

East Coast



Tasmania's glorious east coast is an idyllic domain of sea, sand and serenity. The coastline is fringed with powder-white beaches and lapped by water that's impossibly clear and blue. It's a land of quiet bays and long, sandy shores, punctuated by granite headlands splashed with flaming orange lichen. If you want to be active there's endless hiking and water sports. Otherwise, this is the perfect setting for a relaxed and sun-soaked beach holiday.

Some of Tasmania's most beautiful national parks are found in this part of the state. There's Freycinet National Park, which encompasses picture-perfect Wineglass Bay; Maria Island, as rich in history as it is in wildlife; and often-overlooked Douglas-Apsley National Park, with its emerald forests and waterholes – a tranquil place for a swim. If your idea of an ideal holiday revolves more around joys of the palate, you'll find this part of Tasmania a particularly rich foraging ground. There's ultra-fresh seafood, berry farms overflowing with berry waffles and sundaes, and some of the best vineyards in the state.

The small seaside towns are well set up for visitors. There's plenty of good accommodation – but prices rise considerably in summer. In December and January you'd be unwise to travel here without prebooking somewhere to stay. In the depths of winter the east coast is always warmer than the rest of Tasmania, and even when a stormy surf pounds its beaches, the region is particularly atmospheric.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Slurping down briny-fresh oysters at **Freycinet Marine Farm** (p179)
- Plunging into the ice-blue waters at exquisite **Wineglass Bay** (p179)
- Absorbing the natural beauty of the Freycinet Peninsula from a **sea kayak** (p178)
- Swimming in the clear turquoise waterholes and wandering the gorge at **Douglas-Apsley National Park** (p185)
- Feasting on all things berry and sweet ice-cream delights at **Kate's Berry Farm** (p174)
- Getting up early to watch an **east coast sunrise** turn the sea to molten gold
- Hiking or biking in **Maria Island National Park** (p168) for some of the best up-close wildlife spotting anywhere
- Doing a **wine-crawl** (p173) between tasting rooms and cellar doors, savouring the fruits of the east coast's vines



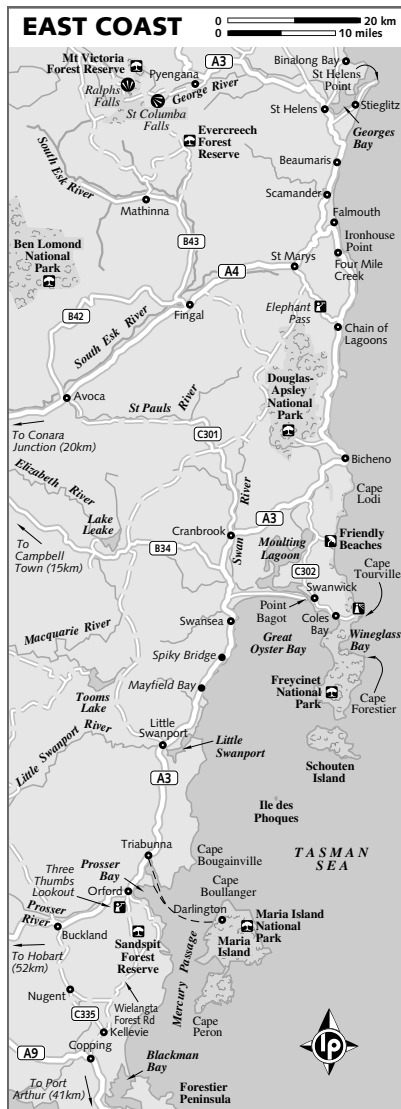
■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.freycinetcolesbay.com

■ www.freycinetcoast.com.au

Getting There & Around BICYCLE

East-coast Tasmania is ideally suited to cycling. The route is blessed by wonderful views, little traffic, few daunting hills and towns perfectly spaced to ride between. You're also less likely to get rained on here than in other parts of Tasmania.



For cyclists travelling between Swansea and Coles Bay, there's an informal **boat service** (☎ 6257 0239) between Point Bagot and Swanwick, which costs \$15 per person and saves approximately 46km of riding. The boat runs on request in both directions, between October and April, weather permitting.

BUS

The east coast is served by **Redline Coaches** (☎ 6336 1446, 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) and **Tassielink** (☎ 6230 8900, 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au). Redline runs one service each weekday from Launceston to Swansea (\$29.60), the Coles Bay turn-off (\$36.20) and Bicheno (\$36.90) and return, via the Midland Hwy and the inland B34 linking road. Services from Hobart connect with these services – you change buses at Campbell Town, where there's a wait of five minutes to three hours depending on the day. Redline also runs daily services (except Saturday) from Launceston to St Helens (and vice versa) along the A4 via Fingal, St Marys and Scamander. Hobart buses connect with this service at Conara on the Midland Hwy.

Tassielink runs one bus on weekdays from Hobart to Swansea during the school term, and only on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Saturdays during school holidays (\$24.90). Tassielink's Hobart–Bicheno service runs Wednesday to Friday and Sunday (\$31.70).

For getting to the Freycinet Peninsula, **Bicheno Coaches** (☎ 6257 0293, 0419-570 293; www.wineglassbay.com, click on 'Getting here') connects with Redline and Tassielink buses at the Coles Bay turn-off daily except Saturday when there's still a Bicheno–Coles Bay Service (see p181).

ORFORD

☎ 03 / pop 500

The seaside village of Orford was once a seaport for the east coast whaling fleet, and the convict and military settlement on Maria Island, just across Mercury Passage. Today, Orford is mostly a holiday village where Hobartians have their seaside 'shacks' and spend summer holidays on the beach.

The Prosser River flows through **Paradise Gorge** as it approaches town: it's often a mirror-calm spot with perfect reflections. On the north side of the river is a convict-built road that once reached all the way to Hobart, and is now a peaceful riverside **walking track**.

Another, coastal walking track of about 5km leads from Raspins Beach, along Shelly Beach and around the Luther Point cliffs to beautiful **Spring Beach**, which has crystal-clear water and, in the right conditions, surfing. The walk passes a convict-era **quarry**, which provided the sandstone for many buildings in Melbourne and Hobart.

The Prosser River is a good fishing and boating spot and you can hire paddle boats from **Sun Smart Paddle Boats** (☎ 0419-196 737) to explore. There's also diving in the clear waters offshore. The recently sunk **Troy D** has provided an artificial reef near Orford that's already attracted plenty of sea life. **Island Ocean Charters** (☎ 6257 1275; mail@islandoceancharters.com.au) can take you there and to dive sites around Maria Island.

Just off the highway opposite the Ampol service station is **Darlington Vineyard** (☎ 6257 1630; Holkham Court; ☎ 10am-5pm daily Jan-Feb, Fri-Mon Mar-Nov), which produces an award-winning riesling (tastings free).

Sleeping

Blue Waters Motor Inn (☎ 6257 1102; 28 Tasman Hwy; d \$75-110, extra person \$15) This place, with its brightly painted exterior, is more pub-and-gaming than accommodation oriented. It does have several different types of motel rooms, which are clean but unremarkable.

Prosser Holiday Units (☎ 6257 1427; cnr Tasman Hwy & Charles St; d \$95; extra adult/child \$20/10) These family-friendly, self-contained units are just off the highway on the edge of the Prosser River. The two-storey units have views of the water, and accommodate up to five.

Sanda House (☎ 6257 1527; www.orfordsandahouse.com.au; 33 Walpole St; d \$100-120) A colonial B&B, it occupies Orford's oldest house, a pretty 1840s stone cottage surrounded by lovingly tended gardens on the south side of the river. Continental breakfasts are served in front of the fire in the dining room.

Spring Beach Holiday Villas (☎ 6257 1440; 314 Rheban Rd; d \$100-145, extra adult/child \$30/25) Just 150m from Spring Beach, this is the perfect spot for children. The two-bedroom self-contained units have a wood-fired stove, private outdoor area with BBQ, and water views.

Orford Riverside Cottages (☎ 6257 1655; www.riversidecottages.com.au; Old Convict Rd; d \$150-190, extra adult/child \$40/20) These pretty timber cottages are set in trees overlooking the Prosser River and have spas, fully equipped kitchens and an ex-

tensive DVD library. You can borrow a fishing line and catch your dinner from the deck.

Eating

Gateway Café (☎ 6257 1539, 1 Charles St, lunch mains \$7.50-15.50, dinner mains \$15-22; ☎ summer 7am-9pm, winter 7am-6pm) By the bridge over the Prosser River, this excellent café does all-day breakfast, lunches and dinners as well as great pies, cakes, wraps and rolls. They also sell Tasmanian gourmet provisions in the shop section.

Scorchers on the River (☎ 6257 1033; 1 Esplanade; mains \$11-23; ☎ 11am-8pm Thu-Tue). Scorchers is known for superior eat-in or takeaway wood-fired pizzas, of which the garlic prawn and Spring Bay seafood number is tops. There's also good lasagne and salads.

Blue Waters Motor Inn (☎ 6257 1102; Tasman Hwy; mains \$16-26; ☎ lunch & dinner) The recently revamped dining room has wide river views and does big meals that are better-than-pub. Try the bourbon-marinated T-bone or the wallaby schnitzel.

Getting There & Away

Tassielink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) coaches stop at Coffee on Prossers (the old roadhouse just north of the river) en route from Hobart to Swansea and Bicheno (and vice versa). The trip from Hobart takes 1½ hours and costs \$17.20.

TRIABUNNA

☎ 03 / pop 900

Triabunna, 8km north of Orford, is set on an inlet of Spring Bay that shelters a small cray- and scallop-fishing fleet. On the northern side of the bay, there's also an enormous pile of woodchips from the mill of Gunns Ltd, which processes Tasmania's forests into matchbox-sized pieces for export to Asia for paper making.

There's not much here of great interest to tourists, except that this is the jumping-off point for beautiful **Maria Island**. There's a pub and tearooms, and also a good **visitors centre** (☎ 6257 4772; cnr Esplanade & Charles St; ☎ 10am-4pm) that will ply you with information on the east coast.

Seawings (☎ 6257 1163; www.seawingsecotours.com.au; Waterfront, Triabunna), which operates the Maria Island Ferry (see p171), does three-hour ecotours leaving daily at 10.30am, visiting the Ile des Phoques seal colony and Maria

DETOUR: WIELANGTA FOREST ROAD

There's a short cut that leads from the Tasman Hwy at Copping and pops you out on the east coast at Orford. It's a beautiful forest drive of 29km on a gravel route that's known as the **Wielangta Forest Road**. Road conditions are generally good – though you may need to look out for log trucks – and there are walks that lead into the heart of the forest.

The Wielangta Forest has recently been the focus of a high-profile logging debate. It's the habitat of 34 endemic species of plant – 11 of which are threatened – as well as 47 bird species including the Tasmanian wedge-tailed eagle and the swift parrot, and rare fauna including the eastern barred bandicoot, the spotted tail quoll and the Wielangta stag beetle. Despite this, it's largely unprotected and vulnerable to logging. Since 2005, when logging began in Wielangta, Senator Bob Brown has been fighting a court case to prevent the forest's destruction. This was successful until, in November 2007, a court decision removed the moratorium. At the time of research, the decision lay with the High Court, and the future of the Wielangta forests still hung in the balance. You can read more about the case at Bob Brown's website www.on-trial.info.

Walks in the forest include the 20-minute stroll through beautiful rainforest at **Sandspit Forest Reserve**, where there's also a picnic area, and a 90-minute return hike called the **Wielangta Walk**, which follows the river valley. There's also the **Three Thumbs Lookout**, 6km from Orford, where a (rougher) side road leads up to a high point, giving wonderful views of Maria Island. The two-hour return walk to the open, rocky summit of the highest 'thumb' rewards you with even better panoramas of the coast.

There are no bus services along this road. If you've driven from Orford, you'll reach a give-way sign at the southern end of the forest road – turn right and head past nearby Kellevie to reach the turn-off to either Buckland or Copping. Some cyclists consider the road too steep and rough to be enjoyable, but if you're used to gravel and hills, you should breeze it.

Island's soaring Fossil Cliffs. Passengers can be dropped on the island after the tour.

Sleeping & Eating

Triabunna Cabin & Caravan Park (☎ 6257 3575; www.mariagateway.com; 4 Vicary St; unpowered/powerd sites \$16/18.20, on-site vans \$44-54, cabins \$77-110) This small, cheek-by-jowl compound opposite the sports fields has all the usual caravan park facilities.

Spring Bay Hotel (☎ 6257 3115; 1 Charles St; s/d \$40/70) This pub is often filled with salty characters from the local fishing fleet – a bit rough around the edges, but welcoming. Rooms have shared facilities and a continental breakfast is included. Reasonable pub food is served nightly except Sunday.

Tandara Motor Inn (☎ 6257 3333; Tasman Hwy; d \$125, extra person \$10) Recently refurbished, this is now a decent place to stay with light, bright, well-decorated motel rooms, each with an attractive en suite. There's a pool when water restrictions allow.

Girraween Gardens & Tearooms (☎ 6257 3458; 4 Henry St; light meals \$4-12; ☎ 9.30am-4pm daily, closed Sat Jun-Aug) Girraween has a rigorously manicured garden and tearooms serving sand-

wiches, cake and light restaurant meals. A good place for afternoon tea if you're early for the ferry.

Getting There & Away

Tassielink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) coaches stop at the visitors centre. The 1¼-hour trip from Hobart costs \$18.20.

MARIA ISLAND NATIONAL PARK

Beautiful Maria (pronounced *ma-rye-ah*) Island, with its high craggy peaks, rises up like a fairytale castle across the waters of Mercury Passage, which separates it from the mainland. It's a peaceful haven, blissfully free of cars, that's a top spot for walking, wildlife-watching, biking and camping – and soaking in the peace.

Maria has some gorgeous natural scenery: soaring cliffs, fern-draped forests, blond-white beaches and azure seas. Forester kangaroos, wombats and wallabies wander about, and there's bountiful bird life, including the grey-plumed Cape Barren goose. Below the water there's also lots to see, with good snorkelling and diving in the clear, shallow waters of the Marine Reserve.

Maria became a national park, as much for its history as for its natural assets, in 1972 and at time of research, the island was also being assessed for Unesco World Heritage status.

History

Maria Island has a rich history that has seen various incarnations as a penal settlement, an industrial site and a farming community. The island was originally home to the Oyster Bay tribe of Tasmanian Aborigines, who called it Toarra Marra Monah. They lived primarily on shellfish, and made the crossing to the mainland in bark canoes.

Dutch explorer Abel Tasman landed here in 1642, and named the island in honour of Anthony Van Diemen's wife. The island became Tasmania's second penal settlement in 1821 and, for the next 10 years, the convicts were set to work to develop the island. Many of the surviving buildings such as Commissariat Store (1825) and the Penitentiary (1830) survive from this era. By the early 1830s Maria Island was becoming too expensive to be viable, so the convicts were shipped back to settlements on the Tasmanian mainland. For the next 10 years, the island was the domain of whalers, farmers and smugglers.

In 1842 Darlington reopened as a probation station and a road was built to a second settlement at Long Point (Point Lesueur). At one stage there were some 600 convicts on Maria, but when convict transportation to Tasmania slowed, convict numbers dwindled and Darlington was again closed in 1850. The whole island was leased for grazing the following year.

Then, with the arrival of enterprising Italian businessman Diego Bernacchi in 1884, Maria Island began a new era of development. Darlington's buildings were renovated and structures like the Coffee Palace added (1888). The town of 260 was renamed San Diego. Over the next 40 years a cement factory and wine and silk-growing industries were developed. This industrial era ended with the advent of the Great Depression in the 1940s and the island reverted to farming.

In the 1960s the government bought the properties on the island, and reintroduced animals like Forester kangaroos, Bennetts wallabies and Cape Barren geese that had been wiped out since European occupation. In 1972 the island became a national park.

Information

The visitors centre in Triabunna (p167) can answer any questions you have about the island, or you can inform yourself ahead of time with online information at www.parks.tas.gov.au/natparks/maria.

There's a **visitors reception area** in the old Commissariat Store, just a short walk from where the ferry docks, where you can get detailed information on walks, biking routes, wildlife, camping and the island's history. There's a **public telephone** near the ranger station in Darlington.

The island has no shops, so you need to bring all your food and gear with you. Bring clothing for cool, wet weather as well as hot sun: a hat and sunscreen are essential. A current national park pass is also required (p64).

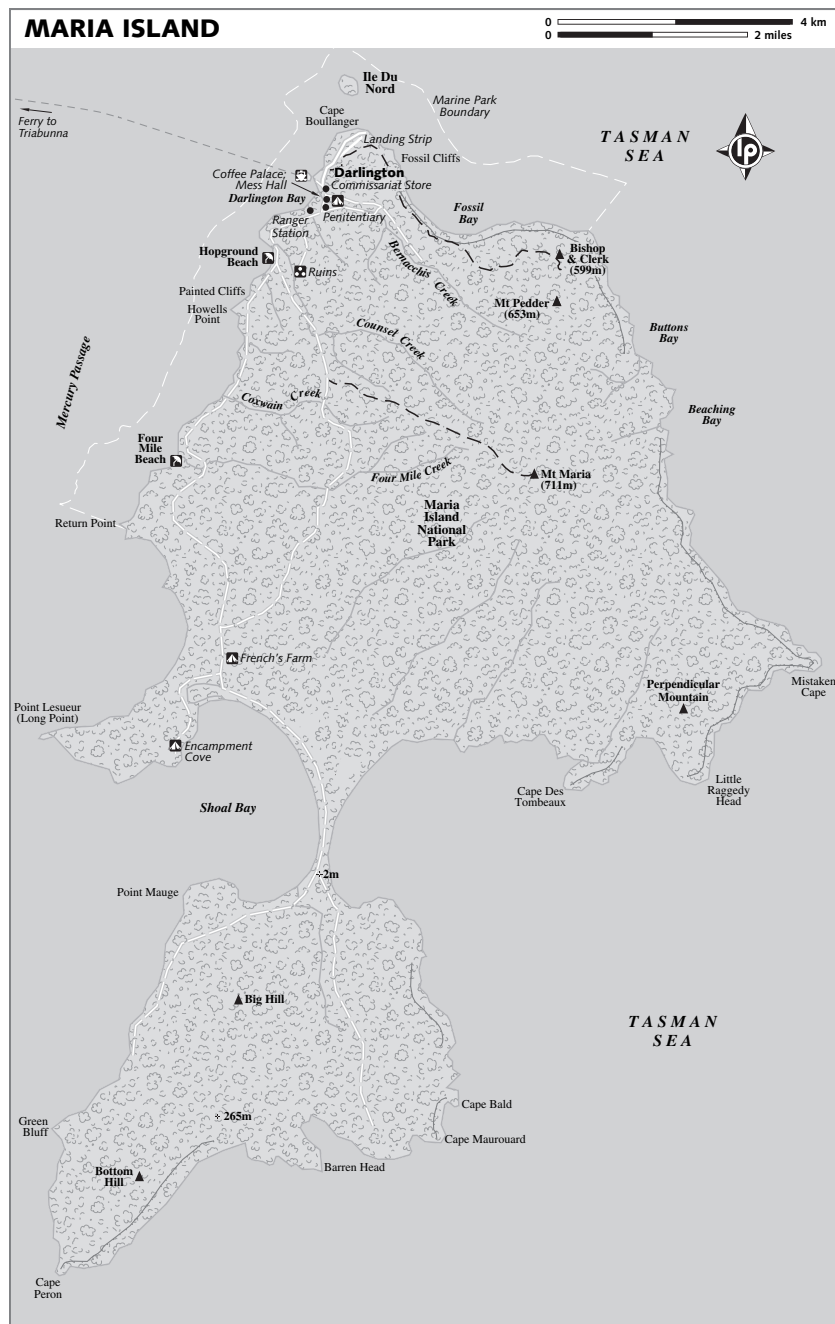
Sights & Activities

The township of **Darlington** is the place to start your time on the island. There's **The Penitentiary**, which once housed convicts (and is now bunkhouse-style accommodation – see p171) as well as the restored **Coffee Palace**, and **Mess Hall**.

From Darlington it's a short walk (under two hours return) to the **Painted Cliffs** at the southern end of Hopground Beach. Here the sculpted sandstone cliffs are stained with iron oxide in a kaleidoscope of colours. It's best to visit at low tide – ask when that is in the Commissariat Store.

On the northern tip of the island there's circuit walk of 1½ hours to **Cape Boullanger**, the **Fossil Cliffs** and the old brickworks. If you have more time (allow four hours return from Darlington), climb **Bishop & Clerk** (599m) and marvel at the soaring bird's-eye views while you eat your packed lunch on the exposed, rocky slabs at the top. **Mt Maria** (711m) is the island's highest point. It's a seven-hour return hike through the eucalypt forests from Darlington. The summit gives good views over the isthmus that connects the island's northern and southern parts.

The seas around Maria, from Return Point to Bishop & Clerk, are a designated marine reserve, so there's no fishing allowed, including in the Darlington area. The reserve encompasses the giant kelp forests and caves around **Fossil Bay**, and has excellent scuba diving and snorkelling. Two good spots for snorkelling are under the ferry pier and at the Painted Cliffs. You'll need a wetsuit if you plan to stay in long.



Bird-watchers will love the abundant bird life on Maria Island. If you're lucky, you might spot the endangered forty-spotted pardalote.

You can hire bicycles on Maria Island for \$15 per day. Ask at the **ranger station** (☎ 6257 1420), where the ranger on duty will also be able to give you advice about where to cycle.

Tours

If like the idea of a multiday bush walk but don't much fancy a soggy tent and noodles from the campstove at dinner, then the **Maria Island Walk** (☎ 6227 8800; www.mariaislandwalk.com.au) might be your thing. Between October and the end of April, this four-day walk takes a gentle, guided wander through the most lovely parts of Maria. The first two nights are spent under canvas at secluded bush camps, and the third at the historic former home of Diego Bernacchi in Darlington. There's amazing food and fine Tasmanian wines to go with it. The walk costs \$1950, including all meals, accommodation and transport from Hobart.

Sleeping

There are **camping grounds** (d/f \$12/15, extra person \$5) on the island at Darlington, French's Farm and Encampment Cove. Bookings aren't required. Gas BBQs are provided close to the Darlington site only, so camping stoves are essential. Fires are allowed in designated fireplaces but are often banned over summer. French's Farm and Encampment Cove have limited tank water supplies.

Penitentiary Accommodation Units (☎ 6257 1420; d \$15, d \$40, 6-bed r \$80) The brick rooms of the penitentiary that once housed the island's convicts are now a good, simple place to stay – if you don't mind the ghosts. There are six bunks in each room, a table and a wood heater, and shared bathrooms with coin-operated hot showers nearby. There's no linen provided, and no electricity. The Penitentiary is often fully booked over summer, so plan well ahead.

Getting There & Away

The Maria Island ferry service has undergone some upheavals recently, and at the time of research there was just one small-scale ferry operating, though others were applying for the licence. If you're planning to visit, Triabunna visitors centre (p167) will give you the most up-to-date information.

The **Seawings** (☎ 6257 1163; www.seawingscotours.com.au; adults/kids/bikes \$50/\$25/\$10) ferry service to

Maria Island departs the docks at Triabunna at 9am and 3.15pm daily in summer. The return ferry departs Maria 9.30am at 4pm daily in summer. The service may be limited to about four days a week in winter – call ahead to check which days. The trip takes 20 to 25 minutes and is weather-dependent. Arrive 20 minutes before scheduled departure times. Seawings will also drop passengers on Maria after one of its eco-tours (p167).

It is also possible to land on the grass airstrip near Darlington by light plane, chartered from Coles Bay, Hobart or Launceston.

SWANSEA

☎ 03 / pop 580

Swansea has thrived on Tasmania's growth in tourism, and this once-sleepy seaside town is now an energetic and attractive holiday haven, with plenty to see and do, good beaches and some wonderful wineries and restaurants on its doorstep.

Swansea lies on the western shore of beautiful Great Oyster Bay, and has sweeping views of the Freycinet Peninsula over often-calm blue waters. Founded in 1820 and originally known as Great Swanport, Swansea also has some historic streetscapes and an absorbing museum.

There are plenty of lovely places to stay here, with a particular abundance of good B&Bs, as well as some less-inspiring motel blocks where the best feature is the view of the water. Swansea can get busy in summer. That means accommodation prices rise and vacancies are hard to come by, so as with the rest of the east coast in summer, ensure you book ahead. Prices generally fall in winter.

Information

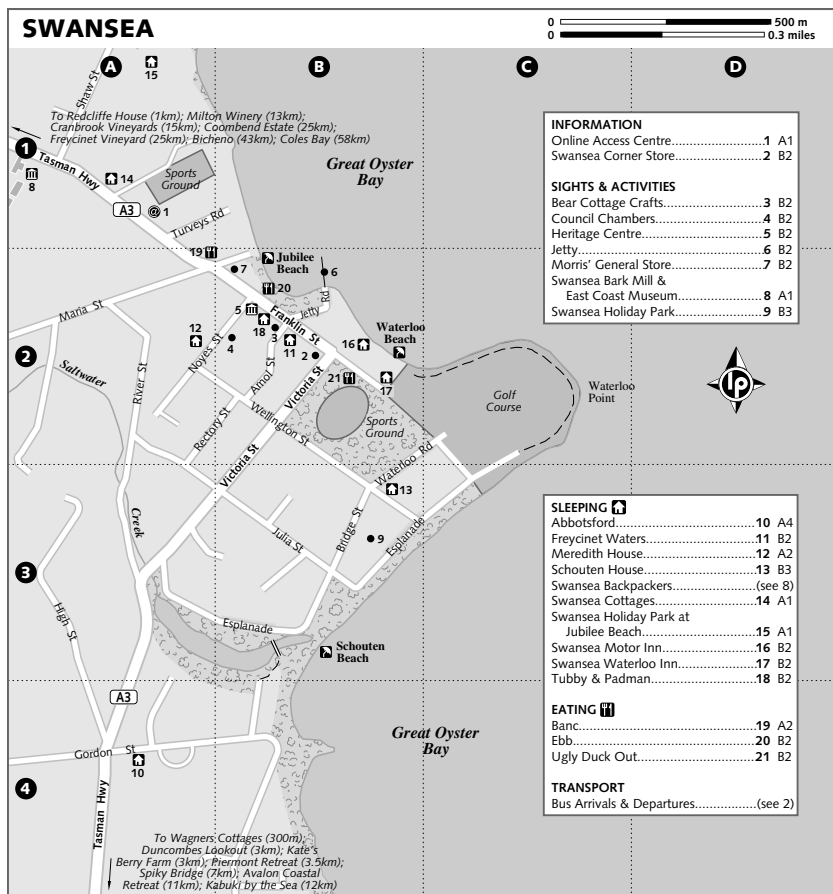
Online Access Centre (☎ 6257 8806; Franklin St; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Tue & Thu-Fri, 10am-5pm Wed, 10am-1pm Sat & Sun) Adjacent to the town's primary school.
Swansea Corner Store (cnr Victoria & Franklin Sts; ☎ 7am-7pm) Has a multcard ATM.

Swansea has been having troubles with the quality of its water supply for some time, and all water must be boiled before drinking. Most accommodation supplies preboiled drinking water for guests.

Sights & Activities

HISTORIC BUILDINGS

The best of Swansea's historic buildings are easily seen on foot accompanied by a *Swansea*



Heritage Walk booklet (\$2.50) available from **Bear Cottage Crafts** (☎ 6257 8091; 18 Franklin St). Most of the best buildings are along the waterfront on Franklin Street. **Morris' General Store** (13 Franklin St), built in 1838, is a Swansea landmark, as are the attractive 1860 **council chambers** and imposing Meredith House (now a hotel; see p174), both up on Noyes Street.

There's also a surprisingly good display at the **Heritage Centre** (☎ 6257 8215; Franklin St; adult/child \$3/1; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) located in the old Swansea Schoolhouse. Here there's an eclectic collection of Aboriginal artefacts, convict paraphernalia, war memorabilia – and an enormous billiard table that can be hired for games (\$2 per person) outside of museum hours.

SWANSEA BARK MILL & EAST COAST MUSEUM

This complex on the edge of Swansea has a **museum** (☎ 6257 8382; 96 Tasman Hwy; adult/child/family \$10/6/23; ☎ 9am-5pm) explaining the processing of black wattle bark to obtain tannin for tanning leathers. The mill was one of the few industries that operated in Swansea through the Great Depression, and it helped keep the town alive. There's also an interesting display on the early exploration by French explorers of Tasmania's east coast. At the time of research, a bakery/café was in the pipeline.

OTHER ATTRACTIONS

When Swansea's old wooden jetty began to succumb to rot, ingenious townspeople came

up with a solution: a new **jetty** (Jetty Rd) made of milk bottles. The jetty, a great spot for fishing or simply admiring the views, used over a million compressed plastic milk bottles – and is guaranteed to outlast its predecessor.

Duncombes Lookout, 3km south of town, provides panoramic views of Oyster Bay and the Freycinet Peninsula. A further 4km south is **Spiky Bridge**, which was built by convicts in 1843 using thousands of local fieldstones but no mortar. The nearby beach and headland are popular for picnics and fishing.

In town, a 30- to 50-minute stroll between Waterloo Beach and the Esplanade passes through the rookeries of mutton birds (short-tailed shearwaters) that burrow here in the breeding season from September to April. The adults return at dusk in a flurry of wings from feeding at sea. The route is known as the **Loon.tite.ter.mair.re.le.hoin.er Walk**, named for the Tasmanian Aboriginal tribe that lived in this area.

If you prefer to cruise around on two wheels, you can hire mountain bikes from **Swansea Holiday Park** (☎ 6257 8148; per half/full day \$15/25) at Schouten Beach.

WINE TASTING & WINERIES

On the Tasman Hwy north of Swansea there are several wineries, most with free tastings and cellar door sales. **Milton Winery** (☎ 6257 8298; off Tasman Hwy; ☎ 10am-5pm), 13km north of Swansea, has tastings in an attractive pavilion overlooking a lake and the vineyards. Try the sparkling pinot noir chardonnay.

Spring Vale Vineyards (☎ 6257 8208; www.springvalewines.com; 130 Spring Vale Rd; ☎ 10am-4pm) is at Cranbrook, about 15km north of town and has a wonderful pinot gris, which is one of Tassie's hottest wines. Nearby is **Craigie Knowe Vineyard** (☎ 6257 8252; 80 Glen Gala Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm), which produces outstanding cabernet sauvignon and pinot noir. Opening hours can vary, so call first. About 10km further north, just past the Great Oyster Bay lookout, an enormous expanse of vines heralds the domain of Gunns Ltd, controversial timber and woodchip conglomerate (see p47) and the owners of **Coombend Estate** (☎ 6257 8881; off Tasman Hwy; ☎ 9am-5pm). There are tastings and cellar door sales here, but you are better to continue up the same driveway to the acclaimed **Freycinet Vineyard** (☎ 6257 8574; off Tasman Hwy; ☎ 9am-5pm) where winemaker Claudio Radenti makes an exquisite Radenti sparkling. The tasting room also serves great coffee.

Sleeping BUDGET

Swansea Holiday Park at Jubilee Beach (☎ 6257 8177; www.swansea-holiday.com.au; 27 Shaw St; unpowered/powered sites for two \$24/28, cabins d \$90-160; ☎) This neat, family-friendly park is close to the shallow, protected waters of Jubilee Beach and has 180-degree water views. The best camping sites are beachside. Some self-contained cabins have a spa and ocean vistas.

Swansea Backpackers (☎ 6257 8650; www.swansea-backpackers.com.au; 96 Tasman Highway dm/d \$34/75; ☎) This top-notch new backpackers at the Swansea Bark Mill is sure to be a crowd pleaser. It has smart and spacious public areas and a shiny stainless steel kitchen. The rooms surround a shady deck and are clean and peaceful.

MIDRANGE

Guesthouses & B&Bs

Freycinet Waters (☎ 6257 8080; www.freycinetwaters.com.au; 16 Franklin St; s \$120-140, d \$130-160) This brightly decorated B&B has friendly owners and a real seaside ambience. There's a sunny breakfast room with water views, and also a brand-new self-contained apartment, with its own deck and entrance.

our pick **Abbotsford** (☎ 6257 9092; www.swansea-bedandbreakfast.com.au; 50 Gordon St, d \$130-170) This delightful stone house has been lovingly refurbished by its Scottish owners, and is one of the nicest places to stay in Swansea. There are three double bedrooms with a shared bathroom and guest lounge, so it's perfectly suited to couples or families travelling together. The owners put up the No Vacancy sign as soon as one of the rooms is occupied, however, so if you're first in, you'll have the whole house to yourself. Breakfasts are divine.

Redcliffe House (☎ 6257 8557; www.redcliffehouse.com.au; 13569 Tasman Hwy; s \$130, d \$145-160) This restored heritage farmhouse, built in 1835, is just north of town. The rooms are beautifully decorated and a guest lounge is equipped with books and a decanter of port. There's also an excellent DVD library. For those that prefer complete privacy, there's a self-contained apartment with breakfast provisions supplied.

Schouten House (☎ 6257 8564; www.schoutenhouse.com.au; 1 Waterloo Rd; d \$150-180) This convict-built brick-and-sandstone mansion was presented as a wedding gift to a Swansea couple in 1844. Its huge rooms, with their original timbers, now house this atmospheric, antique-filled

B&B. You can't go past the pancakes with bacon and maple syrup for breakfast.

Motels

Swansea Motor Inn (☎ 6257 8102; www.swanseamotorinn.com; 1c Franklin St; d \$68-160) This salmon-coloured motel has a range of rooms – the standard level of which are, frankly, hospital-like. If you're after something more swanky, ask for room 20, which has a spa and good water views.

Swansea Waterloo Inn (☎ 6257 8577; 1a Franklin St; d \$77-150) You can't miss this red-brick block on the beach side as the road bends through Swansea. It's aesthetically uninspiring, but some of the rooms do have good water views. Check out the pub/restaurant for curiosity value: there's a log truck Hall of Fame behind the bar.

Self-Contained Apartments & Cottages

Swansea Cottages (☎ 6257 8328; www.swansaecottages.com.au; 43 Franklin St; d \$140-240, extra adult/child \$40/30) These neat and appealing cottages are right by Jubilee Beach. Fully equipped and air-conditioned, they sleep up to seven – some have spas. There's a DVD library, and fishing rods and bikes are available for hire, as well as racquets and balls for the tennis court next door.

Wagners Cottages (☎ 6257 8494; www.wagnerscottages.com.au; Tasman Highway; d \$180-270) Wagners has five lovely stone cottages set in lush gardens a couple of kilometres south of town. Each has a deep spa bath, and there are open fires, fresh flowers, a movie library and complimentary port. Breakfasts feature fresh eggs from Wagners' hens and just-out-of-the-oven bread.

TOP END

Meredith House (☎ 6257 8119; www.meredith-house.com.au; 15 Noyes St; d \$130-220) Meredith House, built in 1853, now houses one of Swansea's nicest places to stay. Furnished with antiques, some of the pretty B&B suites look over Great Oyster Bay, and others the burgeoning green gardens. There's also a row of modern studio spa apartments adjacent.

Kabuki by the Sea (☎ 6257 8588; www.kabukibythesea.com.au; Tasman Hwy; d \$180, extra person \$40) This is as close as you can get to a traditional Japanese *ryokan* in Tasmania. Set on cliff-tops 12km south of Swansea with endless sea views, this is a row of self-contained apartments adorned with 'a touch of Japan'. Even more of an attraction is the excellent Japanese restaurant (opposite).

Tubby and Padman (☎ 6257 890; www.tubbyandpadman.com.au; 20 Franklin St; cottage ste \$165-185, units \$155-165, extra person \$35; ☎) This snug Georgian cottage – that takes its name from its original owners – was once Swansea's department store, and is now a classy B&B. The thoughtfully decorated suites have spas and log fires, and come with breakfast provisions. There are also two stylish self-contained apartments that sleep four to five guests.

Piermont Retreat (☎ 6257 8131; www.piermont.com.au; Tasman Hwy; d \$245-295) Piermont is just the spot for a romantic hideaway holiday or just a great place to relax to the sound of the waves. Set in gardens and bushland close to the shores of Great Oyster Bay are 12 stone cottages, with fireplaces and spas, close to a secluded beach. There's a pool, a tennis court, bikes for hire and a new restaurant that serves plenty of fresh east-coast seafood nightly (except Wednesday).

Avalon Coastal Retreat (☎ 1300 36 11 36, www.avaloncoastalretreat.com.au; Tasman Highway; house sleeping 6 adults \$770) This is the kind of place that makes you feel you're in a movie about the lives of the rich and famous. All glass and steel and ocean views that go on forever, this is possibly the most luxurious beach house in Tasmania. The kitchen and cellar are well stocked, and the beach is nearby – though you'll hardly want to leave the house.

Eating

The east coast is a new top of the list for Tasmanian epicures, and a few establishments in Swansea are highlights. Be sure to make bookings in summer.

Kate's Berry Farm (☎ 6257 8428; Addison St off Tasman Highway; teas & desserts \$4-9; ☎ 10am-4.30pm) Sit under the wisteria-draped pergola and absorb sweeping views over Great Oyster Bay while you indulge in Kate's berries. She does them in a range of ice creams, jams and sauces, and in handmade berry chocolate. The Belgian waffles with berry compote are to die for.

Ugly Duck Out (☎ 6257 8850; 2 Franklin St; meals \$8-26; ☎ 8.30am-9pm) This casual diner was named as a play on Swansea's Swan Inn, which burned down some years ago. The *Sydney Morning Herald* has proclaimed it the home of the best fish and chips in Tasmania – they also do a great salads, gourmet burgers, curries and pastas. The whole menu is available as takeaway.

our pick Banc (☎ 6257 8896; cnr Franklin & Maria Sts; lunch mains \$8-26, dinner mains \$26-40; ☎ dinner Wed-Mon, brunch & lunch Sun & Mon, closed Tue & Wed Jun-Aug) The

Banc is becoming known as one of Tasmania's top restaurants. Using the freshest east-coast produce, it serves up wonderful dishes like venison steaks, slow-roasted suckling pig, and abalone confit with fresh lime mirin. Lazy late breakfasts are served Sunday and Monday.

Kabuki by the Sea (☎ 6257 8588; Tasman Hwy; mains \$22-26; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Tue-Sat Dec-Apr, Fri & Sat May-Nov) The smiling Japanese clientele here is a good sign that Kabuki is serving its Japanese food just right. Try the marinated *una ju* (eel) or the baby east-coast abalone. Incongruously, good Devonshire teas are also available.

Ebb (☎ 6257 8088; 11 Franklin St; dinner mains \$27.50-32.50; ☎ 11.30am-3pm & 6pm-late, closed Mon) This new restaurant right on the waterfront serves fresh, light lunches and a sophisticated dinner menu that's big on fresh east-coast seafood. One house speciality is oysters done seven ways: perfect with a good local chardonnay.

Getting There & Away

Buses arrive at and depart from the Swansea Corner Store, on the corner of Franklin and Victoria Sts. The fare for the 2¼-hour **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) bus journey to/from Hobart is \$25.90; the **Redline Coaches** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) fare from Hobart/Launceston is \$28/29.60. See p166 for more about bus routes.

COLES BAY & FREYCINET NATIONAL PARK

☎ 03 / pop 150

The township of Coles Bay is set on a beautiful sweep of sand and clear sea at the foot of the dramatic orange granite peaks of the Hazards. It's a laid-back, salt-tousled holiday town with plenty of accommodation (though book well ahead in summer), good places to eat and some fun, active tour options. The gorgeous Freycinet National Park is the reason that most people come here. It's a wild domain of sugar-white beaches and waters that are Bombay Sapphire clear. In the coastal heathland and forests, wildflowers and native birds and animals are abundant. The park encompasses the whole of the peninsula south of Coles Bay, including Schouten Island to the south, and a stretch of coastal bushland around Friendly Beaches further north.

History

The first inhabitants of the Coles Bay area and the Freycinet Peninsula were the Oyster Bay

Tribe of Tasmanian Aborigines. Their diet was rich in the abundant shellfish of the bay, and there are shell middens as evidence of this all over the peninsula.

Dutch explorer Abel Tasman visited in 1642 and named Schouten Island. In 1802, Baudin's French expedition explored and named the Freycinet Peninsula, as well as having encounters with Aborigines. When other expeditions noted the presence of seals, sealers arrived from Sydney and quickly plundered them.

A whale 'fishery' was established at Parsons Cove by Coles Bay in 1824 – the area is still known as the Fisheries. Here southern right whales that were hunted on their migration down the peninsula were processed; the sparkling waters and blond sands soon became polluted with rotting whale remains. The station was closed by the 1840s, when most of the whales had gone.

Coles Bay was named after Silas Cole, who arrived in the 1830s and burnt shells from Aboriginal middens to produce lime for the mortar that was used in many of Swansea's early buildings. Since the early field naturalists' expeditions here, in the late 1800s, the bay has been a popular holiday spot. In the 1920s the first holiday homes were built and the area has been a much-loved holiday idyll ever since.

In the early days of the colony both the Freycinet Peninsula and Schouten Island were farmed, but in 1906 both became game reserves. In 1916 Freycinet shared the honours with Mt Field in becoming Tasmania's first national park; Schouten Island was added in 1977. Friendly Beaches (north of Coles Bay) was added to the park in 1992.

Information

Coles Bay lies 31km from the turn-off on the Tasman Hwy and is the gateway to the Freycinet National Park. When travelling this stretch between dusk and dawn, it's essential to take it slowly: there's plenty of wildlife around and you don't want to be flattening any of it in your hurry to get to the park.

Park information is available from the helpful **Freycinet visitors centre** (☎ 6256 7000; freycinet@parks.tas.gov.au; ☎ 8am-5pm May-Oct, 8am-6pm Nov-Apr) at the park entrance just past Coles Bay. Standard national park fees apply (see p64) to enter the park. From late December to February, inquire here about free ranger-led activities such as walks, talks and slide shows.

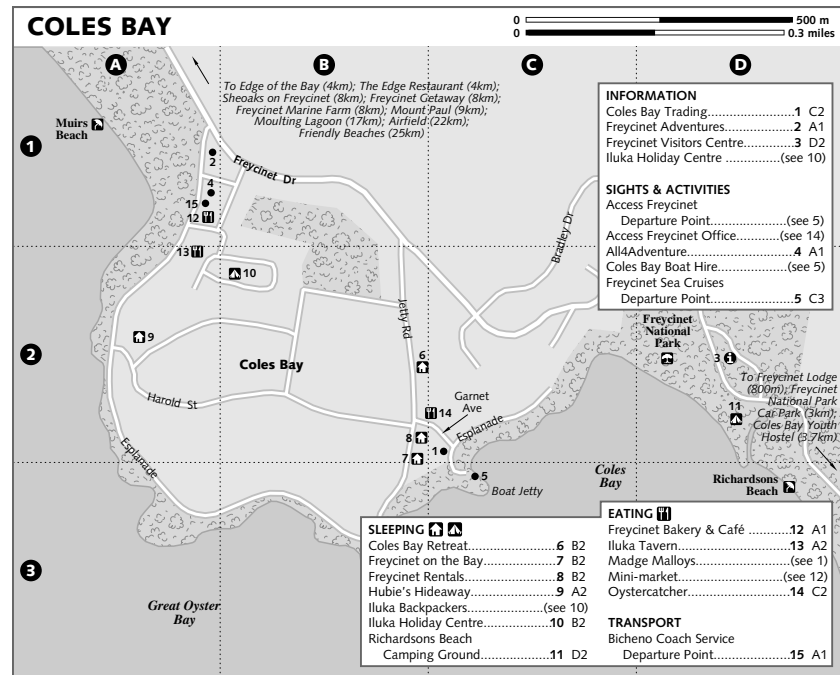


Park information is also online at www.parks.tas.gov.au/natparks/freycinet.

Town maps and general tourist information are available from most stores in Coles Bay. **Coles Bay Trading** (☎ 6257 0109; 1 Garnet Ave; ☎ 8am-6pm Mar-Nov, 7am-7pm Dec-Feb) is the general store, newsagency and post office. It also has an ATM and sells petrol, as well as essentials

like fishing rods, tackle and bait, and buckets and spades. There's a takeaway too, and at time of research it was being renovated to include a café-restaurant.

The **Iluka Holiday Centre** (☎ 6257 0115; Coles Bay Esplanade), opposite Muirs Beach, has a takeaway food outlet, pub and petrol, plus a **mini-market** (☎ 8am-6.30pm) that also houses



an ATM. Internet access is available at the Freycinet Bakery & Café (p180).

Freycinet Adventures (☎ 6257 0500; www.freycinetadventures.com; 2 Freycinet Dr) hires out essential camping equipment and also runs a water taxi service that can deliver you to Hazards Beach, Cooks Beach and Schouten Island.

An online guide to the area can be found at www.freycinetcolesbay.com.

Sights & Activities

BEACHES & LAGOONS

The beach that most people come here to see is the heart-stoppingly perfect curve of **Wineglass Bay**, with its white sands and ice-blue waters. A dip in the clear (but decidedly cool) sea here necessitates a walk of about three hours return on steep tracks with sublime views.

There's also gorgeous, tiny **Honeymoon Bay** – a short walk from Freycinet Lodge – most beautiful at sunset when the orange rocks and east coast lichen are lit a deep amber.

Friendly Beaches is a magnificent ocean beach, signposted from the main road about 26km north of Coles Bay. A five-minute walk leads from the car park to a vantage point for

uninterrupted views of tumbling surf and an endless stretch of sand.

Moulting Lagoon, the estuary of the Swan River (which the road to Coles Bay from the turn-off skirts around), is a large expanse of shallow water that's an important waterbird breeding ground. It's home to black swans, wild ducks and oyster farming.

BUSHWALKING

If you want to get to the heart of Freycinet National Park – and to quieter spots away from the Wineglass Bay – admiring crowds – then the way to do this is on foot. It's about 7km from Coles Bay to the walking tracks car park. Drive or bus here, or follow the shoreline via Honeymoon Bay (1½ hours one way).

The Wineglass Bay walk is deservedly one of the most popular in Tasmania. You can make the steep climb to the **Wineglass Bay Lookout** to get superb views over the bay and peninsula, a 1½-hour return walk, but if you want to hear the squeak of those white sands beneath your feet, you're in for a longer walk. The steep descent from the lookout to the bay takes at least another 30 minutes, making the

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out-and-back trip from the car park some 2½ hours. Alternatively, you can make this walk a circuit by continuing from Wineglass Bay across the shady Isthmus Track to Hazards Beach and back along the coast (about four hours return). Another superb walk, if you're fit, is the trek to the spectacular views from the summit of **Mt Amos** (three hours return).

The **Freycinet Peninsula Circuit** is a two-day, 31km trek around the peninsula, from Hazards Beach south to Cooks Beach (there's an optional extension to beautiful Bryans Beach at the south end of the circuit), then across the peninsula over a heathland plateau before descending to the water at Wineglass Bay. The trek can also be done in the opposite direction, avoiding the very steep ascent from Wineglass Bay with your heavy pack. Details of the walk can be found in Lonely Planet's *Walking in Australia*.

For those with less time, inclination and/or mobility, worthwhile shorter walks include beautiful granite-framed **Sleepy Bay** (10 minutes), just off the Cape Tourville Rd, and the easy boardwalk track at **Cape Tourville**, a 20-minute circuit that affords inspiring panoramas of the peninsula's eastern coastline and is suitable for some wheelchair-users and prams. You'll also see **Cape Tourville Lighthouse** and gaze towards the northeast coast of Tasmania. It's particularly spectacular at sunrise.

For all national park walks, remember to get a parks pass and, for longer walks, to sign in (and out) at the car park registration booth.

GUIDED WALKS

For those who prefer to experience their wilderness in more comfort, **Freycinet Experience** (☎ 6223 7565, 1800 506 003; www.freycinet.com.au) offers a four-day, fully catered traverse of the entire length of the peninsula. Walkers return each evening to the peacefully secluded Friendly Beaches Lodge to enjoy splendid meals, local wine and comfortable beds. The walk covers a total of 37km, with departures between November and May. It costs \$2075 per person.

FISHING

You can be taken on a charter to where the fish are by those in the know, or hire a tinny (aluminium dinghy) to get out onto the water independently. **Access Freycinet** (☎ 0408 146 833) offers inshore fishing charters (and walker

drop-offs on request). All tackle and bait is supplied, and your skipper will clean the fish.

For fishing trips under your own steam, **Coles Bay Boat Hire** (☎ 0419-255 604; Garnett Ave boat ramp, per 2-3-hr \$75/95) hires dinghies with outboards and all safety equipment. They also rent fishing equipment (\$10 for tackle box) separately and can advise on good land-based fishing spots. You can hire snorkelling equipment here too.

SEA-KAYAKING

Coles Bay is often sheltered from the wind and is a great spot for sea-kayaking. **Freycinet Adventures** (☎ 6257 0500; www.freycinetadventures.com.au; 2 Freycinet Dr) offers three-hour paddles (\$90 twice daily (morning and afternoon – times vary seasonally) that allow you to get a glimpse of the peninsula from the water. Alternatively, embark on a four-day expedition (\$990) down the whole length of the peninsula. All instruction, equipment and food are included.

CRUISES

Freycinet Sea Cruises (☎ 6257 0355; freycinetscruises.com) offers a four-hour cruise to Wineglass Bay (\$110) – including a champagne and oyster lunch – a three-hour cruise to Schouten Island (\$75) and a six-hour cruising and walking trip (\$170). You're likely to see dolphins, sea eagles, seals, penguins and perhaps even migrating whales in the right season. It's a superb way to experience the peninsula if you're not going to do so on foot.

ROCK CLIMBING & ABSEILING

There's some excellent rock climbing on the Freycinet Peninsula. Experienced climbers head to Whitewater Wall on the peninsula's eastern side for challenging climbs. With prior notice, **Freycinet Adventures** (☎ 6257 0500; www.freycinetadventures.com.au; 2 Freycinet Dr) can arrange some thrilling abseiling here. Half-day trips cost \$125 per person. Contact them in advance.

QUAD BIKING

You can get off the beaten track into parts of the national park few others access with **All4Adventure** (☎ 6257 0018; www.all4adventure.com.au; Coles Bay Esplanade) quad biking tours. Two-hour tours (with 30 minutes' training beforehand) depart daily at 9am, 1pm and 3.30pm and cost \$114. Half-day tours to Friendly Beaches and lovely Bluestone Bay depart at 8am and cost

WINEGLASS BAY

The hype surrounding Wineglass Bay is quite remarkable. You've no doubt seen the iconic images of this perfect arc with its stunning clear waters and pure white sand. It's also been voted one of the top 10 beaches in the world (by US-based magazine *Outside*). The images of Wineglass Bay are definitely reaching the public, and travellers no doubt visit Tasmania's east coast planning to see this magnificent beach for themselves – and yet somehow the reality of how the beach is accessed is not quite reaching the same audience!

So it bears repeating here: the return walk to the Wineglass Bay lookout takes one to 1½ hours and involves climbing about 600 steep steps each way. To frolic on the sand and/or swim in the bay's pristine waters involves walking for 2½ to three hours return, with the initial part of the walk following the same path as to the lookout. Don't despair if that sort of physical exertion is beyond you – other options for seeing the bay do exist. Take a scenic flight over it, or get right in amongst it by boat.

Interestingly, Freycinet National Park is now the second-most popular national park in Tasmania (after the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park, p289), and it receives close to 250,000 visitors annually. This has put pressure on the park's infrastructure, necessitating a large new paved car park at the head of the walking tracks. There's also been extensive work on the path to the lookout recently. Track workers haven't managed to smooth out the hill, but the path is much wider in parts than it was before – avoiding the tourist-jams that used to occur in peak season.

\$195. A driver's licence is essential. They also have ATV passenger vehicles, ideal for kids, for which prices are \$65 (two-hour tours) and \$105 (half-day tours.)

SCENIC FLIGHTS

Thirty-minute scenic flights over the peninsula are available for \$95 per person from **Freycinet Air** (☎ 6375 1694; www.freycinetair.com.au); longer flights as far afield as Maria Island are also on offer. The airfield is close to Friendly Beaches, signposted off the main road.

FREYCINET MARINE FARM

Just off the Coles Bay road is **Freycinet Marine Farm** (☎ 6257 0140; 1784 Coles Bay Rd; ☒ 9am–5pm daily Sep–May, 11am–3pm Mon–Fri Jun & Jul, closed Aug), which grows huge, succulent oysters in the tidal waters of Moulting Lagoon. They now have a fancy new sales room where you can try and buy their wares, including freshly shucked oysters, mussels and rock lobsters. There's a large deck where you can BYO wine and enjoy a seafood picnic.

Sleeping

Accommodation is at a premium at Christmas, in January and at Easter – and prices are higher. Book well ahead for these periods.

BUDGET

There are walkers' camping grounds at Wineglass Bay, Hazards Beach (two to three

hours' walk from car park), Cooks Beach (4½ hours) and Bryans Beach (5½ hours). Further north, there are two basic camp sites with pit toilets at Friendly Beaches. There are no camping fees here, but national park entry fees apply. The park is a fuel-stove-only area and campfires are not permitted. There's usually water in tanks at Cook's Beach, in Jimmy's Rivulet between Mount Graham and Cook's Beach, and at Laguna Creek behind Hazards Beach. Check water availability with a ranger before departing.

There's free bush camping outside the national park at the River & Rocks site at Moulting Lagoon. Drive 8km north of Coles Bay, turn left onto the unsealed River & Rocks Rd, then turn left at the T-junction. Bring your own water.

There are pretty beachside camping spots all along **Richardsons Beach** (☎ 6256 7000; fax 6256 7090; freycinet@parks.tas.gov.au; unpowered sites for two/family \$12/15, extra adult/child \$5/2.50, powered sites \$15/7, extra adult/child \$3.50/20). There are powered sites, toilets and running water – just yards from the beach. Camping here is deservedly popular, especially during the summer holiday period. Between 1 December and after Easter, allocation of sites is by a ballot system. Applications must be made on a form downloadable from the **national parks** (www.parks.tas.gov.au) website or by calling the **Freycinet visitors centre** (☎ 6256 7000), and must be submitted by 31 October. There's sometimes the odd tent spot left over, even during the peak season, so it's worth

calling to see if they can squeeze you in. Outside the ballot period, bookings can be made in advance for these sites at the visitors centre. National park entry fees apply.

Coles Bay Youth Hostel (dm \$12-15, r \$50-70, 2 person minimum booking) Right on the waterfront at Parson's Cove, this rustic, unstaffed hostel has two basic five-person cabins and a kitchen area with fridge and stove. There are pit toilets and only cold water on tap. Entire cabins can be rented for \$50 (\$70 for non-YHA members) via a ballot system from mid-December to mid-February and at Easter (call before mid-September to register for the summer ballot, and by mid-January for the Easter ballot). Book through Tasmania's **YHA head office** (Map p82; ☎ 6234 9617; yhatas@yhatas.org.au; 1st fl, 28 Criterion St, Hobart). Keys and bed linen are obtained from the Iluka Holiday Centre.

Iluka Holiday Centre (☎ 6257 0115, 1800 786 512; www.ilukaholidaycentre.com.au; Coles Bay Esplanade; unpowered/powered sites for 2 \$23/28, dm \$27, on-site vans \$65, cabins & units d \$95-160, additional adult/child \$20/15) Illuka is a big, friendly holiday park that's a favourite with local holiday makers, so book ahead. There's a shop, bakery and pub/bistro adjacent. Iluka Backpackers has six four-bed dorms (\$27 per person) and just one double (\$67), as well as a large kitchen. Discounts for YHA members.

MIDRANGE

Hubie's Hideaway (☎ 0419-255 604; 33 Coles Bay Esplanade; d \$120-160, extra adult/child \$25/15) At this cute timber cabin, close to the shops and bakery, you'll fall asleep to the sound of the sea. Sleeps up to seven.

Freycinet Rentals (☎ 6257 0320; www.freycinrentals.com; 5 Garnet Ave, Coles Bay) Freycinet Rentals has a range of good holiday cottages in Coles Bay. Prices vary from \$130 to \$170 in summer for two people (extra adult/child \$15/10), with price for doubles about \$20 lower in winter. Minimum stays apply for long weekends and Christmas holidays.

Coles Bay Retreat (☎ 0418-132 538, 8660 2446; 29 Jetty Rd; www.colesbayretreat.com; d unit/house \$130/240) A contemporary, well-appointed three-bedroom house with amazing views over the Hazards. There's also a one-bedroom cottage.

our pick Freycinet Getaway (☎ 0417-609 151; www.freycinetgetaway.com; s \$135-230) Freycinet Getaway has the funky Cove Beach Apartments (97 The Esplanade) and Azure Beach House at Swanwick – all fully self-contained and decorated in better-than-beach-house style.

TOP END

Sheoaks on Freycinet (☎ 6257 0049; www.sheoaks.com; 47 Oyster Bay Cr; B&B d \$165-180, cottage d \$150-200, extra person \$20) Thought B&Bs were all chintz and lace? Think again. Stylish Sheoaks is housed amid fine contemporary architecture, and has glorious views (inside and out). Great breakfasts (and packed lunches on request) will keep you fuelled throughout the day. Sheoaks also manages five nearby beach houses with the same panache.

Freycinet on the Bay (☎ 6257 0034, 0417-157 886; www.freycinetonthebay.com.au; 35 Jetty Rd; d \$200, extra person \$50) This older-style, wood-lined house sleeps up to eight. You can barbecue on the deck overlooking Richardsons Beach.

Edge of the Bay (☎ 6257 0102; www.edgeofthebay.com.au; 2308 Main Rd; ste d \$198-292, cottage d \$180-236, extra person \$24) This peaceful, small resort is right on the beach, 4km north of Coles Bay. It has stylishly decorated waterside suites, and cottages sleeping up to five. There are mountain bikes, dinghies and two artificial grass tennis courts for guests' use. There's also a good restaurant on site (see opposite).

Freycinet Lodge (☎ 6257 0101; www.freycinlodge.com.au; cabin d \$182-319, extra person \$55, 2-bedroom cabins \$214-384) Freycinet Lodge is in a gorgeous location right in the national park, and just steps from Richardsons Beach. It has smart cabins, some with enormous spas and enticing views, and several with disabled access. There are guided activities and two restaurants on site (see opposite). However, recent traveller feedback tells us this is not the beachside nirvana it once was: it's gone just a touch downmarket of late.

Mount Paul on Freycinet (☎ 6257 0300, 0408-504 414; www.mtpaul.com.au; d \$240-270) To really get away from it all at Freycinet, retreat up to Mount Paul, where two timber ecolodges offer wonderful panoramas of the peninsula and only the wildlife for neighbours. This is a magically peaceful spot – you'll want to stay for days.

Eating

Dining options in Coles Bay are somewhat limited; dinner bookings are advised for the restaurants.

Freycinet Bakery & Café (☎ 6257 0272; Shop 2, Coles Bay Esplanade; meals \$3-15, ☎ 8am-5pm; ☎) This bakery has fuelled many a Freycinet walking epic. Pick up hearty sandwiches here or enjoy a lazy all-day breakfast outside. They do good cakes and pastries, and a commendable curried scallop pie.

Oystercatcher (☎ 6257 0033; 6 Garnet Ave; meals \$6-15; ☎ lunch & dinner Nov-Apr) You can sit on the deck here, or grab a quick takeaway. They serve excellent fish and chips, wraps, salads and rolls.

Richardsons Bistro (☎ 6257 0101; Freycinet Lodge; mains \$18-24; ☎ from 10am daily, dinner Nov-Apr only) There's nothing fancy about this casual dining option at Freycinet Lodge, but it does good seaside dishes like crayfish, chips and salad, oysters lots of ways, and decent beer-battered fish. Grab a table on the deck and eat outside, drenched in the glorious view.

Iluka Tavern (☎ 6257 0429; Coles Bay Esplanade; mains \$18-29; ☎ lunch & dinner) This popular, friendly pub gets packed with tourists and locals. They offer excellent pub nosh: look past the ref 'n' beef and the ubiquitous chicken parmigiana and you'll find things like Thai green prawn curry and seafood linguine.

Bay (☎ 6257 0101; Freycinet Lodge; mains \$21-40; ☎ dinner) At night the Lodge puts on the Ritz with Freycinet's finest dining in the Bay restaurant. Forget beer batter: here the catch of the day might be coated in chermoula and served with caramelised pumpkin and cherry tomatoes. Try the magnificent seafood platter for two, with everything out of the bay. There's a good Tasmania-heavy wine list to boot. Bookings essential.

Edge (☎ 6257 0102; Edge of the Bay, 2308 Main Rd; mains \$23-31; ☎ dinner) Get to the Edge of the Bay resort early to enjoy the water views. The chefs serve up fresh east-coast produce and plenty of seafood. Try the lobster pasta, or stripy trumpeter with seafood risotto. There are also meaty options and vegetarians are catered for.

our pick Madge Malloys (☎ 6257 0399; 7 Garnet Ave, Coles Bay; mains \$28-33; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) At Madge's the menu depends on what Mother Nature provides to the fishing boat each day. That might mean steam-baked bastard trumpeter, wrasse with crab stuffing, or poached calamari that melts in the mouth. Bookings and hungry tummies essential.

Getting There & Away

Bicheno Coaches (☎ 6257 0293, 0419-570 293) runs buses between Bicheno, Coles Bay and the national park's walking tracks car park, connecting with east-coast Redline Coaches and Tassielink services at the Coles Bay turn-off. The Hobart-Coles Bay turn-off fare with Tassielink is \$30.80, and the Launceston-Coles Bay turn-off fare with Redline is \$36.20.

From May to November there are usually three Bicheno-Coles Bay services on weekdays and at least one Saturdays and Sundays. Extra services run, on demand, in peak season. The Bicheno-Coles Bay fare is \$11, and from Bicheno direct to the walking tracks it costs \$25. They will pick up for accommodation if requested. Buses depart Bicheno from the **Blue Edge Bakery** (55 Burgess St) and in Coles Bay from in front of the Iluka Tavern and shops.

Getting Around

It's almost 7km from Coles Bay to the national park walking tracks car park. **Bicheno Coaches** (☎ 6257 0293, 0419-570 293) does the trip three times each weekday and once on Saturday and Sunday; bookings are essential. The one-way/return cost from Coles Bay to the car park is \$5/9. Your park entry fee is in addition to this.

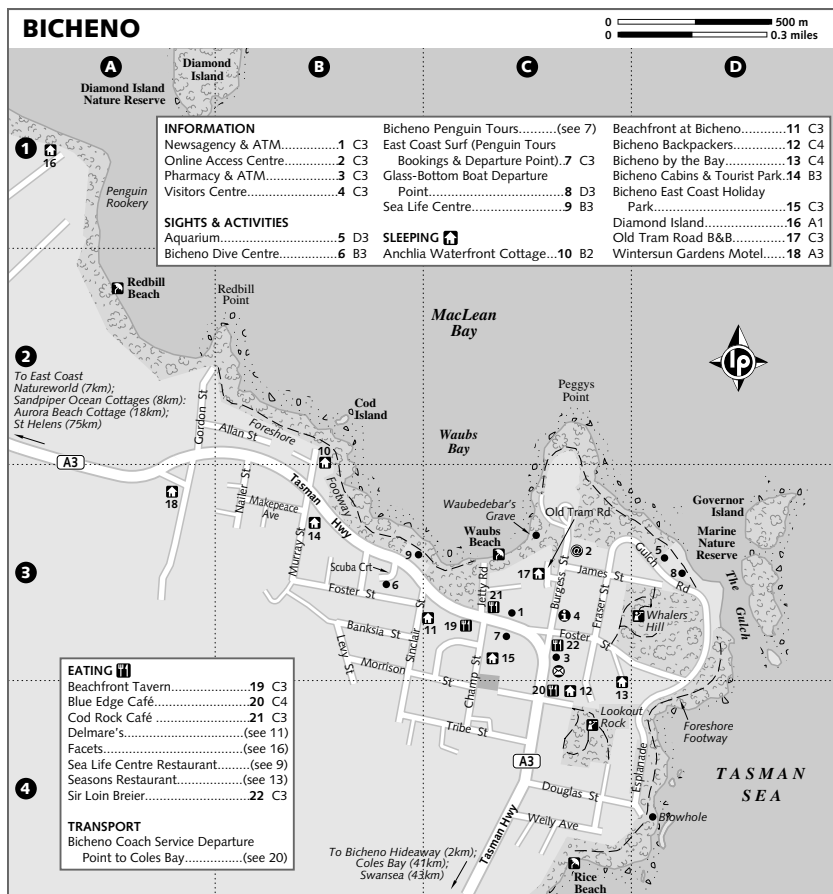
BICHENO

☎ 03 / pop 750

Bicheno is blessed with the kind of idyllic coastal scenery that was always going to make it a hit with seaside holiday makers. The Gulch, Bicheno's curvaceous natural harbour, is filled with water of the clearest blue, its foreshore is edged with granite and fine white beaches, and the whole town is fringed with the startling green of eucalypts under an often deep-blue sky. The fishing boats that shelter in the harbour are this town's mainstay – as are the tourists in the summer holiday season. The style here is more fish and chips (and buckets and spades) than upmarket Swansea for example, but it's still a hugely popular holiday spot. Book accommodation ahead if you intend to stay overnight here in summer.

History

European settlement began here when whalers and sealers made the Gulch their port as early as 1803. The town became known as Waubs Bay Harbour, after an Aboriginal woman, Waubedebbar (one of many who were kidnapped and enslaved by the sealers) rescued two drowning men when their boat was wrecked offshore. After her death in 1832 her body was buried here, and the settlement bore her name until the 1840s when its name was changed to honour James Ebenezzer Bicheno, once colonial secretary of Van Diemen's Land (and reportedly most famous for his girth).



In 1854, Bicheno became a coal-mining port, but mining fortunes here declined after the discovery of gold in Victoria on the mainland, so Bicheno evolved into a quiet fishing town, and eventually the seaside holiday spot it is today.

Information

There are multicaard ATMs outside the pharmacy on Burgess St (close to the post office), and by the newsagency on the town's main strip.

Bicheno visitors centre (☎ 6375 1500; 69 Burgess St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat, 11am-4pm Sun, winter hours vary, closed Sunday in winter) The helpful volunteer staff at this centre can assist with all the sights (and beds) in the area and can make bookings.

Online Access Centre (☎ 6375 1892; The Oval, Burgess St; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm Mon, 10am-2pm Tue-Thu, noon-4pm Fri) Behind the public loos at the oval.

Sights & Activities

WILDLIFE CENTRES

The **Sea Life Centre** (☎ 6375 1121; 1 Tasman Hwy; adult/child/family \$6.50/4/20; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a little aquarium that feels like it's stepped out of the 1970s, fish tanks and all. There are some interesting things on display – including all manner of sea-theme tack in the gift shop – but it's not as enthralling as the price would lead you to expect. The on-site restaurant, also specialising in sea creatures, is a better deal (see p185).

In an unassuming shed on the waterfront, there's a second **aquarium** (☎ 0418-300 620; Gulch

Rd; adult/child \$3/2; ☎ 10am-4pm). Here there are changing displays of sea creatures including seahorses, giant crabs and crayfish. There's also a touch tank – but little fingers will be kept well away from the crabs.

About 7km north of Bicheno is a place both kids and adults can enjoy. **East Coast Natureworld** (☎ 6375 1311; www.natureworld.com.au; adult/child/concession/family \$16.850/13.50/43; ☎ 9am-5pm) is a varied menagerie of native and non-native wildlife including Tasmanian devils, wallabies, quolls, snakes, wombats and enormous roos. There are devil feedings daily at 4pm, and a devil house where you can get up close to these creatures. Other animals are fed at 10am. The tea rooms serve Devonshire teas and the like.

WALKS

The 3km **Foreshore Footway** extends from Redbill Point to the **Blowhole**, right around the **Gulch** and wandering its length is the best way to see Bicheno's pretty coastline. When the seas are rolling in just right, huge columns of foamy seawater spurt spectacularly into the air through the granite rock formations at the Blowhole. Don't get too close: even on calm days you can be unexpectedly drenched. You can return along paths through the she-oaks at **Whalers Hill**, which has panoramic views over town. In whaling days, passing whales were spotted from here.

WATER SPORTS

Waubs Beach and Rice Beach are fairly safe ocean beaches for swimming on calm days. Redbill Point often has good surfing breaks: there's usually a **surf carnival** here in January. For surfboard, boogie board and kayak hire, talk to the friendly people at Bicheno Backpackers (right).

The clear waters off Bicheno are known for their excellent temperate water diving and **Bicheno Dive Centre** (☎ 6375 1138; www.bichenodive.com.au; 2 Scuba Court; ☎ 9am-5pm) organises underwater trips, mainly to dive sites in the Governor Island Marine Reserve. One-day charters including all equipment and one/two boat dives cost \$112/152. There is also budget accommodation in a basic self-contained unit available to divers (single \$30).

If you prefer to stay above water, there's a fun and informative 45-minute **glass-bottom tour** (☎ 6375 1294, 0407-812 217; adult/child \$15/5, children under 4 free) that can show you some of Bicheno's underwater wonders. Tours leave

from the Gulch at 10am, 1pm and 2pm in summer, weather and minimum numbers permitting (bookings advised).

And if you find the most interesting fish the one wriggling on the end of a fishing line, then **Go Fish** (☎ 6375 1581, 0419-750 757) can help you catch it. They take three-hour charters with all fishing gear included, costing from \$75 per person.

Tours

Bicheno is one of the top spots in Tassie to view penguins. **Bicheno Penguin Tours** (☎ 6375 1333; www.bichenopenguin.com.au; East Coast Surf; adult/child \$20/10) takes nightly tours at dusk as the birds are heading back to their burrows. The one-hour tour with an expert guide will take you as close to the little birds as you can get anywhere. This is a wonderful and pure nature experience: no grandstands or souvenirs. Departure times for the tours vary year-round, dependent on when dusk falls. Enquire at the East Coast Surf.

Cruising along through all those views on the back of a trike has long been *the* way to see Bicheno, but Bertrand Cadart, your charismatic French chauffeur at **Le Frog Trike Rides** (☎ 0407 511 454), is now the busy Freycinet Coast mayor. If you book well in advance, however, you may just be able to call him away from his civic duties to give you a spin. Price on application.

Sleeping

Bicheno has scores of holiday homes and motel rooms, but lacks the more sophisticated B&B options that are available in Swansea.

BUDGET

Bicheno Backpackers (☎ 6375 1651; www.bichenobackpackers.com; 11 Morrison St; dm \$23-25, d \$60-70) This friendly backpackers stretches across two mural-painted buildings. The double rooms are quite plush (the sea view one's the pick) and there's a good communal kitchen. It's the fun equipment for rent here that's the highlight though. They have bikes, kayaks, surfboards, boogie boards, fishing rods and tennis gear. There's also luggage storage, and the friendly owners can help with bookings.

Bicheno East Coast Holiday Park (☎ 6375 1999; www.bichenoholidaypark.com.au; 4 Champ St; unpowered/power sites \$20/25, d \$85, cabin d \$98-108, extra adult \$15-20, extra child \$13-15) This neat, friendly park with plenty of green grass and shady tent spots is

centrally located and has a BBQ, camp kitchen, laundry facilities and kids' playground. They also do showers for non-stayers for \$2. Cabins sleep up to seven.

MIDRANGE

Bicheno Cabins & Tourist Park (☎ 6375 1117, 1800 789 075; www.bichenocabins.com.au; 30 Tasman Hwy; d \$70-139, extra person \$9-18; 📶) This place eschews the greenery of a standard park for concrete and gravel, but its range of cabins are new and mod-con-filled (including wireless internet) and can sleep up to six. Note that there are no camping sites here.

Wintersun Gardens Motel (☎ 6375 1225; www.wintersunbicheno.com.au; 35 Gordon St; d \$104-122; 📶) This motel just on the edge of town has an attractively old-fashioned feel with rose-filled gardens, clipped box hedges and hanging baskets. The spic-and-span units are modest but well equipped – opt for the newer Room 11 if it's available.

Beachfront at Bicheno (☎ 6375 1111; www.beachfrontbicheno.com.au; Tasman Hwy; d \$115-145; 📶) This recently renovated property has several grades of rooms, but the ones that look out over the pool and the lawns are the pick. There's a playground and a BBQ area, as well as a pub with a bistro (open for lunch and dinner) and a good à la carte restaurant (dinner only) with views over the bay (see right).

Sandpiper Ocean Cottages (☎ 6375 1122; www.sandpiper.com.au; Tasman Hwy; d \$120-155, extra adult/child \$30/20) These three secluded, wood-lined cottages are 8km north of Bicheno on Denison Beach. Each sleeps five and has a full kitchen, laundry, BBQ facilities and a big deck from which to admire the views.

Anchlia Waterfront Cottage (☎ 6375 1005; www.anchliawaterfront.com.au; 2 Murray St; d \$130-200, extra person \$20) Anchlia is one large house, divided into two separate self-contained cottages, set among the gum trees right by the sea. Cod Rock Terrace is a timber-lined two-storey, two-bedroom home; Penguin Nook is a spacious one-bedroom unit. You can sometimes watch penguins play in the garden.

Bicheno Hideaway (☎ 6375 1312; www.bichenohideaway.com; 179 Harveys Farm Rd; d \$135-180, extra person \$25) These architecturally interesting chalets are set in wildlife-rich bushland, close to the sea and with glorious views. The recently done-up Boathouse has great, quirky décor and even four-poster beds. There are options to suit just a couple, or up to 6 people. There's a

minimum stay of two to three nights, depending on the cottage. Books and fishing gear can be borrowed.

Old Tram Road B&B (☎ 6375 1298; www.oldtramroad.com.au; 3 Old Tram Rd; d \$150-160) This is old-world B&B is set in pretty gardens from which a private track leads to Waubs Beach. There are just two rooms, both with sparkling en suites. The gourmet breakfasts should keep you going for a whole day of beachcombing.

Bicheno by the Bay (☎ 6375 1171; www.bicheno.bythebay.com.au; cnr Foster & Fraser Sts; 1-bedroom units \$140-175, 2-bedroom \$170-210; 📶) There are 20 cabins in a bushland setting here, some of which sleep up to six people. The sea-view cabins are best. Facilities include an outdoor heated pool, a tennis court, communal fire pit and kids' pirate boat playground. The on-site restaurant, Seasons, is probably the best in Bicheno. See opposite).

TOP END

Diamond Island (☎ 6375 0100; www.diamondisland.com.au; 69 Tasman Hwy; d \$190-300, extra person \$25; 📶) About 2km north of Bicheno, this complex of 26 sun-soaked apartments surrounded by green lawns has wonderful views north along the coast. Recently renovated and stylishly furnished with luxury linens, spa baths, DVD players and the like, the resort has a solar-heated pool and private beach access. You can wander over to Diamond Island when the tide is low. There's also a good restaurant (opposite) on site.

our pick Aurora Beach Cottage (☎ 6375 1774; www.aurorabeachcottage.com.au; 207 Champ St, Seymour via Bicheno; d from \$230) For somewhere totally secluded and away from it all, gorgeous Aurora Beach Cottage has to be the pick. This timber and stone cottage is 18km north of Bicheno in a beautifully quiet spot, right on the beach. You can sit out on the deck and watch the waves, or stroll on the sand for miles. Breakfast provisions on request. A top spot for peace-lovers.

Eating

If you're visiting outside the peak summer season, your evening dining options are restricted, with some places closing or considerably reducing their opening hours. Ask at your accommodation for recommendations.

our pick Sir Loin Breier (☎ 6375 1182; 57 Burgess St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Sat) This superior butcher's

shop has an amazing range of deli items, and you can stock up here for picnics. The shop burgeons with cooked local crayfish, smoked trout, oysters, gourmet pies, cheeses and smoked quail sausages. Divine.

Blue Edge Café (☎ 6375 1972; 55 Burgess St; meals \$3-10; ☎ 7am-5.30pm daily summer; 📶) Blue Edge does good sandwiches, wraps, pies, cakes and salads, and you can enjoy the aromas of the freshly made breads, all baked on the premises. The Tasmanian smoked salmon pie is heavenly.

Cod Rock Café (☎ 6375 1340; 45 Foster St; meals \$7.50-18.50; ☎ 9am-8.30pm) Pumps out lots of local seafood in various takeaway guises, with fish and chips cooked to order, and fresh crayfish in season. It also does burgers for those suffering seafood-overdose.

Sea Life Centre Restaurant (☎ 6375 1121; 1 Tasman Hwy; meals \$13-30; ☎ lunch & dinner, closed August) The best thing about the restaurant here are the views over the startlingly blue waters of the Gulch. The menu offers a variety of sea morsels (choose your crayfish – fresh from the tanks – natural, char-grilled or mornay) as well as steaks, and even a good vegetarian lasagne. The seafood chowder is said to be worth travelling the world for.

Beachfront at Bicheno (☎ 6375 1111; Tasman Hwy) This crowd-pleasing complex has two eateries: Delmare's (mains \$16 to \$30; open for dinner October to April), offering Mediterranean fare such as pizza, pasta, seafood and salads; and the laid-back Beachfront Tavern (mains \$14 to \$25; open for lunch and dinner), which serves standard pub fare – lots of grilled meats, plus fish of the day, schnitzels and salads.

Seasons Restaurant (☎ 6375 1521; Bicheno by the Bay, cnr Foster & Fraser Sts; ☎ dinner) This little restaurant in an appealing wooden cabin at the Bicheno by the Bay resort has an open kitchen and unpretentious service. You can sit on the deck and order from a great menu that, predictably, has plenty of marine fare. If you're all seafooled out, you could try the finger-licking honey-and-soy-coated pork cutlets.

Facets (☎ 6375 0100; 69 Tasman Hwy; mains \$22-28; ☎ lunch Dec-March, dinner nightly) This breezy restaurant at Diamond Island has a smart, nautical feel and serves up equally sophisticated fare. Have an aperitif on the deck outside so you can absorb the views, then come in for a menu that's a feast of fresh seafood. The herb-crustured Tasmanian trevalla is a highlight. Bookings advised.

Getting There & Away

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) and **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) serve the town. Tassielink's trip from Hobart costs \$31.70. The Redline fare from Launceston is \$36.90.

Bicheno Coach Service (☎ 6257 0293, 0419-570 293) runs between Bicheno and Coles Bay, departing from Blue Edge Café (left). The fare is \$11/20 one way/return to Coles Bay, and \$13/25 to the national park walking tracks car park.

DOUGLAS-APSLEY NATIONAL PARK

This stretch of intact dry eucalypt forest is the kind of environment that existed over much of the east coast before European settlement. The area was declared a national park in 1989 after a public campaign expressed concern over woodchipping of local forests.

Douglas-Apsley is often overlooked, but it's a wonderful park, cut through at one end by a river gorge that has deep, inviting swimming holes, and plenty to explore. There are rocky peaks, waterfalls and abundant bird and animal life – and best of all, you won't encounter the midsummer hordes that you do at Freycinet.

Access to the park is by gravel roads. To reach the southern end, turn west off the highway 4km north of Bicheno and follow the signposted road for 7km to the car park. A basic camping ground with a pit toilet is provided, and you can throw yourself into the **Apsley Waterhole** for refreshment. To access the northern end, at **Thompsons Marshes**, turn west off the highway 24km north of Bicheno onto the rough E Rd. This is a private road, so obey any signs as you follow it to the car park and boom gate at the park border (4WD is recommended for the final section). You won't find suitable places to camp near this car park.

National park entry fees apply (p64). Open fires are not permitted here from October to April, when cooking is only allowed on fuel stoves.

Bushwalking

There's an easy 10-minute stroll along a wheelchair-standard track leading to the **Apsley Lookout**, where you can get a great view over the river. A three- to four-hour return walk leads to **Apsley Gorge**.

At the park's northern end is the walk to **Heritage and Leeaberra Falls**, which takes five

to seven hours return. There's camping near the falls.

For experienced walkers, the major walk is the three-day **Leaberra Track**. The walk should be done from north to south to prevent the spread of the *Phytophthora* plant disease present in the south. There can be little adequate drinking water on this walk, so you may need to carry your own. Check with Parks & Wildlife before you undertake it. Water from the Apsley River also needs to be boiled for three minutes before drinking it.

ST MARYS

☎ 03 / pop 800

St Marys is a peaceful little town in the Mt Nicholas range, surrounded by forests and cattle farms. Visit for the quiet, small-town atmosphere and the craggy heights around town, which you can climb for breathtaking views over the area.

e.ScApe Tasmanian Wilderness Café & Gallery (☎ 6372 2444; Main Rd) has information leaflets and can give walking advice.

The top of **South Sister** (832m), towering over Germantown Rd, 6km north of town, is a 10-minute walk from the car park. To get to **St Patricks Head** (683m) turn down Irish Town Rd, just east of town. This long, steep 90-minute (one-way) climb with some cables and a ladder is a true challenge, but the top is a spectacular vantage point for views right along the coast.

Sleeping & Eating

St Marys Seaview Farm (☎ 6372 2341; www.seaviewfarm.com.au; German Town Rd; dm with linen \$30, d units \$75) Yes, 'Seaview' is right: the coastal panoramas from here are unbelievable. This beef and blueberry farm is a quiet hilltop retreat – the kind of place you'll want to stop and stay for a while. You'll find Seaview Farm at the end of a dirt track 8km from St Marys – Germantown Rd opposite St Marys Hotel. Bring all your own food.

St Marys Hotel (☎ 6372 2181; Main Rd; s/d \$40/70) There's basic accommodation upstairs at this corner pub. They also do good dinners in the restaurant (\$10 to \$25.50) nightly, including a great local venison pie with native peppercorn chutney.

our pick **Addlestone House** (☎ 6372 2783; addlestone@bigpond.com; 19 Gray Rd; d \$100-120; ☑) This immaculate B&B is as good as they get. The rooms are beautifully decorated, there's a cosy

guest lounge, and the hosts are charming. Highly recommended, and the top place to stay in these parts.

Purple Possum Wholefoods (☎ 6372 2655; 5 Storey St; light meals \$4.95-9.50; ☎ 9am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat) An unexpected find in a little country town, this place has wonderful homemade soups, vegetarian wraps, fabulous coffee and cakes to die for. You can't go past the rhubarb cake.

Happy Belly Deli (☎ 6372 2044; 54 Main St; meals \$5-15; ☎ 11am-6pm Tue-Sun) This new deli in the old butcher's shop does fab delicatessen items for your picnics, as well as café lunches and early dinners. It uses lots of local produce and has the most amazing sourdough breads that alone are worth visiting for.

Mt Elephant Pancake Barn (☎ 6372 2263; Mt Elephant Pass; savoury pancakes \$14.90-19.90, sweet pancakes \$7.90-9.90; ☎ 8am-6pm) This place, 9km south of town off the highway to Bicheno, is a bit of an institution, but it may just be a tad overrated and over-priced. Cash payment only.

Getting There & Away

By bus, St Marys is best accessed from Launceston, St Helens or Bicheno. **Redline Coaches** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) runs a daily service (except Saturday) between Launceston and St Helens that calls at St Marys (buses from Hobart connect with this service at Conara on the Midlands Hwy). The fare for the 1¼-hour journey from Launceston is \$23.40; from St Helens it costs \$5.90 and takes 30 to 40 minutes.

On weekdays you can also catch a lift on the postal run with **Broadby's** (☎ 6376 3488) between St Helens and St Marys, departing the Mobil service station in St Helens around 7.30am, and leaving St Marys for the return journey at 8.20am from outside the post office. The fare is \$5 each way. Ring to confirm.

WARNING

Cyclists riding Elephant Pass must be careful. The road is steep, narrow and winding, and it's difficult for vehicles to negotiate their way around bicycles.

SCAMANDER & BEAUMARIS

☎ 03 / pop 990 (combined)

Low-key Scamander and Beaumaris probably aren't much of an attraction in themselves, but they do have beautiful, long white-sand beaches where the surf rolls in and you feel like you can wander forever. There are good

DETOUR: FINGAL VALLEY

To get off the main east coast tourist route, you can head west from St Marys on the A4 and drive through beautiful, rolling country to Fingal, Mathinna and the Evercreech Forest Reserve.

Sleepy **Fingal**, 21km west of St Marys, was one of the larger agricultural settlements from the early days of the colony and has many fine 19th-century buildings in the main street. It holds the quirky annual **Fingal Valley Festival** in early March, which includes World Roof Bolting and World Coal Shovelling Championships.

For amazing tree-scapes, visit **Evercreech Forest Reserve**, 34km north of Fingal, near Mathinna. A 20-minute circuit walk through blackwood and myrtle takes you to the White Knights, a group of the world's tallest white gums (*Eucalyptus viminalis*); the loftiest branches reach 91m. You can also visit **Mathinna Falls** (follow signs from the Mathinna junction on the B43), a spectacular 80m-high, four-tier waterfall. There's an easy 30-minute return stroll to the base.

The 1844 **Fingal Hotel** (☎ 6374 2121; 4 Talbot St; s with/without bathroom \$50/40, d with/without bathroom \$70/60) has good, no-frills rooms and serves lunch and dinner daily. Or stay in the colonial B&B at **Mayfield Manor** (☎ 6374 2285; www.mayfieldmanor.com.au; d \$75-125), set in gorgeous cottage gardens near the centre of town. There are spa suites and a self-contained cottage. There's camping at the Griffith Camping Area (signposted off the C423 just after you turn off for Mathinna Falls).

surfing spots around Four Mile Creek. Fishers can toss in a line for bream from the old bridge over the Scamander River, or try catching trout further upstream. Shelley Point, just north of town, has rock pools to explore and shells to collect.

Sleeping & Eating

Scamander Tourist Park (☎ 6372 5121; Scamander Ave; unpowered/powerd sites d \$20/25 on-site vans \$50, cabins \$85, extra person \$10) There are shady sites at this simple park and it's close to the beach. Pets are allowed and kids under five are free.

Carmens Inn (☎ 6372 5160; 4 Pringle St; d \$77, extra adult/child \$22/11) Opt for newly renovated unit number 1 here if you can. Other rooms are spotless but outdated. There's a wheelchair-friendly unit, and the owners are super-helpful.

Pelican Sands (☎ 6372 5231; www.pelicansands.com.au; 157 Scamander Ave; dm \$30, unit d/f \$100/180; ☑) If you want to stay on the water-

front, you can't get closer to the beach than this. Some units have been recently renovated and are top-notch. There's a dorm for backpackers too.

Scamander Beach Resort Hotel (☎ 6372 5255; www.scamanderbeach.com.au; Tasman Hwy; d \$110; ☑) This large hotel doesn't look too appealing from the outside, but the rooms are decent – most have great sea views. There's also the new Asian-influenced Spice Restaurant on site (mains \$20 to \$25; open for dinner) and the pub here does lunches (mains \$18 to \$22.50).

Eureka Farm (☎ 6372 5500; 89 Upper Scamander Rd; breakfast & light meals \$7.50-12; ☎ 8am-5pm Oct-Jun) A couple of kilometres south of Scamander is a sign for this fruit-lover's paradise, and it's worth the short detour. Try a smoked salmon omelette for breakfast, or get stuck into the all-day fruit wonders: berry crepes, the fruitiest ice creams, smoothies, summer puddings or the amazing choc-raspberry pavlova.

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