beach, at the southern end of The Neck.

Eating

Hothouse Café (☎ 6293 1131; 46 Adventure Bay Rd, South Bruny; snacks & meals \$9-23; ♿) breakfast & lunch, dinner by

arrangement) This café at Morella Island Retreat occupies a converted hothouse (sit inside on a sunny day and you'll start to sprout). Isthmus views and flappy birdlife distract you from the menu of interesting snacks and mains (omelettes, steaks, flatbread wraps). Dinner is usually an option in January.

Bruny Island Smoke House (☎ 6260 6344; 360 Lennon Rd, North Bruny; mains \$12-20; ☹ lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Fri) Managed with pizzazz, 'BISH' is a winner – gourmet pizzas, smoked fish and meats, cakes, decent coffee and astounding views from the deck. If only they were open more often!

Bruny Island Hotel (☎ 6293 1148; Main Rd, Alonnah; mains \$17-24; ☹ lunch & dinner) An unassuming pub in Alonnah, with outdoor water-view seating to help you unravel, plus a reasonable menu heavy on local seafood. We hope the smile-free barman was just having a bad day.

Penguin Café (☎ 6293 1352; 710 Main Rd, Adventure Bay; 2 courses \$25; ☹ dinner; ☑) Next to the Adventure Bay store, Penguin Café serves fixed-price dinners (soup of the day, beef in red wine, fillet of ocean trout etc) in a cosy wooden room. Wines by the glass or bottle. Bookings essential; reduced winter hours. Ask about their gourmet picnic hampers.

Getting There & Around

Access to the island is via **car ferry** (☎ 6272 3277) from Kettering across to Roberts Point on the north of the island. There are at least 10 services daily from 7am to 7.30pm, taking 20 minutes one way. Return fares: cars \$25 (\$30 on public holidays and public holiday weekends), motorcycles \$11, bicycles \$3 and foot passengers free.

Hobart Coaches (☎ 13 22 01; www.hobartcoaches.com.au) runs weekday-only buses from Hobart to Kettering (see p641), stopping on request at the Kettering ferry terminal. The ferry terminal on Bruny is a long way from anywhere – BYO transport.

WOODBIDGE

☎ 03 / pop 250

Established in 1874 as Peppermint Bay, Woodbridge was eventually renamed by a nostalgic English landowner. It's a quiet village sitting squarely on the tourist trail, thanks to the sexy **Peppermint Bay** (☎ 6267 4088; www.peppermintbay.com.au; 3435 Channel Hwy) development that consumed the old Woodbridge pub. On a mesmeric D'Entrecasteaux Channel inlet,

Peppermint Bay houses a **provedore**, an art gallery, the upmarket à la carte **Dining Room** (mains \$25-30; ☹ lunch daily, dinner Sat), and the casual **Local Bar** (mains \$15-20; ☹ lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat). The emphasis is on local produce: seafood, fruits, meats, cheeses and other foodstuffs from just down the road, used to fantastic effect. Reduced winter hours; bookings advised. You can also take a cruise here from Hobart (p623).

CYGNET

☎ 03 / pop 800

Groovy Cygnet was originally named Port de Cygne Noir (Port of the Black Swan) by Bruny D'Entrecasteaux (swans proliferate on the bay). Youthfully reincarnated as Cygnet (a baby swan), the town has evolved into a dreadlocked, artsy enclave while still functioning as a major fruit-producing centre. Weathered farmers and banjo-carrying hippies chat amiably in the main street and prop up the bars of the town's three pubs.

January's ever-popular **Cygnet Folk Festival** (www.cygnetfolkfestival.org) is three days of words, music and dance, attracting talent like Jeff Lang and Monique Brumby. The warmer months also provide abundant fruit-picking work for backpackers.

The **Cygnet Living History Museum** (☎ 6295 1602; 37 Mary St; admission by donation; ☹ 10am-3pm Tue & Wed, 12.30-3pm Fri & Sat) is a quaint history room next to the church on the main street, stuffed full of old photos, documents and curios.

If you're not in a hurry to be somewhere else (and why should you be?), cruise the scenic Cygnet Coast Rd (C639) between Cradoc and Cygnet. It's 20km longer than the direct route, but makes a slow-paced, photo-worthy detour.

Huon Valley (Balfes Hill) Backpackers (☎ 6295 1551; www.balfeshill.alltasmanian.com; 4 Sandhill Rd, Cradoc; unpowered sites/dm/d/f \$15/20/50/75; ☑), off the Channel Hwy 4.5km north of Cygnet, has decent rooms, good facilities, extensive grounds and super views from the large communal area (despite all of which, some reader reports are negative). It's especially busy from November to May, when the host helps backpackers find fruit-picking work. Courtesy bus to/from Cygnet bus stop; bike hire per half-/full day \$15/25.

The pick of Cygnet's three pubs is the **Commercial Hotel** (☎ 6295 1296; 2 Mary St; s/d with shared bathroom \$45/60) at the bottom of the main street:

serviceable pub rooms upstairs, café and **bistro** (mains \$10-24; ☹ lunch & dinner) downstairs serving mountainous pub classics.

A new breed of hip cafés populates the main street, the best of which is **Red Velvet Lounge** (☎ 6295 0466; 24 Mary St; mains \$8-12; ☹ breakfast & lunch), a funky wholefood store and coffee-house serving deliciously healthy meals to a diverse clientele. Blue-eyed staff, piles of music mags, mellow tunes, urbane without being yuppie, hippie without being feral – Cygnet has arrived!

HUONVILLE

☎ 03 / pop 1710

The biggest town in the southeast, agrarian Huonville sits on the banks of the Huon River, not far from some lovely vineyards and small villages. Having made its name as Tasmania's apple-growing powerhouse, it remains a functional, working town – low on charm but with all the services you need (banks, cafés, supermarkets, petrol, post office). Just down the road is **Franklin**, which seems to be carving out a gourmet niche for itself. Time will tell if the new eateries here are anything more than flash-in-the-pan.

The **Huonville Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6264 1838; www.huonjet.com/trips/viscentre1.html; The Esplanade; ☹ 9am-5pm; ☑) is by the river on the road south to Cygnet. These guys also book the **Huon Jet** (www.huonjet.com) – 35-minute, frenetic jet-boat rides (adult/child \$60/38) – and hire out paddleboats (\$10 for 15 minutes).

At Grove, 6km north of Huonville, the **Huon Apple & Heritage Museum** (☎ 6266 4345; appleheritagemuseum@yahoo.com.au; 2064 Main Rd; adult/concession/child/family \$6/5/3/15; ☹ 9am-5pm) has displays on 500 varieties of apples (count 'em) and 19th-century orchard life. Skip the tacky gift shop.

The nearby township of Ranelagh (3km northwest of Huonville) is home to the vine-wreathed **Home Hill** (☎ 6264 1200; www.homehillwines.com.au; 38 Naim St; ☹ 10am-5pm), producers of award-winning Pinot Noir. Tastings are free, after which wobble into the excellent **restaurant** (mains \$27-28; ☹ lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat).

Also at Ranelagh is the 1865 **Matilda's of Ranelagh** (☎ 6264 3493; www.matildasofranelagh.com.au; 2 Louisa St; d \$160-200), one of Tasmania's finest heritage B&Bs (the Queen once stopped here for tea and a pee). There are more accommodation options further south, in Franklin and Castle Forbes Bay.

The best eatery in Huonville is the hip **BYO Café Motó** (☎ 0400-315 533; 4 Wilmot St; mains \$10-14; ☹ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri), serving city-quality coffee, cakes, quiches, pies and pastries – all homemade, all delicious.

GEEVESTON

☎ 03 / pop 830

Long stigmatised as a redneck logging town (justifiably), Geeveston is battling to become a tourist centre, offering some decent accommodation and eateries close to the Hartz Mountains and Tahune Forest AirWalk.

Doubling as a visitor information centre, the **Forest & Heritage Centre** (☎ 6297 1836; www.forestandheritagecentre.com.au; 15 Church St; ☹ 9am-5pm; ☑) has forestry displays, a woodturning gallery and accommodation info and bookings. You can buy Tahune Forest AirWalk and Hastings Caves tickets here too, and pick up a map detailing short walks en route to the AirWalk.

Head 29km west of town to the hugely successful **Tahune Forest AirWalk** (☎ 6297 0068; www.foresttys.com.au; adult/concession/child/family \$17/16/9/38; ☹ 9am-5pm) – 600m of steel walkways suspended 20m above the forest floor. The walk is accessible for people with disabilities, and there's a café and gift shop here too. Drive here under your own steam, or take a day trip from Hobart (see Tours, p611). There are plenty of picnic spots here and limited unpowered campervan spots (no tents). There's a free (unofficial) camp site at the Arve River Picnic Ground about halfway to the AirWalk. Don't miss the **Big Tree**, an enormous swamp gum not far west of the Arve River.

It's impossible miss bright blue **Bob's Bunkhouse** (☎ 6297 1069; www.bobsbunkhousegeeveestonbackpackers.com.au; cnr Huon Hwy & School Rd; dm \$20, s, d & tw \$40; ☑), just south of town next to a colossal swamp gum log taken from the Arve Valley in 1971 (displayed without a hint of remorse). Bob's roadside rooms are clean and comfy with shared facilities.

Right in the middle of town, **Bears B&B** (☎ 6297 0110; www.bearsoverthemountain.com; 2 Church St; d \$88-130) has four rooms decorated in a whimsical bear theme (with the odd stuffed tiger) – kids will be in heaven. The warm-hearted hosts will cook you dinner too (by prior arrangement).

Kyari (☎ 6297 1601; 13 Church St; mains \$9-14; ☹ breakfast & lunch) is a streamlined eatery in a converted bank, with all-day breakfasts,

enticing café fare, a kids' menu and an outdoor deck. Hours are subject to wild variations – call in advance before you get your hopes up.

HARTZ MOUNTAINS NATIONAL PARK

If you prefer your wilderness a little less pre-packaged than what you'll find at the Tahune Forest Reserve, head for the Hartz Mountains. Part of Tasmania's World Heritage Area, the park is only 84km from Hobart – within striking distance for weekend walkers and day-trippers. The park is renowned for its jagged peaks, glacial tarns, gorges, alpine moorlands and dense rainforest. Rapid weather changes bluster through – even day-walkers should bring waterproofs and warm clothing.

There are some great hikes and isolated, sit-and-ponder-your-existence viewpoints in the park. **Waratah Lookout**, 24km from Geeveston, is an easy five-minute shuffle from the road. Other well-surfaced short walks include **Arve Falls** (20 minutes return) and **Lake Osborne** (40 minutes return). The steeper **Lake Esperance** walk (two hours return) takes you through high country even agnostics would proclaim as 'God's own'.

There's no camping within the park, just basic day facilities (toilets, shelters, picnic tables, barbecues). Collect a *Hartz Mountains National Park* brochure from the Geeveston (p645) or Huonville (p645) visitor information centres.

DOVER

☎ 03 / pop 570

Dozy Dover – a Port Esperance fishing town with a pub, a beach and a pier to dangle a line from – is a chilled-out spot to stay while you're exploring the far south. In the 19th century, this was a timber mill town; nowadays fish farms harvest Atlantic salmon for export throughout Asia. If you're heading further south, buy petrol and food supplies here.

On the Esperance River 5km south of Dover, **Far South Wilderness Lodge & Backpackers** (☎ 6298 1922; www.farsouthwilderness.com.au; Narrows Rd, Strathblane; dm/d/f \$25/65/100; 📺) provides some of Tasmania's best budget accommodation, with a bushy waterfront setting, cosy lounge piled high with *National Geographic* mags, quality accommodation and a strong environmental focus. Mountain bikes and kayaks for rent (\$15/35 per day).

Driftwood Holiday Cottages (☎ 6298 1441, 1800 353 983; www.driftwoodcottages.com.au; 51 Bayview Rd; d \$150-200, f \$190-230) offers modern, self-contained studio-style units or two large, family-friendly houses sleeping four to eight. Sit on your veranda, sip something chilly and watch fishermen rowing out to their boats on Port Esperance.

Opposite a sandy beach, the well-maintained **Dover Beachside Tourist Park** (☎ 6298 1301; www.dovercaravanpark.com.au; 27 Kent Beach Rd; unpowered/powered sites \$18/23, on-site caravans/cabins from \$45/75) features spotless cabins, a bookshelf full of beachy, raised-gold-font novels and ACTUAL GRASS (the drought hasn't made it this far south).

The snug, wood-panelled **Dover Woodfired Pizza** (☎ 6298 1905; Main Rd; mains \$9-19; 🍷 lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) offers traditional and gourmet wood-fired pizzas, baked spuds and filling pasta dishes. Eat in or takeaway.

HASTINGS CAVES & THERMAL SPRINGS

The **Hastings Caves & Thermal Springs** facility is 21km south of Dover, signposted inland from the Huon Hwy. The only way to explore the caves is via guided tour; buy tickets at the **Hastings Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 03-6298 3209; www.parks.tas.gov.au/reserves/hastings; adult/concession/child/family \$22/18/11/55; 🍷 9am-5pm Mar-Apr & Sep-Dec, 9am-6pm Jan & Feb, 10am-4pm May-Aug). Tours leave on the hour: the first an hour after the visitor centre opens, the last an hour before it closes. Admission includes a 45-minute tour of the amazing dolomite Newdegate Cave, plus entry to the **thermal swimming pool** behind the visitor information centre, filled with 28°C water from thermal springs (pool-only admission adult/concession/child/family \$5/4/2.50/12). No public transport runs out this way.

Guided caving tours (no experience required) are also available through **Southern Wilderness Eco Adventure Tours** (☎ 03-6297 6368, 0427-976 368; www.tasglow-wormadventure.com.au; tour incl equipment \$65; 🍷 1pm & 6pm), visiting a cave with a thriving glow-worm population. Four-hour tours depart the Dover Hotel daily, weather and minimum numbers permitting. Bookings essential.

COCKLE CREEK

Australia's most southerly drive is the 19km gravel stretch from Ida Bay past the soft-lulling waves of **Recherche Bay** to **Cockle Creek**. A

grand grid of streets was once planned for Cockle Creek, but dwindling coal seams and whale numbers poured cold water on that idea. There's free camping along the Recherche Bay foreshore, or pitch tent just within Southwest National Park (national park fees apply).

The area features craggy, clouded mountains, sigh-inducing beaches, and (best of all) hardly any people – perfect for camping and bushwalking. The challenging **South Coast Track** starts (or ends) here, taking you through to Maleleuca in the Southwest National Park. Combined with the **Port Davey Track** you can walk all the way to Port Davey in the south-west; see p695).

TASMAN PENINSULA

The Arthur Hwy runs 100km from Hobart through Sorell to the Port Arthur Historic Site, the biggest of Tassie's big-ticket tourist lures. But the convict ruins are only part of the Tasman Peninsula story – also here are astonishing 300m-high sea cliffs, empty surf beaches, sandy bays and stunning bushwalks through thickly wooded forests and isolated coastlines. Much of the area constitutes the Tasman National Park.

See www.portarthur-region.com.au for more information.

Getting There & Around

Regional public-transport connections are surprisingly poor. **TassieLink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) runs a weekday evening bus from Hobart to Port Arthur (\$25, two hours) during school terms, reducing to Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings during school holidays. Buses stop at the main towns en route.

You can cruise from Hobart to Port Arthur with **Navigators** (☎ 03-6223 1914; www.navigators.net.au; adult/child incl site entry & return coach trip \$149/110), or take a coach tour if you don't have transport: **Bottom Bits Bus** (☎ 1800 777 103, 03-6224 2316; www.bottombitsbus.com.au) Small-group Saturday day trips (\$110) including Port Arthur entry, the evening ghost tour and visits to the peninsula's natural attractions (Tessellated Pavement, Tasmans Arch, Devils Kitchen).

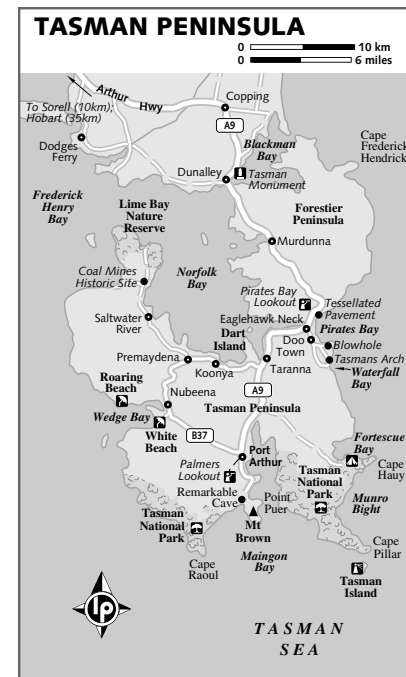
Escape Tours Tasmania (☎ 1800 133 555, www.escapeourtasmania.com.au) Friday tours to the peninsula (\$95). A flexible itinerary can include the whole day at Port Arthur, or visits to other peninsula attractions.

Smash & Grab (☎ 1800 777 103; www.tourstasmania.com.au) Sunday, Monday, Wednesday and Friday day tours (\$100) including Port Arthur admission and stops at Eaglehawk Neck, Doo Town, Tasmans Arch and Remarkable Cave. **TassieLink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) Aside from their regular bus, TassieLink run Port Arthur day trips (\$85) on Tuesday, Thursday, Friday and Sunday (plus Wednesday in summer), with maximum time at the historic site.

SORELL

☎ 03 / pop 1730

Settled in 1808, this is one of Tasmania's oldest towns, but its historic aura has tarnished over time. These days it's a T-junction service town with more petrol stations and fast-food joints than anything else, but there's a perfect pit-stop here: the **Sorell Fruit Farm** (☎ 6265 3100; www.sorellfruitfarm.com; 174 Pawleena Rd; 🍷 8.30am-5pm late Oct-May). Pick your own fruit (15 different kinds!) from their intensely planted 12½ acres (\$6 minimum pick), or enjoy a snack or a mellifluous coffee in the tearooms. To get here, head east through Sorell towards Port Arthur. After exiting the town you'll see Pawleena signposted on your left.



EAGLEHAWK NECK TO PORT ARTHUR

Most tourists associate the Tasman Peninsula only with Port Arthur, but there are boundless attractions (natural and otherwise) down this way. Hit the bookshops for *Peninsula Tracks* by Peter & Shirley Storey (\$18) – track notes for 35 walks in the area. The *Convict Trail* booklet (\$2.50), available from visitor information centres in the area, covers the peninsula's key historic sites.

Approach Eaglehawk Neck from the north, turn east onto Pirates Bay Dr for the **lookout** – expansive Pirates Bay views extend to the rugged coastline beyond. Also clearly signposted around Eaglehawk Neck are some bizarre and precipitous coastal formations: **Tessellated Pavement**, the **Blowhole**, **Tasmans Arch** and **Waterfall Bay**. South of Port Arthur is the sea-gouged **Remarkable Cave**.

The **Tasman National Park** offers some spectacular bushwalking (national park fees apply). From Fortescue Bay, you can walk east to **Cape Hauy** (four to five hours return) – a well-trodden path leading to sea cliffs with sensational rocky sea-stack outlooks. The walk to the exquisitely named **Cape Raoul** (five hours return) is equally rewarding. You can also visit the remains of **penal outstations** at Eaglehawk Neck, Koonya, Premaydena and Saltwater River, and the restored ruins at the **Coal Mines Historic Site**.

The **Tasmanian Devil Conservation Park** (☎ 03-6250 3230; www.tasmaniandevilpark.com; 5990 Arthur Hwy, Taranna; adult/child/family \$22/12/55; ☎ 9am-6pm) functions as a quarantined breeding centre for devils to help protect against DFTD (see p678). There are plenty of other native animals and birds here too, with feedings throughout the day (call for current times).

Some other options for experiencing the area:

Eaglehawk Dive Centre (☎ 03-6250 3566; www.eaglehawkdive.com.au; 178 Pirates Bay Dr, Eaglehawk Neck; 1-4-day courses \$200/495; ☎ office 9am-5pm) Underwater explorations, courses and equipment rental. Free Hobart pick-up; dorm accommodation for divers \$20.

Island Surf School (☎ 03-6265 9776, 0400-830 237; www.islandsurfschool.com.au; lessons \$50) Two-hour surf lessons at Eagle Hawk Neck; board and wetsuit provided.

Sealife Experience (☎ 0428-300 303; www.sealife.com.au; cruises adult/child/family \$95/50/260) Knowledgeable three-hour cruises around the peninsula's east coast – bring your camera. Cruises depart Eaglehawk Neck.

Tasman Sea Charters (☎ 1300 554 049; www.tasmanseacharters.com.au; cruises adult/child \$95/55;

☎ Dec-Apr) Three-hour commentated wildlife cruises around the peninsula from Eaglehawk Neck to Cape Hauy. Cruises depart Eaglehawk Neck Jetty.

Sleeping

Eaglehawk Neck Backpackers (☎ 03-6250 3248; 94 Old Jetty Rd, Eaglehawk Neck; unpowered sites/dm \$16/20) A very simple, family-run hostel in a peaceful location signposted west of the isthmus. There are just four beds in the dorm, plus a couple of tent spots on the back lawn and a camp kitchen. Bike hire is \$5 for duration of stay.

Teraki Cottages (☎ 03-6250 3435; 996 Arthur Hwy, Taranna; d \$80-90, extra adult/child \$20/10) Perhaps the best-value accommodation on the peninsula at the southern end of Taranna, these three neat-as-a-pin, self-contained bushman's huts exude basic, rustic charm. Quiet bush setting; open fires. No credit cards.

Lufra Hotel (☎ 03-6250 3262; www.lufrahotel.com; 380 Pirates Bay Dr, Eaglehawk Neck; s \$65-75, d \$80-120) This hesitantly managed, chowder-coloured pub has a superb outlook above Pirates Bay ('a bit of a view': are they serious?). Rooms are modest but comfortable, all with bathrooms. Chow down nightly in the bistro (mains \$20 to \$34) downstairs.

Fortescue Bay Campground (☎ 03-6250 2433; Tasman National Park; unpowered sites \$24) This remote spot on the gentle arc of Fortescue Bay is 12km off Arthur Hwy down an unsealed road. There are no powered sites and cold showers, but fireplaces and gas BBQs compensate. National park fees apply in addition to camping fees; book ahead during summer.

Eating

Eaglehawk Café & Guesthouse (☎ 03-6250 3331; 5131 Arthur Hwy, Eaglehawk Neck; mains \$10-23; ☎ breakfast & lunch, dinner Fri-Sun Dec-Feb) This is arguably the peninsula's best dining option, just south of Eaglehawk Neck. Stylish décor, local art lining the walls, wines by the glass and a fine day-turns-to-night menu (try the Doo Town venison kebabs; \$22). Or just stop in for coffee and cake. Upstairs are three lovely B&B rooms (\$110 to \$130).

Mussel Boys (☎ 03-6250 3088; 5927 Arthur Hwy, Taranna; mains \$16-26; ☎ lunch & dinner) Open from noon, this bright, fresh café-restaurant has a mussel-bound menu worth screeching into the driveway for. Try the mussels in dill and coconut curry broth (\$18) or the seven-course tasting menu (\$74).

PORT ARTHUR

☎ 03 / pop 200

Inside the entrance of the Port Arthur Historic Site, there's a **Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 03-6251 2371; www.portarthur-region.com.au; ☎ 9am-5pm). There's also an information office in Hobart – the **Port Arthur Region Travel Shop** (Map p618; ☎ 03-6224 5333; 49a Salamanca Pl; ☎ 9am-5pm).

In 1830 Governor Arthur chose the Tasman Peninsula to confine prisoners who had committed further crimes in the colony. A 'natural penitentiary', the peninsula is connected to the mainland by a strip of land less than 100m wide – Eaglehawk Neck. To deter escape, ferocious guard dogs were chained across the isthmus, while rumours circulated about the shark-infested waters on either side.

From 1830 to 1877, 12,500 convicts did hard, brutal prison time at Port Arthur. For most it was hell on Earth, but those who behaved often enjoyed better conditions than they'd endured in England and Ireland. Port Arthur became the hub of a network of penal stations on the peninsula, its fine buildings sustaining thriving convict-labour industries, including timber milling, shipbuilding, coal mining, shoemaking and brick and nail production.

Australia's first railway literally 'ran' the 7km between Norfolk Bay and Long Bay: convicts pushed the carriages along the tracks. A semaphore telegraph system allowed instant communication between Port Arthur, other peninsula outstations and Hobart. Convict farms provided fresh vegetables, a boys' prison was built at Point Puer to reform and educate juvenile convicts, and a church was erected.

Despite its redemption as a major tourist site, Port Arthur remains a sombre, haunting place. Don't come here expecting to remain unaffected by what you see. There's a sadness

here that's undeniable; a gothic sense of woe that can cloud your senses on the sunniest of days. Perhaps this is what brought a deranged young gunman here in April 1996. Unleashing an indiscriminate fusillade of bullets, he murdered 35 people and injured 37 more. After burning down a local guesthouse, he was finally captured and imprisoned north of Hobart, his file stamped 'Never to be Released'.

The **Port Arthur Historic Site** (☎ 6251 2310, 1800 659 101; www.portarthur.org.au; Arthur Hwy, Port Arthur; adult/child/family \$25/11/55; ☎ tours & buildings 9am-5pm, grounds 8.30am-dusk) remains one of Tasmania's busiest tourist attractions. The visitor centre includes an information counter, café, restaurant and gift shop. Downstairs is an excellent interpretation gallery, where you can follow the convicts' journey from England to Tasmania. Buggy transport around the site can be arranged for people with restricted mobility; ask at the information counter.

Worthwhile guided tours (included in admission) leave regularly from the visitor centre. You can visit all the restored buildings, including the Old Asylum (now a museum and café) and the Model Prison. Admission tickets, valid for two consecutive days, also entitle you to a short harbour cruise circumnavigating (but not stopping at) the **Isle of the Dead**. For an additional \$10/7.50/29 per adult/child/family, you can visit the island on 40-minute guided tours – count headstones and listen to some stories. You can also tour to **Point Puer** boys' prison for the same additional prices; these tours don't run in August.

Another extremely popular tour is the 90-minute, lantern-lit **Historic Ghost Tour** (☎ 1800 659 101; adult/child/family \$17/10/45), which leaves from the visitor centre nightly at dusk (rain or shine) and visits a number of historic buildings, with guides relating spine-chilling occurrences. Bookings essential.

Sleeping

Stewarts Bay Lodge (☎ 6250 2888; www.stewartsbaylodge.com; 6955 Arthur Hwy; d \$120-180) Not far from the Port Arthur Historic Site (you can walk there around the coast!), this place offers one-, two- and three-bedroom self-contained, updated log cabins on a slope running down to swimmable Stewarts Bay.

Comfort Inn Port Arthur (☎ 6250 2101, 1800 030 747; www.portarthur-inn.com.au; 29 Safety Cove Rd; d \$137-178; ☎) A motel with flashy views over the historic site but unremarkable rooms. More

DOO TOWN

No-one is really sure how it all started, but the raggedy collection of fishing shacks at Doo Town, 3km south of Eaglehawk Neck, all contain the word 'Doo' in their names. There's the sexy 'Doo Me', the approving 'We Doo', the unfussy 'Thistle Doo Me', the Beatle-esque 'Love Me Doo', and (our favourite), the melancholic 'Doo Write'. We doo hope the new breed of architecturally gymnastic beach-houses here maintain the tradition.

impressive is their restaurant, Commandant's Table (below). Ask about packages including accommodation, dinner, breakfast and a Port Arthur ghost tour (from \$240 for two).

Sea Change Safety Cove (☎ 6250 2719; www.safetycove.com; 425 Safety Cove Rd; d \$150-180) Whichever way you look from this guesthouse there are fantastic views – misty cliffs, sea-wracked beach or scrubby bushland. It's 5km south of Port Arthur, just off the sandy sweep of Safety Cove Beach. There's a beaut communal deck, a couple of B&B rooms inside the house, plus a large self-contained unit sleeping five.

Port Arthur Caravan & Cabin Park (☎ 6250 2340, 1800 620 708; www.portarthurcaravan-cabinpark.com.au; Garden Point Rd; unpowered sites \$20, powered sites \$22-28, dm \$18, cabins \$90-105) Spaciously sloping with plenty of greenery, this well-facilitated park (including camp kitchen, wood BBQs and store) is 2km before Port Arthur, not far from a sheltered beach. Port Arthur's best (and only) budget option.

Eating

There are a couple of daytime food options at the historic site: a coffee shop in the Old Asylum and a café inside the visitor information centre, both serving the usual takeaway suspects.

Eucalypt (☎ 6250 2555; 6962 Arthur Hwy, Port Arthur; mains \$11-20; ☺ breakfast & lunch Wed-Mon, dinner Fri) A peninsula newcomer, Eucalypt extols the virtues of the best things in life: 'Coffee, Art, Food'. Organic breakfasts, light Mod Oz lunches and casual dinners with a glass of wine. Perfect.

Convict Kitchen (mains \$12-18; ☺ lunch & dinner) The less-inviting companion to Commandant's Table, this viewless place serves pedestrian pub grub (schnitzels, roasts, fish and chips, steak).

Commandant's Table (☎ 6250 2101; 29 Safety Cove Rd; mains \$17-28, ☺ dinner) The better of the two dining options at the Comfort Inn Port Arthur (p649), with broad historic site views and an unexpectedly worldly menu (fish-of-the-day with Nonya sambal, ginger and lemon juice on basmati rice; \$27).

Felons (☎ 6251 2310; Visitor Information Centre; mains \$19-27; ☺ dinner) In a wing of the visitor information centre, Felons is a worthy choice before you head off on the ghost tour. Upmarket, creative dinners with a seafood bias reinforce its catchy slogan: 'Dine with Conviction'. Reservations advised.

MIDLANDS

Baked, straw-coloured plains, hawthorn hedgerows, fertile river valleys lined with willows and poplars, Georgian mansions by the roadside: Tasmania's Midlands have a distinctly English-countryside feel. The area's agricultural potential fuelled Tasmania's settlement – coach stations, garrison towns, stone villages and pastoral properties sprang up as convict gangs hammered out the road between Hobart and Launceston.

The course of the Midland Hwy (aka the Heritage Highway) has changed from its original route. Many old towns are now bypassed, so it's worth making a few detours to explore their Georgian main streets, cottage gardens and antique shops.

See www.southernmidlands.tas.gov.au and www.northernmidlands.tas.gov.au for more information.

Getting There & Around

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) powers along the Midland Hwy several times daily; you can jump off at any of the main towns except on express services. The Hobart to Launceston fare is \$34 (about 2½ hours). One way from Hobart/Launceston to Oatlands costs \$19/25; to Ross it's \$25/17 and to Campbell Town \$29/15.

OATLANDS

☎ 03 / pop 600

More tidy-town than twee, Oatlands contains Australia's largest collection of Georgian architecture. On the stately main street alone (which feels like a film set) there are 87 historic buildings, many of which are now galleries and craft stores. This is still a soporific rural town though – lonesome dogs and utes plastered with Bundaberg Rum stickers cruise the wide streets, and nothing's open after 8pm.

The keen-to-assist **Oatlands Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6254 1212; 85 High St; ☺ 9am-5pm) handles accommodation bookings and has a sandstone history room full of photos, relics and knick-knacks. Wander around town by yourself, or take a one-hour **Oatlands Tour** (☎ 6254 1135; per person \$5) booked through the visitor centre.

Much of Oatlands' sandstone, as featured in the 1881 **Town Hall** (High St), came from the shores of nearby **Lake Dulverton** (now bone

dry). **Callington Mill** (☎ 6254 0039; fax 6254 5014; Mill Lane; admission free; ☺ 9am-5pm), off High St, was built in 1837 and ground flour until 1891. Restoration work has begun after a century of neglect, moving ahead in fits and starts. The eerie sounds of chickens and laughing children are piped through restored outbuildings, including the 15m-high mill tower (climb the wobbly stairs to the top).

Warm and inviting in hen-pecked sandstone splendour, **Oatlands Lodge** (☎ 6254 1444; fax 6254 1456; 92 High St; s/d \$100/120) is the pick of the town's accommodation, including a huge breakfast spread (dinners by arrangement). Your best bet for dinner is the **Kentish Hotel** (☎ 6254 1119; 60 High St; mains \$15-19; ☺ lunch & dinner), serving pub meals and quivering 'snot blocks' (aka vanilla slices) at its bakery.

ROSS

☎ 03 / pop 270

Another tidy (nay, immaculate) Midlands town is Ross, an ex-garrison town 120km north of Hobart. Established in 1812 to protect Hobart-Launceston travellers from bushrangers, it became an important coach staging post. Tree-lined streets are wrapped in colonial charm and history; accommodation owners charge accordingly.

The crossroads in the middle of town lead you in one of four directions: temptation (represented by the Man O' Ross Hotel), salvation (the Catholic church), recreation (the town hall) and damnation (the old jail). Beyond salvation, the **Ross Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6381 5466; Church St; ☺ 9am-5pm) is inside the **Tasmanian Wool Centre** (www.taswoolcentre.com.au), which sells some mighty fine beanies if you've got a cold head.

The town is famous for the convict-built, floodlit **Ross Bridge** (1836), one of Australia's most impressive old bridges. Daniel Herbert, a convict stonemason, was granted a pardon for his detailed work on the 186 panels decorating the arches. Other notable historic edifices include the 1832 **Scotch Thistle Inn** (Church St), now a private residence; the 1830 **barracks** (Bridge St), restored by the National Trust and also a private residence; the 1885 **Uniting Church** (Church St); the 1868 **St John's Anglican Church** (nr Church & Badajos Sts); and the still-operating 1896 **post office** (26 Church St).

Off Bond St, the **Ross Female Factory** (☎ 6278 7398; www.femalefactory.com.au/FFRG/ross.htm; admission free; ☺ 9am-5pm) was one of Tasmania's only

THE INVISIBLE BEER LINE

The definitive example of Tasmanian parochialism is the local loyalty to regionally brewed beer: in the south it's Cascade; in the north, Boag's. Up until quite recently you could draw a line from Strahan through Ross to Bicheno, north of which no sane publican would serve Cascade; south of which any mention of Boag's would provoke confusion and ridicule. These days things are much less exclusive, but we challenge you to uphold the traditional drinking rules!

female convict prisons. One building is still standing, and archaeological excavations are underway. Descriptive signs and stories provide insight into their lives. To get here, walk down the track near the Uniting Church.

Sleeping & Eating

Ross Motel & Caravan Park (☎ 6381 5224; www.rossmotel.com.au; 2 High St; unpowered/power sites \$15/18, s cabins \$50-75, d incl breakfast from \$129) Pitch tent on the banks of the fish-filled Macquarie River, bunk down in a barracks-style single-bed cabin or settle into post-colonial comfort in a mod motel room – the choice is yours.

Man O' Ross Hotel (☎ 6381 5445; www.manoross.com.au; 35 Church St; s/d without bathroom & incl breakfast \$70/85) Accommodation prices at this gracious old pub are a bit steep given the shared bathrooms, but the sunny, modernised rooms are better than average. Dinner options in Ross are slim, so you may end up eating here too (mains \$15 to \$24). The rose- and birch-dappled beer garden is ideal for lunch or Plenty O'Beer.

Ross Bakery Inn (☎ 6381 5246; 15 Church St; items \$4-14; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Overdose on carbs at the famous Ross Village Bakery (the caramel slice is a cardiac arrest in disguise). They also do savoury stuff: wood-fired pizzas, soups, salads and pies of all denominations.

CAMPBELL TOWN

☎ 03 / pop 900

Campbell Town, 12km north of Ross, is another former garrison settlement. Unlike Oatlands and Ross, however, the Midlands Hwy still trucks right through town. The local catch-cry 'Campbell Town is reaching out to you!' overstates things just a little, but it does make a handy pee-and-pie pit-stop.

The first white settlers here were Irish timber-workers who spoke Gaelic and had a particularly debauched reputation. Buildings dating from the early days are dotted along High St and Bridge St, including the 1835 **St Luke's Church of England** (High St); the 1840 **Campbell Town Inn** (100 High St); the 1834 **Fox Hunters Return** (132 High St); the **Grange** (87 High St), an 1847 mansion; and the still-scholarly 1878 **old school** (Hamilton St). Rows of red bricks set into the High St footpath detail the crimes, sentences and arrival dates of convicts like Ephram Brain and English Corney, sent to Van Diemen's Land for crimes as various as stealing potatoes, bigamy and murder.

Sleep among the history at the **Fox Hunters Return** (☎ 6381 1602; www.foxhunters.com.au; 132 High St; s/d from \$109/129), a grand-looking old coaching inn built in 1833.

The best eatery in town is the hyperactive, urbane **Zeps** (☎ 6381 1344; 92 High St; meals \$7-22; ☑), serving sandwiches, fat pies, good coffee and café fare throughout the day, with pizzas and Mod Oz mains at night.

EAST COAST

Tasmania's laid-back east coast is heaven for devotees of squeaky, white-sand beaches, fishing and slow-paced seaside atmospheria. Mild, sunny days lure summer holidaymakers from Hobart, but for the rest of the year things are pretty relaxed. The voluptuous goblet of Wineglass Bay and pink granite peaks in Freycinet National Park are world famous, but even from the highway the water views will have you reaching for your camera.

See www.eastcoastescape.com.au for information.

Getting There & Around BICYCLE

Probably the most popular cycle route in Tasmania, the east coast ride is wonderfully varied: seaside towns, forests and plenty of places to swim. Traffic is usually light, and the hills aren't too steep, particularly the section from Chain of Lagoons to Falmouth (east of St Marys).

BUS

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) runs weekday buses between Launceston and Swansea, the Coles Bay turn-off and

Bicheno, via the Midland Hwy and the inland B34 road. Services from Hobart connect with these buses at Campbell Town, where you may have to wait depending on your particular connection. Redline also runs daily (except Saturday) between Launceston and St Helens along the A4 via St Marys. Hobart buses connect with this service at Conara on the Midland Hwy. Redline fares:

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hrs)
Launceston-Swansea	30	2
Launceston-Coles Bay turn-off	37	2½
Launceston-Bicheno	37	2¾
Launceston-St Marys	24	2
Launceston-St Helens	29	2¾

Tassielink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) also provides east coast services from Hobart, running at least three times per week. Some buses detour through Richmond. Buses also run twice-weekly from Launceston to Bicheno via the A4 and St Marys. Tassielink fares:

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hrs)
Hobart-Orford	18	1¼
Hobart-Triabunna	19	1½
Hobart-Swansea	26	2¼
Hobart-Coles Bay turn-off	31	2¾
Hobart-Bicheno	32	3
Hobart-St Helens	46	4
Launceston-St Marys	22	2
Launceston-Bicheno	30	2½

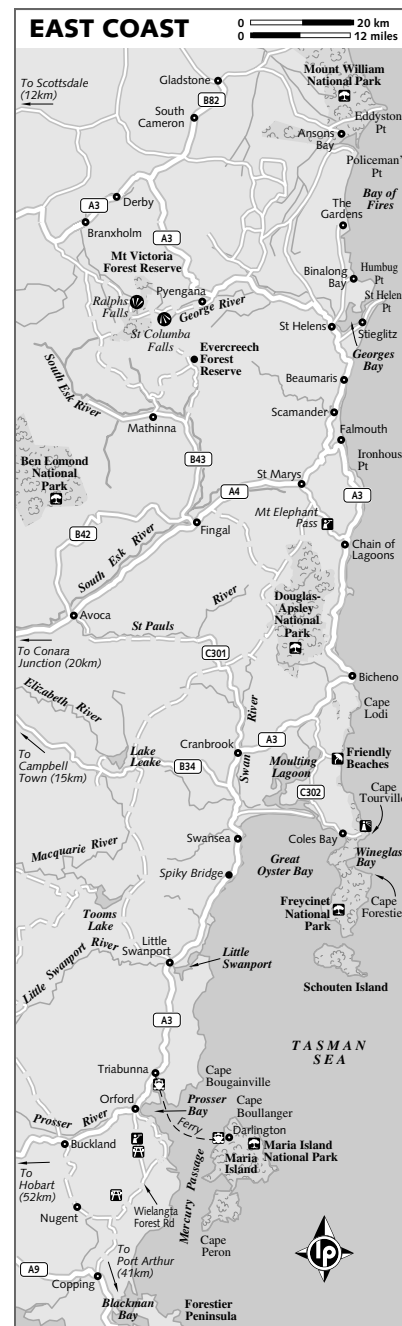
Neither Redline nor Tassielink services the Freycinet Peninsula, but **Bicheno Coach Service** (☎ 03-6257 0293, 0419-570 293, biccoa@vision.net.au) plies the road from Bicheno to Coles Bay (\$11, 35 minutes), connecting with Redline and Tassielink services at the Coles Bay turn-off.

Note that all the services are limited at weekends.

ORFORD

☎ 03 / pop 600

Subdividing faster than cancer, Orford is (or rather was) a lazy seaside town near the wide mouth of the Prosser River, about an hour from Hobart. But suburbia isn't quite here yet, and the town retains its beachy vibe with excellent fishing, swimming, a couple



of B&Bs and greasy cormorants squatting on river jetties. South of town (signposted from the southern end of the bridge over the river) are **Shelly Beach** and **Spring Beach**, popular swimming and surfing spots. There's a 2km cliff-top walk between the two beaches.

Right in the middle of town, the cream-and-marine **Prosser Holiday Units** (☎ 6257 1427; fax 6225 4884; cnr Tasman Hwy & Charles St; d from \$95, extra adult/child \$25/15) offers family-friendly, self-contained highway-side accommodation. They're a bit '80s design-wise, but they're spacious and sleep up to five folks.

Sanda House (☎ 6257 1527; www.orfordsandahouse.com.au; 33 Walpole St; \$80, d \$95-130) is a B&B in Orford's oldest residence, a white-painted stone farmhouse dating from 1840. The open fire in the breakfast room smoulders away for most of the year.

A culinary bright spot by the river, **Scorchers** (☎ 6257 1033; 1 The Esplanade; mains \$11-24; ☒ lunch & dinner, closed Aug) cooks up scorching-hot pizzas, pasta and toasted focaccias. The Spring Bay seafood pizza (\$24) is top of the pops; BYO and licensed.

TRIABUNNA & MARIA ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

☎ 03 / pop 930

About 8km north of Orford is ragged, retro-grade Triabunna, a flat-grid fishing town with almost zero appeal. It's the departure point for ferries to Maria Island National Park (pronounced 'Ma-rye-ah'), a fact for which local businesses must be eternally grateful. Book and buy ferry tickets and national park passes at the **Triabunna Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6257 4772; cnr Charles St & The Esplanade; ☒ 10am-4pm), which provides information on all things Maria: accommodation, walks, activities and fishing charters.

If you do need to sleep in Triabunna, **Udda Backpackers** (☎ 6257 3439; udda@southcom.com.au; 12 Spencer St, East Triabunna; dm/s/d \$20/27/42) is a family hostel with singles and doubles in converted hydro-electric workers' huts and dorms in an old farmhouse, with a '70s-meets-'30s kitchen and chickens and sheep wandering around outside. To get here cross the bridge off Vicary St and keep left, following the signs. Cash only.

A few kilometres off shore, care-free, care-free **Maria Island** was declared a national park in 1972, and features some awesome scenery: forests, fern gullies, fossil-studded sandstone

EAST COAST SHORTCUT

For east coast explorers, there's an interesting shortcut between the Tasman Peninsula and Orford, a road leaving the Tasman Hwy at Copping and following 35km of gravel north through the Wielangta Forest. Portions of the forest are reserved for recreational use and contain interpretive walking tracks. At the time of writing the future of logging in the Wielangta was uncertain, the Federal Court ruling that under the *Environmental Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act*, continued logging would threaten endangered wedge-tailed eagles and parrots. Time will tell if appeals from the woodchip fraternity will reverse the decision.

and limestone cliffs, and empty beaches. Convict and industrial ruins crop up unexpectedly. Bushwalkers and mountain bikers will readily exhaust themselves, bird-watchers will have plenty to look at, and snorkellers and divers are in for a treat (see Scuba Diving, p610). National park fees apply; island info is available at the **Visitors Reception Area** in the old Commissariat Store near the ferry pier.

From 1825 to 1832, **Darlington** was Tasmania's second penal colony (the first was Sarah Island near Strahan). The remains of the convict village, including the **Commissariat Store** (1825), the **Mill House** (1846) and the **Coffee Palace** (1888), are well preserved and easy to explore. There are no shops on the island so BYO supplies (no, the Coffee Palace doesn't serve coffee). Don't miss walks to the top of **Bishop & Clerk** (four hours return), the **Fossil Cliffs** (two hours return) and **Painted Cliffs** (2½ hours return). Chant monastically in the old **silos** near the pier after dark.

The four-day **Maria Island Walk** (☎ 6227 8800; www.mariaislandwalk.com.au; per person \$1700) is a guided walk of the island, with the emphasis on nature, history and minimal-impact walking. Trips run from October to April and include transfers from Hobart to the island, meals and accommodation (in beachfront tents and an historic Darlington house).

Once Upon Maria (☎ 6227 8900; www.mariaisland.com; from Triabunna/Hobart per person \$110/160) is a more moderate guided one-day walk around some of the island's best bits, including lunch, morning tea, bus and ferry transfers.

For independent visitors, **camping** (unpowered sites per adult/child/family \$53/11) is permitted by the creek just east of Darlington (bookings not required). The rooms in the old **Penitentiary** (☎ 6257 1420; maria.island@parks.tas.gov.au; dm/6-bed unit per person \$9/22) in Darlington have been converted into very basic, unpowered bunkhouses (bring gas lamps, utensils and cookers). The bunkhouses tend to overflow with school groups, so book well ahead. Hot showers available (gold coin donation).

Getting There & Away

The **Maria Island Ferry** (☎ 0427-100 104) operates from the marina near the Triabunna Visitor Information Centre (p653), departing 9.30am and 1.30pm daily (returning from Maria Island at 12.30pm and 4.30pm). The journey takes 40 minutes, a return ticket per adult/child is \$25/12; to transport a bike costs \$3.

SWANSEA

☎ 03 / pop 550

Driven by a troupe of ambitious local business-people, Swansea has overtaken Bicheno as the east coast's 'gourmet' holiday destination. The town sits on the sheltered inner shores of Great Oyster Bay, so there's no surf, but rather a surreal stillness in the air, cut with the vague waft of seaweed. Just like Swansea in Wales!

Settled during the 1820s, the town retains some curious historic buildings, including the still-functioning 1860 **Council Chambers** (Noyes St), the 1871 **Anglican Church** (Noyes St) and the red-brick 1838 **Morris' General Store** (13 Franklin St), which is still trading. Around 7km south of town is the 1840s convict-built **Spiky Bridge**. Function or folly, the concept behind the stone spikes has been lost to history.

The **Glamorgan War Memorial Museum** (☎ 6257 8215; 22 Franklin St; adult/child \$3/1; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) was a school in the 1860s, but now features local history exhibits and an ancient billiard table. Also here is **Swansea Canoe, Kayak & Bike Hire** (☎ 0407-391 070; ☎ 8am-8pm) hiring out bikes (\$15 per day), kayaks (\$15 per hour) and canoes (\$20 per hour).

The recently overhauled **Swansea Bark Mill** (☎ 6257 8382; www.swanseabarkmill.com.au; 96 Tasman Hwy; adult/concession/child/family \$10/8/6/23; ☎ 9am-5pm) features working models of black-wattle bark processing equipment, used in tanning leather. The excellent adjoining museum dissects Swansea's early history, from French exploration to agriculture and industry. In

the same complex are a tavern (right) and the new Swansea Backpackers (below).

Sleeping

Swansea Backpackers (☎ 6257 8650; www.swanseabackpackers.com.au; 96 Tasman Hwy; dm, s & d from \$28 per person; ☎) Purpose-built in 2006 with 'flashpackers' in mind, this immaculate place is more like a luxury house than a hostel. Flawless bathrooms, stainless-steel kitchen, pool table, grassy courtyard, decent mattresses – all surrounded by a burnt-orange, bone and charcoal colour scheme.

Redcliffe House (☎ 6257 8557; www.redcliffehouse.com.au; 13569 Tasman Hwy; s \$110, d \$130-160, ind breakfast) Timber-panelled rooms and a wash of warm, traditional colours await at Redcliffe, a charmingly restored farmhouse 1.5km north of town beside the Meredith River. Swim in the waterhole, suck on cheese and wine on the veranda, read a book or do some stargazing – very easy-going.

Tubby & Padman (☎ 6257 8901; www.tubbyandpadman.com.au; 20 Franklin St; d cottage \$160-180, d unit \$150-160, extra adult/child \$35/30) Imaginative décor, fine art and attention to detail await inside this sumptuously renovated 1840s cottage, built for romance. If you're travelling with a family or group with no time for such shenanigans, opt for the modern, two-bedroom, self-contained units out the back.

Piermont Retreat (☎ 6257 8131; www.piermont.com.au; Tasman Hwy; d cottages from \$230; ☎) This is the place to hide if you're coming down off a bad life. A hedgerow-lined driveway leads to a gathering of 15 self-contained, split-level stone cottages with open fires, spas and the most comfortable beds in the world. Not even the sound of the wind whipping across Great Oyster Bay will keep you awake.

Swansea Holiday Park at Jubilee Beach (☎ 6257 8177; www.swansea-holiday.com.au; 27 Shaw St; unpowered/powered sites \$24/28, cabins \$110-150; ☎) Heading north just out of town, this spruced-up beachfront park has BBQs, a pool and kids running everywhere. Prime tent sites are right on the beach; the best cabins are pricey but positively upmarket.

Eating

Kate's Berry Farm (☎ 6257 8428; 12 Addison St; items \$4-9; ☎ 9am-5pm) About 3km south of Swansea, this fruit farm sells homemade jams, wines, sauces and divine ice cream, and has a café serving berry-heavy afternoon teas.

Bark Mill Tavern (☎ 6257 8382; 96 Tasman Hwy; mains \$13-28; ☎ lunch & dinner) The architects have done a bang-up job here, injecting some life into the Bark Mill's eatery. Steaks, pastas, pizza and seafood are washed down with Tassie beers and wines on the roadside terrace, with the occasional acoustic twanger taking the stage at night.

The Banc (☎ 6257 8896; 7 Maria St; lunch mains \$14-20, dinner mains \$22-33; ☎ lunch Sat & Sun, dinner Wed-Mon) Former bank managers' names adorn the walls here (once the Commercial Bank of Australia), but try not to let them raise your ire as you tuck into the abalone *confit* (\$6 each), then the Flinders Island lamb rack (\$26). Impressive wine list and desserts.

Ebb Restaurant & Bar (☎ 6257 8088; 11 Franklin St; mains \$27-37; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat) This sleek new eatery serves creatively prepared meals, the emphasis squarely (but not exclusively) on local seafood. Start with some oysters (\$3 each), then move on to the peppered wallaby with beetroot and horseradish cream (\$27). The deck overlooks the bay – perfect for still summer nights.

COLES BAY & FREYCINET NATIONAL PARK

☎ 03 / pop 150

The small township of Coles Bay is dominated by The Hazards, spectacular 485m-high pink granite outcrops. Geared towards tourism in an almost predatory way, the town is the gateway to white-sand beaches, secluded coves, rocky cliffs and top-notch bushwalks in Freycinet National Park (pronounced *Fray-sin-ay*).

Information

At the park entrance is the professionally-run **Freycinet National Park Visitor Centre** (☎ 6256 7000; Freycinet Dr; www.parks.tas.gov.au; ☎ 8am-5pm Nov-Apr, 9am-4pm May-Oct) – pay your park fees or catch free ranger-led activities in summer.

In Coles Bay itself, jack-of-all-trades **Coles Bay Trading** (☎ 6257 0109; 1 Garnet Ave; ☎ 8am-6pm Mar-Nov, 7am-7pm Dec-Feb) is a general store with a post office, ATM and café. **Iluka Holiday Centre** (p656) also has a store with an ATM and fuel.

Sights & Activities

Sheathed in coastal heaths, orchids and wildflowers, **Freycinet National Park** incorporates Freycinet Peninsula, people-free Schouten

ROUGH RIDE

During the '70s, Coles Bay and Freycinet National Park were far less accessible. The C302 road in from the highway was a driver's nightmare – a rutted, washed-out, pot-holed, tree-crowded gravel track that shook cars to pieces and bent spines out of alignment. So torrid was the experience that the Coles Bay shop sold car bumper stickers saying: 'I Survived the Coles Bay Rd!' So count your blessings as you cruise today's dead-flat tarmac masterpiece!

Island and the lesser-known Friendly Beaches north of Coles Bay. Black cockatoos, yellow wattletails, honeyeaters and Bennett's wallabies flap and bounce between the bushes.

For bushwalkers it's nirvana, with long hikes including the two-day, 31km peninsula circuit. Shorter tracks include the up-and-over saddle climb to the majestic white bowl of **Wineglass Bay**. Ascend the saddle as far as **Wineglass Bay Lookout** (one to 1½ hours return, 600 steps each way), or continue down the other side to the beach (2½ to three hours return). Alternatively, the 500m wheelchair- and pram-friendly lighthouse boardwalk at **Cape Tourville** affords sweeping coastal panoramas and a less-strenuous glimpse of Wineglass Bay. On longer walks, sign in (and out) at the registration booth at the car park; national park fees apply.

Coles Bay Boat Hire (☎ 0419-255 604; fax 6257 0344) hires out bikes (half-/full day \$25/35), canoes (two hours \$55), dinghies (two hours including petrol \$75) and fishing rods (two rods and tackle per day \$30).

Tours

Freycinet Adventures (☎ 6257 0500; www.freycinetadventures.com.au; 2 Freycinet Dr) Get active with this local company – rock climbing and abseiling (from \$125), sea-kayaking (from \$55), plus multiday walks, paddle trips and camping gear hire. They also run an Aqua Taxi from Coles Bay to Hazards Beach, from where it's an easy walk to Wineglass Bay (one way per person \$40).

Freycinet Air (☎ 6375 1694; www.freycinetair.com.au; 109 Friendly Beaches Rd) Scenic flights over the park from the Friendly Beaches airstrip. Flights start at \$95 for 30 minutes.

Freycinet Experience (☎ 1800 506 003, 6223 7565; www.freycinet.com.au) From October to April, this Hobart-based company offers four-day guided walks on the

peninsula (from \$1975) with a degree of comfort and style. Prices include food, wine, accommodation, boat trips and return transport from Hobart.

Freycinet Sea Cruises (☎ 6257 0355; www.freycinetseacruises.com) Cruises (from 2½ to 4½ hours) depart Coles Bay jetty, taking in the peninsula's wild scenery and wildlife; prices start at \$75 for a Schouten Island circuit.

Taste of Freycinet (☎ 6257 0018; www.all4adventure.com.au; Coles Bay Esplanade) Two-hour sunrise (\$85) or sunset (\$130) cruises to calm coastal nooks, including champagne breakfast or gourmet seafood and wine dinner.

Sleeping

Accommodation here is at a premium at Christmas, January and Easter; book well ahead. Everybody and their dog wants to stay here, so expect higher prices than in other parts of the state.

BUDGET

Iluka Holiday Centre (☎ 1800 786 512, 6257 0115; www.ilukaholidaycentre.com.au; Coles Bay Esplanade; unpowered/power sites \$20/25, on-site caravans \$55-65, cabins & units \$80-140, extra child/adult \$15/20; 📶) This large, bushy park gets crowded, but it's well maintained and managed, amenities including house-worthy camp kitchens, a shop, pub and bakery. Tents sites are gravelly; book a decade in advance for the self-contained cabins.

Iluka Backpackers YHA (☎ 1800 786 512, 6257 0115; www.ilukaholidaycentre.com.au; Coles Bay Esplanade; dm/d \$26/62; 📶) Also at the Holiday Centre is this brightly painted YHA – clean-cut and chipper (as only a YHA knows how), with a sunny kitchen and toasty wood heater.

The main camping ground is near the national park entrance at **Richardsons Beach** (☎ 6256 7000; www.parks.tas.gov.au; unpowered/power sites \$12/14). There are toilets and water here, but no showers. Camping here is grossly popular; from mid-December to Easter site allocations are determined by a ballot drawn on 1 October. Apply before 30 September by post (to the visitor centre), fax (☎ 6256 7090) or email (freycinet@parks.tas.gov.au). Some dates may remain unfilled after the ballot, so it's still worth enquiring about vacancies. Outside the ballot period, advance bookings are taken and recommended.

Other campgrounds worth walking to include **Wineglass Bay** (around 1½ hours from the car park), **Hazards Beach** (two to three hours), **Cooks Beach** (4½ hours) and **Bryans Beach** (5½ hours). Further north at **Friendly Beaches**, Isaacs Point has basic camping with

pit toilets. There's little or no drinking water at any of these sites, so carry your own. There are no camping fees here, but national park fees apply. The park is a fuel-stove only area – campfires are banned.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Freycinet Rentals (☎ 6257 0320; www.freycinrentals.com; 5 Garnet Ave, Coles Bay) For Coles Bay holiday accommodation, this is a good starting point. The managers have 14 houses/units (sleeping up to seven) on their books, all with kitchen, laundry, lounge, TV and barbecue. Summer prices range from \$130 to \$180 for two people (extra adult \$15 to \$25, extra child \$5 to \$15). Prices slump from May to August, and for longer stays. Check the website for details and property pictures.

Sheoaks on Freycinet (☎ 6257 0049; www.sheoaks.com; 47 Oyster Bay Cr; s/d incl breakfast \$145/180) Sheoaks is a stylish, contemporary abode with sensational Nine Mile Beach views, knowledgeable hosts, well-equipped rooms and first-class breakfasts. Packed bushwalking lunches and evening meals by arrangement; it's a kid-free zone. To get here, take Hazards View Rd (about 5km before Coles Bay), then turn left at Oyster Bay Cr.

Freycinet Lodge (☎ 6257 0101; www.freycinlodge.com.au; s & d cabins from \$283; 📶) Inside the national park at the southern end of Richardsons Beach, this swanky hotel has 60 plush bushland cabins with balconies, some with self-catering facilities and/or spas, and several with disabled access. Activities and walks are organised for guests (most resembling extras from *The Love Boat*), and there are pricey on-site eateries.

Eating

Freycinet Bakery & Café (☎ 6257 0272; Coles Bay Esplanade; items \$3-10, pizzas \$9-22; ☺ breakfast & lunch) Fuel your day's walking with all-day brekky options, pies, pastries, focaccias and cakes galore. Pizzas take shape after 5pm; it closes too early at 8pm (5pm Tuesday and Wednesday).

Oystercatcher Café (☎ 6257 0033; 6 Garnet Ave, Coles Bay; mains \$8-20, takeaways from \$5; ☺ lunch daily, dinner Fri-Wed) Did you know oystercatchers don't eat oysters? Don't let that stop you though – grab a dozen of the snotty little suckers (\$21), or maybe a coffee and classic scallop pie to go (\$6.50).

Iluka Tavern (☎ 6257 0429; Coles Bay Esplanade; lunch mains \$10-20, dinner mains \$19-27; ☺ lunch & dinner) The

beer terrace here fronts onto the ugly car park, but the late-afternoon rays flood in and nobody seems to mind. Trad pub fare (beef 'n' reef, steaks, pasta, crumbed scallops) is the order of the day. Kids' menu available.

Madge Malloys (☎ 6257 0399; 3 Garnet Ave, Coles Bay; mains \$26-32; ☺ dinner Tue-Sat) Madge has her own fishing boat, reeling in your fresh-from-the-sea dinner. The wine list is as long as your arm, which should keep you distracted until your Spring Bay scallop and honey curry (\$28) arrives, which can take anything up to an hour. Reduced winter hours; bookings required.

Getting There & Away

Bicheno Coach Service (☎ 6257 0293, 0419-570 293) runs between Bicheno, Coles Bay and Freycinet National Park, connecting with east coast Redline and TassieLink coaches at the Coles Bay turn-off (see p652). From Hobart, take TassieLink (\$31 to the turn-off). From Launceston, opt for Redline (\$37 to the turn-off).

There are usually three Bicheno to Coles Bay buses on weekdays and at least one on Saturday and Sunday, continuing to the Freycinet National Park entry 5km beyond Coles Bay (bookings essential).

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (min)
Bicheno-Coles Bay	11	35
Bicheno-Freycinet National Park	13	45
Coles Bay turn-off-Coles Bay	10	25
Coles Bay turn-off-Freycinet National Park	11	35
Coles Bay-Freycinet National Park	5	10

BICHENO

☎ 03 / pop 770

Bicheno has all the indicators of a successful holiday resort – hazy ocean views, abundant sunshine, fish 'n' chip shops, shacks and surf – but unlike Swansea and Coles Bay, it's still a rough-edged, unwashed, functioning fishing port. Listing on the swell down at The Gulch, the fishing fleet has prevented tourism from overwhelming the town, so food and accommodation prices here are realistic.

The **Bicheno Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6375 1500; 69 Burgess St; ☺ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat,

noon-4pm Sun) assists with local information and accommodation bookings. Reduced winter hours.

Sights & Activities

The 3km **Foreshore Footway** extends south from **Redbill Beach**, which has solid sandy breaks, to **Peggys Point**, **The Gulch** and along to the **Blowhole**, returning along footpaths with panoramic town views. In whaling days, the hapless mammals were spotted from **Whalers Hill**. Commercial whaling depleted whale populations; these days only the occasional lucky passer-by experiences a whale sighting.

If the tide is low, you can wade over a sandy isthmus to **Diamond Island** at the northern end of Redbill Beach. Keep an eye on the sea though – the isthmus will ruin your Christmas if you're caught on the island when the tumultuous tide returns.

Bicheno Penguin Tours (☎ 6375 1333; www.bichenopenguinotours.com.au; adult/child \$20/10; ☹ dusk nightly) runs highly recommended, one-hour tours of the fairy penguin rookery at the northern end of Redbill Beach. It's really unusual to be able to get so close to these wee waddling creatures (close enough for them to nip your toes – wear closed shoes). Tours depart the surf shop on the main road in the town centre; bookings essential.

The **Bicheno Dive Centre** (☎ 6375 1138; www.bichenodive.com.au; 2 Scuba Cr; ☹ 9am-5pm) hires diving equipment and organises underwater adventures. Explore the submarine caves and rock formations at Governor Island Marine Reserve near The Gulch.

If you don't feel like getting wet, take a 40-minute coastal tour on the **Bicheno Glass Bottom Boat** (☎ 6375 1294; The Gulch; tours adult/child \$15/5; ☹ 10am, noon & 2pm), with lots of info provided on the underwater stuff you're perching at.

Seven kilometres north of town is Tassie's best wildlife park – the 52-hectare, family-focused **East Coast Natureworld** (☎ 6375 1311; www.natureworld.com.au; adult/concession/child \$16/14/9; ☹ 9am-5pm). Highlights include a walk-through aviary, seething snake pits and lots of free-roaming native animals. They're actively involved in protecting Tasmanian devils from DFTD (see p678).

Five kilometres north of Bicheno is the turn-off to **Douglas-Apsley National Park** (☎ 6256 7000; www.parks.tas.gov.au), protecting undisturbed

dry eucalypt forest, waterfalls, gorges and an abundance of birds and animals. Walk to the swimming hole at **Apsley Gorge** (two to three hours return), or to the **Apsley River Waterhole** (15 minutes return). There's basic, walk-in bush camping here too (free, but national park fees apply).

Sleeping & Eating

Bicheno Backpackers Hostel (☎ 6375 1651; www.bichenobackpackers.com; 11 Morrison St; dm \$21-23, d \$55-60) With its young, enthusiastic owners, mural-embossed walls and unfussed atmosphere, this hostel is Bicheno's best budget option. One lodge houses dorms, the other has double rooms – try for the front room with large balcony and sea views. They also hire out bikes/kayaks for \$30/35 per day.

Sandpiper Ocean Cottages (☎ 6375 1122; www.sandpiper.au.com; Tasman Hwy; d \$135-150, extra person \$33) A comfortable, secluded choice, these three cottages are 8km north of Bicheno on Denison Beach. They're modern two-bedroom arrangements sleeping five, with large balconies perfect for not doing much. If you're developing an aversion to pine panelling, keep driving.

Old Tram Road B&B (☎ 6375 1298; www.oldtramroad.com.au; 3 Old Tram Rd; d \$140-150) Dating from 1886, this is allegedly the second-oldest house on the coast. Inside are two large, comfortable rooms only 100m from the beach, accessed via a private track through the back garden. Gourmet cooked breakfasts will get you started.

Bicheno East Coast Holiday Park (☎ 6375 1999; www.bichenoholidaypark.com.au; 4 Champ St; unpowered/power sites \$16/20, cabins \$75-150) Bang in the middle of town, this caravan park is managed with pride. Everything's in good condition and well maintained; the new \$108 cabins are better than most motels. Keep it down at night (the police station is over the back fence).

Gaol House Restaurant (☎ 6375 1866; 81 Burgess St; mains \$25-28; ☹ dinner) An island of sophistication in a takeaway sea, this stylish green-hued food room serves traditional fare (steaks and seafood) with a classy edge. Oz wines by the glass or bottle. Next door is the original Bicheno gaol.

Swell Café (☎ 6375 1076; 2/70 Burgess St; meals \$7-13; ☹ lunch & dinner; ☒) Not old enough to go to the pub, Bicheno's teenagers hang out here instead. Various stuffed wraps and crepes populate the menu, plus good coffee, fresh juices and shiny surf posters.

ST MARYS

☎ 03 / pop 590

St Marys is an unambiguous, practical little town, 10km from the coast near the Mt Nicholas range, with weatherboard cottages, a pub and a post office. If you were on the run from the law, this would be the place to disappear, change your name and maybe open a coffee shop. For the rest of us, countryside wanderings to waterfalls, forests and hills will have to do.

On a remote hilltop flanked with forest and with blissful views of coastline and mountains, **St Marys Seaview Farm** (☎ 6372 2341; www.seaviewfarm.com.au; Germantown Rd; dm \$25-30, d \$70) is the kind of place you visit for a night but end up staying a week. The cosy backpackers cottage has a kitchen and lounge for all guests, and there are great-value doubles with bathroom. To get here (8km from town) take Franks St opposite St Marys Hotel, which becomes Germantown Rd, and follow the signs. BYO supplies; no kids under 12.

Crepe-fanciers go troppo over **Mount Elephant Pancakes** (☎ 6372 2263; Elephant Pass; savoury pancakes \$12-17, sweet pancakes \$8-10; ☹ breakfast & lunch), on a cool mountain pass on the Bicheno road, 8km south of St Marys. Seasonal fruits and local produce dominate the menu; the smoked salmon, camembert and mushroom pancake (\$19) just plain dominates. Cash only.

THE NORTHEAST

It's amazing (and something of a relief) that the northeast receives so little tourist traffic: it's seductively close to the Pipers River vineyards and boasts some of Tasmania's most secluded white-sand beaches. Seaside St Helens is the main hub of activity, near a wildlife-rich national park, the evocatively named Bay of Fires, waterfalls and miles upon miles of empty coastline. Fishing opportunities abound, and needless to say, so does seafood on plates.

A useful local resource is www.netasmania.com.au.

Getting There & Around

The main bus company serving the northeast is **Redline Coaches** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au), running daily except Saturday between Launceston and St Helens via St Marys (\$29,

2¾ hours). Buses also run daily except Saturday from Launceston to Scottsdale (\$16, 1¼ hours).

TassieLink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) has two services weekly between Hobart and St Helens (\$46, four hours), via the east coast.

ST HELENS

☎ 03 / pop 1400

St Helens, Tasmania's largest fishing port, sprawls around Georges Bay. It's an old whaling town settled in 1830, with the subsequent years recorded through memorabilia and photographs in the **St Helens History & Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6376 1744; 61 Cecilia St; admission by donation; ☹ 9am-5pm). Pick up brochures on fishing, accommodation, scenic drives and walks around town.

St Helens is recovering from the ferocious December 2006 bushfires that raged along the coast south of here, blazing through forest and coastal scrub and destroying dozens of houses. Tourism numbers plummeted, prompting the local mayor to appear on TV in a bid to persuade visitors to return.

On the waterfront is **Ahoy! Boat Hire** (☎ 0418-140 436; www.our.net.au/~chrinsky/ahoy.html; ☹ 10am-5pm), hiring out kayaks, canoes, motor boats, sail boats and fishing tackle from around \$15 an hour.

Town beaches are lousy for swimming, but there are beaches designed for a dip at **Binalong Bay** (11km north on Binalong Bay Rd), **Jeaneret Beach** and **Sloop Rock** (15km north; take Binalong Bay Rd then The Gardens turn-off for both), **Stieglitz** (7km east on St Helens Point), and at St Helens and Humbug Points. Also on St Helens Point are the wind-weathered **Peron Dunes** (8km east).

About 26km west of St Helens, turn off to tiny **Pyengana** and the feathery **St Columba Falls**, the state's highest (90m, give or take a droplet). It's a 20-minute return walk to their base. Further on is **Derby** (not pronounced 'Darby'), an old tin-mining town with a few B&Bs, galleries and pubs.

Sleeping & Eating

St Helens Youth Hostel (☎ 6376 1661; www.yha.com.au; 5 Cameron St; dm/d from \$20/42; ☒) The rooms at this funky '60s YHA are nothing flash, but the facilities (laundry, bike hire etc) are up to scratch, and LP readers are pretty fond of it. Flowering gums line the street.

St Helens Backpackers (☎ 6376 2017; paul.marchment@yahoo.co.uk; 59 Cecilia St; dm \$22, d with bathroom \$60, f\$70-80) The new kids in town are making a concerted effort to lift backpacking accommodation standards. Sleeping just 10 in an early '80s house, the hostel features bright colours, quality mattresses, a wood fire and endless hot water.

Kellrairie Units (☎/fax 6376 1169; 72 Tully St; d \$65, extra person \$35) Next to the highway 800m northwest of town, this unassuming collection of large, self-contained units is the best value in St Helens (and possibly in northern Tassie). Management is quaint; décor is inoffensive.

Bay of Fires Character Cottages (☎ 6376 8262; www.bayoffirescottages.com.au; 64-74 Main Rd, Binalong Bay; d \$150, extra adult/child \$30/20) The owners inherited this billion-dollar slab of real estate (11km from St Helens) and built eight colourful, modern, one- to three-bedroom cottages. All have kitchen, laundry, barbecue and private balcony, from which the views are truly superb.

St Helens Caravan Park (☎ 6376 1290; www.sthelenscp.com.au; 2 Penelope St; unpowered & powered sites \$24-27, cabins \$70-120; ♿ ♻) With dozens of tent and van sites and a clutch of tidy old and new cabins, this park can usually fit you in. There's also a playground, camp kitchen and games room on the sloping site, just south of town.

Captain's Catch (☎ 6376 1170; Marine Pde; meals \$9-17; ☺ lunch) Just what you need! More seafood! Order the house special – fresh-off-the-boat blue eye-and-chips (\$14) – and head for the bay to wage war with the seagulls.

our pick Angasi (☎ 6376 8222; 64 Main Rd, Binalong Bay; lunch mains \$9-17, dinner mains \$22-28) What a killer position, and what a great restaurant! Run by three enterprising 20-something locals, this contemporary red and black box overlooks Binalong Bay and serves crafty Mod Oz with the best Tasmanian wines. A cold beer, a dozen oysters and sunset over the lagoon – life may never be this good again.

Fiddlers on the Bay (☎ 6376 2444; 2 Tasman Hwy; mains \$23-33; ☺ dinner) A town favourite showcasing the region's finest seafood, most effectively in its fishy starter 'A Trip Around the Bay' (scallops, calamari, prawns, oysters and salmon; \$16). Bookings advised.

BAY OF FIRES

A minor road (Binalong Bay Rd) heads north-east from St Helens to meet the coast at the highly swimmable **Binalong Bay**, continuing

north to the start of the Bay of Fires and ramshackle shack-town of **The Gardens**. The Bay of Fires' northern end is reached via the C843, the road to the Ansons Bay settlement and Mt William National Park.

Early explorers named the bay after seeing Aboriginal fires along the shore. Now a coastal reserve, it's a series of glorious white-sand beaches, craggy headlands, heathlands and lagoons. Ocean beaches offer reliable surfing and the lagoons safe swimming; be careful in the sea as there are unpredictable rips around here.

For those who like their wilderness experiences to involve some comfort and sophistication, the heavily marketed **Bay of Fires Walk** (☎ 03-6391 9339; www.bayoffires.com.au) conducts a fully catered four-day walk (\$1750 per person) from Boulder Point south to Ansons Bay. Trips run from November to May, and accommodation includes two nights at the company's magnificent eco-friendly lodge.

Bay of Fires Eco Tours (☎ 6376 8262; fax 6376 8261; tours per person \$70) runs three- to four-hour return boat trips from Binalong Bay to Eddystone Point, passing seals, dolphins and birdlife along the way. Tours run on Monday, Wednesday and Saturday (weather permitting). Call for bookings and departure times.

There are some beautiful free camping spots along the bay, mostly without toilets or fresh water. There are good options immediately north of Binalong Bay, accessed by road from St Helens (take the turn-off to The Gardens). In the northern reaches, we can heartily endorse the sheltered beachfront sites at Policemans Point, reached by a turn-off before Ansons Bay.

MT WILLIAM NATIONAL PARK

The little-known, isolated **Mt William National Park** (www.parks.gov.tas.au) brings together long sandy beaches, low ridges and coastal heathlands – visit during spring or early summer when the wildflowers are at their bloomiest. The highest point, Mt William (a 1½-hour return walk), stands only 216m tall, yet projects your gaze over land and sea. The area was declared a national park in 1973, primarily to protect Forester (eastern grey) kangaroos, which have been breeding themselves silly ever since. Activities on offer in the area include bird-watching and wildlife-spotting, fishing, swimming, surfing and diving.

At Eddystone Point is the impressive **Eddystone Lighthouse**, built from granite blocks in the 1890s. A small picnic spot here overlooks a beach with red granite outcrops. A short drive away beside a tannin-stained creek (and yet another magnificent arc of white sand and aqua water), is the idyllic campground at **Deep Creek**. Camping here is very basic, with pit toilets, bore water and fireplaces – there's no power, and bring your own drinking water and wood. You can also camp at **Stumpys Bay** and **Musselroe Top Camp**. National park fees apply; pay camping fees on-site (unpowered sites \$6). Bookings not required.

The park is well off the main roads, accessible from the north or south. The northern end is 17km from Gladstone; the southern end around 60km from St Helens. Try to avoid driving here at night when animals are bounding about.

SCOTTSDALE & AROUND

☎ 03 / pop 1930

Scottsdale, the largest town in the northeast, services some of Tasmania's richest agricultural and forestry country. The town itself has a couple of pubs and a motel but no other bells or whistles, just a few listless teens looking to make a break. The **Scottsdale Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6352 6520; www.forestrytas.com.au; 88 King St, Scottsdale; ☺ 9am-5pm Dec-Apr, 10am-3pm May-Nov) is inside the truncated cone of the Forest Eco-Centre, built by Forestry Tasmania. There's plenty of info on regional drives, walks and accommodation.

Anabel's of Scottsdale (☎ 6352 3277; www.vision.net.au/~anabels; 46 King St, Scottsdale; s/d \$110/130, extra person \$15) has a high-calibre **restaurant** (mains \$18-26; ☺ lunch & dinner Tue-Sat) inside a lovely old Federation home, plus peach-and-pine motel units overlooking a rambling, overgrown garden.

Bridestowe Estate Lavender Farm (☎ 6352 8182; www.bridestoweestates.com.au; 296 Gillespies Rd, Nabowla; admission per person/vehicle \$4/12 Dec-Jan; ☺ 9am-5pm Nov-Apr, 10am-4pm Mon-Fri May & Sep-Oct, by appointment Jun-Aug) is near Nabowla, 22km west of Scottsdale. Admission charges only apply during flowering season from mid-December to late January (a purple patch?), which covers a guided tour; the rest of the year it's free. Try lavender-flavoured muffins and ice cream at the café.

Bridport, 21km northwest of Scottsdale, is a wound-down beach town with plenty of accommodation. The new **Pavilion Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6356 1881; Main St, Bridport; ☺ 10am-

4pm) has oodles of local info. The Southern Shipping Company runs a weekly ferry from here to Flinders Island (p699).

Bridport Seaside Lodge (☎ 6356 1585; www.bridportseasidelodge.com; 47 Main St, Bridport; dm/s \$22/30, d \$50-75) fills out a weatherboard house on the main street with a palpable sense of do-nothing. Sit on the deck and go with the flow. The better doubles have en suites; dorms are smallish, but tidy. Bike hire is \$20 per day; canoes \$20 per morning.

An accommodating café about 3km south of Bridport, **Flying Teapot** (☎ 6356 1918; 1800 Bridport Rd, Bridport; mains \$8-16; ☺ lunch Wed-Sun, closed winter) overlooks a private airstrip. They'll cook whatever they feel like, or whatever you feel like, depending on their mood.

PIPERS RIVER REGION

Travelling west from Bridport on the B82 brings you into this highly regarded wine-producing region, where several slick wineries make the most of rich orange soils, north facing slopes and low humidity.

Established in 1974, **Pipers Brook** (☎ 03-6382 7527; www.pbv.com.au; 1216 Pipers Brook Rd, Pipers Brook; tastings \$3; ☺ 10am-5pm) is Tasmania's best-known grape-stomper; here you can try Pipers Brook Vineyard and Ninth Island Pinots, sparkling whites and Chardonnays. The architecturally arresting winery houses a **café** (mains \$15-20; ☺ lunch).

Next door to Pipers Brook is **Jansz Estate** (☎ 03-6382 7066; www.jansztas.com; 1216b Pipers Brook Rd, Pipers Brook; ☺ 10am-4.30pm), where you can sip Jansz's titillating range of 'methode Tasmanoise' sparkly.

Some 15km away, south of Pipers River, **Bay of Fires Wines** (☎ 03-6382 7622; www.bayoffireswines.com.au; 40 Baxters Rd, Pipers River; tastings free; ☺ 10am-5pm) offers tastings (we fully recommend the Arras sparkling white) plus a super-stylish **restaurant** (mains \$12-35; ☺ lunch) serving quality Tasmanian produce indoors or alfresco.

LAUNCESTON

☎ 03 / pop 98,160

Launceston ('Lonnie' to locals) squats in a basin where the North and South Esk rivers meet to form the Tamar River. It's Tasmania's second-largest city, but maintains an unconcerned, big-country-town pace. Hobart is far more cosmopolitan, but Launceston's

remarkable stock of Victorian, Federation, Edwardian and Art Deco houses is the rival of any Australian city.

Like most Tasmanian towns, early Launceston was anything but refined. When the Reverend Horton visited in 1822, he wrote to his superiors: 'The wickedness of the people of Launceston exceeds all description. If you could witness the ignorance, blasphemy, drunkenness, adultery and vice of every description, you would use every effort to send them more missionaries.' It's still a vaguely pugilistic town – there seem to be as many bikers and shirtless, shouting drunks as police – but the University of Tasmania, some great restaurants and regularly scheduled AFL football games are infusing the place with a more worldly outlook.

See www.discoverlaunceston.com for more Lonnie low-down.

ORIENTATION

The city grid forms around Brisbane St Mall, which runs between Charles and St John Sts. Flanking the old seaport are a string of new eateries and a hotel. West of the city is Cataract Gorge, a rugged ravine that's one of the city's major tourist drawcards. Charles St south of the CBD is emerging as a caffeinated, bohemian enclave.

INFORMATION

Banks/ATMs are located on St John and Brisbane Sts near the mall. There are post offices on St John and Cameron Sts.

Birchalls (Map p664; ☎ 6331 3011; www.birchalls.com.au; 118-120 Brisbane St; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat, 10am-4pm Sun) Considered Australia's oldest bookshop (c 1844).

Cyber King (Map p664; ☎ 6334 2802; 113 George St; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-6.30pm Sat & Sun) Internet access.

Launceston Visitor Information Centre (Map p664; ☎ 6336 3133; travelcentre@launceston.tas.gov.au; cnr St John & Cimitiere Sts; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat, to noon Sun) Pamphlets and state-wide accommodation, tour and transport bookings. Next to the bus terminal.

PC Connection (Map p664; ☎ 6333 0100; 107 St John St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat) Internet access.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Cataract Gorge

A 10-minute walk west of the city is the fabulous **Cataract Gorge** (Map p663; ☎ 6331 5915; www.launcestoncataractgorge.com.au; ☎ 9am-dusk). Sur-

rounded by a wildlife reserve, near-vertical basalt cliffs crowd the banks of the South Esk River as it enters the Tamar. During the day, teens plunge into the river and rock-climbers defy gravity; at night the floodlit cliffs take on a shifty, shadow-strewn countenance.

Walking tracks on either side of the gorge lead from Kings Bridge up to First Basin, where there's a **swimming pool** (admission free; ☎ Nov-Mar), picnic grounds, a quality restaurant with resident peacocks, and trails leading to vista-packed lookouts. The northern track takes about 30 minutes one way; the steep southern Zig Zag track much longer. Both a suspension bridge and a **chairlift** (one way adult/child \$8.50/6, return \$10/7; ☎ 9am-5pm) sail across First Basin. A walking track (45 minutes one way) leads further up the gorge to Second Basin and the old Duck Reach power station.

Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery

The **Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery** (☎ 6323 3777; www.qvmag.tas.gov.au; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm) has two branches, the purpose-built 1891 museum at **Royal Park** (Map p664; 2 Wellington St), and at the revamped **Inveresk Railyards** (Map p663; 2 Invermay Rd). Both have cafés and access for wheelchairs.

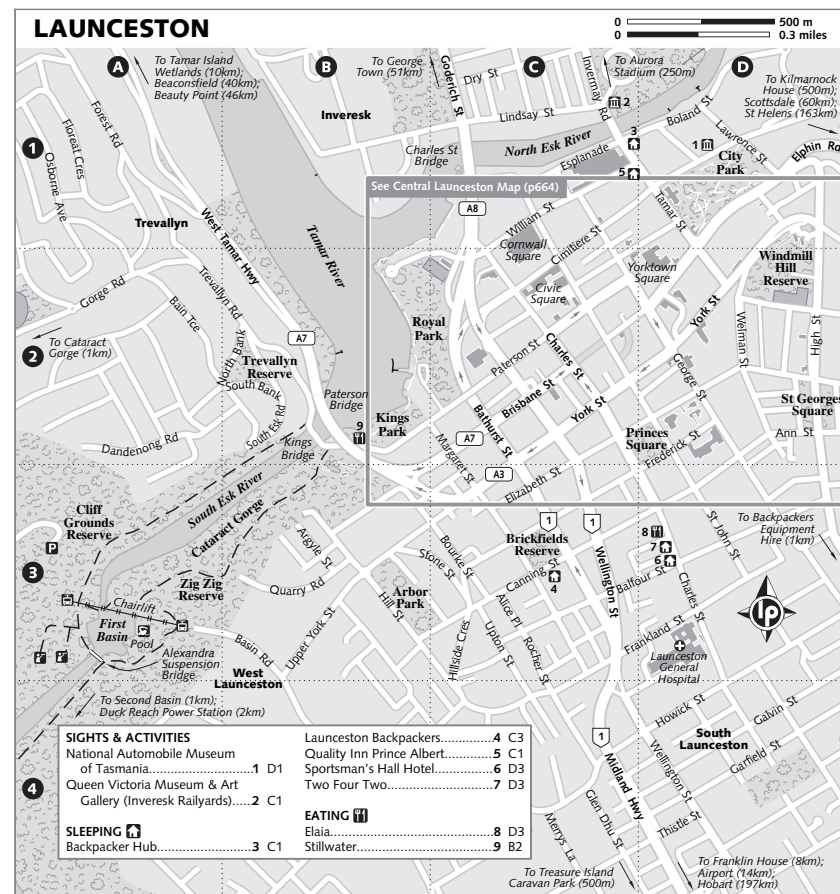
The child-friendly Royal Park branch includes exhibitions on Tasmania's Aboriginal heritage and fauna, a splendid joss house donated by the descendants of Chinese settlers, and the **Planetarium** (adult/child/family \$5/3/13; ☎ shows 3pm Tue-Sat). The slick Inveresk branch houses an impressive art gallery, old aeroplanes, authentic railway workshops and exhibitions on Tasmanian immigration and sporting history.

Boag's Brewery

Boag's beer, the northern Tasmanian beer of choice (see the boxed text, p651) has been brewed on William St since 1881. One-hour guided 'Discovery Tours' operate from the irresistibly named **Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers** (Map p664; ☎ 6332 6300; www.boags.com.au; 39 William St; adult/concession/child/family \$18/14/14/50; ☎ tours from 9am Mon-Fri), concluding with tastings. The 1½-hour 'Beer Lovers Tour' (adult/concession/child/family \$25/22/22/75) eases the belt out another notch with beer and cheese tastings. Bookings essential.

Other Attractions

The **Design Centre of Tasmania** (Map p664; ☎ 6331 5506; www.twdc.org.au; cnr Brisbane & Tamar Sts; ☎ 9.30am-



5.30pm), on the edge of City Park, is a retail outlet displaying high-quality work by Tasmanian craftspeople. In the same building, the **Wood Design Collection** (adult/concession/child \$5/4/free) showcases local designs, with more sassafras, Huon pine and myrtle than your average southwest forest.

The oxymoronic **National Automobile Museum of Tasmania** (Map p663; ☎ 6334 8888; www.namt.com.au; 86 Cimitiere St; adult/child/family \$9.50/5.50/24.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Sep-May, 10am-4pm Jun-Aug) will excite rev-heads – one of Australia's best presentations of classic and historic cars and motorbikes. The '69 Corvette Stingray will burn tyre tracks into your retinas.

Signposted 8km south of town, **Franklin House** (☎ 6344 7824; www.nationaltrust.org.au; 413

Hobart Rd, Breadalbane; adult/concession/child/family \$8/6/free/16; ☎ 9am-5pm Oct-Mar, to 4pm Apr-Sep) is one of Launceston's most attractive Georgian homes. Built in 1838, it's now beautifully restored, furnished and passionately managed by the National Trust.

Parks & Reserves

The 13-hectare, oak-filled **City Park** (Map p664) is a fine example of a Victorian garden, with an elegant fountain, mature European trees, a bandstand, a riotous enclosure of Japanese Macaques (monkeys) and an 1832 glass conservatory. Pretty **Princes Square** (Map p664) features a bronze fountain purchased at the 1855 Paris Exhibition. **Royal Park** (Map p664), at the North Esk and Tamar River junction,



INFORMATION		SLEEPING		DRINKING	
Birchalls.....	1 C3	Airle on the Square.....	13 C2	Irish Murphy's.....	32 B4
Cyber King.....	2 D2	Ashton Gate.....	14 E3	Royal Oak Hotel.....	33 D1
Launceston Visitor Information Centre.....	3 B1	Fiona's B&B.....	15 D3		
PC Connection.....	4 C3	Hatherley House.....	16 F3	ENTERTAINMENT	
Post Office.....	5 C2	Hillview House.....	17 E4	James Hotel.....	34 C3
Post Office.....	6 C3	James Hotel.....	(see 34)	Princess Theatre.....	35 D2
		Lloyds Hotel Backpackers.....	18 C1	Village Cinemas.....	36 C3
		Old Bakery Inn.....	19 B4		
		Peppers Seaport Hotel.....	20 A1	TRANSPORT	
SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES		Sandor's on the Park.....	21 E1	Bike Hire Tasmania (Appleyby Cycles).....	37 D2
Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers.....	7 C1	Strathesk House.....	22 E1	Brendan Manion's Coaches.....	38 C3
Design Centre of Tasmania.....	8 D1			Cornwall Square Transit Centre.....	39 B1
Japanese Macaque Enclosure.....	9 D1	EATING		Economy Car Rentals.....	40 C1
Mountain Bike Tasmania (Mountain Designs).....	10 C3	Bombay Café.....	23 C4	Lo-Cost Auto Rent.....	41 D1
Planetarium.....	(see 11)	Fee & Me.....	24 C4	Mountain Bike Tasmania (Mountain Designs).....	(see 10)
Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery (Royal Park Site).....	11 B3	Fish 'n' Chips.....	25 A1	Redline Coaches.....	(see 39)
Tamar River Cruises.....	12 A2	Fresh.....	26 C4	Rent-a-Bug.....	(see 41)
Wood Design Collection.....	(see 8)	Hallam's Waterfront.....	27 A3	TassieLink.....	(see 39)
		Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery (Royal Park Site).....	28 D2		
		Jailhouse Grill.....	29 B4		
		Metz.....	30 C3		
		Pierre's.....	31 C2		

features a Gorge-to-Seaport boardwalk and houses Launceston's disaffected skateboarder population.

Ten minutes' drive north of the city are the **Tamar Island Wetlands** (☎ 6327 3964; www.parks.tas.gov.au/reserves/tamar; West Tamar Hwy; adult/concession/child/family \$3/2/2/6; ☎ 9am-5pm Apr-Sep, 10am-4pm Oct-Mar), where you'll find an Interpretation Centre and a 2km wheelchair-accessible boardwalk through a significant wetlands reserve, teeming with birds, reptiles and the odd echidna.

TOURS

Bushbeats Guided Walks (☎ 6399 3393; www.bushbeatsdaywalks.com; half-/full-day walks from \$90/180) Take a walk on the mild side from Launceston to Ben Lomond, Split Rock Falls or Narawntapu National Park. Includes lunch, backpacks and jackets.

Coach Tram Tours (☎ 6336 3133, 0419-004 802; coachtramtour@vision.net.au; adult/concession/child/family \$37/27/19/90; ☎ 10am) Three-hour historical city tours departing the visitor information centre (which also handles bookings). Ask about half-day Tamar Valley tours.

Launceston City Ghost Tours (☎ 0421-819 373; www.launcestoncityghosttours.com; adult/concession/child/family \$20/17/10/45; ☎ dusk) Spooky 90-minute tours around the city's back alleys and lanes with theatrical guides, departing the Royal Oak Hotel (14 Brisbane St); bookings essential. 'Yesteryear Tours' also available.

Launceston Historic Walks (☎ 6336 2213; per person \$15; ☎ 4pm Mon, 10am Tue-Sat) One-hour guided architecture and social history walks, departing the visitor information centre. Bookings required.

Mountain Bike Tasmania (Mountain Designs) (Map p664; ☎ 6334 0977; launceston@mountaindesigns.com; 120 Charles St) Guided rides with transport, equipment and lunch/snacks provided: Ben Lomond Descent (\$150), Trevallyn Reserve (\$90), North Esk River (\$70). Pedalling on demand.

Tamar River Cruises (Map p664; ☎ 6334 9900; www.tamarrivercruises.com.au; Home Point Pde) Fifty-minute Cataract Gorge cruises hourly from 9.30am to 3.30pm (adult/concession/child/family \$18/16/9/45), plus longer lunch, afternoon and dinner cruises on the Tamar.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Festivale (www.festivale.com.au) Three mid-February days devoted to eating, drinking, arts and entertainment, staged in City Park.

Three Peaks Race (www.threepikes.org.au) Over four days in April, teams sail from Beauty Point (north of Launceston) to Hobart, pausing for runners to scale three mountains along the way.

Royal Launceston Show (☎ 6331 6044) Old hands display their herds in October.

Launceston Blues Festival (www.ozblues.net/lbc) In November, blues, roots and funk with local and mainland performers.

SLEEPING Budget

Launceston Backpackers (Map p663; ☎ 6334 2327; www.launcestonbackpackers.com.au; 103 Canning St; dm \$18-19, d with/without bathroom \$60/50; ☎) Friendly vibes fill the spacey communal areas in this huge 1904 church-built house. Amicable staff offer advice on local attractions, and the carpeted rooms are clean and spacious. Chill out with a book in the park across the road.

Lloyds Hotel Backpackers (Map p664; ☎ 1300 858 861; www.backpackers-accommodation.com.au; 23 George St; dm \$19-20, s/d/f \$40/50/105; 📺) Lloyds stakes a claim as Launceston's happening-est pub. Downstairs the place goes nuts, but above things remain relatively calm, with clean rooms (all with bathroom), full kitchen, capacious communal areas and wi-fi internet. Bike hire from \$15 per day.

Backpacker Hub (Map p663; ☎ 6334 9288; www.backpackerhub.com.au; 1 Tamar St; dm/s/d \$23/47/54; 📺) Upstairs at this 1888 riverside pub are no-frills (absolutely no-frills) backpacker rooms with clean shared bathrooms. Downstairs the bar, gelato counter and pool tables collide with occasional live music.

Sportsman's Hall Hotel (Map p663; ☎ 6331 3968; www.maskhospitality.com.au; 252 Charles St; s/d from \$50/65, self-contained flat d \$100) Above this pub on hip Charles St are immaculate budget rooms, all with private bathrooms that border on beautiful. Live music creeps up through the floorboards on weekends. Parking aplenty.

James Hotel (Map p664; ☎ 6334 7231; www.jameshotel.com.au; 122 York St; s/d \$50/80) The clean, en suite rooms upstairs at the James are affordable, but the weekend nightclub and live bands downstairs can make you feel like you're sleeping inside a stereo. One for the night owls.

Treasure Island Caravan Park (☎ 6344 2600; www.caravancampingnetwork.com.au; 94 Glen Dhu St; unpowered/powered sites \$22/26, on-site caravans \$50, cabins \$75-82) The closest camping to the city is 2.5km south of town next to the noisy highway. Facilities are passable; BBQs are free.

Midrange

Sandor's on the Park (Map p664; ☎ 1800 030 140, 6331 2055; www.sandorsonthepark.com.au; 3 Brisbane St; d \$100-120) Launceston's most central motel is a '60s number with an '80s facelift that's starting to sag. There's little to write home about here, other than the marvellous City Park across the road. A last-resort resort if all you want is a bed.

Hillview House (Map p664; ☎ 6331 7388; www.hillviewhouse.net.au; 193 George St; s \$90, d \$115-130) Impressive city, river and valley views extend from this National Trust-listed B&B (c 1840). Cottagey, apricot-hued rooms are cosy, and the veranda or wee outdoor deck are perfect for a sunny breakfast.

Airlie on the Square (Map p664; ☎/fax 6334 2162; Civic Square, Cameron St; s/d \$100/125) Surrounded by grim government buildings, it's amazing

that this old redbrick B&B has survived. Old-fashioned rooms are comfy but uncool (faux roses and Mona Lisa prints). Continental breakfast included.

Old Bakery Inn (Map p664; ☎ 1800 641 264, 6331 7900; www.oldbakeryinn.com.au; 270 York St; r from \$125; 📺) Around 130 years old, this old bakery dips unashamedly into the heritage design catalogue, but the rooms are comfortable and not un-charming. It's surprisingly quiet inside given the busy corner locations.

Ashton Gate (Map p664; ☎ 6331 6180; www.ashtongate.com.au; 32 High St; s \$95-110, d \$130-150) This 1880s B&B on the East Launceston hilltop provides a sense of home; rooms are furnished with the kind of stuff you wouldn't mind in your own house. There's a self-contained apartment too, and a lovely park across the street.

Kilmarnock House (☎ 1300 304 965, 6334 1514; www.kilmarnockhouse.com; 66 Elphin Rd; s \$95, d \$135-150, f \$175) If floral, lacy, antique-soaked interiors float your boat, then book into this National Trust-listed 1905 Edwardian mansion. Rate includes a DIY breakfast; kids are welcome.

Quality Inn Prince Albert (Map p663; ☎ 6331 7633; www.princealbertinn.com.au; 22 Tamar St; d \$135-280; 📺 📺) A gorgeous Italianate façade promises more than the rooms deliver, but the PA is a spacious, centrally located option. The Honeymoon Suite occupies the sky-lit billiard loft. Breakfast available.

Fiona's B&B (Map p664; ☎ 6334 5965; www.fionas.com.au; 141a George St; s \$110-120, d \$140-165) Brilliantly located Fiona's looks older than it really is (12). Charcoal-coloured walls clash with some odd design choices (gilt-framed Impressionists, urns from the set of *LA Law* with weird sticks in them), but overall the effect is reasonably hip. Rates include full breakfast; aim for a balcony suite.

Top End

Strathesk House (Map p664; ☎ 6334 6335; www.strathesk.com.au; 18 York St; d \$180; 📺 📺 📺) Renovated with style, dedication and delight by self-confessed 'spiritual Victorians', Strathesk comprises three self-contained apartments, just a block from the city on Windmill Hill. Swimming pool, valley views, opulent Ottoman touches, wireless internet – hard to fault.

Two Four Two (Map p663; ☎ 6331 9242; www.twofourtwo.com.au; 242 Charles St; d incl breakfast \$190; 📺) Now *this* is a cool renovation! Alan the furniture maker has channelled his craft into three self-contained apartments, each with blackwood,

myrtle or Tasmanian oak detailing. Flat-screen TVs, stainless-steel kitchens, coffee machines and spa baths complete the experience.

Peppers Seaport Hotel (Map p664; ☎ 6345 3333; www.peppers.com.au; 28 Seaport Blvd; d from \$228; 📺 📺) Shipshape (literally) by the river, this glam hotel's contemporary design extends to the spacious, deluxe rooms, accentuated by natural timbers and muted tones. Classical music fills the corridors; most rooms have balconies.

Hatherley House (Map p664; ☎ 6334 7727; www.hatherleyhouse.com.au; 43 High St; ste incl breakfast \$250-310) Confidently colonial, Hatherley House (c 1830s) is one of Tasmania's top boutique hotels. Interiors combine antique and ultra-modern, with king-sized beds, marble fireplaces and sleek bathrooms, overlooking divine gardens. But what's with the 'sambo' statues in the lobby? Kids outlawed.

EATING

Restaurants

Bombay Café (Map p664; ☎ 6334 5458; 144 Charles St; mains \$9-13; 🍷 dinner) Follow your nose into the upbeat, BYO Bombay Café, where the great-value curries arrive thick and fast. Randomly placed bongos, fake flowers and embroidered wall-hangings are a bonus.

Izakaya (Map p664; ☎ 6331 0613; 25 Yorktown Sq; sushi \$4-8, mains \$17-22; 🍷 lunch Wed-Sat, dinner Tue-Sun) Be wooed by chef Caesar Woo and his masterful sushi (using trevalla, flathead, salmon or tuna – whatever's fresh) and superior mains. The interior and location are nothing flash, but the food transcends place and time.

Jailhouse Grill (Map p664; ☎ 6331 0466; cnr Wellington & York Sts; mains \$20-28; 🍷 lunch Thu-Sun, dinner daily) Serving grass-fed Tasmanian beef, this wood-fired meat mecca takes your choice of steak (eye fillet, scotch, rump or porterhouse) and cooks it just the way you like it. Management is full of winks and jokes.

Hallam's Waterfront (Map p664; ☎ 6334 0554; 13 Park St; mains \$25-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Right on the river and decked out with an appropriately nautical theme, this friendly place specialises in super-fresh seafood. There's also a takeaway attached, catering to gourmet fish 'n' chip lovers.

Fee & Me (Map p664; ☎ 6331 3195; cnr Charles & Frederick Sts; 3/4/5 courses \$60/70/75; 🍷 dinner Tue-Sat) Serving innovative, upmarket cuisine, Fee & Me's degustation-style dishes are all entrée size, the brackets of dishes moving from light to rich. Diners choose between three and five courses, depending on appetite. Service and

wine are outstanding; décor misses the mark. Bookings suggested.

Stillwater (Map p664; ☎ 6331 4153; Ritchies Mill, 2 Bridge Rd; lunch mains \$13-27, dinner 2/3 courses \$66/81) Impress and be impressed at Stillwater, inside the stylishly renovated 1840s Ritchies riverside flour mill. Dinner delights include worldly seafood and meat mains, vegetarian options and a comprehensive wine list. By day it's a relaxed café churning out breakfast (coffees, smoked salmon bagels, homemade muesli) and lunch (roast vegetable wraps, Thai chicken salad). Book ahead.

Cafés & Quick Eats

Fish 'n' Chips (Map p664; ☎ 6331 1999; 30 Seaport Blvd; mains \$8-17; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Making the most of Launceston's underutilised riverfront, this upmarket fish 'n' chipper serves its namesake (from \$8), plus seafood salads and antipasto platters. Kids chase seagulls outside and scribble on the walls with chalks.

Elaia (Map p663; ☎ 6331 3307; 240 Charles St; lunch mains \$11-18, dinner mains \$17-29) A cool new café on cool old Charles St, Elaia's colourful awnings, fold-back windows, footpath tables and wines by the glass perfectly complement its pizzas, pastas and risottos. Good coffee too.

Metz (Map p664; ☎ 6331 7277; 119 St John St; lunch mains \$12-16, dinner mains \$15-27) Caught somewhere between a café, bistro and wine bar, mainstream Metz pleases all-comers with Mod Oz pastas, steak, seafood and wood-fired pizzas. Beers on tap; cocktails too.

Fresh (Map p664; ☎ 6331 4299; 178 Charles St; mains \$14-18; 🍷 breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat, dinner Fri & Sat) This retro, cushions-and-chai café opposite Princes Sq serves tasty vegetarian and vegan fare. Try the grilled polenta with seared lemon fetta (\$15) or the spicy chilli beans with avocado salsa, relish and cornbread (\$15).

Pierre's (Map p664; ☎ 6331 6835; 88 George St; mains \$15-28; 🍷 Mon-Sat) Pierre's plates up light meals (bagels, burgers, pasta) and more substantial, innovative mains. Early risers can expect home-made fruit loaf and eggs any which way. Desserts sometimes drown in cream, but the coffee is class. (Pierre's had one of the first three espresso machines in Australia!)

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

See the local newspaper the *Examiner* for Entertainment listings.

Royal Oak Hotel (Map p664; ☎ 6331 5345; 14 Brisbane St; 🍷 11am-late) Launceston's best pub, hands

down. We can almost guarantee you won't get beaten up here, plus there are heaps of brilliant beers on tap, open mic nights (the last Wednesday of the month) and live acoustic rock Wednesday to Sunday.

Irish Murphy's (Map p664; ☎ 6331 4440; www.irishmurphys.com.au; 211 Brisbane St; ☎ 11am-late) This low-lit watering hole, stuffed full of Emerald Isle predictabilia, has live music every night (usually free), including Sunday arvo jam sessions. Give the accommodation upstairs a wide berth.

James Hotel (Map p664; ☎ 6334 7231; www.jameshotel.com.au; 122 York St; bands free-\$20, nightclub \$5-7; ☎ 3pm-midnight Mon-Wed, 2pm-5.30am Thu-Sat) The James hosts a steady stream of local and interstate acoustic and full-blown rock acts (Sarah McLeod, AC/DC tribute bands etc), plus DJs in Reality nightclub out the back (Thursday to Saturday from 11pm).

Princess Theatre (Map p664; ☎ 6323 3666; www.theatrenorth.com.au; 57 Brisbane St; shows \$2-60; ☎ box office 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat) Built in 1911 and incorporating the smaller Earl Arts Centre, the Princess stages an eclectic mix of local and mainland drama, dance and comedy acts.

Village Cinemas (Map p664; ☎ 6331 5066; www.villagecinemas.com.au; 163 Brisbane St; tickets adult/concession/child \$14.50/11/10; ☎ 10am-10pm) Mainstream Hollywood fodder.

Aurora Stadium (Map p663; ☎ 6323 3666, 6344 9988; www.aurorastadium.com; admission from adult/concession/child/family \$19/11/3/37) If you're in town during AFL football season (April to August), see the big men fly at the revitalised Aurora Stadium. 'BAAAAAALL!!!'

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

There are regular direct flights between Launceston and Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane (see p611).

Bus

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) and **TassieLink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) depart Launceston from the

Cornwall Square Transit Centre (Map p664; cnr St John & Cimitiere Sts), just behind the visitor information centre. **Brendan Manion's Coaches** (Map p664; ☎ 6383 1221; manions.coaches@tassie.net.au; 168 Brisbane St) have services that run from Launceston up the West Tamar Valley (see Getting There & Around, opposite).

Redline fares and routes:

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hrs)
Launceston-Bicheno	37	2¾
Launceston-Burnie	32	2¾
Launceston-Deloraine	12	45min
Launceston-Devonport	24	1½
Launceston-George Town	12	45min
Launceston-Hobart	34	2½
Launceston-Stanley	50	4
Launceston-St Helens	29	2¾
Launceston-Swansea	30	2

TassieLink fares and routes:

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hrs)
Launceston-Bicheno	30	2½
Launceston-Cradle Mountain	54	3
Launceston-Devonport	22	1¼ (meeting ferries)
Launceston-Hobart	31	2½
Launceston-Queenstown	65	6
Launceston-Sheffield	27	2
Launceston-Strahan	74	8¾

GETTING AROUND To/From the Airport

Launceston airport is 15km south of town. **The Airporter** (☎ 6343 6677; adult/child \$10/\$5) is a door-to-door airport shuttle bus. A taxi out from the city costs about \$30.

Bicycle

Backpackers Equipment Hire (☎ 6334 9779; www.tasequiphire.com.au; 4 Penquite Rd, Newstead; ☎ 8am-10pm Mon-Fri, 9am-9pm Sat & Sun) Doug's bikes and advice from \$15 per day, 2km southeast of the city centre.

Bike Hire Tasmania (Appleby Cycles) (Map p664; ☎ 6331 1311; www.bikehietetasmania.com.au; 83 George St; ☎ 10am-5.30pm Mon & Fri, 9am-5.30pm Tue-Thu, 9am-2pm Sat) City bikes from \$25 per day.

Mountain Bike Tasmania (Mountain Designs) (Map p664; ☎ 6334 0988; www.mountaindesigns.com; 120 Charles St; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) Mountain bikes from \$20 per day.

Bus

Local buses are run by **Metro Tasmania** (☎ 13 22 01; www.metrotas.com.au), most departing from St John St between Paterson and York Sts. For \$4.80 you can buy a daily pass for use after 9am Monday to Friday, and all day Saturday,

Sunday and public holidays. Most services cease after dark; Sunday services are limited.

Car

The big-name rental companies have either Launceston airport or city offices. Smaller operators with cars from around \$30 per day:

Economy Car Rentals (Map p664; ☎ 6334 3299; fax 6334 1500; 27 William St)

Freedom Rent-A-Car (☎ 0409-933 618; www.freedomrentacar.com.au) Free delivery to airport or city.

Lo-Cost Auto Rent (Map p664; ☎ 1300 883 739, 6334 6202; www.rentforless.com.au; 80 Tamar St)

AROUND LAUNCESTON

TAMAR VALLEY

Sliding slowly north past orchards, forests, pastures and vineyards, the Tamar River links Launceston with Bass Strait. This district, along with the nearby Pipers River Region (p661) are two of Tasmania's leading wine-producing areas, heartily embracing the notion of eat, drink and be merry. Batman Bridge, the Tamar's only bridge, spans the river near Deviot. **The Tamar Visitors Information Centre** (☎ 1800 637 989, 03-6394 4454; www.tamarvalley.com.au; Main Rd, Exeter; ☎ 8.30am-5pm) is in Exeter in the West Tamar Valley.

Getting There & Around

For cyclists, the ride north along the Tamar River is a gem.

Brendan Manion's Coaches (Map p664; ☎ 03-6383 1221; manions.coaches@tassie.net.au) runs buses from Launceston (168 Brisbane St) up the West Tamar Valley to Rosevears (\$6, 20 minutes), Beaconsfield (\$9, 55 minutes) and Beauty Point (\$10, one hour).

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) has three buses on weekdays along the Tamar's eastern side between Launceston and George Town (\$12, 45 minutes).

Shuttlefish Ferry (☎ 03-6383 4479, 0412-485 611; www.shuttlefishferry.com.au; one way adult/child \$10/6, return \$18/10; ☎ Wed-Mon Oct-May) crosses the Tamar on demand between Beauty Point and George Town (25 minutes). Bookings essential; reduced winter service.

Rosevears

☎ 03 / pop 160

Rosevears is a picture-perfect riverside hamlet on a side road off the West Tamar Hwy. With

some super wineries in the area, this is wine-buff heaven.

Strathlynn Wine Centre (☎ 6330 2388; www.pbv.com.au; 95 Rosevears Dr; tastings \$4; ☎ 10am-5pm) is an outlet for Pipers Brook Vineyard (p661) and home to the highly polished restaurant **Daniel Alps at Strathlynn** (mains \$29; ☎ lunch), with seductive river views. Dan is a local lad made good; try his Spring Bay scallops with leek, thyme butter and pine nut gratin.

Back on the main road, follow the signs to the hilltop HQ of prestigious **Rosevears Estate** (☎ 6330 1800; www.rosevearsestate.com.au; 1a Waldhorn Dr; tastings free; ☎ 10am-5pm). Its stylish restaurant **Estelle** (mains \$25-30; ☎ lunch) offers a contemporary menu, and rather than drink and drive, you can stay here in plush self-contained **cottages** (www.questrosevears.com.au; 1- & 2-bedroom cottages \$180-350; ☎).

If you haven't overdone it with the vino and the fine food, **Rosevears Waterfront Tavern** (☎ 6394 4074; 215 Rosevears Dr; mains \$18-24; ☎ lunch & dinner) has trad pub meals, a wisteria-hung beer terrace and bizarre bas-relief murals.

Beauty Point & Around

☎ 03 / pop 1500

At Beauty Point is the mesmerising **Seahorse World** (☎ 6383 4111; www.seahorseworld.com.au; Inspection Head Wharf, Beauty Point; adult/concession/child/family \$18/15/9/46; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm), a seahorse farm where the curly critters are grown to supply aquariums worldwide. One-hour tours take you into the world of the *Hippocampus abdominalis* (pot-bellied seahorse). The **café** (mains \$10-18; ☎ lunch) has bodacious Tamar views.

Next to Seahorse World is **Platypus House** (☎ 6383 4884; www.platypushouse.com.au; Inspection Head Wharf, Beauty Point; adult/concession/child/family \$18/15/9/46; ☎ 9.30am-3.30pm Apr-Nov, to 4.30pm Dec-Mar), which runs brilliant 50-minute tours on which you get an up-close look at platypuses and pat bumbling echidnas.

South of Beauty Point is the infamous gold-mining town of **Beaconsfield**, which made world news after a mine collapse and rescue in April 2006 (see the boxed text, p671). At the mine is the **Grubb Shaft Gold & Heritage Museum** (☎ 6383 1473; West St, Beauty Point; adult/concession/child/family \$9/7/4/24; ☎ 9.30am-4.30pm Oct-Apr, 10am-4pm May-Sep), detailing mining history through interactive exhibits.

You can visit all three of the above attractions with a **Triple Pass** (adult/family \$33/46) from the Tamar Visitors Information Centre (left).

In Beauty Point, readers rave about the food at **Tamar Cove** (☎ 6383 4375; www.tamarcove.com; 4421 Main Rd, Beauty Point; s/d from \$85/95; ♿), an old-style motel that's benefited from a facelift and the addition of an excellent **restaurant** (mains \$12-26), attracting crowds like moths to its alfresco terrace.

Beauty Point Tourist Park (☎ 6383 4536; www.beautypointtouristpark.com.au; 36 West Arm Rd, Beauty Point; unpowered & powered sites \$22-25, on-site caravans/cabins \$70/90) is run by an enthusiastic couple who've planted 650 trees on site. They'll eagerly point out the best spots to fish, stroll and swim.

North of Beauty Point at the mouth of the Tamar are the demure holiday and fishing towns of **Greens Beach** and **Kelso**, each with waterside caravan parks.

George Town

☎ 03 / pop 4130

On the eastern lip of the Tamar River mouth, historic George Town is the third-oldest settlement in Australia (after Sydney and Hobart). Lieutenant Colonel Paterson landed here in 1804 to guard against the dastardly French. The French never showed up, and sadly, little remains of the original township (now defined by an aluminium smelter), and what does remain isn't celebrated. This ambivalence continues at the **Visitor Information Centre** (☎ /fax 6382 1700; Main Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm), staffed by chipper but clueless volunteers (at least when we visited).

In steady decline is **The Grove** (☎ 6382 1336; www.thegrovetas.com; 25 Cimitiere St; adult/concession/child/

TODD, BRANT & LARRY

The Beaconsfield mine disaster of April 2006 will be remembered for many reasons, not least for the media circus that surrounded the incident. On Anzac Day, a rock fall killed miner Larry Knight and trapped Todd Russell and Brant Webb in a cage 1km underground. After an exhaustive two-week rescue operation that made global headlines (further sensationalised by the heart-attack death of a TV reporter on the surface), Todd and Brant emerged to a media feeding frenzy. Magistrates quaffed beer at the Beaconsfield pub, rock stars flew in to perform, Oprah was mentioned. Weathering the storm, Todd and Brant signed lucrative deals for their story, but to everyone's great disappointment, they turned out to be regular blokes – short on charisma, patience and eloquent summations of their ordeal. Oprah never called; the mine reopened in April 2007. Tony Wright's *Bad Ground: Inside the Beaconsfield Mine Rescue* is the definitive account of the tragedy.

family \$7.50/6/3.50/17.50; ☎ 10.30am-3pm Mon-Fri), a National Trust–classified Georgian bluestone residence (c 1835) displaying local relics, photos and documents.

The **Pier Hotel** (☎ 6382 1300; www.pierhotel.com.au; 5 Elizabeth St; motel/villa d \$145/170) offers self-contained villas (sleeping four) and spotless motel rooms popular with visiting smelter engineers. The beery **bistro** (mains \$15-26; ☎ lunch & dinner) has outdoor seating near the river and an up-to-scratch pub menu.

Low Head

☎ 03 / pop 465

North of George Town is Low Head, a community-focused, beachy holiday town centred on the **Low Head Historic Precinct**. It's an infinitely prettier place to stay than George Town, but is light on facilities.

Helping ships navigate into the Tamar, **Low Head Pilot Station** (☎ 1800 008 343, 6382 2826; www.lhph.com.au; 399 Low Head Rd; adult/concession/child/family \$5/3/3/15; ☎ 9am-6pm) is Australia's oldest (1805) and houses an interesting **maritime museum** cluttered with historical items and displays. There's also colonial cottage accommodation here in the 1860s **Pilot's Row** (d from \$110).

On Low Head itself, the view from the 1888 **lighthouse** (☎ grounds to 6pm) is a winner. Penguins return to their burrows here every night, and can be viewed with **Low Head Penguin Tours** (☎ 0418-361 860; www.penguinstours.lowhead.com.au; adult/child \$15/8; ☎ dusk). There's good surf at **East Beach** on Bass Strait, and safe swimming in the river.

Low Head Tourist Park (☎ 6382 1573; lowheadtp@lgh.com.au; 136 Low Head Rd; unpowered/powered sites \$20/25, cabins \$75-90; ♿) overlooks the Tamar from a bald, treeless position. The better cabins have full kitchens.

WESTBURY

☎ 03 / pop 1250

Historic Westbury, 32km west of Launceston, has a crop of old buildings, a village green and some quirky attractions. Across from the green is the 1841, National Trust–listed **White House** (☎ 6393 1171; www.nationaltrust.org.au/pdfs/copytas.pdf; 170 King St; adult/concession/child/family \$8/6/free/16; ☎ 10am-4pm Wed-Sun), full of colonial furnishings, vintage cars, 19th- and 20th-century toys and an intricate dolls' house. The on-site **bakery** (items from \$3; ☎ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun) delivers the freshest, tastiest hot bread this side of Bass Strait.

Get lost in the above-head-high hedges at **Westbury Maze** (☎ 6393 1840; dent_wma@vision.net.au; 10 Meander Valley Rd; adult/child/family \$5.50/4.50/2.00; ☎ 10am-5pm Sep-Jul) then recover in the tearoom.

Across the road, **Pearn's Steam World** (☎ 6397 3313; www.pearnsteamworld.org.au; 65 Meander Valley Rd; adult/child \$5/2; ☎ 9am-4pm) houses puffing steam engines and similarly analogue relics.

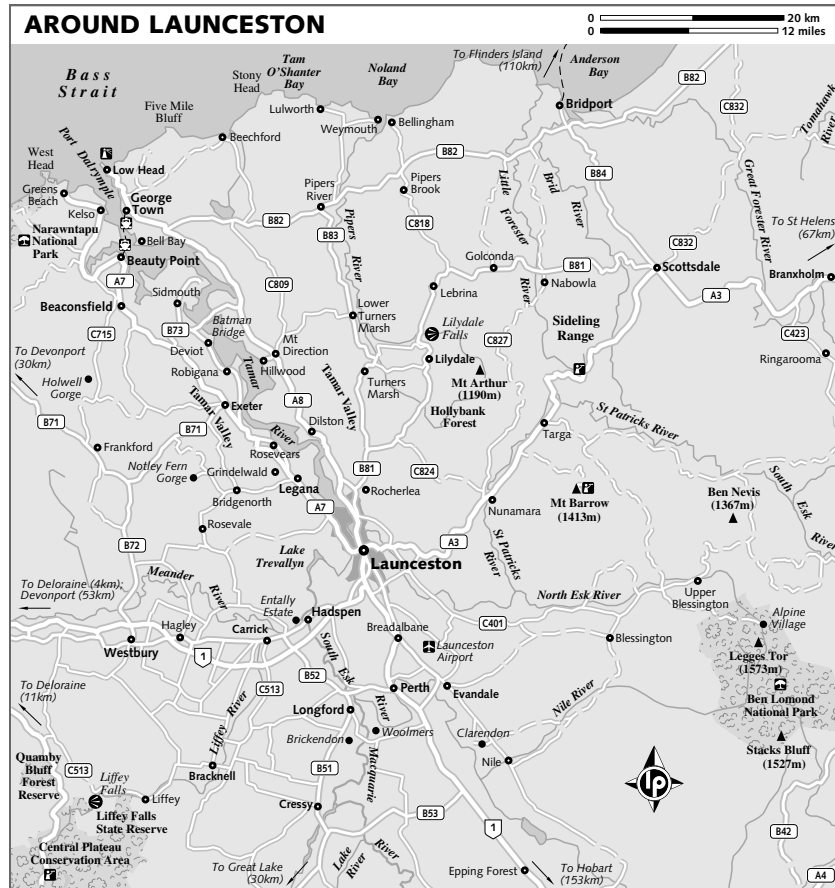
Gingerbread Cottages (☎ 6393 1140; www.westburycottages.com.au; 52 William St; d \$150-170, extra person \$30) comprises five renovated colonial cottages dating from the 1850s, all self-contained with breakfast provisions included.

Hobnobs (☎ 6393 2007; 47 William St; mains \$30; ☎ lunch Sun, dinner Thu-Sat) is a classy, licensed restaurant in an 1860s National Trust–listed building. The Mod Oz menu changes weekly, emphasising local produce.

LONGFORD & AROUND

☎ 03 / pop 2830

Believe it or not, Longford, a National Trust–classified town 27km south of Launceston, hosted the 1965 Australian Grand Prix. The cars have driven off, but historic estates remain.



Grandiose **Woolmers** (☎ 6391 2230; www.woolmers.com.au; Woolmers La, Longford; adult/child/concession/family \$18/5/15/42; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) was built in 1819 and sustains a two-hectare rose garden. Admission includes a one-hour guided tour of the homestead, plus a self-guided tour of the grounds. Nearby is **Brickendon** (☎ 6391 1383; www.brickendon.com.au; Woolmers La, Longford; adult/concession/child/family \$12/11/5/35; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun), a more modest estate dating from 1824, with heritage gardens and a still-functioning farm village. Both these estates have been nominated for World Heritage listing, and offer self-contained accommodation in restored colonial-era cottages (d \$115-180).

Around 10km west of Longford, running north towards Launceston, is the Liffey River in the gorgeous **Liffey Valley**. It's well worth a short detour to explore the valley and Liffey Falls State Reserve.

The highlight of Hadspen, 15km north of Longford, is the government-owned **Entally Estate** (☎ 6393 6201; www.entally.com.au; Old Bass Hwy, Hadspen; adult/concession/family \$8/6/16; ☎ 10am-4pm). Built in 1819 and named after a Calcutta suburb, it's set in beautiful grounds and creates a vivid picture of colonial rural affluence.

The **Country Club Hotel** (☎ 6391 1155; 19 Wellington St, Longford; s/d \$30/40, 3-bed unit \$60) is an 1850s redbrick inn with good-value budget rooms (some with bathroom) and a **bistro** (mains \$17-26; ☎ lunch & dinner) dishing up hearty pub tucker.

JJ's Bakery & Old Mill Café (☎ 6391 2364; 52 Wellington St, Longford; mains \$10-20; ☎ breakfast & lunch), in the Old Emerald flour mill, turns out pizzas, salads and oft-awarded baked goods.

EVANDALE

☎ 03 / pop 1060

Less isolated than Otlands and less corny than Richmond, immaculately-preserved Evandale is 20km south of Launceston in the South Esk Valley. The large country **Evandale Market** (☎ 6391 9191; www.touringtasmania.info/evandale_market.htm; Falls Park; ☎ 8am-2pm Sun) happens every week. The volunteer-staffed **Visitor Information Centre** (☎ /fax 6391 8128; 18 High St; ☎ 10am-4pm; ☎) handles accommodation bookings (B&Bs aplenty) and local low-down.

In keeping with the olde-worlde atmosphere, the town hosts the **Evandale Village Fair & National Penny Farthing Championships** (www.evandalevillagefair.com) in February each year.

Rising from the plains off Nile Rd, 11 kilometres south of Evandale, is the National

Trust-listed **Clarendon Homestead** (☎ 6398 6220; clarendonhomestead@bigpond.com; adult/concession/child \$10/7/free; ☎ 10am-5pm Sep-May, 10am-4pm Jun-Aug), a grand neoclassical mansion (1838) surrounded by impressive parklands. There are three self-contained cottages (☎ 6398 6190; d \$135-155) out the back and **Menzies Restaurant** (mains \$12-20; ☎ lunch) out the front.

Clarendon Arms Hotel (☎ 6391 8181; clarendonarms@bigpond.com; 11 Russell St; s/d without bathroom \$45/68) is a classic country pub with good-value meals in the **bistro** (mains \$13-22; ☎ lunch & dinner), basic accommodation, a leafy beer garden and mildly off-putting murals.

The well-loved **Ingleside Bakery Café** (☎ 6391 8682; 4 Russell St; mains \$9-20; ☎ breakfast & lunch) serves all-day breakfasts and light lunches (soups, gourmet sandwiches and excellent pies) amid local art and antiques.

BEN LOMOND NATIONAL PARK

Tassie's most reliable skiing hot spot (or rather, cold spot), this 165-sq-km park, 55km south-east of Launceston, incorporates the entire Ben Lomond Range. Bushwalkers traipse through when the snow melts, swooning over alpine wildflowers that run riot during spring and summer. The odd lonesome crow may comment on your arrival on the treeless plateau.

Stay here year-round at Tasmania's highest-altitude pub, the **Creek Inn** (☎ 03-6390 6199; www.ski.com.au/creekinn; d \$120-180, extra adult/child \$45/25). There's a fully licensed restaurant and, during ski season (July to September), a kiosk and ski shop. Lift tickets cost adult/child \$45/25 per day; ski hire (including lift ticket) is \$90/70. National park fees apply.

During the ski season, **McDermotts Coaches** (☎ 6394 3535; return adult/concession/family \$26/20/85) depart Launceston at 8am and ascend the mountain, returning at 4pm. Outside the ski season, driving is your only option. The route up to the alpine village includes Jacob's Ladder, a ludicrously steep ascent on an unsealed hairpin-bend road – drive slowly, with snow chains in winter.

THE NORTH

Rust-coloured, iron-rich soils and verdant pastures extend north of Launceston along the Tamar Valley and west to the Great Western Tiers. Forget about getting from A to B – this is the place for turning off the highway and

exploring quiet minor roads and small mountain and coastal towns.

Getting There & Around

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) has several northern services daily.

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hrs)
Launceston-Deloraine	12	45min
Launceston-Devonport	24	1½
Launceston-Ulverstone	27	2
Launceston-Penguin	28	2¼
Launceston-Burnie	32	2¾

TassieLink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) runs the daily *Main Road Express* aligning with Bass Strait ferry schedules – an early-morning express bus runs from Devonport to Launceston and Hobart, returning in the opposite direction in the afternoon to meet evening boat departures. Typical one-way fares include:

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hrs)
Devonport-Launceston	22	1¼
Devonport-Hobart	52	4¼
Devonport-Sheffield	5	30min
Devonport-Cradle Mountain	37	1½
Devonport-Strahan	58	7¼

DEVONPORT

☎ 03 / pop 25,000

Visitors to Devonport, Tassie's third-largest city, are usually coming or going rather than staying. The *Spirit of Tasmania* Bass Strait ferry arrives from Melbourne every morning, performing a deft 180-degree pirouette in the Mersey River before sailing off again at night. Locals line the riverbanks to watch, wave and imagine places elsewhere and more interesting. Actually keeping tourists (and their money) here seems a challenge too large. Devonport remains a sedentary, mildly menacing place: speeding rednecks yell, 'FUCK OFF!' at unsuspecting pedestrians, and the McDonald's drive-thru is the place to be on a Saturday night.

Information

Backpacker's Barn & Wilderness Centre (☎ 6424 3628; www.backpackersbarn.com.au; 10-12 Edward St; ☎ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri, to 3pm Sat) Green-thinking bushwalking and tour information, plus bushwalking gear

for sale/hire. Also handles accommodation, tour, car-rental and bus bookings.

Devonport Visitor Information Centre (☎ 6424 8176; www.dcc.tas.gov.au; 92 Formby Rd; ☎ 7.30am-5pm or 9pm) In the city across the river from the ferry terminal, this centre is open to meet all ferry arrivals; the 9pm closure applies when day crossings from Melbourne arrive at 7pm.

Online Access Centre (☎ 6424 9413; 21 Oldaker St; per hr \$2; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10.30am-1.30pm Sat; ☎) Internet access at the library.

Sights & Activities

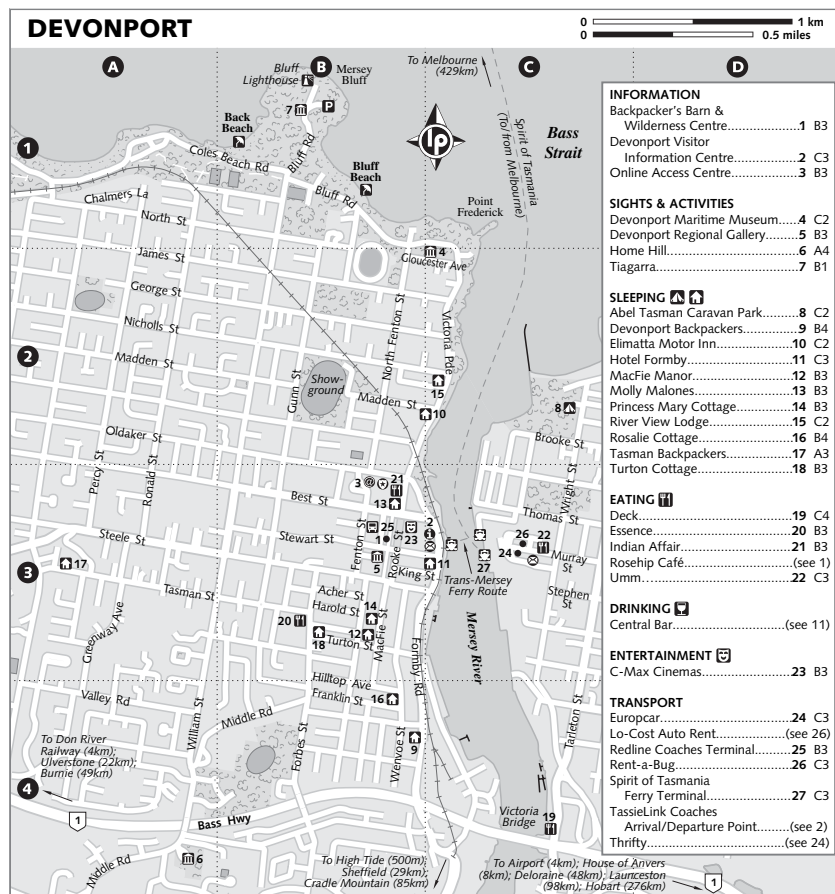
Devonport's dominant feature (aside from the big red ferry!) is the lighthouse-topped **Mersey Bluff**, from where there are fine coastal views. The red-and-white-striped lighthouse was built in 1889 to aid navigation into the expanding port, which is still important today, handling much of the produce from northern Tasmania's agricultural areas.

Also on Mersey Bluff is the impressive Aboriginal culture centre and museum, **Tiagarra** (☎ 6424 8250; tiagarra@westnet.com.au; Bluff Rd; adult/child/concession/family \$4/2.50/2.50/10; ☎ 9am-5pm), which means 'keep'. This museum has a rare collection of more than 250 indigenous rock engravings, dating back 10,000 years. Pick up a map for the free geological trail around the Bluff (traditionally a men's ceremonial area), taking in a series of (sometimes obscure) petroglyphs.

An outpost of progressive thought and culture is the **Devonport Regional Gallery** (☎ 6424 8296; www.devonportgallery.com; 45-47 Stewart St; admission free; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon-Sat; noon-5pm Sun), with permanent and temporary exhibitions and installations of contemporary and indigenous art.

The passionately run **Devonport Maritime Museum** (☎ 6424 7100; 6 Gloucester Ave; adult/child/family \$4/1/8; ☎ 10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar, 10am-4pm Tue-Sun Apr-Sep) occupies the old harbourmaster's residence and has an excellent collection of maritime and local history paraphernalia, including model ships, knots, flags and chaotic folios of photos.

The **Don River Railway** (☎ 6424 6335; www.donriver.railway.com.au; Forth Main Rd; adult/concession/child/family \$10/8/6/25; ☎ 9am-5pm), 4km west of town, maintains a collection of steam locomotives and carriages. Ride a vintage train (steam on Sundays and every day in January, diesel other times; 15 minutes one way) along the banks of the Don River and picnic at Coles Beach. Trains leave hourly from 10am to 4pm inclusive.



The National Trust-administered **Home Hill** (☎ 6424 3028; 77 Middle Rd; adult/concession/family \$8/6/18; ☎ 1.30-4pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, closed Jul & Aug), about 3km south of town, is the former residence of Joseph and Dame Enid Lyons. Joe is the only Tasmanian to have been Prime Minister of Australia (1932-39), while Enid raised eyebrows in 1943 as the first female member of the House of Representatives. Obsessive guides talk your ear off.

About 8km out of Devonport towards Launceston is the **House of Anvers** (☎ 6426 2958; www.anvers-chocolate.com.au; 9025 Bass Hwy, Latrobe; ☎ 7am-5pm), producing velvety Belgian-style chocolates and truffles. Check out the history displays, watch shower-capped workers mix viscous vats of chocolate (Monday to

Saturday) and (of course), sample and buy the results (cognac truffles 70c).

Tours

Tasman Bush Tours (☎ 6423 2335; www.tasmanbush.tours.com) offer Devonport-based guided walks to remote parts of Tassie, including Walls of Jerusalem National Park (\$645, three days) Frenchmans Cap (\$1290, six days), Overland Track (\$1290, six days) and South Coast Track (\$1390, eight days).

Sleeping BUDGET

Tasman Backpackers (☎ 6423 2335; www.tasmanbackpackers.com; 114 Tasman St; dm/tw \$14/18, d with/without bathroom \$50/40, f\$65) A stark, modernist gulag out-

side, colourful and happy inside, this gargantuan hostel was once nurses' accommodation. It's a 15-minute trudge from town, or arrange transport when booking. Movie room, pool table and a wall of fridges in the kitchen.

Devonport Backpackers (☎ 0400-656 345; 16 Formby Rd; dm \$18, d with/without bathroom \$50/45) With a name it seems odd no-one's thought of before, this joint occupies an amazing old Italianate brown-brick mansion. It's right on a busy road, but it's cheap, clean and central with a roomy lounge and kitchen.

Molly Malone's (☎ 6424 1898; mollymalones@vantagegroup.com.au; 34 Best St; dm \$18, d with/without bathroom \$55/45) The carpet here is like an acid flashback from *Fear & Loathing in Las Vegas*, but the en suite doubles are as good as any motel's. Clean, basic dorms and a comfy lounge; tasty food and rowdy crowds downstairs.

Elimatta Motor Inn (☎ 6424 6555; elimatta@southcom.com.au; 15 Victoria Pde; s \$65-75, d & tw \$80-85) The ever-lovin' Elimatta isn't anything flash, with basic motel rooms above the bistro and out the back, but the staff are friendly, it's clean and tidy, and just a short walk from the city centre. Aim for a river-view room.

Hotel Formby (☎ 6424 1601; fax 6424 8123; 82 Formby Rd; s/d \$70/80) Renovation efforts are slowly filtering upstairs at the Formby, where there are decent en suite rooms with TVs and river views, plus \$45 men-only singles with shared bathrooms (management oddly assumes that women can't tolerate shared facilities).

Abel Tasman Caravan Park (☎ 6427 8794; www.tigerresortstas.com.au; 6 Wright St; unpowered/powerd sites \$18/23, on-site caravans/cabins from \$45/75) Offering spotless facilities and 'cheeky check-in', this busy park has a tasty beachfront location in East Devonport, just five minutes from the ferry terminal.

MIDRANGE

River View Lodge (☎ 6424 7357; www.riverviewlodge.com.au; 18 Victoria Pde; s/d incl breakfast \$93/110, with-out bathroom \$80/90) This foreshore lodge (1877) is an amicable, old-fashioned kinda place opposite a strip of picnic-prone greenery. The rooms with bathroom are good value.

MacFie Manor (☎ 6424 1719; www.macfiemanor.com.au; 44 MacFie St; s \$95, d \$100-130) Offering B&B close to the city centre is this beautiful two-storey Federation building, opulently furnished with antiques (not for the retro-phobic). Sip a G&T on the balcony the *Spirit* sails over the horizon.

Devonport Historic Cottages (☎ 6424 1560; www.devonportcottages.com; d incl breakfast from \$150) This company manages three self-contained cottages: Rosalie Cottage (66 Wenvoe St), Turton Cottage (28 Turton St) and Princess Mary Cottage (42 MacFie St). All are comfortably fitted out with period furniture and memorabilia, maintaining the heritage atmosphere. Breakfast provisions, log fires and overgrown gardens a bonus.

Eating

Rosehip Café (☎ 6424 1917; 12 Edward St; mains \$8-12; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) Part of the Backpacker's Barn complex (p673), hip Rosehip does reliable coffee and fresh, healthy wraps, salads, focaccias and soups using organic products. Try the felafel wrap (\$8).

Umm... (☎ 6427 7055; 13 Murray St, East Devonport; mains \$13-21; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri, dinner Wed-Sat) Peruse the menu and say, 'Umm...' while you decide - pizza, pasta, risotto or panini? The chicken and prosciutto pizza with asparagus and goat's cheese (\$19) will distract you while you wait for the ferry.

The Deck (☎ 6427 7188; 188-190 Tarleton St, East Devonport; lunch mains \$13-21, dinner mains \$25; ☎ lunch & dinner) Under the bridge downtown, right on the river, this is a Mod Oz haven. Expect beautifully constructed seafood, pasta and risotto dishes, plus sushi and pizza. The deck is actually a terrace, but it's the perfect spot for a king prawn, chilli, sun-dried tomato and coriander pizza (\$15).

High Tide (☎ 6424 6200; 17 Devonport Rd; lunch mains \$15-24, dinner \$19-28; ☎ breakfast Fri-Sun, lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat) South of town on a moiling inner reach of the Mersey, this mod restaurant serves great seafood and steaks. The Jack Daniels-marinated scotch fillet is the ultimate rock 'n' roll meal!

Indian Affair (☎ 6423 5141; 153 Rooke St; mains \$16-20; ☎ dinner) Just what Devonport needs - a bit of spice! South Indian curries cooked with chutznaph ensure the round tables in this upbeat eatery are always busy.

Essence (☎ 6424 6431; 28 Forbes St; 2/3 courses \$44/55; ☎ lunch Wed & Fri, dinner Tue-Sat) This suburban industrial neighbourhood isn't where you'd expect to find one of Devonport's best restaurants, but you'll be impressed by the menu of locally sourced dishes cooked with élan.

Drinking & Entertainment

Competing with Molly Malone's (left) for the 'Best Pub in Town' award, the Hotel Formby's

Central Bar (☎ 6424 1601; 82 Formby Rd; ☎ 10am-late) is hoping its million-dollar makeover keeps attracting the crowds. Across the road from the river, it's a stylish spot to swill a beer, swallow a schnitzel or catch live acoustic sets.

C-Max Cinemas (☎ 6420 2111; www.cmax.net.au; 5-7 Best St; tickets adult/concession/child \$15/11/10; ☎ 10.30am-11.30pm) screens recent releases. All Tuesday tickets \$9.50.

Getting There & Away

AIR

There are regular direct flights between Launceston and Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane (see p611). **Tasair** (☎ 6248 5088; www.tasair.com.au) flies between Devonport and King Island (one way \$192) via Burnie/Wynyard.

BOAT

The **Spirit of Tasmania** (☎ 13 20 10; www.spiritoftasmania.com.au) vehicle/passenger ferry sails between Melbourne and Devonport; see p611 for details. It docks on the eastern side of the river.

BUS

See p673 for details on **Redline Coaches** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) and **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) services between Launceston and Devonport. Tassielink also runs from Devonport to Cradle Mountain, and from Devonport to Burnie continuing to the west coast (Zeehan, Strahan, Queensland etc).

The Redline Coaches terminal is opposite the Backpacker's Barn on Edward St (also stopping at the ferry terminal); Tassielink coaches stop outside the Devonport Visitor Information Centre and the ferry terminal.

If none of the scheduled services suit your particular bushwalking needs, charter a minibus from **Maxwells** (☎/fax 6492 1431) or through the Backpacker's Barn (p673).

Getting Around

Devonport airport is 5km east of town. A **shuttle bus** (☎ 1300 659 878; per person \$10) runs between the airport/ferry terminals, the visitor information centre and city accommodation; bookings are essential. A **taxi** (☎ 6424 1431) to/from the airport costs \$15 to \$18.

A small **ferry** (☎ 0418-360 142; one way \$2.50; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat Mar-Nov, 8am-6pm Mon-Sat Dec-Feb) departs on demand from opposite the visitors information centre, docking on the eastern side of the river beside the ferry terminal.

Operating out of the same office are **Rent-a-Bug** (☎ 6427 9034; www.rentabug.com.au; 5 Murray St, East Devonport) and **Lo-Cost Auto Rent** (☎ 6427 0796; www.locostautorent.com), with older cars from \$35 per day. Established internationals at the ferry terminal include **Europcar** (☎ 6427 0888; www.europcar.com.au; 11 The Esplanade, East Devonport) and **Thrifty** (☎ 1800 030 730, 6427 9119; www.thrifty.com.au; 10 The Esplanade, East Devonport).

DELORAINE

☎ 03 / pop 2030

Out of the foot of the Great Western Tiers, Deloraine's meandering main street meanders down to the Meander River, where abstract sculptures and huge European trees congregate. Tasmania's largest inland town grows even larger around late October when the annual four-day **Craft Fair** (www.tascraftfair.com.au) happens. Thousands of visitors book out accommodation from Launceston to Devonport for the festivities.

The **Great Western Tiers Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6362 3471; www.greatwesterntiers.net.au; 98 Emu Bay Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm) handles accommodation bookings. Also here is the **Deloraine Folk Museum & Yarns: Artwork in Silk** (adult/child/family \$72/15; ☎ 9.30am-4pm). 'Yarns' is a Bayeux Tapestry-esque, hand-dyed silk depiction of local life. An audiovisual display explains its design and construction (taking 300 locals three years to complete).

Many of the town's Georgian and Victorian buildings have been restored. Those of interest include the whitewashed 1859 **St Mark's Anglican Church** (East Westbury Pl) and the 1853 **Bowerbank Mill** (4455 Meander Valley Hwy), now a gallery, 2km east of town.

Sleeping & Eating

Highview Lodge YHA (☎ 6362 2996; www.yha.com.au; 8 Blake St; dm/d/f from \$20/47/60) This shambolic hillside YHA hostel has warm, timber-floored confines and friendly staff, but rickety timber-frame beds. It's a steep walk from town, but incredible Great Western Tiers views compensate.

Tarcombe House (☎ 6362 4848; tarcombehouseband@hotmail.com; 40 West Church St; s/d incl breakfast \$98/125) Beyond a shambling garden and gorgeous sunroom at this early-1900s house are comfortable rooms, straight out of the Laura Ashley design manual. The lounge is less florid, with an open fire, complimentary port and piles of 40° *South* magazines.

Bonney's Inn (☎ 6362 2974; www.bonneys-inn.com; 19 West Pde; incl breakfast s \$128, d \$148-168) Inside Deloraine's first brick building (c 1830) is tasteful, understated colonial accommodation – not a floral print in sight! Breakfast is a fully cooked affair, with fruits, yogurt and homemade pastries.

our pick **Deloraine Deli** (☎ 6362 2127; 36 Emu Bay Rd; mains \$7-13; ☎ lunch & Mon-Sat) What a find! Who would have thought there'd be somewhere this fabulous in little ol' Deloraine! Plough into a ploughman's lunch, baguettes, bagels, focaccias, spinach lasagne, veggie burgers and *superb* coffee. Dairy- and gluten-free meals, too.

Gangsters (☎ 6362 3882; 53-55 Emu Bay Rd; mains \$12-25; ☎ lunch & dinner) With a drive-thru, shoot-'em-up vibe (we're willing to bet this used to be a petrol station), Gangsters has an ambitious menu of pizzas, steaks and seafood, utilising local produce like salmon, truffles, vegetables and raspberries.

Deloraine Apex Caravan Park (☎ 6362 2345; ruthiel@bigpond.com; 2 West Goderich St; unpowered/powerd sites \$18/21) A green sliver by the river, this park has 48 powered sites and hot showers, but no cabins. The site floods once in a blue moon (check its colour before you go to sleep).

MOLE CREEK

☎ 03 / pop 300

About 25km west of Deloraine is mole-sized Mole Creek, a creek-plains town below the sky-scraping jags of the Great Western Tiers. In the 'hood (once overrun with thylacines) are limestone caves in the **Mole Creek Karst National Park**, leatherwood honey apiaries and an excellent wildlife park.

Marakoopa Cave, a wet cave 15km from Mole Creek, features underground streams and glow-worms. **King Solomons Cave**, a dry cave with light-reflecting calcite crystals, has few steps – the better cave for the less energetic. During summer there are at least five tours in each cave daily between 10am and 4.30pm. Each cave costs \$15/12/8/38 per adult/concession/child/family; tour times are displayed on access roads, or call the **Mole Creek Caves Ticket Office** (☎ 6363 5182; www.parks.tas.gov.au; 330 Mayberry Rd, Mayberry). Wear warm clothes – cave temperatures average 9°C.

There are also some magnificent wild caves in the area. **Wild Cave Tours** (☎ 6367 8142; www.wildcavetours.com) offers half-/full-day adventures for \$85/170 including caving gear (book ahead;

DEVONPORT PETROL RORT

If you're rolling off the *Spirit of Tasmania* or returning a rental car to the ferry terminal and need to refuel, fill-up across the river in the city. Petrol stations near the terminal in East Devonport slug you up to 10c per litre more than elsewhere in town. What a rip off!

over-14s only). Bring spare clothing and a towel – you're gonna get wet.

The leatherwood tree only grows in damp, western Tasmania; honey from its flowers is uniquely delicious! Tasmanian kids grow up studying the weird bee on the honey labels from **R Stephens Leatherwood Honey Factory** (☎ 6363 1170; www.leatherwoodhoney.com.au; 25 Pioneer Dr; admission free; ☎ 9am-4pm Mon-Fri). Visitors can taste and purchase the sticky stuff. At nearby Chudleigh there's a **Honey Farm** (☎ 6363 6160; www.thehoneyfarm.com.au; 39 Sorell St; admission free; ☎ Sun-Fri 9am-5pm) with free honey tasting and an interactive beehive.

About 5km east of Mole Creek on the B12 road is the first-rate **Trowunna Wildlife Park** (☎ 6363 6162; www.trowunna.com.au; adult/child/family \$16/9/44; ☎ 9am-8pm Jan, to 5pm Feb-Dec, tours 11am, 1pm & 3pm), specialising in Tasmanian devils and wombats (and the odd peacock). Informative one-hour tours let you pat, feed and hold various critters. The **Devil Education & Research Centre** is also here.

Sleeping & Eating

Mole Creek Hotel (☎ 6363 1102; fax 6363 2003; Pioneer Dr; s \$45, d with/without bathroom \$85/75) is a classic small-town pub with bright upstairs rooms. Downstairs the bistro **Tiger Lair** (mains \$15-22; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Mon-Sat) is crassly devoted to the thylacine and serves hearty pub standards.

Exuding country hospitality, the 1890 **Mole Creek Guest House & Laurelberrry Restaurant** (☎ 6363 1399; www.molecreekgg.com.au; 100 Pioneer Dr; s from \$100, d \$110-150, incl breakfast) has comfy, old-fashioned rooms (all with bathroom) and a **restaurant** (mains \$16-22) serving coffee, pancakes, pies, quiches, cheese platters and sausages.

WALLS OF JERUSALEM NATIONAL PARK

This isolated Central Plateau national park (part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area) features glacial lakes and

TIGERS & DEVILS

The story of the Tasmanian Tiger (*Thylacinus cynocephalus*, or thylacine), a striped, nocturnal, dog-like predator once widespread in Tasmania, has two different endings. Version one says thylacines were hunted to extinction in the 19th and early 20th centuries, the last captive tiger dying in Hobart Zoo in 1936. No specimen, living or dead, has been conclusively discovered since then, despite hundreds of alleged sightings.

Version two maintains that thylacines continue a furtive existence deep in the Tasmanian wilderness. Scientists ridicule such suggestions, but the tantalising possibility of remnant tigers makes them prime corporate fodder – Tasmanian companies plaster tiger imagery on everything from beer bottles to licence plates. David Owen's *Thylacine* examines this phenomenon and traces the animal's demise.

The obnoxious Tasmanian devil (*Sarcophilus harrisi*) is definitely still alive, but DFTD (Devil Facial Tumour Disease, a communicable cancer) infects up to 75% of the wild population. Quarantined populations have been established around the state, but efforts to find a cure have been depressingly fruitless. The actual beast is nothing like the Warner Bros cartoon, but financial contributions from this company to help save the devil are rumoured. In the meantime, you can check them out at wildlife parks around the state.

valleys, alpine flora and the rugged dolerite Mt Jerusalem (1459m). It's a favourite of experienced bushwalkers with a lust for challenging, remote hiking. The most popular walk here is the full-day trek to the 'Walls'; you can also camp in the park. National park fees apply.

If you prefer a guided walk, Tasmanian Expeditions (p611) operates a six-day Walls trip for \$1290. Tasman Bush Tours (p693) and Tiger Trails (p611) also run tours here.

Access to the Walls is from Sheffield or Mole Creek. From Mole Creek take the B12 west, the C138 south then the C171 (Mersey Forest Rd) to Lake Rowellan; remain on this road, following the C171 and/or Walls of Jerusalem signs to the start of the track. Pick up the *Walls of Jerusalem Map* (\$9.50) from Mole Creek Caves Ticket Office (p677).

SHEFFIELD & AROUND

☎ 03 / pop 1000

In the 1980s, Sheffield locals tried to figure out a way of improving the town's dreary economic prospects. Some bright spark came up with the idea of spangling town walls with murals. The first one was a hit with visitors, and there are now around 50 murals daubed around town. The **Kentish Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6491 1036; www.sheffieldcraedleinfo.com.au; 5 Pioneer Cres; ☎ 9am-5pm), just off the main street, has mural maps and regional information.

We're holding our breath for the day someone builds a non-cottagey, non-colonial, well-designed, small-town Tasmanian motel.

Until then, neat outfits like the **Kentish Hills Retreat** (☎ 6491 2484; www.kentishhills.com.au; 2 West Nook Rd; d \$85-150) are as good as it gets. All rooms have a video, most have a kitchenette, one has a spa.

The lacy old **Sheffield Hotel** (☎ 6491 1130; 38 Main St; mains \$11-23; ☎ lunch & dinner) has good-value counter meals amid the confusing blare of the sound system and multiple TVs. Upstairs **rooms** (s \$45, d with/without bathroom \$75/65) are better than average, with new beds and decent bathrooms.

The refreshingly cosmopolitan **Coffee on Main** (☎ 6491 1893; 43 Main St; mains \$10-15; ☎ lunch Wed-Sun) is an art-filled gallery-café serving cakes, coffee and gourmet sandwiches.

More attractive than any mural, the scenery around Sheffield is beaut – the hulky **Mt Roland** (1234m) rises above farmlands, forests and fish-filled rivers. Nearby is the deep, loch-like **Lake Barrington**, an international rowing venue. **Tasmazia** (☎ 6491 1934; www.tasmazia.com.au; 500 Staverton Rd; adult/child \$15/8; ☎ 10am-4pm Mar-Nov, 9am-5pm Dec-Feb), at the wonderfully named Promised Land at the Lake Barrington turn-off, combines leafy mazes, the cheesy-as-hell Lower Crackpot model village, a lavender patch and pancake parlour.

Gowrie Park, 14km southwest of Sheffield below Mt Roland, is an excellent base for mountain walks. Here you'll find **Mt Roland Budget Backpackers** (☎ 6491 1385; fax 6491 1848; 1447 Claude Rd; unpowered & powered sites \$10, dm & s \$10, d \$20), a super-casual, vaguely managed operation

with basic camping and cheap hostel-style beds. Adjacent to the backpackers and run by the same people are the four self-contained **Gowrie Park Wilderness Cabins** (d \$72).

ULVERSTONE & AROUND

☎ 03 / pop 9795

The coastal town of Ulverstone has a relaxed, uncommercial atmosphere – retirees sip weak cappuccinos beneath a few gracious old buildings and a ridiculous clock tower. Drop a line in the Leven River (pronounced 'Lee-ven') and unwind for a day or two. The funkily designed **Ulverstone Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6425 2839; www.centralcoast.tas.gov.au; 13 Alexandra Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm; ☎) is a treasure trove of local knowledge.

At **Gunns Plains**, 25km south of Ulverstone, signs say, 'This is God's country. Don't drive through it like Hell.' Take a guided tour of the 'shawl' formations at **Gunns Plains Caves** (☎ 6429 1388; gunnsplainscaves@bigpond.com; adult/concession/child/family \$12/10/6/35; ☎ tours hourly 10am-noon & 1.30pm-3.30pm). Also here is **Wings Wildlife Park** (☎ 6429 1151; www.wingsfarmpark.com.au; 137 Winduss Rd; adult/child \$15/6; ☎ 10am-4pm), an un-gregarious family-oriented place where you can interact with farm and native animals, reptiles, birds of prey and a proprietorial rooster. There's riverside **camping** (unpowered sites \$10) and **backpacker accommodation** (s/d/cabin \$15/20/85) here too.

South of Gunns Plains, the River Leven stutters through a 274m-deep gorge. Follow the 41km road from Ulverstone through Ni-etta to the knock-your-socks-off **Leven Canyon Lookout**. A 20-minute return track leads to the gorge-top – if you're lucky you'll have the viewing platform to yourself. Are you out there thylacine?

Sleeping & Eating

Furner's Hotel (☎ 6425 1488; www.goodstone.com.au; 42 Reibey St; s \$60, d \$80-100) Redbrick Furner's is the second-biggest thing in Ulverstone (after the clock tower), but the rooms are modestly old-fashioned. Downstairs it's all gaming and bistro inferno (mains \$10 to \$24), which opens for lunch and dinner.

Waterfront Inn (☎ 6425 1599; www.waterfrontinn.com.au; Tasman Pde; s \$75, d \$80-120) Right on the river across from town, this motel has a congregation of economical, pink-and-pace waterfront rooms, including spa and family units. The on-site restaurant (mains \$15 to

\$27) is pretty good, serving a bit of everything at dinner.

Ulverstone Holiday Park (☎ 6425 2624; www.ulverstonecaravanpark.alltasmanian.com; 57 Water St; unpowered & powered sites \$20-25, on-site caravans \$55, cabins \$80-101; ☎) 'Tween surf and city, this scrubby Big 4 park has sheltered camp sites, a camp kitchen, basic vans and woody cabins with kitchens and TVs. The young managers impress.

Suspended above the river on stilts, **Pedro's the Restaurant** (☎ 6425 6663; Wharf Rd; mains \$21-40; ☎ lunch & dinner) has its own fleet that delivers the daily catch right to the door. This is the place to eat in Ulverstone, specialising in up-market seafood dishes (the Paradise Platter is worth every penny; \$80). Next door is **Pedro's Takeaway** (☎ 6425 5181; mains \$7-11; ☎ 11am-8pm), serving fab fish and chips.

PENGUIN

☎ 03 / pop 3050

A quaint little seaside village (complete with huge concrete penguin on the foreshore and penguin-shaped rubbish bins), Penguin lures tourists with its fantastic beaches and thronging market. The absence of a natural harbour has meant commercial interests have overlooked Penguin – the town remains uncomplicated, unassuming and only half-awake. And we like it that way.

Driving from Ulverstone, take the old Bass Hwy along the coast. As you approach Penguin, the countryside takes on a gentrified, rural feel with cottage gardens, a narrow-gauge railway track and beaches squeezing themselves into the scene. The **Penguin Visitors Information Centre** (☎ 6437 1421; fax 6437 1463; Main Rd; ☎ 9am-4pm) does what it's supposed to do, while the famous **Penguin Market** (☎ 6437 2935; www.penguinmarket.com; cnr Arnold & King Edward Sts; admission free; ☎ 9am-3.30pm Sun) has 300-plus stalls selling arts, crafts, food and wine, attracting up to 10,000 punters every week.

Treat yourself to a night at the stylish, minimalist **Madsen Guesthouse** (☎ 6437 2588; www.themadsen.com; 64 Main Rd; d \$130-195; ☎). The top rate will score you the spacey front room (a former banking chamber), with sea views and wi-fi internet.

The **Groovy Penguin Café** (☎ 6437 2101; 74 Main Rd; mains \$8-13; ☎ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun; ☎) is a shrine to all things kitsch and retro, with super-nice staff, cakes, focaccias, soups, salads, great coffee and fold-back windows snaring the sea breeze.

THE NORTHWEST

Swept clean by the Roaring Forties winds and washed annually by more than two metres of rain, the magnificent Northwest boasts coastal heaths, wetlands and dense rainforests from Gondwana times. Communities here are either rurally off-the-map or touristy to-the-hilt – there's not much in between. The further west you get, the less trammelled the landscape becomes. Raging ocean beaches and isolated small communities are all that stand between you and South America. The Northwest is one of Tassie's gems – add it to your list.

Getting There & Around

AIR

Regional Express (REX; ☎ 13 17 13; www.regionalexpress.com.au) flies between Melbourne and Wynyard Airport (aka Burnie/Wynyard Airport or Burnie Airport) from \$105 one way.

Tasair (☎ 03-6248 5088; www.tasair.com.au) flies between King Island and Burnie/Wynyard from \$193 one way.

BUS

There are no public transport services to Marrawah or Arthur River, but **Redline Coaches** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) services the Northwest's larger towns:

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hrs)
Launceston-Burnie	32	2¾
Burnie-Wynyard	5	20min
Burnie-Boat Harbour	8	30min
Burnie-Stanley	19	1
Burnie-Smithton	19	1½

On weekdays (except public holidays), **Metro** (☎ 6431 3822; www.metrotas.com) has regular buses from Burnie to Penguin, Ulverstone and Wynyard (all \$4.30 one way), departing from Cattle St. Burnie to Wynyard buses also run on Saturday.

CAR & MOTORCYCLE

The main north-to-west-coast route is the Murchison Hwy (A10) from Somerset west of Burnie, running through to Queenstown. The **Western Explorer** is the inland road from Smithton through the **Tarkine** wilderness area to the west coast, including a difficult 50km

section between Arthur River and Corinna. Promoted as a tourist route, the road is OK for non-4WD vehicles, but it's remote, potholed and mostly unsealed – think twice in bad weather or after dark. Fill up your tank in Marrawah in the north or Zeehan in the south, as there's no petrol in between. The **Arthur River Parks & Wildlife Service** (☎ 6457 1225) provides road condition updates.

At Corinna there's a pay-per-crossing vehicle ferry (p685) across the Pieman River, from where you continue to Zeehan and the rest of the west.

BURNIE

☎ 03 / pop 18,065

Burnie, Tasmania's fourth-largest city, presides over Emu Bay – a deepwater port that has seen shipping become integral to the local economy. The scars of heavy industry and docks piled high with logs and woodchips don't make a great first impression, but a beachy vibe and an emerging environmental sensitivity provide some optimism. As *Midnight Oil* sang in *Burnie*, "This is my home, this is my sea, don't paint it with the future of factories."

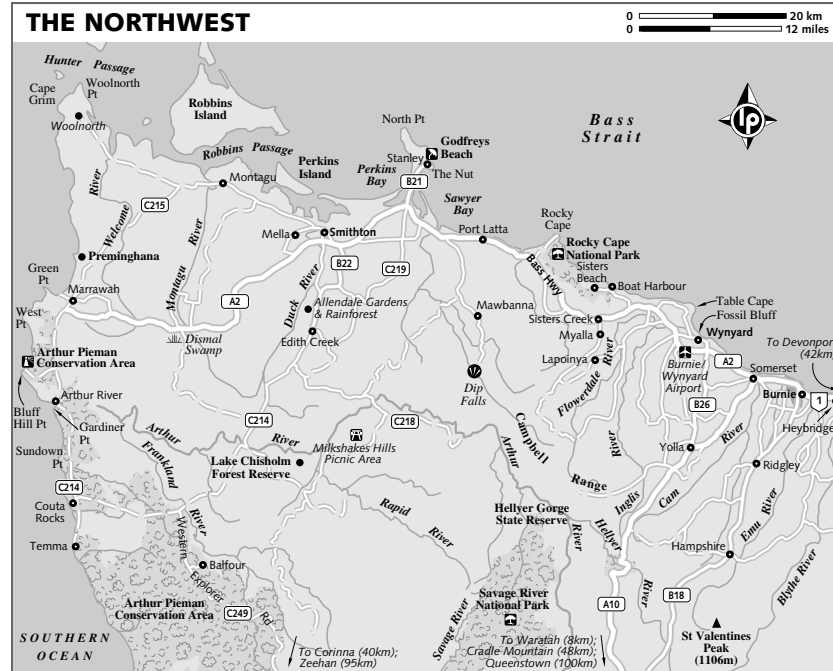
Attached to the Pioneer Village Museum, the **Burnie Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6434 6111; www.burnie.net; Little Alexander St; ☎ 9am-5pm) provides information and bookings for the northwest.

Sights & Activities

The absorbing **Pioneer Village Museum** (☎ 6430 5746; Little Alexander St; adult/child/concession/family \$6/2.50/4.50/17; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) is an authentic indoor re-creation of a 1900s village street-scene, with shopfronts chock-full of historic odds and sods. Upstairs is an 'applied technology' room with curious old machinations.

Creative Paper Tasmania (☎ 6430 7717; www.creativepapertas.com.au; Old Surrey Rd; admission free, tours adult/child/concession/family \$15/8/10/40; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) is an arty, non-profit co-op producing handmade paper, including 'roo poo', denim and beer paper, and paper using traditional Aboriginal fibres. Check the website or call for tour times and updates on their Bass Hwy relocation.

At the **National Foods Tasting Centre** (☎ 6433 9255; fax 6431 2647; 145 Old Surrey Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun), you can taste and purchase speciality Tasmanian cheeses, oils, honey and jams.



Fern Glade, 3km from the city, is a peaceful riverside spot with picnic areas, walks and potential platypus sightings. The visitor information centre has info on other gardens, waterfalls and viewpoints around town.

Follow the foreshore boardwalk from Hilder Pde to the western end of West Beach, where there's a **penguin observatory**. Book at the visitor information centre for free dusk tours (October to February).

Sleeping

Regent Hotel Backpackers (☎ 6431 1933; fax 6432 2091; 26 North Tce; s/d from \$25/40) Rudimentary but clean, satisfactory pub rooms, most with shared bathrooms. The TV room has awesome Bass Strait views (if there's nothing on telly), and the Mallee Grill (p682) serves whopping steaks downstairs.

Beachfront Voyager Motor Inn (☎ 1800 355 090, 6431 4866; www.beachfrontvoyager.com.au; 9 North Tce; r \$127-155; ☎) Opposite the West Beach surf lifesaving club are these better-than-expected motel rooms. The exterior looks like something from an Isaac Asimov dustcover, but inside the rooms are spacious rather than

space-age. Wireless internet, beach balconies, on-site restaurant.

Apartments Down Town (☎ 6432 3219; www.apartmentsdowntown.com.au; 52 Alexander St; s/d apt \$130/175 incl breakfast; ☎) Happily dwelling in a bygone era, these self-contained Art Deco apartments are stylish, spacious and well-equipped, with two or three bedrooms. 1930s trimmings make a pleasant change from the usual colonial time-warp.

Burnie Holiday Caravan Park (☎ 6431 1925; fax 6431 1753; 253 Bass Hwy, Cooe; unpowered/powered sites \$18/22, dm \$22, on-site caravans \$48, cabins \$70-85, motel d \$95; ☎) Four kilometres west of town in Cooe (barely within cooe of anywhere), this well-managed park has budget dorms, decent camp sites, a range of cabins (some could use an airing) and standard motel rooms. And a pool!

Eating

Café Europa (☎ 6431 1897; 2/23 Cattle St; mains \$4-11; ☎) breakfast, lunch & dinner (Mon-Sat) For some Mediterranean-style ambience, try Café Europa. Beneath sky-blue walls order liquids from coffee to wine, and solids like croissants, toasted Turkish bread and cheese platters.

Mallee Grill (☎ 6431 1933; 26 North Tce; mains \$14-36; ☞ lunch Sun-Fri, dinner daily) If you're hankering for something's flesh, this is the place to slake your desires. Steaks, gourmet sausages, seafood, pork and chook – it's the self-proclaimed 'most popular restaurant in town'.

Gianni's Restaurant & Wine Bar (☎ 6431 9393; 104 Wilson St; mains \$16-29; ☞ dinner Tue-Sat) This enduring à la carte restaurant marches through its Italian menu with confidence, dishing up pasta, steaks and seafood with mod-Med chic. Sip wines by the glass or bottle in low-lit confines.

WYNYARD

☎ 03 / pop 4700

Sheltered by the monolithic Table Cape, the oft-overlooked service town of Wynyard abuts the beach and the Inglis River's tidal estuary. There's not much happening here and you'll struggle to find a proper coffee, but it's an affordable, easy-going base from which to explore the area.

The **Wynyard Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6443 8330; www.warwyn.tas.gov.au; 8 Exhibition Link; ☞ 9am-5pm) dispenses info on the surrounding region, including scenic walks and drives. Also here is **Wonders of Wynyard** (admission adult/child/concession/family \$6/3/5/15), a polished exhibition of old Fords (Holden fans wait outside).

Wynyard's undisputed highlight is **Table Cape**. A hulking igneous plateau 4km north of town, it has unforgettable views, a tulip farm (in bloom and open to the public from late September to mid-October) and an 1888 lighthouse. Sit for a while at the lookout – cloudbanks roll in over the ultramarine sea, fishing boats slice through the shimmer, crows jeer above deep-red soils. You can drive to the lighthouse or walk along the cliff tops from the lookout (30 minutes return).

Fossil Bluff, 3km from town signposted from the Saunders St roundabout, is where the oldest marsupial fossil found in Australia was unearthed (it's an estimated 20 million years old). The soft sandstone here also contains shell fossils deposited when the level of Bass Strait was much higher. Errol Flynn's dad (of all people) spent a lot of time here digging through the dust and bones.

Arguably the best pub accommodation in Tassie, the **Wharf Hotel** (☎ 6442 2344; wharfhot@bigpond.net.au; 10 Goldie St; s/d \$45/75) has huge rooms with fridges, quality linen, spotless en suites, river views and TVs that actually work (on every channel!). Their bistro, open

for lunch and dinner, does bang-up meals (mains \$15 to \$25) and quality live music now and then.

Beach Retreat Tourist Park (☎ /fax 6442 1998; 30 Old Bass Hwy; unpowered & powered sites \$22, budget s/d \$22/40, motel unit/cabin \$75/85) is a popular park on a shoaly beach not far from town. The owners have upgraded the facilities, with accommodation to suit most tastes and budgets. Spotless motel units and cabins are well equipped and decorated with oceanic vim.

Wynyard has a few cafés and pubs on the main street, but the best choice for a fishy feed is the nautical **Buckaneers** (☎ 6442 4104; 4 Inglis St; mains \$10-20; ☞ lunch & dinner). Order succulent takeaway fish and chips, or walk the gangplank into the restaurant for a more formal meal.

BOAT HARBOUR

☎ 03 / pop 400

It wasn't that long ago that nobody knew about Boat Harbour, a tiny beach village 14km northwest of Wynyard, but the cat is now well and truly out of the bag. Perched on a beautiful bay with gleaming white sand and crystal-clear water, it's still an idyllic spot. But, ugly 'beachside living' apartments ('From only \$435,000!') are replacing crusty old shacks, and expensive B&Bs have put the down-at-heel motels out of business.

Boat Harbour Beach House (☎ 6445 0913; www.boatharbourbeachhouse.com; d \$150-180, extra person \$30) is actually two self-contained, multi-bedroom beach houses: **The View** (12 Moore St) and **The Waterfront** (314 The Esplanade). Both are beautifully renovated, with outdoor decks and BBQs.

Lit with rice-paper lanterns, **Jolly Rogers** (☎ 6445 1710; The Esplanade; mains \$15-30) is a slick Mod Oz seafood restaurant next to the surf club. Try the salt-and-pepper squid (\$15).

Nearby are the coastal heathlands of the small **Rocky Cape National Park** (www.parks.gov.tas.au), known for its bushwalking, diving, snorkelling, shipwrecks and sea caves; and **Sisters Beach**, an 8km expanse of bleached sand with safe swimming, good fishing, a boat ramp and a general store.

STANLEY

☎ 03 / pop 600

A local joke: 'How can you pick the poor kids in Stanley? They're the ones eating crayfish sandwiches.' Stanley is a crustacean-rich fishing village, cowering at the foot of the extraordinary Circular Head (better known as

The Nut). Buffeted by cold ocean winds, the oddly treeless town has a strange air of impermanence to it, despite the fact that Europeans have lived here for almost 200 years.

Tourism is Stanley's other mainstay – every second house is a B&B, and there are a handful of up-to-par eateries. The **Stanley Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6458 1330; www.stanley.com.au; 45 Main Rd; ☞ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat & Sun) is on your left as you roll into town.

Sights & Activities

Around 13 million years old, **The Nut** is an iconic, 152m-high volcanic table-top formation visible for miles around. It's a steep 20-minute climb to the top, but the view is damn impressive. For the aged, infirm or just lazy, a **chairlift** (☎ /fax 6458 1286; Browns Rd; adult/child/family \$9/7/25; ☞ 9.30am-5.30pm Oct-May, 10am-4pm Jun-Sep) also operates, weather permitting.

The 1844 bluestone building on the seafront was originally the **Van Diemen's Land Company Store**, and now houses **@VDL Stanley** (☎ 6458 2032; 16 Wharf Rd; www.atvdlstanley.com.au; ☞ 10am-5pm), a gallery with ultra-luxe accommodation. The VDL Company's headquarters were at high-brow **Highfield** (☎ 6458 1100; www.historic-highfield.com.au; Green Hills Rd; adult/child/family \$7/4/16; ☞ 10am-4pm), 2km north of Stanley, a dignified colonial homestead with barns, stables, workers' cottages, a chapel and views of the Nut as wide as the day is long.

Back in town near the wharf is the mid-19th-century **Ford's Store**, a two-storey bluestone grain store, now a restaurant (they don't build 'em like they used to). Other historic buildings include **Joe Lyons Cottage** (☎ 6458 1145; 14 Alexander Tce; admission by donation; ☞ 10am-4pm), birthplace of former prime minister Joseph Lyons, and **St James' Presbyterian Church** (Fletcher St), bought in England and transported to Stanley in 1885. **St Paul's Anglican Church** (39 Church St) is around the corner, next to which is the **Stanley Discovery Museum** (☎ 6458 1309; rutheslake@yahoo.com.au; 37 Church St; adult/child \$3/5/0; ☞ 10am-4pm), a one-room folk museum festooned with photos and artefacts.

Tours

Stanley Seal Cruises (☎ 0419-550 134; www.stanleysealcrises.com.au; Fishermans Dock; adult/child/family \$44/17/120; ☞ 10am daily, extra 3pm cruise Oct-Apr) See 300 Australian fur seals sunning themselves on Bull Rock on these 75-minute cruises. Cruises run rain or shine, but not if the sea is angry.

Wilderness to West Coast Tours (☎ 6458 2038; www.wildernessstasmania.com) A Stanley-based company running platypus-spotting excursions (adult/child \$35/20) and penguin-viewing tours (adult/child \$15/10) at Godfrey's Beach from late September until February. Full-day 4WD wilderness tours (per person for two people \$249, for three or more people \$225, including lunch) take in Tarkine rainforest, river and coastal areas. Tag along in your own 4WD for \$95 per person.

Sleeping

Stanley Hotel (☎ 6458 1161; www.stanleytasmania.com.au; 19 Church St; s/d with shared bathroom \$40/60, s & d with bathroom \$80) Refurbished to within an inch of its life, this 160-year-old pub offers a rabbit warren of comfortable, yellow-painted rooms. The bistro, open for lunch and dinner, has abandoned greasy fry-ups in favour of grilled and baked seafood and steak dishes (mains \$17 to \$24).

Stamps of Stanley (☎ 6458 1109; www.stampsofstanley.com.au; 11-13 Church St; d \$70-100, extra person \$20, apt \$100, extra person \$25) An affordable, self-contained apartment next to the post office, sleeping up to six. There's also an en suite double which can be booked separate to or as part of the apartment. Old fashioned without being olde-worde.

Abbey's Cottages (☎ 1800 222 397; www.stanleytasmania.com.au; d \$95-140, extra person \$15-30) Abbey's manages a range of self-contained units and cottages around town of varying sizes, standards and prices – check the website for details.

Dovecote Motel & Restaurant (☎ 6458 1300; www.dovecote.com.au; 58 Dovecote Rd; d \$110-158) A little way out of town, this amiable place has an assortment of standard motel rooms and self-contained units, most endowed with million-dollar views of The Nut (cheaper rooms are sans views). The restaurant, open for dinner Tuesday through Sunday, highlights local produce (mains \$16 to \$28).

Stanley Cabin & Tourist Park (☎ 6458 1266; www.stanleycabinpark.com.au; 1 Wharf Rd; unpowered/power sites \$22/24, dm/d \$22/80, cabins \$55-95) On a grassy tract abutting Tatlows Beach, this park is run with Forrest Gump-like enthusiasm, completely unfazed by its blessed location. Sleeping options suit all budgets: doubles are motel-like, cabins are clean, tent sites are almost on the beach.

Eating

Moby Dick's Breakfast Bar (☎ 6458 1414; 5 Church St; mains \$6-15; ☞ breakfast) If you've been up all

night swilling rum and singing sea shanties (or your Stanley B&B is missing the second 'B'), this breakfast bar will get you started with waffles, eggs, omelettes and strong coffee.

Hurseys Seafood (☎ 6458 1103; 2 Alexander Tce; mains \$8-25) 'From our fleet to your plate' is the catch-cry at Hurseys, a linoleum-shod fish café with a huge orange crayfish glued to the façade. The complex includes Kermies Café (meals \$5 to \$13), serving fish 'n' chip take-aways with bottomless pots of tartare sauce, and Julie & Patrick's (mains \$19 to \$30, open for dinner), a more formal seafood restaurant with cute balcony seats.

Sealer's Cove (☎ 6458 1234; 2 Main Rd; mains \$11-19; ☞ dinner Tue-Sun) Going to die if you even see another scallop? Head along to this navy-blue BYO place for some seafood relief: pasta, steaks, gourmet pizza, salads and excellent desserts.

SMITHTON & AROUND

☎ 03 / pop 3320

Smithton, 22km west of Stanley, serves one of Tasmania's largest forestry areas. There's bugger-all to see here, but for a bed and a feed try the **Bridge Hotel/Motel** (☎ 6452 1389; www.goodstone.com.au/bridge; 2 Montague Rd; hotel s/d \$40/60, motel s & d \$100). Serving dinner, county music boot- scoots through the bistro (mains \$10 to \$20).

The serene **Allendale Gardens & Rainforest** (☎ 6456 4216; www.allendalegardens.com.au; Allendale La, Edith Creek; adult/child \$10/3.50; ☞ 9am-5pm Oct-Apr) is signposted off Blanche Rd (which is off the B22), 12km south of Smithton towards Edith Creek. There are 6½ acres of bird-filled gardens and 26 hectares of old temperate rainforest to forget yourself in, plus a café serving Devonshire teas.

Thirty kilometres southwest of Smithton on the A2 is the alluringly named **Dismal Swamp** (☎ 6456 7199; www.dismalwetland.com.au; Bass Hwy; adult/child/family \$20/10/45; ☞ 9am-5pm Nov-Mar, to 4pm Apr-Oct), the highlight of which is a 110m slippery-dip plummeting into a blackwood sinkhole (over-eights only). At the bottom there's a boardwalk with sculptures peering out from the ferns; at the top the café and interpretation centre celebrate the blackwoods' cultural heritage.

MARRAWAH

☎ 03 / pop 370

At Marrawah, with its open pastureland punctuated by stands of old conifers, the wild Southern Ocean occasionally coughs up

pieces of ships wrecked off the rugged coast. The area's beaches and rocky outcrops are hauntingly beautiful, particularly at dusk, and the seas are often monstrous. In March the **West Coast Classic** (www.ripurl.com/events) surf competition carves up the swell.

In the township there is a general store selling petrol and supplies, and the **Marawah Tavern** (☎ 6457 1102; Comeback Rd; mains \$10-19; ☞ lunch & dinner) which serves counter meals but doesn't have accommodation. There's a free but very basic (and windy!) camping area with toilets and cold shower by the beach at Green Point, 2km from Marawah.

About 5km from the beach, **Glendonald Cottage** (☎ /fax 6457 1191; 79 Arthur River Rd; s/d from \$80/95, extra person \$25) is a comfortable self-contained cottage sleeping five; the owner also conducts excellent four-hour **wildlife tours** (www.kingsrun.com.au; tours per person \$75) in the area.

Wake up, scratch your head and contemplate a surf at the compact, blue-and-pine **Marawah Beach House** (☎ /fax 6457 1285; 19 Beach Rd; s/d from \$100/120), which has amazing views across the beach to oblivion. Fully self-contained; sleeps four.

ARTHUR RIVER

☎ 03 / pop 120

The haphazard settlement of Arthur River, 15km south of Marawah, is a random collection of fishing shacks and holiday houses. **Gardiner Point**, signposted off the main road south of the old timber bridge, has been christened the 'Edge of the World' – nothing but sea from here to Argentina. The off-shore breeze peels spray from the breakers as they thunder towards the river mouth. From here you can drive 110km south to Corinna on the West Coast via the **Western Explorer** road (p680).

If you're not into fishing, take a scenic cruise on the Arthur River with either **Arthur River Cruises** (☎ 6457 1158; www.arthurrivercruises.com; Arthur River Store, 1414 Arthur River Rd; adult/child \$74/30; ☞ 10am-3pm), cruising upriver to the confluence of the Arthur and Frankland Rivers for a BBQ and a rainforest walk; or **AR Reflections River Cruises** (☎ 6457 1288; www.arreflections.com; 4 Gardiner St; adult/child \$77/44; ☞ 10.15am-4.15pm), where passengers also get a guided rainforest walk and a gourmet lunch.

Arthur River Canoe & Boat Hire (☎ /fax 6457 1312; 1429 Arthur River Rd; ☞ 9am-5pm) hires out motorboats (per hour/day \$25/130), canoes (\$16/70), and kayaks (\$12/50). You can take

the canoes upriver and camp for as long as you like – waterproof drums provided; BYO everything else.

There are decent self-catering accommodations in Arthur River, but no eateries (only two takeaway stores). Pitch a tent at Manuka, Peppermint or Prickly Wattle **camping grounds** (adult/family \$3/10) around Arthur River; self-register at the **Arthur River Parks & Wildlife Service** (☎ 6457 1225; www.parks.tas.gov.au; ☞ 24hr registration booth) on the main street.

Just north of town, **Arthur River Caravan Park** (☎ 0429-336 223; www.arthurrivercabinpark.com; 1239 Arthur River Rd; unpowered & powered sites \$20, cabins \$65-85) has some cleverly-converted shipping container units, old and new cabins and plenty of wildlife passing through.

Arthur River Holiday Units (☎ 6457 1288; www.arholidayunits.com; 2 Gardiner St; powered sites \$22; s/d from \$77/88) has comfortable (if a little dated) river-side units ranging from one to three bedrooms, and a couple of powered sites to boot.

THE WEST

Mortifying mountains, dashing tannin-stained rivers, impenetrable rainforest, desolate coast and rain, rain, rain... Welcome to the wild west, much of which is now part of Tasmania's World Heritage Area. Aside from tourist-centric Strahan, towns here are rough and ready, beaten down by the weather and hardened by the wilderness – don't expect many cosmopolitan trimmings.

Prior to 1932, when the Hobart-Queens-town road was built, the only way into the area was by sea, through the dangerous Hells Gates into Strahan's Macquarie Harbour. European settlement brought convicts, soldiers, loggers, prospectors, railway gangs and fishermen to the area. In the 20th century, outdoor adventurers, naturalists and environmental crusaders were lured into the wilderness. The proposed damming of the Franklin and Lower Gordon Rivers in the 1980s sparked the greatest environmental debate in Australian history, and has fostered an ecotourism boom around Strahan.

See www.westcoast.tas.gov.au for regional information.

Getting There & Around

Tassielink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) buses run from Hobart to the west coast five times

per week. The duration of the Strahan journey varies with Queenstown stopover times.

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hr)
Hobart-Bronte Junction	34	2¼
Hobart-Derwent Bridge	40	3¼
Hobart-Lake St Clair	47	2¾
Hobart-Queenstown	59	5
Hobart-Strahan	68	6-8¾

From Launceston, Tassielink buses run three times per week:

Journey	Price (\$)	Duration (hr)
Launceston-Devonport	22	1¼ (meeting ferries)
Launceston-Sheffield	27	2
Launceston-Gowrie Park	36	2¼
Launceston-Cradle Mountain	54	3
Launceston-Zeehan	56	5½
Launceston-Queenstown	65	6
Launceston-Strahan	74	8¾

Drivers heading north along the rugged **Western Explorer** road (p680) should fill up at Zeehan or Waratah; there's no fuel at Corinna or Arthur River, only at distant Marawah.

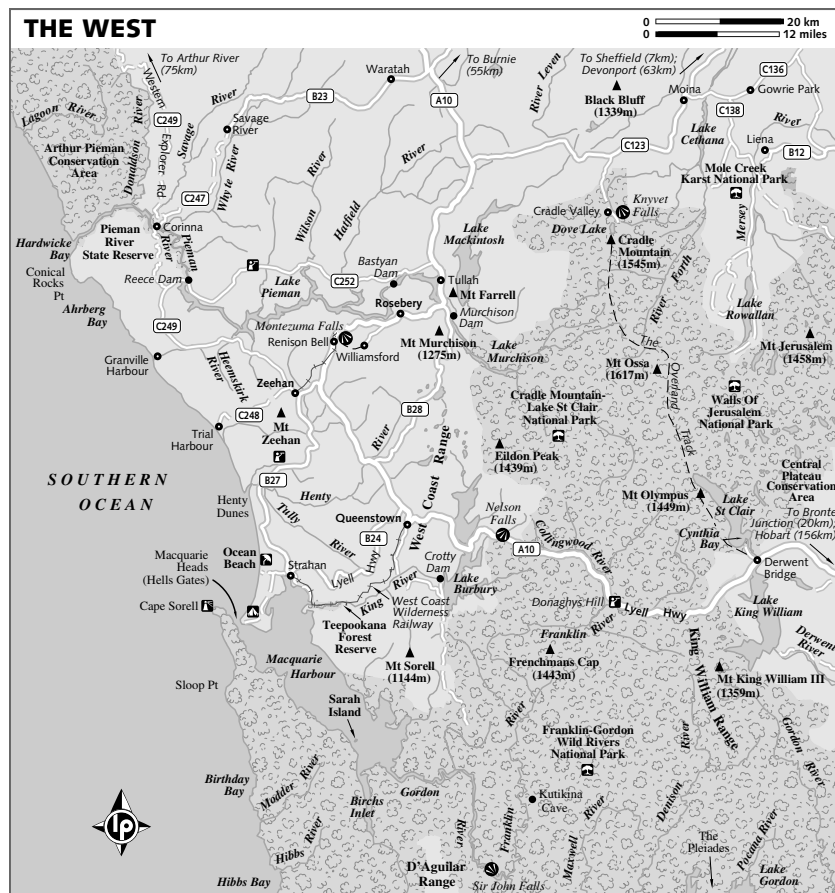
CORINNA

☎ 03 / pop 5

Tiny Corinna (☎ 6446 1170; www.corinna.com.au; Western Explorer Rd; unpowered sites \$20, s/d \$50/70, cabins \$100-175), on the northern bank of the Pieman River, was once a gold-mining settlement, but nowadays the whole town is run as a remote tourist resort. The ambitious owners have renovated the old pub and built 14 new self-contained, solar-powered cabins on the hillside. A tavern and visitors centre are planned.

Pieman River Cruises (adult/child \$70/35; ☞ 10.30am-2.30pm) operate from here – a laid-back, rustic alternative to Strahan's crowded, mass-produced Gordon River cruises. Four-hour cruises on the *Arcadia II* pass an impressive gorge and forests of eucalypts, ferns and Huon pines en route to Pieman Heads, where you can rummage around the log-strewn beaches. Bookings essential.

The **Fatman ferry** (☎ 6446 1170; vehicle/caravan \$20/25, motorcycles & bicycles \$10; ☞ 9am-5pm Apr-Sep, to 7pm Oct-Mar) slides across the Pieman on demand (the only way across the river).



ZEEHAN

☎ 03 / pop 650

Zeehan has ridden a rollercoaster of highs and lows, its fortunes intrinsically bound to those of the mining industry. In the late 19th century, Zeehan (aka Silver City) was boomtown with 10,000 residents, 27 pubs and the 1000-seat Gaiety Theatre. But by 1908, the mines had begun to fail. Zeehan declined inexorably until the late '60s when the Renison Tin Mine reopened. It's never reclaimed its former glories, but it makes a convenient overnighter if you're driving the 50km to Corinna for a cruise.

The historic part of Main St is at the northern end of town, not the bit you see when entering from Strahan or Queenstown. Remnant

boom-time buildings include the once-famous **Gaiety Theatre**, the **post office and courthouse** (all on Main St), and the concrete **St Luke's Church** on Belstead St.

The **West Coast Pioneers Memorial Museum** (☎ 6471 6225; wchldt@bigpond.com.au; Main St; adult/child/family \$10/9/22; ☹ 9am-5pm) offers an insight into mine workings plus old steam trains, a mineral collection and pictorial west coast history. Admission includes access to the Gaiety Theatre (slowly being restored) and the courthouse.

Trial Harbour, Zeehan's original port, is a lonesome, end-of-the-world place with bush camping; between Zeehan and Strahan are the desert-like, blindingly white expanses of the **Henty Dunes**.

The redbrick **Hotel Cecil** (☎ 6471 6221; 99 Main St; s \$45, d with/without bathroom \$75/65, cottage \$105) has small, well-loved pub rooms and four self-contained miners' cottages on the adjacent block. Pub meals, available for lunch and dinner (mains \$12 to \$25) from the bistro, are miner-sized.

At the eastern end of town, the **Heems-kirk Motor Hotel** (☎ 1800 639 876, 6471 6107; heems-kirk@tasparkside.com.au; Main St; d \$102-150) won't win any architectural design awards, but the owners take pride in their decent-sized motel rooms and bistro (mains \$18 to \$26), which has a well-weighted wine list.

QUEENSTOWN

☎ 03 / pop 2400

The Lyell Hwy winds down into Queenstown through a surreal, denuded moonscape – deep, eroded gullies and hillsides scalded by acid rain – the legacy of environmentally destructive mining. Mining activities and sulphur emissions are now controlled, and greenery is springing up on the slopes. Ironically, some locals want to keep the green away, believing the bald hills and gravel football field attract the tourists.

Unlike affluent Strahan (and despite the locals' best efforts), Queenstown retains an impoverished mining-town atmosphere. When the weather sets in the mood is menacing and desperate: timber miners' hovels rot in the rain, curtains shift in windows as you pass by.

Doubling as the **Queenstown Visitor Information Centre**, the **Eric Thomas Galley Museum** (☎ / fax 6471 1483; 1-7 Driffield St; adult/child/concession/family \$4/2.50/3/10; ☹ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 12.30-6pm Sat & Sun Oct-Mar, 10am-5pm Mon-Fri, 1-5pm Sat & Sun Apr-Sep) started life as the Imperial Hotel in 1898. Inside are diverting displays of old photographs with idiosyncratic captions, one-finger-typed by photographer Eric Thomas.

The town's biggest (and priciest) attraction is the **West Coast Wilderness Railway** (p688), a restored line traversing the pristine wilderness between Queenstown and Strahan. The station is on Driffield St, opposite the Empire Hotel.

For top-of-the-town views, follow Hunter St uphill, turn left onto Bowes St, then sharp left onto Latrobe St to a small car park. From here a short, steep track ascends **Spion Kop Lookout**.

The abandoned open-cut mine **Iron Blow** can be seen from a lookout off the Lyell Hwy,

while mining continues deep beneath the massive West Lyell crater. Take a 2½-hour tour with **Douggy's Mine Tours** (☎ 0407 049 612; tours \$70; ☹ tours 10am & 1pm). Minimum age 14; bookings essential.

Sleeping & Eating

Empire Hotel (☎ 6471 1699; www.empirehotel.net.au; 2 Orr St; s \$25, d with/without bathroom \$55/45) The majestic, century-old Empire has basic but clean, well-priced rooms in the middle of town. Its heritage dining room (mains \$14 to \$20) serves beefy pub standards (avoid the fish this far inland) for lunch and dinner.

Penghana (☎ 6471 2560; www.penghana.com; 32 The Esplanade, access via Preston St; s \$110, d with/without bathroom from \$150/110, incl breakfast) Built in 1898 for the Mt Lyell Mining Company's general manager, this upmarket guesthouse lords above town in detached affluence, surrounded by a surprising number of trees (surprising, given that this is Queenstown). Guest facilities include a lounge with open fire, bar and billiard table, and a grand dining room. Lunch and dinner by arrangement.

Chancellor Inn Queenstown (☎ 6471 1033; www.ghihotels.com; Batchelor St; d \$130-180) There are half-a-dozen generic motels around town – this is the best one, though it's managed with all the charm of a concrete block. Comfortably refurbished rooms have all mod cons, and you might opt for a buffet breakfast in the attached restaurant.

Queenstown Cabin & Tourist Park (☎ 6471 1332; fax 6471 1125; 17 Grafton St; unpowered/powered sites \$20/22, on-site caravans \$40, lodge s/d \$45/50, cabins \$80) About 500m south of town, this park covers most price brackets: a lodge with decent budget rooms, OK caravans and cabins, a gravelly tent patch and amenities with astoundingly mismatched '70s tiles.

The Queenstown culinary scene has about as much life as Queen Victoria herself these days, but takeaway stores line the main street, and **Dotties Coffeshop** (☎ 6471 1700; Driffield St; items \$5-10; ☹ breakfast & lunch), inside the train station, serves focaccias, toasted sandwiches, pies, pasties and coffee.

STRAHAN

☎ 03 / pop 700

Strahan (pronounced 'Strawn'), 40km southwest of Queenstown on the Macquarie Harbour, is the epicentre of west-coast tourism, attracting droves of visitors seeking a

wilderness-in-comfort experience aboard a seaplane, a Gordon River cruise or the Wilderness Railway.

Macquarie Harbour was discovered in the early 1800s by sailors searching for Huon pine. The area was inaccessible by land and proved difficult to reach by sea – dubious assets that prompted the establishment of a brutal penal colony on Sarah Island in 1821. In the middle of Macquarie Harbour, Sarah Island isolated the colony's worst convicts, their muscle used to harvest Huon pine nearby. Convicts worked 12 hours a day, often in leg irons, felling pines and rafting them back to the island's saw-pits where they were used to build ships and furniture. In 1834, after the establishment of the 'escape-proof' Port Arthur penal settlement, Sarah Island was abandoned.

Today, Strahan's harbourside main street is undeniably attractive, but in an artificial, overcommercialised kind of way. Eager to make a buck, local businesses have ramped up prices for everything from fuel to a loaf of bread, and charge like a wounded bull for accommodation. Bemused residents shake their heads and say, 'They're gonna kill the goose that laid the golden egg!', concerned that the rampant cash-in will drive tourists elsewhere.

Information

The architecturally innovative **West Coast Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6472 6800; www.westcoast.tas.gov.au; The Esplanade; ☎ 10am-7pm Dec-Mar, to 6pm Apr-Nov; ♿) provides information on accommodation, attractions and activities around town.

WEST COAST WILDERNESS RAILWAY

The century-old railway between Queenstown and Strahan passes through dense forest, crossing wild rivers and 40 bridges, and stopping at historic stations. The rack-and-pinion line opened in 1896, utilising the Abt system (involving a third, toothed, lock-on rail), allowing fully-loaded mining carriages to tackle steep gradients. After closing in 1963, the railway fell into disrepair.

Today the entire track is magnificently restored, locomotives shuttling passengers along its full length. Trains depart Queenstown and Strahan at the same times (10am daily, plus 3pm December to February), meeting in the rainforest at Dubbil Barril station. Change trains here and continue the full distance (around four hours end-to-end), then take a later train or bus back to your starting point; or return to your point of origin on the train you rode in on. One way (or return to Dubbil Barril) costs \$99/56 per adult/child. The bus costs an additional \$15/8; both ways on the railway costs \$198/112.

Purchase tickets at either **Queenstown Station** (☎ 6471 1700; www.federalgroup.com.au; Driffield St; ☎ ticket office 9am-5pm, to 7pm Dec-Feb), in the centre of town, or the **Strahan Activities Centre** (☎ 6471 4300; The Esplanade, Strahan; ☎ 9am-5pm, to 7pm Dec-Feb).

The **Parks & Wildlife Service** (☎ 6471 7122; www.parks.tas.gov.au; The Esplanade; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri; ♿) office in the old Customs House on the foreshore also houses the post office and online access centre. There's an ATM outside the Fish Café on the main street.

Sights & Activities

Beyond the Huon-pine reception desk at the visitor information centre is **West Coast Reflections** (☎ 6472 6800; The Esplanade; adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 10am-7pm Dec-Mar, to 6pm Apr-Nov), a creative, thought-provoking display on west-coast history, including a refreshingly blunt appraisal of environmental disappointments and achievements.

The Ship That Never Was (☎ 6472 6800; www.roadearth.com.au; The Esplanade; adult/child/concession \$15/free/11; ☎ 5.30pm year-round, also 8.30pm in Jan) is a pantomime-style show staged daily at the visitor information centre's amphitheatre. It tells the story of the last ship built at Sarah Island, and the convicts who stole it and escaped. There's something to please all ages (beware: audience participation).

Hogarth Falls is at the end of a rainforest walk (40 minutes return) alongside the platypus-inhabited Botanical Creek, starting from People's Park south of town.

Other natural attractions include the storm-battered, 33km-long **Ocean Beach**, 6km from town, where the sunsets have to be seen to be believed. The rips rip and the undertows tow – swimming isn't recommended. From October to April the Ocean Beach dunes become a **mutton bird rookery**, the birds returning from winter migration. Ask at the visitor

information centre about ranger-run tours in January and February. **West Strahan Beach**, closer to town, has a gently shelving sandy bottom that's OK for swimming. About 14km along the road from Strahan to Zeehan are the spectacular **Henty Dunes**, impressive 30m-high sand mountains.

Tours

See opposite for information about the West Coast Wilderness Railway between Strahan and Queenstown. **Strahan Taxis** (☎ 0417-516071) can wheel you out to surrounding attractions like the Henty Dunes (\$30 per taxi, maximum four people).

GORDON RIVER CRUISES

The following cruises include a rainforest walk at Heritage Landing, views of (or passage through) Hells Gates, Macquarie Harbour's narrow entrance, and a land tour of Sarah Island. Gordon River Cruises has reserved seating; World Heritage Cruises is first-in-best-dressed.

Gordon River Cruises (☎ 1800 628 288, 6471 4300; www.puretasmania.com.au; The Esplanade) Offers 5½-hour cruises departing 8.30am daily, and also at 2.45pm over summer. Cost depends on where you sit (most people get up and wander around anyway) and whether meals are involved. Standard seats without food cost from \$85/47/197 per adult/child/family. Buffet lunch included. Don't be seduced by the more expensive seats – they're not worth the outlay.

World Heritage Cruises (☎ 1800 611 796, 6471 7174; www.worldheritagecruises.com.au; The Esplanade) Take a six-hour Heritage Morning Cruise departing 9am daily (per adult/child/family \$85/35/220), a five-hour Morning Express Cruise departing 9am daily from January to April (\$80/32/215), or a 5½-hour Heritage Afternoon Cruise departing 3pm from January to March (\$85/38/220). Limited discount 'early bird' tickets save around \$20/10 per adult/child. Buffet lunch available (adult/child \$15/8). Their two-night 'Discovery' cruises (\$1995 per person) are pure indulgence.

JET-BOAT RIDES

Wild Rivers Jet (☎ 6471 7396; www.wildriversjet.com.au; The Esplanade) Fifty-minute jet-boat rides on the hour from 9am to 4pm up the King River's rainforest-lined gorges. The experience costs \$60/35/165 per adult/child/family. Minimum two people; bookings recommended.

SAILING

West Coast Yacht Charters (☎ 6471 7422; www.tasadventures.com/wcyc; The Esplanade) Overnight Gordon

River sightseeing cruises onboard the 60-foot steel ketch *Stormbreaker*. The boat carries only 10 passengers – a more personal way to experience the river. One night, including a visit to Sarah Island and all meals, costs \$320/160 per adult/child. Two-day/two-night cruises are \$420/210. Also available are three-hour fishing trips (\$45/20) and a 2½-hour evening cruise on Macquarie Harbour (\$80/50, including crayfish dinner).

SCENIC FLIGHTS

All of the following flights are weather and numbers permitting.

Strahan Seaplanes & Helicopters (☎ 6471 7718; www.adventureflights.com.au; The Esplanade) Light-plane and helicopter flights over the region. Light-plane options include 45-minute flights over Frenchmans Cap, the Franklin and Gordon Rivers, and Sarah Island (per adult/child \$169/105), and 65-minute flights over the Cradle Mountain region (\$195/95). A 60-minute helicopter flight over the Teepookana Forest Reserve costs \$169/105.

Wilderness Air (☎ 6471 7280; seair1985@bigpond.com; The Esplanade) Excellent 80-minute seaplane flights (per adult/child \$169/99), departing regularly from Strahan Wharf, flying up the Gordon River to Sir John Falls, where the plane lands so you can enjoy a rainforest walk.

Sleeping

BUDGET

West Coast Yacht Charters (☎ 6471 7422; www.tasadventures.com/wcyc; The Esplanade; dm adult/child \$40/20, d \$80, incl breakfast) For a timid taste of life at sea, bunk down on the yacht *Stormbreaker* moored in the harbour. The yacht is used for Gordon River cruises (left), so be prepared to check in after 7.30pm and be booted out of bed before 9am. It's not moored every night, so call in advance. Linen supplied.

Cosy Cabins Strahan Backpackers (☎ 6472 6211; www.cosycabins.com.au; 43 Harvey St; unpowered sites/dm \$22/30, tw, d & cabins \$70; ♿) The new management has been working hard to upgrade this place, settled among bush 10 minutes' walk from town. Spick-and-span dorms and small A-frame cabins are lemony-fresh with bright linen, but the daggy bathrooms could use an overhaul (we're told this will happen soon).

Strahan Wilderness Lodge (☎ 6471 7142; strahanlodge@keypoint.com.au; Ocean Beach Rd; lodge d \$60-80 incl breakfast, cabins \$75-100) This homely old house was relocated here from Queenstown in 1982. The décor is firmly wedged in 1972 and bathrooms are shared, but it's still the best value in town and it's warm when the rain sets in. Self-contained timber cabins are dotted among windswept heathlands – also

great value. To get here drive three minutes along Harvey St west from the town.

Cosy Cabins Strahan Seaside (☎ 6472 6200; www.cosycabins.com.au; cnr Innes & Andrew Sts; unpowered/powered sites \$27/33, cabins \$90-132) Fifty metres through some scrub from a safe-swimming beach, this open, airy caravan park is well maintained and managed. Following the state-wide trend, they've dispensed with their old on-site vans. Does anyone else mourn this loss, or is it just us?

Strahan Holiday Park (☎ 6471 7442; www.islandcabins.com.au; cnr Innes & Jones Sts; powered sites/on-site vans \$30/55, cabins \$110-130) Patrolled by Zooch the humungous hound, this outfit offers stylish executive cabins and clean standard cabins in a leafy glen (with platypuses in the creek!) 130m from the beach. Bike hire \$8 for two hours.

MIDRANGE & TOP END

Cedar Heights (☎ 6471 7717; cedarheights@vision.net.au; 7 Meredith St; s/d from \$95/110) Timber self-contained cabins with private courtyards set back in a quiet street, far from the bustle. Maybe a bit too far.

Regatta Point Villas (☎ 6471 7103; The Esplanade; d from \$125) Near the West Coast Wilderness Railway station at Regatta Point and managed by the local tavern (right), this place offers eight roomy, self-contained units with fair views.

Strahan Village (☎ 1800 628 286, 6471 4200; www.puretasmania.com.au; d \$180-320, extra person \$34; 📺) Much of the accommodation around town is run by this conglomerate, which has its booking office (open daily) under the clock tower on the Esplanade. The lowest rate buys you a standard room with harbour views at the refurbished Hilltop Motor Inn; the highest a deluxe spa waterfront cottage. There are a number of options in-between, too.

Risby Cove (☎ 6471 7572; www.risby.com.au; The Esplanade; d \$189-216, with spa \$233) Clad in blue corrugated iron, this eye-catching foreshore complex, 500m east of the town centre, has sexy suites overlooking the marina, including two right on the water's edge. There are bikes and dinghies for hire (per half-/full day \$10/20), plus a 45-seat cinema, gallery and top-quality restaurant on site (right).

Eating

Banjo's Bakehouse (☎ 6471 7794; The Esplanade; items \$3-8; 🍳 breakfast & lunch) Popular central bakery

serving sugar-coated breakfasts (muffins, pastries, coffee) and lunchy bites like sandwiches, baguettes, hot chunky pies and pasties. Grab a sausage roll and munch by the harbour.

Hamer's Bar & Grill (☎ 6471 4335; The Esplanade; lunch mains \$10-14, dinner mains 17-28; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Hamer's family-friendly pub bistro serves commendable, upmarket dinners like wallaby steak on apple and potato *rosti* with peppercorn chutney (\$24), and more downmarket lunches like burgers, steak sandwiches and fish and chips. It's not a bad spot for a couple of beers either.

Fish Café (☎ 6471 4386; The Esplanade; mains \$11-22; 🍷 lunch & dinner) Haughty (some may say overpriced) harbourside fish and chips. Hone in on some pink ling, trevalla or oysters, or try the 'Fish Café Sampler' (\$16) with a bit of everything. The seafood chowder in a sourdough bowl (\$11) is stomach-sized.

Regatta Point Tavern (☎ 6471 7103; The Esplanade; mains \$16-30; 🍷 lunch & dinner) The last bastion of grit and substance in Strahan is this locals' pub, full of beery conversation about 2km around the bay from town near the railway terminus. The bistro serves substantial seafood and steak mains; there's a kids' menu too.

Risby Cove (☎ 6471 7572; The Esplanade; mains \$22-29; 🍷 dinner) French restaurateur Fernand Point said, 'If the divine creator has taken pains to give us delicious and exquisite things to eat, the least we can do is prepare them well and serve them with ceremony.' Lofty ambitions indeed, and Risby Cove's super-chef Dave succeeds on all counts. Seafood galore, plus duck, pasta, pork and venison, well prepared and ceremoniously served.

FRANKLIN-GORDON WILD RIVERS NATIONAL PARK

Saved from hydroelectric immersion in the 1980s, this World Heritage-listed national park embraces the catchment areas of the Franklin and Olga Rivers and part of the Gordon River – all exceptional rafting, bushwalking and climbing areas. The park's snow-capped summit is **Frenchmans Cap** (1443m; a challenging three- to five-day walk). The park also boasts a number of unique plant species and the major indigenous Australian archaeological site at **Kutikina Cave**.

Much of the park consists of deep river gorges and impenetrable rainforest, but the Lyell Hwy traverses its northern end. There

are a handful of short walks starting from the highway, including hikes to **Nelson Falls** (20 minutes return), and **Donaghys Hill** (40 minutes return) from where you can see the Franklin River and the sky-high white quartzite dome of Frenchmans Cap.

Rafting

Rafting the bubbling churns of the Franklin River is thrillingly hazardous; for the inexperienced, tour companies offer complete rafting packages. Whether you go with an independent group or a tour operator, you should contact the park rangers at the **Queenstown Parks & Wildlife Service** (☎ 6471 2511; Penghana Rd), or the **Lake St Clair Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6289 1172; Cynthia Bay) for current information on permits, weather, regulations and environmental considerations. Also check the detailed 'Franklin River Rafting Notes' online at www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/boating.

Expeditions should register at the booth at the junction of the Lyell Hwy and the Collingwood River, 49km west of Derwent Bridge. Rafting the length of the river, starting at Collingwood River and ending at Sir John Falls, takes between eight and 14 days. It's also possible to do shorter trips on different sections of the river. From the exit point, you can be picked up by a **Wilderness Air** (☎ 03-6471 7280; seair1985@bigpond.com) seaplane, or paddle 22km further downriver to meet a Gordon River cruise boat at Heritage Landing.

Tours run mainly from December to March. Tour companies with complete rafting packages (departing Hobart) include:

Rafting Tasmania (☎ 6239 1080; www.raftingtasmmania.com) Five-/seven-/10-day trips costing \$1550/1850/2400.

Tasmanian Expeditions (p611) Nine-/11-day trips for \$2350/2550.

Water By Nature (☎ 1800 111 142, 0408-242 941; www.franklinrivertasmania.com) Five-/seven-/10-day trips for \$1540/1840/2460.

CRADLE MOUNTAIN-LAKE ST CLAIR NATIONAL PARK

Tasmania's best-known national park is the peerless 168,000-hectare World Heritage area of Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair. Mountain peaks, dank gorges, pristine lakes, tarns and wild moorlands extend triumphantly from the Great Western Tiers in the north to Derwent Bridge on the Lyell Hwy in the south. It was one of Australia most heavily glaciated areas,

and includes Mt Ossa (1617m) – Tasmania's highest peak – and Lake St Clair, Australia's deepest natural freshwater lake (167m).

The preservation of this region as a national park is due in part to Gustav Weindorfer, an Austrian who became besotted with the area. In 1912 he built a chalet out of King Billy pine, called it Waldheim (German for 'Forest Home') and, from 1916, lived there permanently. Today, the site of his chalet at the northern end of the park retains the name Waldheim.

There are fabulous day walks at both Cradle Valley in the north and Cynthia Bay (Lake St Clair) in the south, but it's the outstanding 80.5km Overland Track between the two that has turned this park into a bushwalkers' mecca.

Information

All walking tracks in the park are signposted, well defined and easy to follow, but it's prudent to carry a map – pick one up at park visitor information centres.

CRADLE VALLEY

There are two visitor information centres here. Adjacent to Cosy Cabins Cradle Mountain (p693), 3km north of the park's northern boundary is the privately run **Cradle Information Centre** (☎ 03-6492 1590; Cradle Mountain Rd; 🍷 8am-5pm) with its vast car park. This is the starting point for the shuttle bus service (p695) into the national park. The centre provides bushwalking information and sells park passes, food and fuel. It's more worthwhile to continue to the mega-helpful **Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre** (☎ 03-6492 1110; www.parks.tas.gov.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; 🍷 8am-5pm Jun-Aug, 8am-6pm Sep-May), within the park itself and run by the Parks & Wildlife Service, providing extensive bushwalking information (including national park and Overland Track passes and registration), and informative flora, fauna and park history displays.

Regardless of season, be prepared for cold, wet weather around Cradle Valley. On average it rains here seven days out of 10, is cloudy eight days in 10, the sun shines all day only one day in 10, and it snows on 54 days each year!

LAKE ST CLAIR

Occupying one wing of a large building at Cynthia Bay on the park's southern boundary is the **Lake St Clair Visitor Information Centre**

DEFORESTATION IN TASMANIA *Senator Bob Brown*

Tasmania's wild and scenic beauty, along with a human heritage dating back 30,000 years, is a priceless heritage available to all of us. The waterfalls, wild rivers, lovely beaches, snow-capped mountains, turquoise seas and wildlife are abundant and accessible for locals and visitors alike.

Because we are all creations of nature – that curl on our ears is fashioned to pick up the faintest sounds from the forest floor – we are all bonded to the wilds. No wonder that in this anxiety-ridden world there is such a thirst for remote, pristine, natural places. Yet around the world, wilderness is the fastest disappearing resource and Tasmania is no exception.

This year, 150,000 truck-loads of the island's native forests, including giant eucalypt species which produce the tallest flowering plants on earth, will arrive at the woodchip mills en route to Japan. After logging, the forests are firebombed and every fur, feather and flower is destroyed. These great forests, built of carbon, are one of the world's best hedges against global warming. They are carbon banks. Yet they are being looted, taken from our fellow creatures and all who come after us. The log trucks on Tasmania's highways are enriching banks of a different kind.

Over two decades ago, people power saved Tasmania's wild Franklin and Lower Gordon Rivers (p690) which nowadays attract hundreds of thousands of visitors to the west coast. Those visitors, in turn, bring jobs, investment and local prosperity. Saving the environment has been a boon for the economy and employment.

The rescue of Tasmania's forests relies on each of us, and there are plenty of ways we can help. We can help with letters or phone calls to newspapers, radio stations, or politicians; with every cent donated to the forest campaigners; and in every well-directed vote. The tourist dollar speaks loudly in Tasmania, so even overseas travellers, who cannot vote, should take the opportunity to write letters to our newspapers and politicians. With each step we take, we move toward ending the destruction of Tasmania's wild and scenic heritage.

Senator Bob Brown was elected to the Tasmanian parliament in 1983 and first elected to the Senate in 1996. His books include The Valley of the Giants. Read more about Bob Brown at www.bobbrown.org.au.

(☎ 03-6289 1172; www.parks.tas.gov.au; Cynthia Bay; ☞ 8am-5pm), providing rock-solid walking advice and national park passes and displays.

At the adjacent, separately run **Lake St Clair Wilderness Resort** (☎ 03-6289 1137; www.lakestclairresort.com.au; Cynthia Bay; ☞ 8am-5pm Apr-Oct, 7am-8pm Nov-Mar), you can book a range of accommodation (optional), or a seat on a ferry or cruise (p695).

Sights & Activities

Bushwalking is the primary (and perhaps primal) lure of this national park. Aside from the **Overland Track** (p694), there are dozens of short walks here. For Cradle Valley visitors, behind the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre (p691) there is an easy but first-rate 20-minute circular boardwalk through the adjacent rainforest, called the **Pencil Pine Falls & Rainforest Walk**, suitable for wheelchairs and prams. Nearby is another trail leading to **Knyvet Falls** (45 minutes return), as well as the **Enchanted Walk** alongside Pencil Pine Creek (20 minutes return), and the **King Billy Walk** (one hour return). The **Cradle Valley Walk** (2½ hours one way) is an 8.5km-long boardwalk linking the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre and Dove Lake. The **Dove Lake Walk**

is a 6km lap of the lake, which takes around two hours.

At Cynthia Bay, the **Larmairremener tabelti** is an Aboriginal culture walk that winds through the traditional lands of the Larmairremener, the indigenous people of the region. The walk (one hour return) starts at the visitor information centre. Another way to do some walking here is to catch the ferry service (p695) to either Echo Point Hut or Narcissus Hut and walk back to Cynthia Bay along the lakeshore. From Echo Point it's four to five hours' walk back; from Narcissus five to six hours.

Also at Cradle Mountain is **devils@cradle** (☎ 6492 1491; www.devilsatcradle.com; Cradle Mountain Rd; tours adult/child/concession/family \$15/10/13.50/45; ☞ 10am-10pm), another of Tassie's many devil parks, which runs informative 45-minute tours continuously from 10am to 3pm. More expensive 1½-hour feeding tours (adult/child/concession/family \$25/12.50/17.50/60) happen at 5.30pm and 8.30pm.

Tours

Most travellers to Tasmania consider Cradle Mountain a must-see, so almost every

tour operator in the state offers day trips or longer tours to the area (including guided walks along the Overland Track). Some recommendations:

Craclair (☎ 03-6339 4488; www.craclair.com.au) Highly experienced company running guided bushwalking tours; among its many offerings is a seven-day/six-night Overland Track tour (\$1890 per person including packs, sleeping bags, tents, jackets and over-trousers). Also runs shorter trips.

Cradle Mountain Helicopters (☎ 03-6492 1132; www.adventureflights.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; flights Sep-Jun). A sedentary but thrilling way to see the region's wonders is to take a helicopter flight from beside the Cradle Information Centre. Fifty-minute flights cost \$190/110 per adult/child; weather permitting.

Cradle Mountain Huts (☎ 03-6391 9339; www.cradlehuts.com.au) If camping isn't your bag, from November to May you can take a six-day/five-night, small-group guided walk along the Overland Track with accommodation in plush private huts and the heavy stuff on someone else's back. The \$2350 fee per person includes meals, national park fees and transfers to/from Launceston.

Tasman Bush Tours (☎ 03-6423 2335; www.tasmanbush.com.au) Offers a six-day/five-night package for \$1290, including camping gear, park pass, food, Lake St Clair ferry tickets and transport to/from Devonport.

Tasmanian Expeditions (p611) Does an eight-day/seven-night Overland Track trip for \$1790 (November to April), with plenty of side trips.

TassieLink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) For the less energetic, TassieLink runs nine-hour day trips (adult/child/concession \$127/76/108) to Cradle Mountain from Launceston. Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday only.

Sleeping & Eating**CRADLE VALLEY**

Cosy Cabins Cradle Mountain (☎ 1800 068 574, 03-6492 1395; www.cosycabins.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; unpowered/power sites \$30/40, dm \$30, cabins \$132-157) Situated 2.5km from the park entrance, this humming bushland complex has camping sites, a decent hostel, squeaky-clean self-contained cabins and upmarket cottages (with spa). Expensive for what it is (a caravan park), but off-season rates are reasonable. Book in advance.

Waldheim Cabins (☎ 03-6492 1110; cradle@parks.tas.gov.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; d \$70, extra adult \$25) 'This is Waldheim, where there is no time, and nothing matters.' Perhaps Gustav Weindorfer was hiding from his more meaningful past; a night or two at these basic four- to eight-bunk huts near his original hut, 5km into the national park, might get you into his frame of mind. Each contains a shared bathroom, gas stove,

heater and cooking utensils, but no bedding. Book through the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre (p691).

Cradle Mountain Highlanders Cottages (☎ 03-6492 1116; www.cradlehighlander.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; d \$115-190, extra person \$15-35) One for the yodellers, hospitable Highlanders is a cluster of 10 Germanic, shingle-clad timber cottages straight out of *The Sound of Music*. It's an easy-going, family-run operation. All cottages have a kitchen and lounge; the more luxurious ones have a wood heater and spa.

Cradle Mountain Lodge (☎ 1300 134 044, 02-8296 8010; www.cradlemountainlodge.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; d \$256-580, extra person \$58; ☑) Looking like somewhere Jack Nicholson might go to write a book, this stone and timber resort near the national park entrance is a *Shining*-sized monster – nearly 100 cabins surround the main lodge. Four types of cabin each have tea- and coffee-making facilities and fridge, but no kitchens. Prices include buffet breakfast. There's a spa retreat here too, and you can launch into a plethora of activities (guided and self-guided). Also here is the Highland Restaurant (mains \$19 to \$28, open for breakfast and dinner), a classy (yet somehow casual) eatery with an open fire and a formidable wine cellar; and the Tavern (mains \$12 to \$19, open for lunch and dinner), with pub-style meals and ski-lodge vibes.

At the Cradle Information Centre (p691), **Cradle Mountain Café** (☎ 03-6492 1204; Cradle Mountain Rd; meals \$5-13) is a licensed, quick-fire establishment serving toasted sandwiches, wraps, soups and coffee in biodegradable cups.

Self-caterers should stock up before heading to Cradle Valley; minimal supplies are sold at the Cradle Mountain Café, Cosy Cabins Cradle Mountain and Cradle Mountain Lodge.

CYNTHIA BAY & DERWENT BRIDGE

Lake St Clair Wilderness Resort (☎ 03-6289 1137; www.lakestclairresort.com.au; Cynthia Bay; unpowered/power sites \$15/20, dm \$25, cabins from \$176) Based at the shop/café adjoining the Lake St Clair Visitor Information Centre (p691), these guys run a lakeside camping ground not far away, with toilets, showers and bountiful wildlife. Spartan dorms and high-quality self-contained cabins are also on offer. The café serves light meals (\$6 to \$25) – toasted sandwiches and burgers – plus breakfasts and takeaways. A ramping-up of dinner services was planned at the time of research.

THE OVERLAND TRACK

This most esteemed of walks is usually tackled as a six-day, five-night epic, trudging 80.5km between Cradle Valley in the north and Lake St Clair in the south. The trail takes you up Tasmania's highest peaks, through tall eucalypt forests bursting with wildlife, and across exposed alpine moors and buttongrass valleys of unsurpassed beauty.

The best time to walk the Overland Track is during summer, when flowering plants are strutting their stuff. From December to April daylight hours are longer and average temperatures are warmer, but spring and autumn also have their attractions. Only walk the track in winter if you're very experienced. All walkers must register at either end of the track, and it's a good idea to note your progress (and wax lyrical about the scenery/wombats/possum who ate your muesli bar) in the hut logbooks along the way.

In 1953 less than 1000 people walked the Overland Track, but by 2004 the trail was being pounded by 9000 hikers annually. To preserve the area's delicate ecology and avoid environmental degradation and overcrowding, some changes to walking conditions have been introduced:

- There's a booking system for the peak walking period (November to April), with walker numbers limited to 34 people departing per day.
- From November to April bushwalkers are required to tackle the track from north to south (Cradle Valley to Lake St Clair).
- In addition to national park fees (p608), a charge of \$100 (\$80 for children and seniors) applies to cover costs of sustainable track management. The additional fees only apply from November to April, and only to those walking the entire Overland Track.

Departing Cradle Valley, walkers sometimes start at Dove Lake, but the recommended route begins at Ronny Creek, around 5km from the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre. There are many secondary paths off the main track, scaling mountains like Mt Ossa and detouring to lakes, waterfalls and valleys, so the length of time you spend on the track is only limited by the amount of supplies you can carry.

Once you reach Narcissus Hut at the northern end of Lake St Clair, you can stomp around the lake's edge to Cynthia Bay (a five- to six-hour walk), or take the ferry run by Lake St Clair Wilderness Resort (opposite). To guarantee a seat, you must book the ferry before you start walking, then when you get to Narcissus Hut, use the radio to confirm your booking. The one-way ride costs \$22 per person.

You can bunk down in the excellent huts along the track, but in summer they're full of smelly, snoring hordes. To preserve your sanity, bring a tent and pitch it on the established timber platforms around each hut. Campfires are banned, so fuel stoves are essential. There's plenty of clean drinking water available along the way, but boil anything you have doubts about.

Book your walk online at www.overlandtrack.com.au, where you can also order an information pack (\$25 if mailed within Australia, \$37 overseas). The pack includes the 1:100,000 Tasmap *Lake St Clair Map & Notes*, and *The Overland Track – One Walk, Many Journeys* booklet detailing track sections, flora and fauna. Visitor information centres also sell the map (\$10) and booklet (\$12). Refer also to www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/tracknotes/overland.html for track tips, and Lonely Planet's *Tasmania* and *Walking in Australia* guides for detailed walk descriptions.

Derwent Bridge Wilderness Hotel (☎ 03-6289 1144; fax 03-6289 1173; Lyell Hwy, Derwent Bridge; dm \$25, d with/without bathroom \$115/95) If you've got any sense at all, the minute you step off the Overland Track you'll head here for a beer, a steak and some big talk about your big walk. The accommodation is seriously un-special and needs an upgrade, but the bar has a soaring, timber-beamed ceiling, a pool table, jukebox

and blazing open fire. Meals in the bistro (mains \$15 to \$27) are above-average pub offerings, without being gourmet.

Derwent Bridge Chalets (☎ 03-6289 1000; www.derwent-bridge.com; Lyell Hwy, Derwent Bridge; d \$145-230, extra adult/child \$35/25) There are a half-dozen roomy, self-contained studios and chalets to choose from here, each with back porch bush views. Immaculate but unsophisticated chalets

sleep up to eight (popular with Overland Track groups and families), with full kitchen and laundry; some have a spa. The newer, smaller, cheaper studio doubles have kitchenettes.

Getting There & Away

Tassielink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) buses service both Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair; see p685 for details. They also offer Cradle Mountain day trips (p693) from Launceston.

Maxwells (☎ /fax 03-6492 1431) runs on-demand services from Devonport to Cradle Mountain (one to four passengers \$160/five or more \$40 per passenger), Launceston to Cradle Mountain (\$240/60), and Devonport or Launceston to Lake St Clair (\$280/70).

You might be able to find more convenient or cheaper transport options by talking to staff at bushwalking shops or hostels.

Getting Around

CRADLE VALLEY

Leave your car at the Cradle Information Centre (p691) and jump on a **shuttle bus**, departing at 10-minute intervals (mid-September to late May) and stopping at the visitor information centre inside the park, Snake Hill, Ronny Creek (the Overland Track departure point) and Dove Lake. The service is free, but national park fees apply (p608). Visitors can alight at any bus stop along the way. Contact the Cradle Information Centre (p691) for reduced winter service details.

Maxwells (☎ /fax 6492 1431) runs on-demand year-round local shuttles (one way per person \$9), picking up passengers from local accommodations and taking them into the national park. Bookings essential.

CYNTHIA BAY & DERWENT BRIDGE

Maxwells (☎ /fax 6492 1431) runs on-demand buses between Cynthia Bay/Lake St Clair and Derwent Bridge (\$7 per person one way).

Lake St Clair Wilderness Resort (☎ 6289 1137; www.lakestclairresort.com.au; one way/return \$22/27) runs the ferry service between Cynthia Bay and Narcissus Hut at the northern end of Lake St Clair. The boat departs twice daily from April to October (10am and 2pm), thrice daily from November to March (9am, 12.30pm and 3pm). This is essentially a water taxi for Overland Track walkers – it's a great way to see the lake, but don't expect any interpretive commentary. Bookings essential; prices rise for

fewer than four passengers. If you are taking the ferry to complete your Overland Track opus, you must book in advance and radio the ferry operator to confirm when you reach Narcissus Hut. Ask about two-hour lunch and sunset cruises on the lake (in a state of flux at the time of research).

THE SOUTHWEST

SOUTHWEST NATIONAL PARK

There are few places left on our lonely planet as isolated and untouched as the southwest wilderness. This is Tasmania's largest national park, home to some of the world's last tracts of virgin temperate rainforest; a place of ancient grandeur and extraordinary diversity.

The southwest is the habitat of the endemic Huon pine, which can live for more than 3000 years, and the swamp gum, the world's tallest hardwood and tallest flowering plant. Around 300 species of lichen, moss and fern – some of which are rare and endangered – dapple the rainforest with shades of green; glacial tarns seamlessly mirror snowy mountaintops; and in summer, picture-perfect alpine meadows explode with wildflowers. Untamed rivers charge through the landscape, rapids surging through gorges and waterfalls plummeting over cliffs.

Activities

BUSHWALKING

The most-trodden walks in the park are the 70km **Port Davey Track** between Scotts Peak Rd and Melaleuca (around five days' duration), and the considerably more popular 85km **South Coast Track** (six to eight days) between Cockle Creek and Melaleuca. You can combine the two (Scotts Peak Rd to Cockle Creek), but it's one hell of a hike!

On both tracks, hikers should be prepared for vicious weather. Light planes airlift bushwalkers into Melaleuca in the southwest (there are no roads), while there's vehicle access and public transport to/from Cockle Creek at the other end of the South Coast Track, and Scotts Peak Rd at the other end of the Port Davey Track. Check out the notes on both walks on the Parks & Wildlife Service website (www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/tracknotes/scoast.html), and the detailed descriptions in Lonely Planet's *Walking in Australia*.

SEA-KAYAKING

Kettering's **Roaring 40's Ocean Kayaking** (p641) runs three- and seven-day guided kayaking expeditions (\$1525/2250 per person) out of Melaleuca, exploring the waterways around Bathurst Harbour and Port Davey. Prices include flights, food and all equipment (except sleeping bags).

Getting There & Around

The most popular way to tackle the South Coast Track is to fly into Melaleuca and walk out to Cockle Creek. **Par Avion** (☎ 1800 144 460, 03-6248 5390; www.paravion.com.au) and **Tasair** (☎ 1800 062 900, 03-6248 5088; www.tasair.com.au) fly between Hobart and Melaleuca for \$155 and \$176 one way respectively.

For those who like their creature comforts, there is a soft option – scenic flights from Hobart over the southwest, with time spent on the ground. Par Avion's speciality is a four-hour 'Heritage Tour' (adult/child \$170/136), passing the big peaks and surf-ravaged south coast, along with a boat trip on Bathurst Harbour. Full-day trips cost \$275/220. Tasair's offerings include a two-hour scenic flight with 30 minutes on the ground at Cox Bight or Melaleuca (\$243 per person). Their 3½-hour option (\$316) has 1½ hours at Melaleuca, and includes a gourmet hamper.

From December to March on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, **TassieLink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) runs buses from Hobart to Cockle Creek (\$65, 3½ hours), returning to Hobart on the same days. In the same months TassieLink also runs from Hobart to Scotts Peak Rd at the end of the Port Davey Track (\$73, four hours).

LAKE PEDDER & STRATHGORDON

☎ 03 / pop 75

At the northern edge of the southwest wilderness lies Lake Pedder, once a breathtakingly beautiful natural lake considered the ecological jewel of the region. In 1972, however, it was flooded to become part of the Gordon River power development. Together with nearby Lake Gordon, Pedder now holds 27 times the volume of water that's in Sydney Harbour and is the largest inland freshwater catchment in Australia.

Built to service employees during construction of the Gordon River Power Scheme, tiny Strathgordon appears out of nowhere. On a clear day (about one in five!), the drive out

here from Mt Field is bedazzling – bleak peaks, empty buttongrass plains, rippling lakes and the Gordon Forests. About 12km west of Strathgordon is the **Gordon Dam Lookout** and **Visitor Information Centre** (☎ 6280 1134; www.hydro.com.au; Gordon River Rd; 10am-5pm Nov-Apr, to 3pm May-Oct), poised above the 140m-high Gordon Dam and providing info on the scheme. The views from atop the dam will make the strongest of knees tremble.

Accommodation-wise, your only options are the free **Teds Beach Campground** beside Lake Pedder (toilets and electric barbecues; no fires permitted), or the increasingly renovated **Lake Pedder Chalet** (☎ 6280 1166; www.lakepedderchalet.com.au; Gordon River Rd; d \$60-150; ☎), a low-slung motel hunkering down under the rain clouds. Also at the Chalet is a **restaurant** (lunch mains \$8-16, dinner mains \$17-26; ☎ lunch & dinner) serving dam-busting mains like beef lasagne and steak and Guinness pie.

No bus services run to Strathgordon.

BASS STRAIT ISLANDS

You might think that Tasmania moves at a slower pace than the mainland states (and you'd be right), but the two major islands in Bass Strait offer the chance to drop it back a few notches further.

Bass Strait has two archipelagos – the Hunter and Furneaux Groups – at the western and eastern entrances of Bass Strait respectively. King Island is the main land mass in the Hunter Group, as is Flinders Island in the Furneaux Group. Once the transient homes of sealers, sailors and prospectors, today these islands harbour an extraordinary array of wildlife, punctuated by small towns culturally mired in the early '90s – the perfect escape for aspiring novelists, damaged urbanites, mad artists and those in need of some solitude.

Your best bet for visiting King or Flinders Islands is to purchase a package including flights, car rental and accommodation. Enquire with the airlines listed below, or contact Tourism Tasmania (p608) for details.

KING ISLAND

☎ 03 / pop 1570

Flat, fertile and uncomplicated, King Island (known locally as 'KI') stands guard over the western end of Bass Strait. It's not a huge place – just 64km long and 27km wide – but

the island's beaches, rocky coastline, oddly oversized wildlife, world-famous cheese and bucolic simplicity more than compensate for its size.

Discovered in 1798, the island became known as a breeding ground for seals and sea elephants, which were hunted close to extinction by brutal sealers and sailors known as the Straitsmen.

Over the years, Bass Strait's heaving seas have wrecked hundreds of ships, around 60 of these off King Island. Australia's worst peace-time catastrophe occurred here in 1845 when the *Cataraqui*, an immigrant ship from Liverpool, went down just 150 yards offshore, drowning 399 people.

The main township is Currie on the west coast, which has a pub, two supermarkets, a petrol station, ATM and post office. Over on the east coast is Naracoopa, a beachy collaboration of holiday shacks with a fabulously derelict jetty, perfect for fishing. In the southeast is Grassy, a former scheelite mining boomtown, abuzz with rumours of the mine reopening.

For help planning your trip, contact **King Island Tourism** (☎ 1800 645 014; www.kingisland.org.au). Another useful website is www.kingisland.net.au. For tourist information on KI, visit **The Trend** (☎ 6462 1360; trend@kingisland.net.au; 26 Edward St, Currie; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun). The **Online Access Centre** (☎ 6462 1778; 5 George St; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, 10am-7pm Wed, 1-5pm Thu, 10am-9pm Fri, 10am-noon Sat) charges \$5 per 30 minutes.

Sights & Activities

King Island is undoubtedly best known for its heavenly, award-winning cheeses. **King Island Dairy** (☎ 1800 004 950, 6462 1348; www.kidairy.com.au; North Rd, Loorana; ☎ noon-4.30pm Sun-Fri Oct-Apr, noon-4.30pm Sun-Tue, Thu & Fri May-Sep), 8km north of Currie (just beyond the airport), has free tastings and amazingly cheap *fromage* for sale (damn that Roaring Forties blue is good...).

The **King Island Historical Museum** (☎ 6462 1572; Lighthouse St, Currie; adult/child \$4/1; ☎ 2-4pm), inside the former lighthouse-keeper's cottage, features maritime and local-history displays including remnants of maritime disasters (casually displayed on the floor), and absorbing newspaper accounts of the Grassy mine closure.

Kelp Industries Pty Ltd (☎ 6462 1340; www.kelpind.com.au; 89 Netherby Rd, Currie; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) proc-

esses bull kelp seaweed for export to Scotland for alginate extraction (a natural thickener). See the kelp drying on racks by the roadside, or duck into the visitor centre for more info.

King Island's four **lighthouses** illuminate the treacherous coastline. The 48m Cape Wickham lighthouse is the southern hemisphere's tallest; the others are at Currie, Stokes Point and south of Naracoopa. Col Kotter, Currie's former lighthouse keeper, said, 'People seem to have romantic notions about lighthouse keepers. But I've found nothing romantic about it. It's a long way up that light at 2am.'

Diving among the local marine life and shipwrecks is highly recommended, as is **swimming** at deserted beaches and freshwater lagoons, **surfing** and **fishing** from Naracoopa jetty. There are established bush and coastal **walks** here too, including a 20-minute return stroll to the **calcified forest** in the south. King Island **wildlife** is ridiculously healthy; don't miss the **fairy penguin colony** on Grassy breakwater.

Tours

King Island Coaches (☎ 1800 647 702, 6462 1138; www.kingislandgem.com.au; 95 Main St, Currie) Offers various half-/full-day island explorations (\$40/80), plus an evening fairy penguin viewing tour (\$40, December to February).

King Island Dive Charter (☎ 6461 1133; www.kingislanddivecharter.com.au) Single boat dives for \$75, plus good-value three- to seven-day packages (including dives on the *Cataraqui* wreck).

Sleeping

Parer's King Island Hotel (☎ 6462 1633; www.kingislandhotel.com.au; Main St, Currie; d \$125) Parer's will never replace the old pub which burnt down in 1964, but the new joint is clean and central, with unsurprising motel-style rooms. Downstairs the bistro (mains \$16 to \$29) does bang-up counter meals with sprigs of fresh wattle on the tables for lunch and dinner.

Devils Gap Retreat (☎ 6462 1180, 0429-621 180; devilsgap@kingisland.net.au; Charles St, Currie; d \$130) Hands-down, the best place to stay on the island is this crafty, hexagonal cabin on the dunes overlooking the wild sea. Full kitchen, fabulous deck, open stone hearth, and a tub with a view. Magic.

Baudins Cottages (☎ 6461 1110; baudins@kingisland.net.au; The Esplanade, Naracoopa; d \$140-170, extra person \$40) Is it really Western Red Cedar, or just orange-stained pine? We suspect the latter, but the beachfront location is hard to beat.

Four one- and two-bedroom self-contained units; mostly without views.

Bass Caravan Park & Cabins (☎ 6462 1168; 0428-621 168; dinojohn@bigpond.com; 100 Main St, Currie; on-site van \$45, cabin \$98) As affordable as KI gets, this desperate-looking park has on-site vans with bathroom, and two-bedroom cabins with kitchen and bathroom.

Eating

Boathouse (☎ 0429-621 180; Lighthouse Rd, Currie; ☎ 24hr) A weather-beaten old boathouse on Currie Harbour that's been turned into a free, artsy 'restaurant with no food' – you bring the edibles and wine; plates, cutlery and glasses are in the cupboard.

King Island Bakery (☎ 6462 1337; 5 Main St, Currie; items \$3-12; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Fri) A top spot for picnic fodder. Sells lots of freshly baked goods, including raved-about gourmet pies filled with crayfish, camembert and asparagus, and King Island beef. Pizzas on Friday nights.

Nautilus Coffee Lounge (☎ 6462 1868; Edward St, Currie; mains \$5-18; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) 'Venture down the stairs' to Nautilus, your best bet for a near-decent coffee and a big island breakfast. Ponder the local art on the crimson walls as you chow into a feta-and-scrambled-egg croissant with orange mustard dressing (\$16).

Grassy Club (☎ 6461 1341; Main Rd, Grassy; mains \$18-25; ☎ lunch Thu-Sun, dinner Wed-Mon) The chef in the restaurant here can be hit-and-miss, but at least he's ambitious. Expect creative mains utilising produce from around the island (often involving cheese), served attentively in discreet surrounds. The bar next door is perfect for a beer.

Getting There & Away

Flying is the only way to access King Island. **Regional Express** (REX; ☎ 13 17 13; www.regionalexpress.com.au) flies from Melbourne, as does **King Island Airlines** (☎ 9580 3777; www.kingislandair.com.au) – the latter flies to/from the small Moorabbin airport in Melbourne's southeast. Return flights cost around \$300.

Tasair (☎ 1800 062 900, 6248 5088; www.tasair.com.au) flies from Devonport and Burnie/Wynyard to King Island (\$385 return from both destinations).

Getting Around

There's no public transport on the island. Car-hire companies will meet you at the airport;

bookings essential. **Cheapa Car Rental** (☎ 6462 1603; kicars@kingisland.net.au; 1 Netherby Rd, Currie) and **King Island Car Rental** (☎ 1800 777 282, 6462 1282; kicars@bigpond.com; 2 Meech St, Currie) both have cars from around \$65 per day.

FLINDERS ISLAND

☎ 03 / pop 925

Flush with natural wonderments, Flinders Island is the largest of the Furneaux Group's 52 islands. First charted in 1798 by British sea-salt Matthew Flinders, the Furneaux Group became a base for the Straitsmen, who slaughtered seals in their tens of thousands. Like King Island, Flinders is strewn with shipwrecks, 68 vessels having come to grief here.

The most tragic part of Flinders Island's history, however, was its role in the near-annihilation of Tasmania's Aboriginal people between 1829 and 1834. Of the 135 survivors who were forcibly removed from the Tasmanian mainland to Wybalenna (meaning 'Black Man's House') to be 'civilised and educated', only 47 heartbroken survivors made the journey back to Oyster Cove near Hobart in 1847.

The main industries here are farming, fishing and seasonal mutton-birding, caught by sticking a gloved, snake-proof hand down bird burrows. The island runs rampant with wild-life, especially birds, the most famous of which is the Cape Barren Goose (honk-honk).

Whitemark, the main town, is on the west coast. Lady Barron in the south is the main fishing area and deep-water port. Plan your visit with help from the **Flinders Island Area Marketing & Development Office** (☎ 1800 994 477, 6359 2380; www.flindersislandonline.com.au). On the island the **Flinders Island Tourist Information Centre** (☎ 6359 2160; 6 Patrick St, Whitemark; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri) provides local low-down. Another useful website is www.focusonflinders.com.au. There are no ATMs on the island, but there's a Westpac Bank agency and small businesses have Eftpos facilities.

Sights & Activities

Today, all that remains of the sad settlement at **Wybalenna** are the cemetery and chapel, restored by the National Trust. In 1999 the site was returned to the descendants of the indigenous people who lived there.

Nearby at Emita is the engrossing **Furneaux Museum** (☎ 6359 2010; fax 6359 2026; admission adult/child \$2/1; ☎ 1-5pm daily Dec-Feb, 1-4pm Sat & Sun Mar-

Nov), housing a variety of Aboriginal artefacts (including beautiful shell necklaces), sealing and shipwreck relics, and a display on the mutton-bird industry.

Visitors love to stamp up the 756m-high Mt Strzelecki in **Strzelecki National Park**. The walk starts 12km south of Whitemark on Trousers Point Rd, from where you point your trousers up the well-signposted track (four to five hours return). The views from the top are gob-smacking. Mt Strzelecki is one of the peaks in the **Three Peaks Race** (p665).

There are some brilliant, footprint-free **beaches** around the island (particularly the west coast – don't miss Trousers Point), and easily accessible **scuba diving** sites off the northern and western coasts. Rock and beach **fishing** keeps the locals entertained year-round. If you're the patient type, try **fossicking** for Killiecrankie diamonds (actually fragments of topaz) on the beach and creek at Killiecrankie Bay.

Tours

Flinders Island Adventures (☎ 6359 4507; www.flindersisland.com.au) Arranges fishing charters, evening mutton bird-viewing cruises (December to March, \$35), half-/full-day 4WD tours (\$100/166 per person), and customised tour and accommodation packages.

Flinders Island Dive (☎ 6359 8429; flindersdive@yahoo.com) Half-/full-day diving charters from \$100/160 per person, plus fishing trips, diving courses and equipment hire.

Sleeping

Interstate Hotel (☎ 6359 2114; interstatehotel@trump.net.au; Patrick St, Whitemark; s \$30-55, d \$55-84, ind breakfast) In the centre of Whitemark is this pub, built in 1911 and renovated in heritage style. It's an amenable place with no-frills budget rooms (shared facilities) and en suite rooms of a better standard.

Furneaux Tavern (☎ 6359 3521; potboil@bigpond.com; 11 Franklin Pde, Lady Barron; s \$60-75, d \$80-110, extra person \$15-30) The tavern in Lady Barron has 10 capacious motel units set in native gardens behind the bar-restaurant, not far from Adelaide Bay (beaut views!). Some road signage still refers to this place as the Flinders Island Lodge.

Silas Beach (☎ 6359 3521; potboil@bigpond.com; 11 Franklin Pde, Lady Barron; d \$130, extra person \$35) In an absolute waterfront location and enjoying a surplus of windows is this modern three-bedroom holiday house, sleeping six with all the comforts of home (presuming your home is comfortable). Book through the tavern.

Flinders Island Cabin Park (☎ 6359 2188; fi_cabin_park@yahoo.com.au; 1 Bluff Rd; unpowered & powered sites \$14, s cabin \$35, d cabin \$50-95, extra person \$15) About 4km north of Whitemark are these affordable, family-sized brick cabins, some with private bathroom. From the main road, take the Bluff Point road and it's the first property on the left.

There's free **camping** at Trousers Point, with toilets and gas barbecues but no powered sites or showers. You can also camp at Allports Beach, Lillies Beach and North East River. Only Trousers Point has water.

Eating

Flinders Island Bakery (☎ 6359 2105; Lagoon Rd, Whitemark; items \$4-8; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, breakfast Sat Dec-Feb) How about a salad roll or chunky curried lamb pie, followed by decent coffee and a wedge of lemon tart? Open on weekends in summer.

Interstate Hotel (☎ 6359 2114; Patrick St, Whitemark; lunch \$10-15, dinner \$16-25; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Mon-Sat) Swing into this gracious old Whitemark landmark, the hub of island life. The dining room serves well-priced lunches and dinners – the usual pub standards with a seafood leaning.

Furneaux Tavern (☎ 6359 3521; 11 Franklin Pde, Lady Barron; bar mains \$10-15, restaurant mains \$22-32; ☎ bar lunch & dinner daily, restaurant lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) The best (only) option for meals in Lady Barron, the Furneaux satisfies everyone with great views, a sociable bar, cheap, filling bar meals (burgers, fish and chips), and a restaurant menu starring local produce.

Walkers Supermarket (☎ 6359 2010; Patrick St, Whitemark; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon Sat, 1-5pm Sun) and the general stores in Lady Barron and Killiecrankie are all open daily.

Getting There & Away

AIR

Airlines of Tasmania (☎ 1800 144 460, 6359 2312; www.airtasmania.com.au) flies daily between Launceston and Flinders Island (\$300 return), as well as from Moorabbin in Melbourne three times a week (\$404 return).

BOAT

Southern Shipping Company (☎ 6356 3333; www.southernshipping.com.au; Main St, Bridport; ☎ office 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) operates a weekly ferry (departing Monday) from Bridport in Tasmania's northeast to Lady Barron on Flinders Island,

continuing to Port Welshpool in Victoria on demand. A return trip to Flinders Island from Bridport costs \$97 per person. To take a vehicle costs from \$515 to \$926 (including driver), prices varying with vehicle size. The journey takes 8½ hours one way; bookings essential (four to six weeks in advance).

Getting Around

There's no public transport on the island. Car-hire companies will meet you at the airport; bookings essential. **Flinders Island Car Rentals** (☎ 6359 2168; flindersislandcarrentals@hotmail.com; 21 Memana Rd, Whitemark) has sedans and minivans from \$66 to \$110 per day.

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