

Launceston & Around

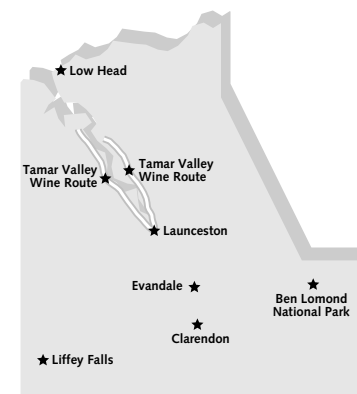


If you wanted to create the perfect pocket-sized city, you'd probably start by making it small enough to stroll around. You might add agreeable old architecture, interspersed with parks, and you'd probably place it somewhere near the water. Downtown you'd give it art galleries, a great museum, plenty of enticing places to shop and, of course, some excellent eateries. Finally you might arrange some gentle countryside around it. If you did all that, you might have just created Launceston. The city really is a bit of a gem; it has shed its former stolid, country-bumpkin air and is now surprisingly artsy and sophisticated. It's still got a relaxed, rural sort of feel – rush hour lasts barely 10 minutes – and it's only 10 minutes out into the country. And remarkable Cataract Gorge brings the wilds into the heart of town. Midweek you may find few signs of a rollicking nightlife, but you can hang out in the cool cafés and restaurants on Charles St, get your museum fix at the fabulous Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery, or romantically wander the waterside boardwalks of the Seaport at dusk.

The vines of the Tamar Valley are a wine-bibber's Valhalla: the tastings and cellar doors will keep you merry. You'll want to take in the reed-fringed banks of the gorgeous Tamar River and the wide horizons bounded by craggy Ben Lomond National Park to the east. There's lots of the past to absorb too: historic towns like Evandale; Clarendon and Woolmers homesteads; and the lighthouses and maritime instalments of George Town and Low Head.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Finding the wild within the city at Launceston's magnificent **Cataract Gorge** (p202)
- Swooshing down the slopes at **Ben Lomond National Park** (p226)
- Strolling the 'Paris end' of **Launceston's Charles St** (p210) and settling in at one of its hip cafés for a latte
- Quaffing some fine wines and stocking up at the cellar doors in the **Tamar Valley Vineyards** (p213)
- Feeling like you've stepped onto the set of *Gone with the Wind* as you admire the neo-classical stately home at **Clarendon** (p225)
- Watching the world's tiniest penguins emerge from the sea at **Low Head** (p221)
- Walking through the myrtle and sassafras rainforest to exquisite, multi-tiered **Liffey Falls** (p223)
- Cheering on the riders as they career dangerously around town at Evandale's **National Penny Farthing Championships** (p225)



LAUNCESTON

☎ 03 / pop 71,000

When you visit Launceston, you'll want to do so with your walking shoes on. This is a city to stroll around – from the green spaces of the city's parks, to the wilds of Cataract Gorge, to the streets of the city centre lined with superb architecture. If you've got a few days, you'll want to sample some of its great restaurants and cafés, visit its museums, and perhaps take a cruise on the Tamar River to see the city and surrounds from the water. Be sure to take it slow here, though. When in Rome...

HISTORY

Bass and Flinders were the first Europeans to sight Launceston's Tamar River when they sailed in here on their 1798 voyage of discovery. The first settlement was established in 1804, when the British, intent on beating the French in claiming this island, built a military post at what's today George Town. Not long after, an expedition scouted south and found the present-day site of Launceston, naming it for the English seaside town in Cornwall – although this version came to be pronounced *Lon-ses-ton*. Early Launceston was both a port and a military headquarters. By 1827 it already had a population of 2000, and was shipping wool and wheat from the surrounding districts. By the 1850s the town was Tasmania's second major centre and was proclaimed a municipality. In 1871 tin was discovered at Mt Bischoff, which further cemented Launceston's fortunes as a trading hub and a decade later it opened its own stock exchange. In the 20th century it has been an important service town for the rich agricultural region that surrounds it.

ORIENTATION

The city grid forms around the Brisbane St Pedestrian Mall, which runs between Charles and St John Sts. Flanking the old seaport on the Tamar are a string of contemporary river-front eateries and a resort 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

Bookshops

Angus & Robertson (Map p204; ☎ 6334 0811; 80-82 St John St) A popular bookery.

Birchalls (Map p204; ☎ 6331 3011; 118-120 Brisbane St) Considered Australia's oldest bookshop (c 1844).

Internet Access

Cyber King Internet Lounge (Map p204; ☎ 6334 2802; 113 George St; per min 15c, per hr \$5; ☎ 8.30am-7.30pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-6.30pm Sat & Sun)

Medical Services

Launceston General Hospital (Map p203; ☎ 6348 7111; 287-289 Charles St)

St Vincent's Hospital (Map p204; ☎ 6332 4999; 5 Frederick St)

Money

ATMs are installed at most banks in the city centre, which are mainly on St John St or Brisbane St near the Mall.

Post

Main post office (Map p204; ☎ 13 13 18; 111 John St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-1pm Sat)

Tourist Information

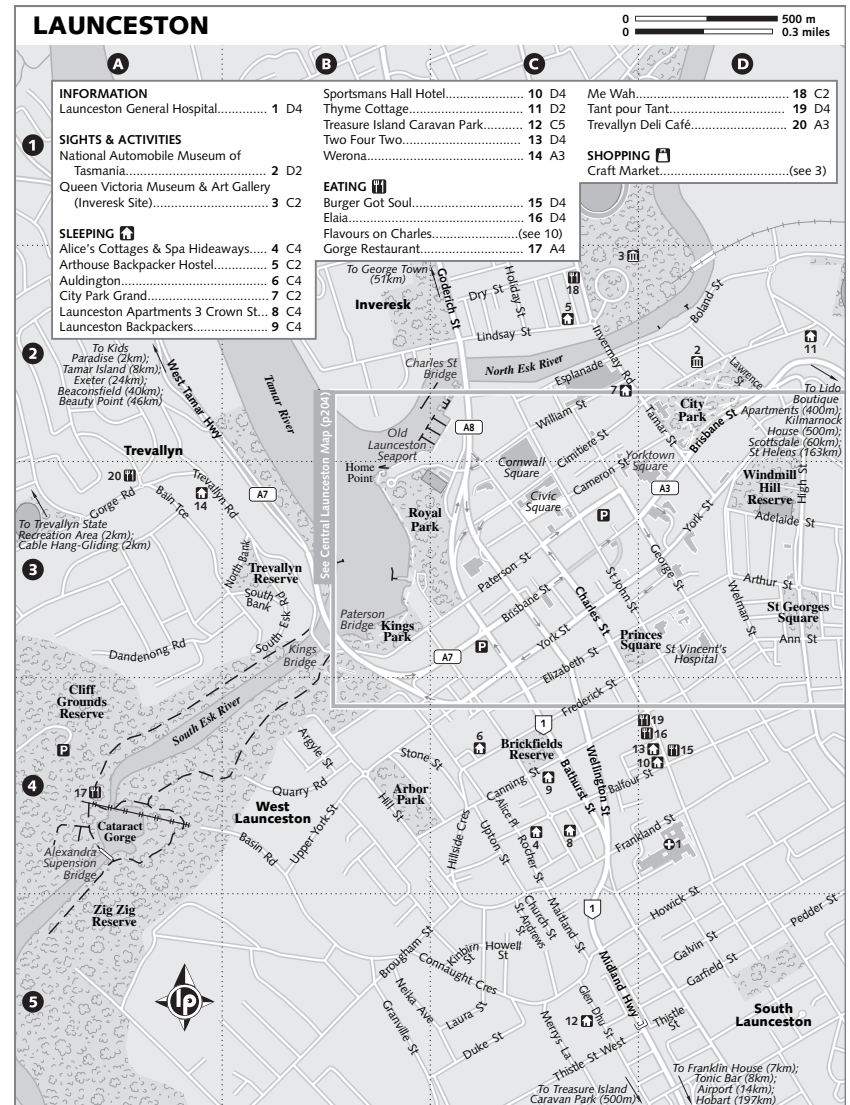
Visitors centre (Map p204; ☎ 1800 651 827, 6336 3133; www.tvtasmania.com.au, cnr St John & Cimitiere Sts; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, 9am-noon Sun & public holidays) The centre houses racks of pamphlets and handles statewide accommodation, tour and transport bookings.

SIGHTS

Cataract Gorge

Ten minutes' wander west of the city centre, edging the residential suburb of Trevallyn, is the magnificent **Cataract Gorge** (Map p203; www.launcestoncatractgorge.com.au; ☎ 9am-dusk). It's amazing to have such a wild area cut right into the core of the city: the bushland, cliffs and tumbling waters of the South Esk River here really feel a million miles away from town.

Two walking tracks straddle the gorge, leading from Kings Bridge up to the Cliff Grounds Reserve and First Basin, where there's an outdoor **swimming pool** (admission free; ☎ Nov-Mar), picnic spots and fine dining at the **Gorge Restaurant** (☎ 6331 3330; meals \$18-32; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner Tue-Sat) with sociable peacocks loitering outside. There's also a **kiosk** serving snacks and afternoon teas. Trails lead from here up to the Cataract and Eagle Eyrie Lookouts. The gorge walk takes about 30 minutes; the northern trail is the easier, while the southern Zig Zag Track has some steep climbs as it passes along the cliff tops. The whole scene is impressively



floodlit at night. You can also access First Basin from the main car park by following the signs from York St to Hillside Crescent, Brougham St, then Basin Rd. The **Basin Café** (☎ 6331 5222; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner, reduced hr in winter) has wide views over the river and greenery from fold-back windows and is just the spot for a lazy, late weekend breakfast.

At First Basin, the world's longest single-span **chairlift** (☎ 6331 5915; adult/child one-way \$10/7, return \$12/8; ☎ 9am-dusk) makes the 10-minute crossing over the parkland and river (you can board the chairlift at either end). Just upstream is the Alexandra Suspension Bridge. Another walking track (45 minutes one way) leads further up the gorge to Second Basin



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Cyber King.....	3 D2	
Main Post Office.....	4 D3	
Old Post Office.....	5 C2	
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and further still to Duck Reach, the earliest municipal hydroelectric power station in Australia (established in 1895).

Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery

There are major changes on the cards at the wonderful **Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery's** two sites (☎ 6323 3777; www.qvmag.tas.gov.au; admission free; 🕒 10am-5pm) in the remodelled **Inveresk railyards** (Map p203; 2 Invermay Rd) and at **Royal Park** (Map p204; 2 Wellington St). Previously, both sites have housed both art and museum collections, but at time of research, that was about to be turned on its head. Royal Park was due to close in mid-2008 for major renovations and reopen in 2010 housing exclusively fine and decorative arts – including the collection from Inveresk, which will be transferred here. The Inveresk site will take on a more natural-sciences and history focus and will be the new home of the **Planetarium**, previously at Royal Park. All this means that there will be a period from mid-2008 until 2010 when Launceston's much-loved museums will be in flux.

In the meantime you'll still be able to see aspects of the major collections on display (however, one of the museum's favourite treasures, the Chinese Joss House – see p190 –

will be closed during renovations.) Ask at the visitors centre and at the museum's Inveresk site for information on progress and expect knock-out new displays when the whole change is complete.

Boag's Brewery

The ubiquitous Boag's beer (preferred by most northern Tasmanians – southerners are loyal to Hobart's Cascade) has been brewed on William St since 1881. You can see this alchemy in action on a tour from the irresistibly named **Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers** (Map p204; ☎ 6332 6300; www.boags.com.au; 39 William St; 🕒 tours at 10am, 11am & 2pm Mon-Thu, 10am, 11am & 1pm Fri) Tours range from one hour (adult/child \$18/14) to 90 minutes (\$25/22) and take in the brewery and a tasting (with soft drinks for kids). The on-site museum also sheds some light on brewing history.

Historic Buildings

Launceston has a fascinating architectural heritage and, as it was built over a more extended period than some of the other towns in Tasmania, has a diversity of building styles. Some of the private homes here are simply beautiful: wander the hillsides of Trevallyn to sticky-beak.

LAUNCESTON & AROUND FOR CHILDREN

- Squealing with delight at City Park's **Japanese macaques** (right)
- Floating through the air on the **Cataract Gorge chairlift** (p203)
- Burning energy with hours of creative play at **Kids Paradise** (opposite)
- Being entranced by the weird and wonderful critters at **Seahorse World** (p217)
- Getting outdoor-energetic at the activity centre at **Tamar Valley Resort** (p214)

Notable public edifices include **Macquarie House** (Map p204) on Civic Sq, built in 1830 as a warehouse but later used as a military barracks and office, and the **Town Hall** (Map p204), erected in 1864 in Victorian Italianate style. Opposite is the **old post office** (Map p204; Cameron St) with its unique round clock tower.

One corner of City Park is the site of **Albert Hall** (Map p204), erected in 1891 for a trade fair and housing the unusual Brindley water-powered organ.

The National Trust–classified **Old Umbrella Shop** (Map p204; ☎ 6331 9248; 60 George St; ☹ 9am–5pm Mon–Fri, to noon Sat) is a rare example of a largely intact early-20th-century store. It sells all kinds of period knick-knacks, including, of course, an amazingly large range of brollies.

Launceston also does a large range in churches – most built between 1830 and 1860. On the Civic Sq block are the **Pilgrim Uniting** (Map p204) and the **St Andrews Presbyterian** (Map p204) churches and opposite Princes Sq is **St Johns Anglican Church** (Map p204), all dating from this era.

Signposted 8km south of town, **Franklin House** (☎ 6344 7824; 413 Hobart Rd, Franklin Village; adult/child/concession/family \$8/free/6/16; ☹ 9am–5pm Mon–Sat, 12–4 Sun) 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. Franklin Village–bound Metro buses 40 and 50 from the city stop here.

Parks & Gardens

Wonderful, green **City Park** (Map p204) has enormous oaks and plane trees, an el-

egant fountain, a fern-filled conservatory, a Victorian bandstand and a playground and mini train for kids. A glass-walled enclosure of **Japanese macaques** (☹ 8am–4pm Apr–Sep, to 4.30pm Oct–Mar) will also fascinate little ones for hours.

Princes Sq (Map p204; btwn Charles & St John Sts) features an enormous bronze fountain purchased at the 1855 Paris Exhibition.

Other public spaces include **Royal Park** (Map p204), at the North Esk and Tamar River junction, where there's a river-edge boardwalk leading to the Cataract Gorge Reserve, Ritchies Mill, Home Point and the new Seaport development; and **Windmill Hill Reserve** (Map p204), to the city's east, which has a great swimming pool.

A 10-minute drive north of the city is **Tamar Island Wetlands** (☎ 6327 3964; West Tamar Hwy; adults/children & concession/family, \$3/2/6; ☹ 10am–4pm April–Sep, 9am–5pm Oct–March), where there is a 2km wheelchair-friendly boardwalk through a significant wetlands reserve teeming with bird life (including brown falcons and white-bellied sea eagles).

Further upstream from Duck Reach is the **Trevallyn State Recreation Area** (☹ 8am–dusk), on the Trevallyn Dam. This is Launcestonians' favourite spot for watersports like rowing. You can take a picnic and a splash in the shallows on a warm day. To get to the reserve, follow Paterson St west (after crossing Kings Bridge it becomes Trevallyn Rd and then Gorge Rd), then turn right into Bald Hill Rd, left into Veulalee Ave and veer left into Reatta Rd to the reserve.

Other Attractions

The **Design Centre of Tasmania** (Map p204; ☎ 6331 5506; www.twdc.org.au; cnr Brisbane & Tamar Sts; ☹ 9.30am–5.30pm), on the fringe of City Park, is the place to browse for the products of creative Tasmania. There's top-notch work by craftspeople here – great for classy Tassie gifts. In the same building, the **Wood Design Collection** (adult/child/concession \$5/free/4) showcases local designs, with more sassafras, Huon pine and myrtle than your average southwest forest.

The oxymoronic **National Automobile Museum of Tasmania** (Map p203; ☎ 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 – this is one of Australia's best presentations of classic and historic cars and motorbikes. The '69 Corvette Stingray will burn tyre tracks into your retinas.

On rainy days, **Kids Paradise** (☎ 6334 0055; www.kidsparadise.net.au; 1 Waterfront Drive; adult/toddler/child/family \$12/\$5/\$9/\$22) is the place to let the little ones loose. In this rapturous treasure-trove of fun, there's a pirate ship and four interactive playrooms. They'll be soaked to the bone and giggling with delight in the Wetzone.

ACTIVITIES Hang-gliding

Who hasn't looked at a bird and marvelled at its swooping, soaring flight? You can do the same with a spot of **cable hang-gliding** (☎ 0419 311 198; Reatta Rd; www.cablehanggliding.com.au; adult/child \$20/15, tandems \$30; ☹ 10am–5pm Dec–Apr, to 4pm May–Nov & school holidays). You'll hurtle over the edge of a cliff and glide down a 200m long cable, suspended under wide wings. It's great stomach-in-your-mouth fun. Head west along Paterson St and from King's Bridge follow the signs.

Biking

You can get on two wheels and get off the beaten track with **Mountain Bike Tasmania** (Map p204; ☎ 6334 0988; www.mountainbiketasmalia.com.au; in Mountain Designs, 120 Charles St) It guides rides by the North Esk River (\$75) and through the Trevallyn Reserve (\$90), as well as a thrilling descent of Ben Lomond (\$150) – a downhill adrenaline rush losing 1050m in altitude as fast as you can say 'Marzocchi shocks'. For more sedate biking, you can hire a battery-powered model from **Ecoride** (☎ 0409-700 655; shop 33 Quadrant Mall) for \$15 for a half-hour to \$70 for a full day. The rechargeable batteries give you over 600km of effortless travel. How green!

Roman Baths

You just can't go to Launceston without spending a few hours at **Aquarius Roman Baths** (Map p204; ☎ 6331 2255; 127-133 George St; adult \$26, no children under 16; ☹ 8.30am–8pm Mon–Fri, 9am–6pm Sat & Sun) Go a good shade of beetroot in the Caldarium, chill out in the Tepidarium, or simply soak in the Salubre Thermae (warm healing baths). Steam rooms, spas and mud or seaweed massages will make you walk out of here feeling born again.

TOURS

Get your historical bearings with a 1½-hour **Launceston Historic Walk** (☎ 6331 2213; adult/child/concession/family \$15/11/15/40), a journey through

the Georgian, Victorian and modern architecture of the city. Departing 10am Tuesday to Saturday and 4pm Monday.

As the sun goes down, get spooked on a 90-minute **ghost tour** (☎ 0421 819 373; www.launcestoncityghosttours.com; adult/child/concession/family \$25/10/20/55) around the city's back alleys and lanes. You'll hear spine tingling stories of ghoulish spectres and severed heads. Tours depart from the **Royal Oak Hotel** (Map p204; ☎ 6331 5346; 14 Brisbane St) – where Cyril is the resident ghost – at dusk. Bookings essential.

Coach Tram Tours (☎ 0419 004 802; coachtramtour@vision.net.au) offers three-hour bus-based tours of the city's key attractions (adult/child/family \$37/18.50/90). In addition, it runs excursions around the Tamar Valley and Beauty Point (adult/child \$55/25). Tours used to be in an old tram – not any longer.

Tamar River Cruises (Map p204; ☎ 6334 9900; www.tamarrivercruises.com.au; Home Point Pde; adult/child/concession/family \$19/10/17/48) conducts 50-minute explorations of the Gorge on the 1890s-style *Lady Launceston*. If you're on for more extended cruising, try its **Batman Bridge Luncheon Cruise** (adult/child/concession/family \$98/49/90/254). There's also an extended afternoon trip and an evening voyage with dinner.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

Festive (www.festive.com.au) Three days in February feverishly devoted to celebrating eating, drinking, arts and entertainment, staged in City Park. The event involves over 70 Tasmanian food and wine stalls, dancing, theatre and bands twanging through electric and acoustic gigs.

Launceston Cup Held in February; horses work up a sweat on the track.

Australian Three Peaks Race (www.threepikes.org.au) A four-day nonstop nautical rush in March to sail from Beauty Point (north of Launceston) to Hobart, pausing long enough for teams of runners to jump ashore and scale three mountains along the way.

Easter Pacing Cup Over Easter the trotting track gets pounded.

Royal Launceston Show In October – all candy floss and bumper cars with pedigree livestock thrown in for good measure.

SLEEPING Budget

Launceston Backpackers (Map p203; ☎ 6334 2327; www.launcestonbackpackers.com.au; 103 Canning St; 4-/6-bed dm \$19/18, tw/tr \$24/20, d with/without bathroom \$60/50; ☹) The insides of this large Federation house have been gutted to make way for the

cavernous interiors of this hostel. It's in a leafy, green location looking over Brickfields Reserve, but it's not the most inspiring hostel you'll ever visit. Rooms are decently clean and fresh, though.

Lloyds Hotel Backpackers (Map p204; ☎ 1300 858 861; www.backpackers-accommodation.com.au; 23 George St; dm \$22, s/d/f \$55/70/120; 📶 | wi-fi) Lloyds stakes a claim as Launceston's happening-est pub. Downstairs the place goes nuts, but above things remain relatively calm, with clean en suite rooms, kitchen, capacious communal areas and wi-fi internet.

our pick Arthouse Backpacker Hostel (Map p203; ☎ 6333 0222; www.arthousehostel.com.au; 20 Lindsay St, 4-/6-/8-bed dm \$27/25/23; 📶 |) Housed in a beautiful old heritage home, the Arthouse has spacious, airy dorms, a welcoming shared sitting room with a huge plasma TV, a wide upstairs veranda for shooting the breeze on and a courtyard with BBQ out back. You can also hire bikes or camping equipment, store gear... and the young owners are friendly to boot. It's even set up for disabled travellers and is also Australia's first carbon-neutral backpackers.

HOTELS, MOTELS & PUBS

Irish Murphy's (Map p204; ☎ 6331 4440; cnr Brisbane & Bathurst Sts; dm/d \$21/45; 📶 |) This corner pub is just two blocks from the city centre and has reasonable bunk and double rooms, kitchen, common room and clean bathrooms. The bar/restaurant downstairs gets thumpin' when bands are on.

Sportsmans Hall Hotel (Map p203; ☎ 6331 3968; www.maskhospitality.com.au; cnr Charles & Balfour Sts; s/d from \$50/65) In the most salubrious part of Charles St, 'Sporties' is a bit of an institution. It's been done up recently and the rooms are really decent – without en suites but each with its own private bathroom. Whatever you do, don't get a room over the bar – if you intend to get any sleep that is.

Hotel Tasmania (Map p204; ☎ 6331 7355; www.saloons.com.au; 191 Charles St; s \$60, r \$80) This place has spacious rooms – all with en suites – that fortunately forgo the Wild West kitsch of the bar/bistro downstairs. Benefits include continental breakfast and tea- and coffee-making facilities.

Star Bar (Map p204; ☎ 6331 6111; www.starbarcafeandhotel.com.au; 113 Charles St; s \$80, d \$100, family \$150) Another bar/bistro with accommodation upstairs, Star Bar is right in the heart of the CBD and has better-than-pub rooms upstairs.

It's all spick-and-span and each room has a sparkling en suite.

CAMPING & CABINS

Treasure Island Caravan Park (off Map p203; ☎ 6344 2600; treasureislandlaunceston@netspace.net.au; 94 Glen Dhu St; unpowered/poweredsites d \$22/26, onsite vans \$50, cabins \$75-82) If you turn your back to the highway, you could forget that the city is so close (2.5km) – you won't be able to ignore the highway noise, however, though this does die down at night. There are pretty camping spots among the trees.

Midrange

COTTAGES & SELF-CONTAINED APARTMENTS

Launceston Apartments (Map p203; ☎ 6344 6953; www.launcestonapartments.com.au; d from \$100-190) A collection of cottages and older-style apartments is available through this agency. If you can get it, gorgeous Three Crown St is the pick: it's a little workers' cottage with three bedrooms that's been fabulously renovated and is downright cool. Stay here one night and you'll wish you could move in permanently.

Thyme Cottage (Map p203; ☎ 6331 1906; www.thymecottage.com.au; 31 Cimitiere St; d \$140, extra adult/child \$25/15) A delightful 1880s cottage providing self-contained heritage accommodation. With cottage furniture and antiques, it exudes warmth and charm. Modern facilities and full breakfast supplies provided. Sleeps up to seven in three bedrooms.

Quest Launceston Serviced Apartments (Map p204; ☎ 6333 3555; www.questlaunceston.com.au; 16 Paterson St; d \$170-190; 📶 |) Set in the beautifully restored Murray Building in the heart of town, these apartments are everything you could want in an upmarket home-away-from-home: spacious, comfortable, fully self-contained and decorated with style. They also have facilities for disabled travellers.

Launceston Historic Cottages (Map p204; ☎ 0437-008 336; www.launcestonhistoriccottages.com; 1 Babington St; d \$180, extra person \$10) This smartly decorated two-bedroom Victorian workers' cottage is a cosy place for an overnight stay, and has all you'd need to spend much longer. There's a cute veranda for sunny outdoor breakfasts.

GUESTHOUSES & B&BS

Kilmarnock House (Map p203; ☎ 6334 1514; www.kilmarnockhouse.com; 66 Elphin Rd; s from \$95, d \$130-150, f \$170) This National Trust-listed 1905 Edwardian

mansion provides gracious accommodation in elegantly antique-furnished rooms. Lovebirds will enjoy the romantic Honeymoon Spa Suite. The rate includes a generous breakfast and children are welcome.

Airlie on the Square (Map p204; ☎ 6334 0577, 0427-480 008; www.airielodge.com.au; Civic Sq; s/d \$95/125, extra person \$30; 📶 |) Airlie is truly a rose among thorns. It's housed in the last of the beautiful old buildings on Civic Square – the others were demolished to make way for concrete horrors in the 1970s. Wonderfully peaceful Airlie has been thoughtfully decorated and the friendly owner serves scrumptious breakfasts. A real haven in the city's heart.

Ashton Gate (Map p204; ☎ 6331 6180; www.ashtongate.com.au; 32 High St; s \$115, d \$135-170, cottage d \$170) This thoroughly welcoming and refreshing Victorian B&B exudes a sense of home, and each en suite room is immaculately decorated in period style. There's also a self-contained apartment in the Old Servants' Quarters.

Kurrajong House (Map p204; ☎ 6331 6655; www.kurrajonghouse.com.au; cnr High & Adelaide Sts; d \$130-170) From the scented rose garden outside to the crackling log fires when you come in, you'll love the home-but-smarter feel of this welcoming B&B. The cooked breakfasts are a sumptuous affair.

Fiona's B&B (Map p204; ☎ 6334 5965; www.fionas.com.au; 141a George St; d \$140-165, extra guest \$20) Fiona's has beautifully stylish rooms, some with great panoramas over Launceston. There are fine touches like luxury linens and claw-foot baths, and most rooms have their own private courtyard or access to the leafy, green garden.

HOTELS & MOTELS

Old Bakery Inn (Map p204; ☎ 1800 641 264, 6331 7900; www.oldbakeryinn.com.au; cnr York & Margaret Sts; d \$90-135) You can almost smell freshly baked bread aromas coming from the ovens, which are still a feature of this 130-year-old building. There are 24 appealingly decorated rooms here with cons like minibars and electric blankets. Rates don't include breakfast.

Motel & Apartments (Map p204; ☎ 1800 060 954, 6331 6699; www.leisureinnhotels.com; 147 Paterson St; d \$120-198, extra adult/child \$30/15) Originally an old coaching inn on the banks of the Isis River in Tasmania's Midlands, this hotel was moved to its present location bang next to Cataract Gorge, brick by painstaking brick. It's been swankily refurbished, but has man-

aged to retain the wooden beams and the old-world feel.

Colonial on Elizabeth (Map p204; ☎ 1800 060 955, 6331 6588; www.colonialinn.com.au; 31 Elizabeth St; d \$125-250; 📶 |) Formerly the Launceston Church & Grammar School, today this 1847 building houses boutique colonial rooms all done up in leather sofas and dusky-room hues. Attached is the exceedingly praiseworthy café-wine bar, Three Steps on George (p210).

City Park Grand (Map p203; ☎ 6331 7633; www.cityparkgrand.com.au; 22 Tamar St; d \$140-275; 📶 |) This building has been a hotel since 1855 so staff know just how to make you feel at home. The expansive rooms have recently been redecorated in the best of taste. There's also Q22 bar/restaurant here which does à la carte dinner nightly.

Top End COTTAGES

Alice's Cottages & Spa Hideaways (Map p203; ☎ 6334 2231; alices.cottages@bigpond.com; 129 Balfour St; d \$170-206) Alice's bills itself as the place for 'wickedly wonderful romantic retreats' – and why not indeed? It has several sumptuously decorated B&B cottages, including 'Camelot' and 'The Boudoir', where it's all spas, four-post beds, open fires and self-contained privacy.

GUESTHOUSES & B&BS

Werona (Map p203; ☎ 6334 2272; www.werona.com; 33 Trevallyn Rd; d \$120-230; 📶 |) This opulent B&B is in a Queen Anne Federation home with unsurpassed views. There are amazing decorative mouldings, *trompe l'oeil* murals and beautiful leadlighting. The Joan suite is top-of-the-line here – with a fairy-tale four-poster and spa en suite. On the ground level there's a billiards table and a guest lounge, and there's a pretty garden out back.

Waratah on York (Map p204; ☎ 6331 2081; www.waratahonyork.com.au; 12 York St; d \$202-288, extra person \$48) The Waratah is set in an 1862 Victorian Italianate mansion and is an opulent and unashamedly old-fashioned gay-friendly B&B. Its rooms – some with four-post beds – are luxuriously 'heritage' and the executive spa suites have panoramic views.

Hatherley House (Map p204; ☎ 6334 7727; www.hatherleyhouse.com.au; 43 High St; junior deluxe ste from \$260, deluxe ste from \$310) Veritably hip Hatherley has won a string of awards and it's not hard to see why. Set in an 1830s mansion overlooking expansive lawns, this sophisticated small hotel

is decked out with the best furnishings, art and ultra-modern fittings money can buy, and yet the effect is pleasingly low-key cool. Leave the kiddies at home.

HOTELS & MOTELS

Peppers Seaport Hotel (Map p204; ☎ 6345 3333; www.seaport.com.au; 28 Seaport Blvd; d \$187-320; ☑) Right on the waterfront in the swanky new Seaport development, this glam hotel is big on design in natural timbers and muted tones. The Mud Club day spa offers all manner of massages and beauty treatments, and when you've worked up an appetite you can hang out at the Mud bar (see right) next door.

Auldington (Map p203; ☎ 6331 2050; www.auldington.com.au; 110 Frederick St; d from \$210, extra person \$48; ☑) This small private hotel has a historic exterior complete with lacy wrought-iron balconies which belies the funkily modern fitout inside. It's plum in town in a quiet spot, has a wheelchair friendly suite and the kind of cheerful, personal service that you don't get in the larger hotels.

SELF-CONTAINED APARTMENTS

Lido Boutique Apartments (Map p203; ☎ 6334 5988; www.thelido.com.au; 47-49 Elphin Rd; apt \$190-420) The eight spacious and wonderfully decorated apartments here exude 1930s style. They all have the most comfortable queen-sized beds and expansive living areas. For pure indulgence, reserve the exotic three-bedroom 'Japanese Imperial' suite with an enormous spa and every imaginable mod con.

Two Four Two (Map p203; ☎ 6331 9242; www.twofourtwo.com.au; 242 Charles St; d incl breakfast \$198-220, extra adult/child \$50/25) 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.

York Mansions (Map p204; ☎ 6334 2933; www.yorkmansions.com.au; 9-11 York St; apt \$216-352) Yearning to spend a night as the Duke or Duchess of York? Stay in one of the five opulent, historically themed apartments in the 1840 Georgian, National Trust-classified York Mansions.

EATING

Restaurants

Izakaya (Map p204; ☎ 6331 0613; 25 Yorktown Sq; sushi \$4-12, mains \$19-26; ☎ lunch Wed-Fri, dinner Tue-Sat) Be

wooded 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. The *ika izakaya huu* (squid slivers marinated in black vinegar and sweet soy) are sensational.

Three Steps on George (Map p204; ☎ 6334 2084; 158 George St; mains \$17-26; ☎ dinner) Part of the Colonial on Elizabeth complex (p209), this wonderful restaurant/wine bar not only has great décor (check out the convict bricks), but friendly service and slap-up bistro fare. There's plenty to keep meat-eaters happy, including the aged Fillet Wellington and the Three Steps Burger.

Northern Club (Map p204; ☎ 6331 3568; 61 Cameron St; mains \$15-32; ☎ lunch & dinner) The Northern Club goes pub Mondays and Tuesdays with a \$12 menu all day. At other times it's the place for laid-back sophisticates to eat, drink and play. All the meat and fish is local. The lamb shanks are so tender they'll make you go weak at the knees.

Me Wah (Map p203; ☎ 6331 1308; 39-41 Invermay Rd; mains \$15-80; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner daily) This is hands down Launceston's best Chinese restaurant and serves all sorts of old favourites as well as innovative dishes heavily influenced by fresh Tasmanian seafood. The abalone with shitake mushrooms in oyster sauce (\$80) may blow your budget – but might also just blow your mind.

Pickled Evenings (Map p204; ☎ 6331 0110; 135 George St; mains \$18-24; ☎ dinner) In India, the word 'pickled' is often used to mean drunk: that's the explanation for the topsy-turvy décor in this restaurant. But there's nothing higgledy-piggledy about the service or food here. The heady aromas that greet you at the door confirm this'll be the best Indian you've had in a while.

Fee & Me (Map p204; ☎ 6331 3195; cnr Charles & Frederick Sts; per course 3 courses \$19.50, 4 courses \$17.50, 5 courses \$15.50; ☎ dinner Tue-Sat) The awards plastered all over the wall here are testament to Fee & Me's semilegendary status. The menu is structured so that you can have three, or five courses, all of which are entrée sized. There are delights like hare pie with parmesan soufflé topping and an ambrosial lemongrass rice pudding for dessert.

Mud (Map p204; ☎ 6345 3340; 28 Seaport; lunch mains \$21.90-29.90, dinner mains \$17.90-38; ☎ lunch & dinner)

You can hang out on the cool leather sofas or at the bar here, then migrate to the tables where you can order such sophisticated fare as slow cooked duck leg with red cabbage and hazelnut, or simply a good old porterhouse from the grill with roasted garlic and potatoes. Trendy and relaxed – and food that's consistently great.

Hallam's Waterfront (Map p204; ☎ /fax 6334 0554; 13 Park St; mains \$23-34; ☎ lunch & dinner) Adjacent to the Tamar Yacht Club and decked out in a requisite nautical theme, this place has friendly service and specialises in exquisite crayfish dishes. The hot-and-cold seafood platter (\$79 for two people) gets a thumbs-up. There's also a takeaway attached, catering to gourmet fish-and-chip lovers.

our pick **Luck's** (Map p204; ☎ 6334 8596; 70 George St; mains \$24-37; ☎ lunch Tue-Fri, dinner daily) This classy new restaurant was once a butcher's shop, but now it's all ornate gilded wallpaper, spanking white tablecloths and an definite air of retro-cool. Luck's serves fancy food in a French-bistro atmosphere. There's *chateaubriand* with *chasseur* sauce, or closer to home, a Flinders Island lamb rack. For afters try the dark chocolate and Turkish delight tart.

Stillwater (Map p204; ☎ 6331 4153; Ritchies Mill, 2 Bridge Rd; dinner 2/3 courses \$70/85, 6-course tasting menu \$105; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) Set in the stylishly renovated 1840s Ritchies flour mill beside the Tamar, Stillwater does laid-back breakfasts, relaxed lunches – and then puts on the Ritz for dinner. There are delectable seafood, meaty and vego mains. Try the incredible Asian *assiette* of sweets.

Pubs

Irish Murphy's (Map p204; ☎ 6331 4440; cnr Brisbane & Bathurst Sts; mains \$13.50-26.50; ☎ lunch Tue-Sun, dinner daily) This popular pub offers a better-than-average take on the humble counter meal. The menu consists of delicious Irish fare – stew may be involved.

Flavours on Charles (Map p204; ☎ 6331 3968; 252 Charles St; mains \$17.50-26.50; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) This restaurant in the Sportsmans Hall Hotel does great bistro fare: hearty staples like thick beef sausages with creamy herb mashed potato. Leave room for a wicked liquid centre chocolate pudding afterwards.

Royal on George (Map p204; ☎ 6331 2526; 90 George St; mains \$18-24; ☎ breakfast Sat & Sun, lunch & dinner) There's a fantastic, inventive menu – that includes kids' and gluten-free options – here.

The Royal may be a pub but this is definitely superior to pub food: take the fennel and black pepper-crusted pork or the blue-eye in Champagne cream.

Cafés & Quick Eats

Café Rossilli (Map p204; ☎ 6334 3488; 41 George St; mains \$7-22; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat; ☑) Everything is homemade fresh every day at this inviting little café on George St. It uses free-range chicken, eggs and bacon and local produce wherever possible. Lunches are healthy salads and wraps. You can finish with a latte done just right and an almond-coconut cake that's to die for.

Pasta Resistance Too (Map p204; ☎ 6334 3081; 23 Quadrant Mall; lunch meals \$7-9; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat) The 20-year success story of this popular eatery says it all for the food. There's wonderful fresh pasta with lashings of mouthwatering sauces: try the creamy chicken pesto with sundried tomatoes or the unbeatable spinach and ricotta ravioli with mushroom and tomato. You can also bulk-buy pasta and sauces for around \$12 per kg.

Fresh (Map p204; 6331 4299; 178 Charles St; mains \$8-16; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Fri) Retro-arty (and now licensed) Fresh offers an all-vegetarian/vegan menu that's both deliciously tempting and environmentally aware. It does energising breakfasts, linger-over lunches and coffees and cakes in between. The food's organic as much as possible and it works hard to recycle waste, as well as supporting green community issues.

Burger Got Soul (Map p203; ☎ 6334 5204; 243 Charles St; \$9.90-14; ☎ lunch & dinner) Hands down the best burgers in Launceston, served in a funky atmosphere by happy staff. They're all into healthy too: it's good, lean meat, the freshest bread, crunchy salads – and it even does Soul Veggie Burgers for those of the nonmeat eating persuasion.

Elaiá (Map p203; ☎ 6331 3307; 240 Charles St; mains dinner \$17.20-27; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner except Sun nights; ☑) You'll love the Mediterranean atmosphere in this great spot on Charles St. It does inventive pizzas, delicious pastas and risottos, steaks and good salads. You can also occupy the soft leather wall benches for all-day breakfast or coffee and cake.

our pick **Tant pour Tant** (Map p203; ☎ 6334 9884; 226 Charles St; ☎ 7.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 8.30am-4pm Sat & Sun) Your eyes will surely be bigger than your stomach at this wonderful French patisserie. As well

as artisan and organic breads, it serves a jaw-dropping range of croissants, cakes and pastries; and does breakfasts and light lunches too. You'll feel like you're in Paris as you savour your *mille feuille* and coffee at a streetside table.

Trevallyn Deli Café (Map p203; ☎ 6334 9588; 1-3 Osborne Ave; mains \$12-26; ☞ breakfast & lunch Sun-Wed, breakfast, lunch & dinner Thu-Sat) This little foodie enclave on the hill at Trevallyn does organic as much as possible and can cater to gluten-free eaters. There are also man-sized meals: gourmet pizzas, pastas, local salmon and steak. Everything's delicious and good for the conscience too – even the coffee is of the Fair Trade variety.

DRINKING & ENTERTAINMENT

Most of Launceston's entertainment options are advertised in the *Examiner* newspaper daily.

Royal Oak Hotel (Map p204; ☎ 6331 5345; 14 Brisbane St; ☞ 11am-late) We can almost guarantee you won't get beaten up at Launceston's friendliest and most laid-back pub. There are heaps of brilliant beers on tap, open mic nights (last Wednesday of the month) and live acoustic rock Wednesday to Sunday.

James Hotel (Map p204; ☎ 6334 7231; www.jameshotel.com.au; 122 York St; 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).

Tonic Bar (off Map p203; ☎ 6335 5777; Country Club Av, Prospect Vale; ☞ daily until late) Launceston's new super-cool bar at the Country Club (8km out of town) is the latest place to see and be seen. There are cocktail specials on Friday evenings and free live music gets the place thumping Thursday to Saturday. Tapes and bar snacks also available.

Irish Murphy's (☎ 6331 4440; cnr Brisbane & Bathurst Sts; admission free; ☞ noon-midnight Sun-Wed, to 2am Thu-Sat) This low-lit watering hole (see p208), stuffed full of Emerald Isle predictabilia, has live music every night (usually free), including Sunday arvo jam sessions.

Princess Theatre (Map p204; ☎ 6323 3666; 57 Brisbane St) Built in 1911 and including the smaller Earl Arts Centre, this theatre stages an eclectic mix of drama, dance and comedy, drawing acts from across Tasmania and the mainland.

Village Cinemas (Map p204; ☎ 6331 5066; 163 Brisbane St; adult/child/concession \$14.50/10/11.50) Big-budget

flicks and Hollywood blockbusters offer cinematic escapism.

SHOPPING

Mill Providore + Gallery (Map p204; ☎ 6331 0777; Ritchies Mill, 2 Bridge Rd; ☞ 9am-6pm) Above Stillwater Restaurant in the Ritchies Mill complex, you'll find this treasure-trove of everything for the home, kitchen, stomach and soul! There's a brilliant delicatessen and chocolatier for picnic goodies. The gallery upstairs will keep you browsing for hours.

Pinot Shop (Map p204; ☎ 6331 3977; 135 Paterson St; ☞ 10am-6pm Mon-Thu, to 7pm Fri & Sat) Close to Ritchies Mill, this boutique specialises in Pinot Noirs and fine wines – particularly of the Tasmanian variety. It also does premium international and 'big-island' vintages. Tastings of selected wines available – and it can freight wine Australia-wide.

Paddy Pallin (Map p204; ☎ 6331 4240; 110 George St; ☞ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat, 10am-2pm Sun) sells (and hires out) all the gear you need for a camping adventure. **Mountain Designs** (Map p204; ☎ 6334 0988; 120 Charles St; ☞ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 4pm Sat, 11am-3pm Sun) also does gear sales and hire, fuel sales, MTB hire and park passes.

Craft markets (Map p203) are held every weekend near Launceston showground off Forster St, just past the **Aurora Stadium** (Map p203; off Forster St; ☞ 9am-2pm Sun).

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Air

There are regular flights between Launceston and both Melbourne and Sydney, connecting with other Australian cities. For flight details see **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au), **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com), **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) or **Tiger Airways** (☎ 9335 3033; www.tigerairways.com).

For details of the daily flights from Launceston to Flinders Island see p314. Light plane charter flights also be arranged.

Bus

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) and **TassieLink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) operate out of Launceston. The depot for services is at **Cornwall Square Transit Centre** (Map p204; cnr St John & Gimitiere Sts), behind the visitors centre.

Redline runs buses to Burnie (\$31.30, two hours 20 minutes), Deloraine (\$11.70, 45 minutes), Devonport (\$23.30, 1½ hours), George

Town (\$11.10, 45 minutes), Hobart (\$33.20, 2½ hours), Stanley (\$49.50, four hours), Bicheno (\$36.90, 2½ hours), St Helens (\$29, 2¾ hours) – operated by Calows Coaches – and Swansea (\$29.60, two hours). There are also services to the East Tamar on weekdays.

TassieLink (☎ 1300 300 520, 6336 9500; www.tassielink.com.au) has a regular city express service to Devonport (\$21, 1¼ hours), tying in with the ferry schedules and to Hobart (\$30.20, 2½ hours). It also services the northwest, including Sheffield (\$27.00, two hours), Gowrie Park (\$35.60, 2¼ hours), Cradle Mountain (\$53.30, three hours), Tullah (\$46.10, 4¾ hours), Rosebery (\$48.10, five hours), Zeehan (\$55.80, 5½ hours), Queenstown (\$64.70, six hours) and Strahan (\$73.90, seven hours).

Manion's Coaches (Map p204; ☎ 6383 1221) services the West Tamar region from Launceston. For details see right.

Car

Many of the major car rental firms have desks at the airport or in town. There's **Europcar** (Map p204; ☎ 13 13 90, 6331 8200; 112 George St) and **Thrifty** (Map p204; ☎ 6333 0911, 1300 367 227; 151 St John St), and cheaper operators like **Economy Car Rentals** (Map p204; ☎ 6334 3299; 27 William St), with prices starting at \$37 per day (older cars and rentals of at least seven days). **Lo-Cost Auto Rent** (Map p204; ☎ 6334 3437, 1800 647 060; www.rentforless.com.au; 80 Tamar St) have starting rates from \$30 daily for multiday hire.

GETTING AROUND

To/From the Airport

Launceston airport is 15km south of the city. A **shuttle bus** (☎ 6343 6677) runs a door-to-door airport service costing \$12/6 per adult/child. A taxi to the city costs about \$40.

Bicycle

Arthouse Backpackers Hostel (see p208) rents out bikes on an hourly and daily basis, as does **Mountain Designs** (see opposite). There's also **Ecoride** (see p207), which hires battery powered bikes.

Bus

The local bus service is run by **Metro** (☎ 13 22 01; www.metrotas.com.au); the main departure points are on the two blocks of St John St between Paterson and York Sts. For \$5 you can buy a Day Rover pass for unlimited travel after 9am Monday to Friday and all

day Saturday and Sunday. Most routes don't operate in the evening and Sunday services are limited.

AROUND LAUNCESTON

TAMAR VALLEY

Funnelling north from its higher reaches around Launceston to its ocean mouth on the Bass Strait, the Tamar River and the valley that cradles it are among Tasmania's greatest natural beauty spots. This wide, tidal stretch of water is often glassy-calm. Fringed with deep-green reeds and framed with emerald hills, it can be picture-postcard perfect. From Launceston the Tamar River stretches 64km, separating the east and west Tamar districts. On the east side is the river's ocean port, Bell Bay near George Town. The Batman Bridge – an architectural and engineering wonder – unites the Tamar's two banks near Deviot.

The hillsides of the Tamar Valley and the nearby Pipers River region are covered in a geometry of vines. This is among Tasmania's key wine-producing areas, and the dry premium wines created here have achieved international recognition.

At the time of writing the Tamar Valley was under the cloud of the proposed Gunns Pulp Mill: community opposition was quite clear from the ubiquitous red 'Stop the Mill' stickers and placards and the adamant anti-mill graffiti all over the Tamar Valley. See p47.

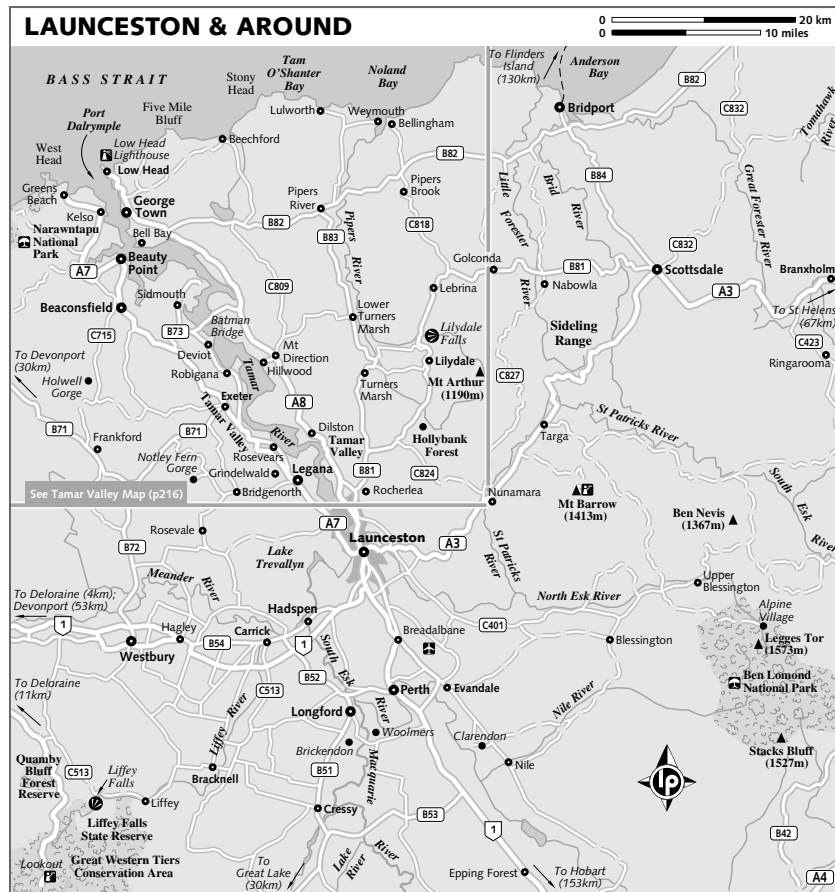
Getting There & Around

BICYCLE

The ride north along the Tamar River is an absolute gem. On the west bank, it's possible to avoid most of the highway and follow quiet roads with few hills through small settlements. On the eastern shore, follow the hilly minor roads inland through stunning landscape to Lilydale. The only way to cross the lower reaches of the Tamar River is either via Batman Bridge or by ferry (p214).

BUS

On weekdays **Manion's Coaches** (Map p204; ☎ 6383 1221; 72 Shore St, Beaconsfield) services the west Tamar Valley from Launceston stopping at Legana (\$4.90), Grindelwald/Rosevears (\$6.60), Exeter and Gravelly Beach (\$8.60), Deviot and Sidmouth (\$8.90), Beaconsfield (\$9.40) and Beauty Point (\$10.25). In Launceston, buses



leave from 165 Brisbane St opposite the Village Cinemas. Southbound you'll need to hail the bus at the stop in Beaconsfield's main street (Weld St) near the IGA Supermarket.

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000, 6336 1446; www.tasredline.com.au) runs two buses every weekday (no weekend services) along the eastern side of the Tamar from Launceston to Hillwood (\$7), the Batman Bridge turn-off (\$8.50) and George Town (\$11.10, 45 minutes). There's also a daily Redline service between Launceston and Deloraine (\$11.70, one hour), via Carrick (\$4.90) and Westbury (\$6.90).

FERRY

The little **Shuttlefish ferry** (☎ 6383 4479, 0412 485 611; www.shuttlefishferry.com.au; ☹ Wed-Mon Nov-Apr)

makes trips across the Tamar between Beauty Point and George Town three times a day in summer. It departs the public pontoons on Wharf Rd at Beauty Point and in George Town it leaves from the pier at the end of Elizabeth St. The 25-minute journey costs \$11/7 per adult/child one way, \$20/11 return. The ferry also carries bikes – cyclists appreciate the shortcut.

Legana

☎ 03 / pop 1990

The main feature of Legana, a Launceston satellite suburb 12km north of town, is **Grindelwald**, a Swiss 'village' that inexplicably emigrated to Tasmania to start a new life as a residential suburb and resort. The **Tamar**

Valley Resort (☎ 6330 0400; www.tamarvalleyresort.com.au; 7 Waldhorn Dr; ☎) has quite smart accommodation, a restaurant, some slightly twee shops and an activity centre with water bikes, boats, canoes, pedal carts, a playground with a giant jumping pillow, minigolf and full-sized golf.

Further down Waldhorn Drive is **Rosevears Estate** (☎ 6330 1800; www.rosevearsestate.com.au; 1A Waldhorn Dr; tastings \$2; ☹ 10am-5pm). This top winery was acquired by controversial timber and woodchipping giant Gunns Ltd (see p47) in its recent expansion into the wine business (and may soon be enjoying breathtaking views of the latter's proposed pulp mill, just across the Tamar River). There are wine tastings, cellar door sales and a flash restaurant, **Estelle** (☹ breakfast & lunch daily; mains \$16-24.50). There's also on-site accommodation in studio apartments from \$250 for two people (see below).

SLEEPING & EATING

Launceston Holiday Park (☎ 6330 1714; www.islandcabins.com.au; 711 West Tamar Hwy; powered sites d from \$28-30, cabins d from \$70-115; ☎) Conveniently located, this park has a range of cabins (two with spas), from basic stuffy budget versions to deluxe spa units. There's a guest laundry, BBQ and games room.

Tamar Valley Resort (☎ 6330 0400; www.tamarvalleyresort.com.au; 7 Waldhorn Dr; hotel ste d \$170-240, chalets \$214-260, apt \$214-259, extra person \$15) There are neat hotel rooms and some quite luxurious chalets and apartments here. The alpine theme is carried right through the hotel with the giant flower canvases on its walls.

Rosevears Estate (☎ 6330 1800; www.rosevearsestate.com.au; 1A Waldhorn Dr; 1-2-bedroom cottages \$250/350) There are 20 modern cottages on the hillside here overlooking the river – just the place to hang out on the balcony with a glass of the local drop. The restaurant's tasting plates (mains \$16.50 to \$24.50; open lunch and dinner Wednesday to Saturday) are good when savoured with this estate's wine.

Food-wise, try **Alpenrose Restaurant & Lounge Bar** (☎ 6330 0444; Waldhorn Dr; lunch mains \$8.50-19.90, dinner mains \$19.50-31.50; ☹ breakfast, lunch & dinner). Despite being part of Grindelwald village, it fortunately avoids references to 'Swiss cheese'. Lunches are quick and casual, but it's finer dining at dinner: it does a great ocean trout with seared cherry tomatoes. There's a kid-dies' menu and the play area is adjacent.

Rosevears

☎ 03 / pop 160

Get off the main highway (A7) onto narrow Rosevears Dr that follows the waterside past moored yachts and swaying reed-beds to the pretty riverside settlement of Rosevears. Vines climb all over the hills here and several good wineries make this a favourite haunt of wine lovers.

Even if you're no wine buff, you should drop into glorious **Ninth Island Vineyard Strathlynn** (☎ 6330 2388; 95 Rosevears Dr; tastings \$3; ☹ 10am-5pm). The vines and views are achingly beautiful here – especially when they turn golden in autumn. Go inside to taste the vino or pop into the popular restaurant.

Our pick **Daniel Alps at Strathlynn** (mains \$18.90-\$29.90; ☹ 12-3pm) is great for a long lazy lunch. Head chef Daniel (who's just a notch off celeb-chef) whips up seasonal regional food for a daily-changing menu. As much as possible, the fruit and veg is organic and locally sourced.

Along the scenic riverbank drive, you'll come across **Rosevears Waterfront Tavern** (☎ 6394 4074; 215 Rosevears Dr; mains \$20-25; ☹ lunch & dinner). One of Tasmania's oldest pubs, it was opened in 1831 and now serves all sorts of deliciously tempting upmarket fare. Don't mind the obligatory chicken parmigiana: you can also have your chook done with honey and macadamia, crunch on crumbed scallops or savour salt-n-pepper squid. The laid-back beer garden does bar snacks.

Nearby is the fully self-contained **Connel Cottage** (☎ 6330 1466; www.connelcottage.com.au; 125 Rosevears Dr; s/d \$130/140). Prices include breakfast that's supplied for you to cook and there's a veggie garden and orchard with more than 40 fruit and nut trees to raid.

On Craythorne Rd, off to the left just after Connel if you're travelling north, is the highly browse-worthy **Treeform Gallery** (☎ 6330 3646; www.treeform.com.au; 110 Craythorne Rd; ☹ 10am-4pm) where talented local craftsmen create beautiful pieces of furniture and ornaments from native timbers, much of it salvaged from 'waste' left by forestry operations. It ships nationally and internationally.

You can also stay at **SummerSett** (☎ 6394 3882, 0427-943 882; 259a Rosevears Dr; d \$95, extra person \$10) about 1km past the Rosevears Hotel, heading north. This self-contained unit on the ground floor of a riverbank home sleeps up to four and comes with breakfast provisions.

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. Magnates 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.

3.30pm) you can view specimens of these astounding sea creatures from all round the world – from Tasmania's own weedy sea dragons to the strange pot-bellied seahorse (*Hippocampus abdominalis*), which you can see in various stages of development from the tiniest shrimpy critters to portly full grown. There's even a touch-tank where the little horses will swim up and wrap their tails around your fingers.

In the wharf shed opposite, **Platypus House** (☎ 6383 4884; www.platypushouse.com.au; Inspection Head Wharf; adult/child/concession/family \$18/9/15/46; ☎ 9am-4pm, last tour 3pm) has the world's only two monotremes: the platypus and the echidna. While you do actually get to see the platypus gambol in their glass-sided tanks and transparent 'burrows', it's not a hugely inspiring presentation. The echidna room is fun as you get to walk among several of these trundling creatures and cheerful guides give you the lowdown on it all.

For information on a three-attraction pass to the above spots, combined with Beaconsfield's Grubb Shaft Museum, see p217.

SLEEPING & EATING

Beauty Point Tourist Park (☎ 6383 4536; www.beautypointtouristpark.com.au; Redbill Point; powered sites \$25, onsite vans \$70, cabins \$99-119) There's camping on the grass by the water here, comfortable vans and good cabins that are all kitted out even for longer stays. A tennis court and river swimming will keep you busy.

Tamar Cove (☎ 6383 4375; 4421 Main Rd; motel d from \$95; 🏠) What an appealing little enclave you'll find here! Attractive, recently done-up motel rooms front a well-manicured landscape with a pool to dip in. The restaurant (meals \$16 to \$28; open breakfast in summer, lunch and din-

ner year-round) gets rave reviews. You can't go past its signature seafood chowder. Yum!

Beauty Point Cottages (☎ 6383 4556, 0428 768 790; 14 Flinders St; d \$144-188) You can stay in the historic homestead here, or in a self-contained spa cottage. Great decoration with attention to detail makes it look good inside, but even better is looking outdoors – the river views are sensational.

Pomona Spa Cottages (☎ 6383 4073; www.pomona spacottages.com.au; 77 Flinders St; d from \$230, extra person \$40, discounts for longer stays) There are three spa cottages in the grounds of this heritage homestead, masterfully built in the same genre as the old home itself and so comfortably kitted out you could move right in. There are decks with rotundas and, naturally, great views.

Carbone's Café (☎ 6383 4099; 225 Flinders St; mains \$13.90-21.90; ☎ breakfast & lunch) On sunny days at Carbone's the windows wrap right back and the water feels so close you could touch it. The menu tempts with fresh local fare – we liked the smoked salmon with zucchini fritters – and the chai lattes are just about perfect too.

Seahorse World Café (☎ 6383 4964; Beauty Point Wharf; mains \$9.50-17.50; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Upstairs at Seahorse World and privy to unbeatable views over the Tamar, this restaurant-café serves good meals and snacks that draw heavily on the sea. Try the Malibu – jumbo prawns poached in coconut, rum and garlic sauce. Is that a chocolate seahorse on my cappuccino froth?

Greens Beach

☎ 03 / pop 200

This little holiday settlement, founded in 1828, is the favourite getaway of Launcestonians and it's not hard to see why: there are miles

of beach and headland to stroll and protected waters to fish and swim in. It's also right next to Narawntapu National Park, so there's great camping and hiking on the doorstep.

Get your supplies at **Greens Beach Shop** (☎ 6383 9228; Greens Beach Rd; ☎ 8.30am-6pm), where there's also a basic takeaway. The shop manages hire of the **tennis courts** that are right next door (\$15 per day). **Greens Beach Golf Club** (☎ 6383 9102; ☎ 6am-6pm, green fees per day \$15) is also adjacent. It's a nine-hole, par 72 course with plenty of trees and sea views from the eighth tee.

Opposite the shop is the departure point for the **Greens Beach West Head Coastal Trail**. It's about 10km return, passing between waterside holiday shacks and the shoreline and entering the national park about half way along. National park fees apply. The walk leads through dense stands of she-oaks and paperbark, rich with wildlife and Aboriginal heritage, to spectacular West Head Lookout. If you don't have time to walk, you can drive to just below the lookout on Gardners Rd and take a five-minute stroll up to the views.

You can camp or take a cabin at friendly **Greens Beach Caravan Park** (☎ 6383 9222; Main Rd; unpowered/power sites \$15/14, cabins d \$220, extra person \$10) right behind the beach. For somewhere more fancy try **Beaches n Greens** (☎ 0438-344 436; 2 Tamar Crescent; d \$95-140, extra guest \$15). All decked out in yellow and blue, these pretty weatherboard houses, sleeping up to five, have Bass Strait views and are encircled with timber decks. Just the spot for a postbeach barbie. Truly top notch is **Greens Beach Luxury Escape** (☎ 0408-376 211; www.luxuryescapestas.com.au; 19 Pars Rd; house \$250), a glam beach house sleeping four with views to die for.

Narawntapu National Park

Located 25km east of Devonport (12km off the B71), the Narawntapu (formerly Asbestos Range) National Park is a reserve of coastal heath, dunes and bushland that's astoundingly abundant in wildlife. Visit just on dusk and you'll see Forester kangaroos, foraging wombats, wallabies and pademelons.

The park can be accessed near Greens Beach at two points via the C721 and C741. However, the main entrance, where there's a **ranger station and information centre** (☎ 6428 6277; ☎ 8am-4pm Dec-April, 9am-3pm May-Nov) is off the B71 near Port Sorell (see p238). **Discovery rangers** provide guided walks and activities

from here in summer. If you're entering the park from the Greens Beach side, you can buy your parks pass from the Greens Beach shop, or self-register on entry.

Horse riding is allowed and the park has corrals and a 26km trail; bookings with the ranger are required. **Bakers Beach** is the safest swimming area and water-skiing is permitted here in summer.

There are some engaging walking trails in the park. You can hike round **Badger Head** in around six to eight hours (via Copper Cove), while the **Archers Knob** (114m) walk (around two hours return) has good views of Bakers Beach. The one-hour **Springlawn Nature Trail** includes a boardwalk over wetlands to a bird hide. The beach from Griffiths Point to Bakers Point is good for beachcombing and sunset-watching.

The park has four **camp sites**. Caravans can drive to **Springlawn Beach** (powered sites d/family \$15/20) and there are unpowered sites at **Koybaa**, **Bakers Point** and **The Horseyard** (d/family \$12/15), which has a corral for horses. There are tables and toilets at all sites. Firewood is sometimes provided but there's not always reliable water, so check with rangers before setting off or bring your own.

George Town

☎ 03 / pop 5550

George Town sits sentinel on the Tamar River's Eastern Shore, close to where it empties into Bass Strait. The town was founded in 1804 by Lieutenant Colonel Paterson, as part of the British attempt to stave off settlement by the French who had been reconnoitring the area. The town's older buildings date from the 1830s and 1840s, when it prospered as the port linking Tasmania with Victoria. Though today it's perhaps not the most appealing of towns, it's still got a historic maritime feel and a couple of attractions worth visiting.

INFORMATION

Commonwealth Bank (Macquarie St) Has an ATM.

Post office (Macquarie St)

Visitors centre (☎ 6382 1700; Main Rd; ☎ 9am-5pm)

On the main road as you enter from the south.

SIGHTS

Ask at the visitors centre for a map detailing the **George Town Heritage Trail**, which walks you interestingly through the town's history, starting at the **Old Watch House** (1843) on Macquarie

MANNA OR MADNESS? GEORGE TOWN & THE PULP MILL

It's been said you can gauge Tasmania's political and environmental persuasions by the messages on its bumper stickers, and while the West Tamar appears – from the stickers and placards at least – to be vociferously anti-mill, in George Town it's another story altogether. George Town would be the closest town to the proposed \$2 billion Gunns Pulp Mill (see p47) and hopes to benefit from jobs created during its construction, as well as rising house prices amid a general mill-related boom. For this quiet seaside town (that's been rather in the doldrums since the Devil Cat Bass Strait ferry was scrapped) it seems like a boon. But ask people around town about the pulp mill – and if they'll talk to you about it at all – the mood is not so clear. Sure, people would like to see new jobs and investment in town, but it's become increasingly evident that the majority of contractors will be brought in from outside. There are concerns about dangerous construction traffic and an on-going flow of heavy log trucks on the roads nearby. The issue of pollution has people worried too. So although the most widespread bumper sticker you might see in George Town is the succinct judgement 'Greens Tell Lies', dig a little deeper here and you'll find a town that's not entirely happy about the mega-mill that appears about to be built on its doorstep.

St, which houses a small museum. Just outside town there's **Mt George**, which (now among modern communications towers) retains the semaphore equipment once used to relay signals via Mt Direction to Launceston. There's a wheelchair-accessible ramp from the car park to the mountain top.

Bass & Flinders Centre

Undoubtedly the highlight of a visit to George Town, even for committed landlubbers, is the great new **Bass & Flinders Centre** (☎ 6382 3792; 8 Elizabeth St; ☞ 10am-4pm, adult/child/family \$10/8/24) housing a replica of the *Norfolk*, the little yacht used by Bass and Flinders for their 1897 circumnavigation of Van Diemen's Land. Built for a historic re-enactment of the voyage in 1998, the red-sailed replica *Norfolk* now rests here, together with several other historic wooden vessels and an excellent interpretive display.

TOURS

Seal & Sea Adventure Tours (☎/fax 6382 3452, 0419-357 028; www.sealandsea.com) cruises out to the Australian fur seal colony at Tenth Island, with an enthusiastic and knowledgeable guide at the helm. Trips cost \$121 per person for two people and \$98 per person for groups of three or more. River trips, fishing, diving and PADI instruction are also available.

North of town at the airport (heading towards Low Head, turn right down North St for about 2km) you can take ultralight-plane flights over the hills with **Freedom Flight** (☎ 6382 4700). These cost from \$85 per person for 30 minutes; book well in advance.

SLEEPING & EATING

There are camping and caravan sites at Low Head – see opposite.

George Town Heritage Hotel (George Town Hotel; ☎ 6382 2655; 75 Macquarie St; d \$100) Built in 1845, this historic pub with ornate wrought-iron balconies offers basic but comfortable accommodation with en suites, and includes a decent bistro (mains \$15 to \$24) serving the usual steaks and seafood.

Pier Hotel Motel (☎ 13 24 00, 6382 1300; www.pierhotel.com.au; 5 Elizabeth St; d \$155-180; ☑) There are clean-and-tidy motel rooms here, but the star attraction is the recently refurbished and deservedly popular bistro (mains \$18 to \$25; open lunch and dinner). It serves excellent pizzas, porterhouse steaks, snacks and salads. Fold-back doors are opened onto the water in warm weather.

Charles Robbins (☎ 6382 4448; www.thecharlesrobbins.com.au; 3 Esplanade North; d \$240-360, extra person \$76) Done up all modern in leather sofas and glass, these spa suites are George Town's take on luxury. One is equipped with disabled facilities.

Signature Cafe (☎ 6382 1748; 48 Macquarie St; mains \$8-12; ☞ 8am-5pm Mon-Fri) This is a cheerful place with a good range of light meals such as focaccias and salads.

ourpick **York Cove** (☎ 6382 9900; www.yorkcove.com.au; 2 Ferry Blvd; d \$225-265; ☑ ☑) This new waterfront resort is making waves on the Tamar. There are upmarket motel-style rooms and apartments, and a funky bar-restaurant (dishes \$15 to \$32; open breakfast, lunch and dinner), which does contemporary café food and excellent coffees.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

The George Town agent for Redline is the **Shell Service Station** (Main Rd).

Low Head

☎ 03 / pop 465

Low Head and George Town are barely divided – you won't notice leaving one before arriving in the other. It's in a spectacular setting, though, looking out over the swirling – and treacherous – waters of the Tamar as it empties into the sea.

The historic **Low Head Pilot Station** was established in 1805 with the current buildings erected between 1835 and 1962. The Tamar pilot boats are still based here. The **Pilot Station Maritime Museum** (☎ 6382 2826; Low Head Rd; adult/child/pensioner/family \$5/3/4/15; ☞ 10am-4pm) has a great display of maritime clutter – from whalebones to diving bells to shipwreck flotsam and jetsam. Even landlubbers will love it

At the head itself visit the 1888 **lighthouse** (☞ grounds to 6pm) to get a perspective over the great torrent of the Tamar as it spills into the strait. Bring your earmuffs if you plan to be here on a Sunday at noon: this is when the **foghorn** sounds with an earsplittingly deafening bellow.

Little penguins live around the lighthouse and you can view them with **Low Head Penguin Tours** (☎ 0418 361 860; www.penguinours.lowhead.com.au). Tours cost \$15/9 per adult/child and take place nightly from dusk, departing from a signposted spot beside the main road just south of the lighthouse.

There's good surf at **East Beach** on Bass Strait and safe swimming at most beaches around the head.

SLEEPING & EATING

Low Head Tourist Park (☎ 6382 1573; www.lowheadtouristpark.com.au; 136 Low Head Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$22/27.50, cabins \$80, cottages \$95) This river's-edge park has comfortable timber-lined cabins as well as caravan and camping spots – water views included.

Pilot Station (☎ 6382 2826; Low Head Rd; d from \$100) Low Head's historic precinct offers a range of pleasant, fully self-contained, waterfront colonial cottages for up to eight people.

Belfont Cottages (☎ 0418 300 036; www.cottagesofthecolony.com.au; 178 Low Head Rd; d \$135) These cottages once housed the caretakers of the leading light next door and now offer ac-

commodation in period-style interiors. Watch out for the rising damp!

Coxwain's Cottage Café (Low Head Rd; Pilot Station; ☞ 10am-4pm) On a cold winter's day you'll be glad of the hearty warm soups (\$7.50) and snacks served up in this snug café overlooking the water.

Pipers River Region

This region's most famous vineyard is **Pipers Brook** (☎ 6382 7527; 1216 Pipers Brook Rd; tastings \$3; ☞ 10am-5pm) where you can try Pipers Brook, Ninth Island and Krieglinger wines in an architecturally innovative building that also houses the **Winery Café** (mains from \$22; ☞ lunch), which serves a changing menu of light snacks and a delectable tasting plate.

Also within the Pipers Brook estate, but signposted up a different drive, you can visit the separately run **Jansz Wine Room** (☎ 6382 7066; 1216B Pipers Brook Rd, Pipers Brook; ☞ 10am-4.30pm) where you can taste damn fine sparklings, including a delightful pink fizz of a rosé. Self-guided tours clarify some of the 'méthode Tasmannoise' wine production. You can enjoy cheese platters with the sparkly, and take a spell on the lakeside terrace contemplating the vines.

Some 15km away, south of Pipers River, **Bay of Fires Wines** (☎ 6382 7622; 40 Baxters Rd, Pipers River; tastings free; ☞ 10am-5pm) is the home of recently prestigious Arras Sparkling and a fine Tigriss Riesling. Other local vineyards worth a visit include the friendly **Delamere** (☎ 6382 7190; 4238 Bridport Rd, or B82 Hwy, Pipers Brook; ☞ 10am-5pm), which offers superb unwooded chardonnay and pinot noir varieties; and **Dalrymple** (☎/fax 6382 7222; 1337 Pipers Brook Rd; ☞ 10am-5pm) for good French-style pinot noir and award-winning sauvignon blanc.

Lilydale

☎ 03 / pop 345

Quiet Lilydale is little more than a main street with a few stores and services – and some brightly painted utility poles. You can stock up for a picnic at National Trust-listed **Bardenhagen's General Store** (Main Rd; ☞ 7am-7pm Mon-Fri, 7.30am-6pm Sat) and then take a walk to **Lilydale Falls**, 3km north of town. If you're feeling energetic, you could tackle **Mt Arthur** (five to seven hours return), which towers dramatically above Lilydale.

On the road to Lalla is the **WAG Walker Rhododendron Reserve** (admission per vehicle \$2; ☞ 9am-6pm Apr, May & Sep–mid-Dec, 9am-6pm Sat & Sun mid-Dec-Mar), where

there are over 100 varieties of rhododendron and exotic tree. The rhodos make an unbelievable display September to December.

Nearby is Tasmania's oldest working vineyard, **Providence Vineyard** (☎ 6395 1290; www.providence.com.au; 236 Lalla Rd; tastings free; ☞ 10am-5pm) which has a fine chardonnay and pinot, and also sells wines from other boutique vineyards.

The latest attraction in these parts is Forestry Tasmania's newest tourism venture **Hollybank Treetops Adventure** (☎ 6395 1390; www.treetopsadventure.com.au; adult/child \$99/66; ☞ 9am-5pm) about 6km south of Lilydale. Here, harnessed to a cable-mounted swing-seat, you can skim through the treetops at stomach-churning heights, in the care of an experienced guide who will interpret the surrounding forest. There are short walks and forest picnic spots for nonadventurers.

SLEEPING & EATING

Camping is possible for \$6 (for up to two people) at Lilydale Falls Reserve. You need to pay a \$50 deposit at **Lilydale Takeaway** (☎ 6395 1156; Main Rd) to get a key to the amenities block where there are even hot showers; \$14 is refunded on return of the key (two-night stay limit).

Lilydale Tavern (☎ 6393 1230; Main Rd; d \$79; ☞ bakery 9am-5pm) Simple motel-style rooms and a fabulous bakery/café offering light meals, cakes and pastries. People come from miles around to eat its famous pies.

Cherry Top & Eagle Park (☎ 6395 1167; cherrytop@bigpond.com; 81 Lalla Rd; cottage d \$120) This is a place you can pause for a while. There are two sweet self-contained cottages here on a farm that grows most of its own food. Share a yarn around the fire pit and be guided on a farm walk, and enjoy fresh farm produce for your breakfast. Take the C822 out of Lilydale and follow the signs.

Plovers Ridge Host Farm (☎ 6395 1102; fax 6395 1107; 132 Lalla Rd; s/d from \$95/130) An organic property growing apples, berries, nuts veggies and garlic, Plover Ridge offers sun-soaked self-contained accommodation with cooked breakfast in two snug timber units with fantastic valley and mountain views. Filling evening meals are also available (two courses from \$25 per person).

SOUTH OF LAUNCESTON

To the south of Launceston lie Hadspen and Carrick, once small historic villages. They incorporate some landmarks, historic buildings

and one of the richest historic homesteads in Tasmania.

Hadspen & Carrick

☎ 03

Hadspen is an outlying residential suburb about 15km southwest of Launceston. Most visitors who come here do so to visit nearby **Entally House** (☎ 6393 6201; www.entally.com.au; adult/child/family \$97/7/20; ☞ 10am-4pm). Built in 1819 by shipping entrepreneur Thomas Haydock Reibey, it is one of Tasmania's oldest – and loveliest – country homesteads and gives a vivid picture of the affluent rural life of that period. You can inspect the antique-filled house or stroll under the magnificent English trees in the garden. Entally has been leased from the National Trust by woodchipping giant Gunns Ltd (see p47) since 2005, when the company committed \$500,000 to restore the estate. It's also to become a showcase for Gunns' wines.

Just 4km from Hadspen, on the old highway to Deloraine, is Carrick. The village's most prominent feature is the 1846 four-storey, ivy-smothered **Carrick Mill** (67 Bass Hwy). At the time of research this was closed for renovations, but was thought to be opening by the end of 2008 as an upmarket restaurant. Behind the mill is the crumbling 1860 ruin known as **Archers Folly** (Bishopsbourne Rd), twice burnt down. Next door is the **Tasmanian Copper & Metal Art Gallery** (☎ 6393 6440; www.tascoppermetalart.com; 1 Church St; ☞ 9.30am-5pm), where there's an Aladdin's Cave of imaginative metalwork for sale.

SLEEPING & EATING

Hawthorn Villa (☎ 6393 6150; 0427 936 150; cnr Meander Valley Hwy & Church St, Carrick; s/d from \$90/130) Encircled by the well-tended gardens here are four mud-brick cottages providing comfortable B&B accommodation with thoughtful touches like crisp white linen and extra thick bath towels. All have wood fires and generous breakfast provisions.

Carrick Inn (☎ 6393 6143; Meander Valley Rd; mains \$9.50-19.50; ☞ lunch & dinner) has been offering hospitality here since 1833 and does better-than-average pub meals in the welcoming Sammy Cox Bistro, with plenty of meat and seafood.

Westbury

☎ 03 / pop 1300

This languid country town, with its tree lined streets and **village green**, has a feast of his-

toric buildings and a decidedly English feel. Westbury's best known for the **White House** (☎ 6393 1171; King St; adult/child under 16/concession/family \$8/free/6/16; ☞ 10am-4pm Tue-Sun), a property built by Thomas White in 1841-42 as a general store, which now features all sorts of collections and oddities including a 1.8m-high, 20-room doll's house. The on-site **White House Bakery** (right) will get your taste buds craving.

Pearn's Steam World (☎ 6393 1414; 65 Bass Hwy; adult/child \$5/2; ☞ 9am-4pm) comprises two huge sheds filled with the world's largest collection of antique steam engines and relics. This place will appeal most to old-machinery enthusiasts. If that's not enough to oil your engines then head on over to the **Vintage Tractor Shed Museum** (☎ 6393 1167; 5 Veterans Row; adult/child \$3/free; ☞ 9am-4pm) which has 93 farm tractors from 1916-52, as well as 600 scale models of tractors: in short, everything pertaining to these beasts of the field.

If you're more of the artistic persuasion, you shouldn't miss the **John Temple Gallery** (☎ 6393 1666; 103 Bass Hwy; admission free; ☞ 10am-5pm), which exhibits inspiring photographs by this top Tasmanian photographer.

There is 1km of paths among 3000 privet hedges at the **Westbury Maze** (☎ 6393 1840; 10 Bass Hwy; adult/child/family \$6/5/22; ☞ 10am-5pm Sep-Jul, to 6pm Jan). Make your way to the centre to climb a viewing platform and get a bird's-eye view of this gigantic riddle. The tearoom serves Devonshire teas and light lunches, and there's a gift shop selling – of course – puzzles.

SLEEPING

Andy's Bakery (☎ 6393 1846; 45 Bass Hwy; ☞ 24hr, ☑) There are free caravan spots behind Andy's. Shower/toilet facilities cost \$5 and you can hang out inside at any hour of the day.

Olde Coaching Inn (☎ 6393 2100; 54 William St; s/d \$70/100) Dating from 1833, this place was the original inn of the village. This B&B option comprises comfortable and spacious quarters set in beautiful English garden surrounds.

Fitzpatricks Inn (☎ 6393 1153; www.fitzpatrickssinn.com.au; 56 Meander Valley Rd; d \$100) This grand 1833 building set in lovely gardens has been extensively refurbished, but retains all of its period charm. There are eight spacious en suite rooms, and a continental breakfast is served in the restaurant. There's also an à la carte restaurant and a bar menu for snacks.

our pick **Gingerbread Cottages** (☎ 6393 1140; 52 William St; d from \$160-180, extra adult/child \$30/20)

These little cottages alone are worth staying in Westbury for. Decked out with antiques, a cosy, country feel and absolute attention to detail, they are fully self-contained with all mod-cons. Our favourite is the cute timber-lined Gingerbread Cottage (c 1880).

EATING

White House Bakery (☎ 6393 1066; King St; ☞ 9am-4pm Tue-Sun) Nestled into the side of the White House historic estate, this bakery creates magic with dough using a wood-fired oven (dating from 1840) to give you the freshest and tastiest hot bread this side of the Bass Strait. There are also tarts, cakes and incredible biscuits.

Serendipi Tea House (☎ 6393 2544; 34 William St; snacks \$5-14; ☞ 10am-4pm Wed-Sat) There are delicious homemade cakes and meals at these friendly tea rooms. Leaf teas are served in bone china and it does takeaways for the weary traveller.

Westbury Hotel (☎ 6393 1151; 107 Bass Hwy; mains \$14-21.50; ☞ lunch & dinner) This pub isn't doing accommodation until after renovations are finished in early 2009, but it serves good meals: roasts, chicken Kiev and a parmigiana that's up there with the best of them.

Hobnobs (☎ 6393 2007; 47 William St; mains from \$32.50; ☞ lunch Sun, dinner Thu-Sat) The atmosphere in this inviting restaurant is casually delicious – and the chefs are top-notch. Book in for a traditional Sunday roast (complete with Yorkshire pud), or save yourself for dinner – the mouthwatering slow-braised venison shanks are a treat on a cold winter's evening. There's wheelchair access too.

Liffey Valley

This valley at the foot of the Great Western Tiers (Kooferona Niara or 'Mountains of the Spirits') is famously the spiritual home of conservationist and politician Dr Bob Brown. The natural centrepiece of **Liffey Falls State Reserve** (34km southwest of Carrick) is **Liffey Falls**. There are two approaches to the falls, which are actually four separate cascades. From the upstream car park (reached by steep and winding road) it's a 45-minute return walk on a well-marked track. You can also follow the river upstream on foot to the Gulf Rd picnic area; allow two to three hours return. The area has some fine fishing.

Longford

☎ 03 / pop 2830

Another small historic town, dating from the early days of settlement, Longford was

TALL POPPIES

As you travel Tasmania's agricultural heartlands, you may see fields of purple poppies. Tasmania grows 40% of the legal global poppy crop and extracts the opiate alkaloids for use in the production of painkillers and other medicines. You may notice the large Tasmanian Alkaloids production plant near Westbury.

The growing and harvesting of poppies in Tasmania is strictly controlled by the state government and the Poppy Advisory and Control Board, but because poppies are grown in rotation with a range of farm crops, accidents can happen. A local horse trainer was surprised to learn that some of his steeds had ingested poppy seeds that had stowed away in horse feed – disqualifying three from racing after testing positive for opium 'use'. Never try to enter a poppy field, it's illegal and most are protected by electric fences. Believe the warning signs on fences: the unrefined sap from opium poppies can kill.

founded in 1807 when a number of free land-holding farmers were moved to Van Diemen's Land from Norfolk Island. It's one of the few Tasmanian towns not established by convicts.

The village is proud of its gardens, hosting the **Longford Garden Festival** each November. Well known to brown trout-fishing enthusiasts, Longford is also a popular base for fishing in the nearby rivers and streams, and at Cressy 13km to the south.

There's an **online access centre** (☎ 6391 2200; Wellington St; ☎ 10am-5 Mon-Fri), just behind the library, costing around \$5.50 per hour and you'll find a Commonwealth Bank ATM next to the BP service station on Marlborough St.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

Longford is spread out around **Memorial Park** and is known for architectural gems such as the bluestone **Anglican Church** (Goderich St), the **Town Hall** (Smith St), the **library** (Wellington St) and the **Queens Arms Hotel** (Wellington St).

The streets of this little town are also known for something quite different: their stint in the 1950s and '60s as an Australian Grand Prix track. The **Country Club Hotel** (19 Wellington St) is a shrine to this racy past with racing photos and paraphernalia all over the walls. Nowadays the town's main event is the **Blessing of the Harvest Festival** in March, with a street parade and country-fair stalls.

There are two wonderful historic estates around Longford, both established by the Thomas Archer family in the colony's early days. **Woolmers** (☎ 6391 2230; www.woolmers.com.au; Woolmers Lane; adult/child/senior/family from \$18/5/15/41.50; ☎ 10am-4.30pm, tours 11am, 12.30am, 2pm, 3.30pm) dates from 1819 and you'll feel like you've stepped back in time, wandering through the antique-

filled rooms. Here there's also the **National Rose Garden** – two hectares of headily scented blooms. At **Brickendon** (☎ 6391 1383; www.brickendon.com.au; Woolmers Lane; adult/child/concession/family \$12/4.50/11/35; ☎ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun, closed Jul & Aug), the homestead is still lived in by the Archer family, so you can't visit that but you can spend time in the gorgeous old gardens and the farm village. Kiddies will love the animal feeding, and there's trout fishing in the lake. Both properties offer accommodation (see below). To reach both, follow the signs from Wellington St in Longford.

SLEEPING & EATING

Longford Riverside Caravan Park (☎ /fax 6391 1470; 2a Archer St; unpowered/power sites d \$18/22, dm \$40, d \$40-60) You can fish and kayak right from the green riverbanks of this park. There are some cheap bunks, decent rooms and cabins, and the amenities block is disabled-friendly. Under-control dogs welcome.

Country Club Hotel (☎ 6391 1155; 19 Wellington St; s/d \$40/50) This busy pub is a bit of a shrine to Longford's car racing days and you can dine in the Chequered Flag bistro here among the fast-car memorabilia. It's good food including all the usual pub suspects (bistro is open lunch and dinner).

Racecourse Inn (☎ 6391 2352; www.racecourseinn.com; 114 Marlborough St; d \$155-195) There's welcoming (and gay-friendly) hospitality in this restored Georgian inn. The rooms are beautifully antique decorated and the à la carte breakfasts are distinctly gourmet: think eggs Benedict, eggs with smoked salmon, and berries and fruits from the property. Meals are served most nights in the restaurant too.

Brickendon (☎ 6391 1383; accommodation@brickendon.com.au; Woolmers Lane; B&B historic cottage d \$160,

farm cottage d \$150) Brickendon has two well-equipped, early-19th-century cottages (one each for 'coachman' and 'gardener' wannabes), furnished with antiques and family collectables, plus three much newer self-contained cottages with old-style trimmings.

Woolmers (☎ 6391 2230; fax 6391 2270; www.woolmers.com.au; Woolmers Lane; d from \$170) There are seven little cottages set in the grounds of Woolmers. Most once housed servants and free settlers on the estate and they are now all done up for visitors. The Gardeners Cottage is heartbreakingly beautiful.

Servants Kitchen Restaurant (☎ 6391 1163; Woolmers Lane; ☎ lunch) You can take Devonshire teas and lunches in front of the roaring log fire at this little restaurant on Woolmers Estate. If you're staying in the cottages it can arrange a two- or three-course dinner hamper (\$25/30) to take away.

JJ's Bakery & Old Mill Cafe (☎ 6391 2364; 52 Wellington St; mains \$10-20; ☎ 7am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun) There are delectable bakery offerings at this happening place in the Old Emerald flour mill. Pizzas here include the legendary satay chicken and mango variety and it also does various bruschettas, pies and quiches. You can finish off with all things sweet and heavenly: pavlovas, mud muffins and a fine custard tart.

Evandale

☎ 03 / pop 1035

Walk down the main street in Evandale and you'll feel like you've stepped back a century, which is why the whole town is National Trust-listed. It's such an attractive place you'll want to take time to wander its sweet, quiet streets, browse its galleries and market stalls and hang out in cafés. The highlight of the year here is February's National Penny Farthing Championships, when one-wheel warriors race the town's streets at alarming speed.

INFORMATION

At the informative **visitors centre** (☎ 6391 8128; 18 High St; ☎ 10am-3pm) you can pick up the pamphlet *Evandale Heritage Walk* (\$3), which will guide you around the town's historic features. The history room here has a display on famous locals including painter John Glover and highly decorated WWI soldier Harry Murray. Both are commemorated with statues on Russell St: Glover, 18 stone and club-footed and Murray hurling a grenade.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

As you enter town travelling from the airport to the north, there's a castle-like **water tower** (High St) which encloses a convict-dug tunnel designed to supply water to Launceston. Evandale's two historic **churches** – both St Andrews – face off across High St, one Uniting and the other Anglican. There are also stately homes like **Solomon House** (High St), **Fallgrove** (Logan Rd) and **Ingleside** (Russell St). Also on Russell St is **Brown's Village Store**, which still has the original Victorian wooden shop-fitout (and seemingly some of its wares).

The highlight of Evandale's constellation of historic properties (south of town via Nile Rd) is **Clarendon** (☎ 6398 6220; 634 Station Rd; adult/child/concession/family \$10/free/8/20; ☎ 10am-4pm). Built in 1838 in neo-classical style, it looks like it's stepped straight out of *Gone with the Wind* and was long the grandest house in the colony. The antique-graced home is set in seven park-like hectares on the South Esk River bank and you can tour both. For accommodation here, see p226.

Evandale Market (Falls Park; ☎ 9am-1pm) is held each Sunday, and is an exuberant mix of happy locals selling fresh fruit and veg (much of it organic), kids' pony rides (and occasionally a mini train) as well as stalls selling crafts and bric-a-brac.

Foodies shouldn't miss the **Tasmanian Gourmet Sauce Co** (☎ 6391 8437; www.gourmetsauce.com.au; 174 Leighlands Rd; ☎ 10am-5pm Oct-Apr, to 4pm Wed-Sun May-Sep), 3km west of Evandale. Here local fruits and berries are wizarded into delicious jams, sauces, chutneys and relishes. Taste and buy to your heart's content. You can stroll the fabulous topiary-laden gardens too.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

February's **Evandale Village Fair & National Penny Farthing Championships** (www.evandalevillagefair.com; adult/child \$7/free) is when the town comes out to play. There are Penny Farthing races at breakneck speed, a market and the occasional pipe-band parading the streets.

SLEEPING

Stables Accommodation (☎ 6391 8048; evandalestables@bigpond.com; 5 Russell St; B&B s/d \$100/140, extra adult/child \$30/25) The Stables has three comfortable self-contained units set back off the street behind Browns Village Store (above). Ask for the one with the countryside mural behind the bed.

Solomon Cottage (☎ 6391 8331; 1 High St; s/d \$100/130) This cottage was built in 1838 as a

bakery. Joseph Solomon would never have envisaged his oven taken up by a queen-sized bed (note the brick-vaulted ceiling!). The cottage has two bedrooms and the price includes a cooked breakfast with fresh croissants and fruit.

Clarendon (☎ 6398 6190; 634 Station Rd; d \$110) This comfy, cottage accommodation is in an idyllically quiet setting on the estate. TV, microwave and tea- and coffee-making facilities are included and breakfasts can be, on request. Otherwise, wander over to Menzies Restaurant (open for breakfast and lunch) for a cooked breakfast feast.

Arendon Cottage (☎ 6391 8093; 30 Russell St; d 120, extra person \$10) You can sit out on the veranda here and watch the world go by through the white roses. The beautifully kitted-out cottage sleeps up to four. You can get cosy by the wood-burning stove. The breakfast provisions are abundant.

our pick Wesleyan Chapel (☎ 6331 9337; 28 Russell St; \$120) Built in 1836, this tiny brick chapel has been used as a druids' hall, an RSL hall and a meeting place for Scouts. Now, under the high ceiling, it's eminently stylish accommodation for two.

Farthings Village Accommodation (☎ 6391 8251; bookings@farthingsvillageaccommodation.com.au; 16 Russell St; d \$140, extra person \$20) Sleeping up to four, this cute cottage has been lovingly restored in old-world style. The master bedroom has a king-sized four-poster and the bathroom has a spa. Inquire at the Evandale General Store.

Other recommendations:

Clarendon Arms Hotel (☎ 6391 8181; 11 Russell St; s/d \$45/80) This pub has decent budget rooms with shared facilities, and does lunch and dinner daily.

Prince of Wales Hotel (☎ 6391 8381; cnr High & Collins Sts; d \$55-70, f \$70-80) Less salubrious than the other pub in town, the Prince of Wales also offers cheap accommodation.

EATING

Muse Coffee Bar (☎ 6391 8552; 14 Russell St; mains \$7-18; ☎ 10am-5pm, Fri & Sat 6-8pm) This cool little eatery does morning and afternoon teas and delicious lunches using plenty of fresh local produce. Try the Tasmanian smoked salmon on sourdough with figs. Fridays and Saturdays are pizza nights.

Ingleside Bakery Café (☎ 6391 8682; 4 Russell St; mains \$15-20; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Sit in the beautiful walled courtyard or under the high ceiling inside these atmospheric former council chambers. Fresh baking smells waft from the

wood oven, making the bakery wares quite irresistible. They do delectable pies and pasties (\$6), a swagman's lunch for the hungry (\$20) and all manner of sweet treats.

Clarendon Arms Hotel (☎ 6391 8181; 11 Russell St; mains \$13-20; ☎ lunch & dinner) This pub serves up commendable bistro meals and has an outdoor beer garden where you can dine under the trees. Try the homemade beef-and-Guinness pie.

Ben Lomond National Park

This 165-sq-km park takes in the whole of the Ben Lomond massif: a craggy alpine plateau some 14km long by 6km wide. The plateau reaches heights of 1300m and its peaks are above 1500m. Legges Tor (1573m) is the second-highest peak in Tasmania and in fine weather affords amazing 360-degree views. A feature of the park is the tumbled landscape of dolerite columns (popular with rock climbers) and chunky scree slopes.

Ben Lomond has long been Tasmania's St Moritz – well not quite, but when the snow does fall the lifts grind into action and there is skiing here. The park's also magnificent in the summer when alpine flowers run riot.

Ben Lomond was named after its Scottish namesake by the founder of Launceston, Lieutenant Colonel Paterson, in 1804. From 1805 to 1806 Colonel Legge explored the plateau and named its features after explorers of the Nile River in Africa and members of the fledgling Van Diemen's Land colony.

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

In summer, there's easy walking here. It's two hours each way to **Legges Tor** from Carr Villa, about halfway up the mountain. You can also climb to the top from the alpine village on the plateau, which takes about 30 minutes each way on marked tracks. (All walkers and cross-country skiers should register at the self-registration booth at the alpine village.)

If you're happy to go off track, you can walk across the plateau in almost any direction. This is easy enough in fine weather but not recommended in less-than-complete visibility. Unless you're well equipped, walking south of the ski village isn't advised.

The snow can be fickle here but the ski season is generally from early July to mid September. Full-day ski-lift passes cost \$50/45/35/25 per adult/student/teenager 13 to 17/child, while half-day passes cost

\$30/25/20/15. Under sevens and over 70s ride free! There are three T-bars and four poma lifts. **Ben Lomond Snow Sports** (☎ 6393 6105; ☎ from 9am) runs a kiosk selling takeaway fare and a shop doing ski rental package deals. Skis, boots, poles, a day lift pass and a lesson cost \$90/78/65 per adult/teenager 13-17 years/child under 13.

SLEEPING & EATING

There's accommodation year-round at Tasmania's highest pub, **Creek Inn** (☎ 6390 6199; d in summer/winter \$90/180, extra child in summer/winter \$5/25). There are cosily heated en suite rooms here and the best thing is – snow conditions permitting – you can ski right to the door. There's also a fully licensed **restaurant** (mains \$20; ☎ 10am-4pm in summer, breakfast lunch & dinner in winter) where you can top up your skiing or hiking energy.

There's also a good **camping** area, 1km along from the park entrance, which offers secluded,

cleared, unpowered sites, flushing toilets, drinking water and a fantastic lookout.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

In the ski season **McDermotts Coaches** (Map p204; ☎ 6394 3535; 40 St John St, Launceston; adult/concession/family return \$27/21/87) runs a service departing from the back entrance of the Launceston Sport & Surf store (the Birchalls car park) at 8.30am daily, departing the mountain at 4pm. An additional shuttle service runs between the rangers station (\$14/11 per adult/concession return) and the alpine village throughout the day. Park entrance fees are \$11 per person – you can buy them on the bus. Book a day in advance.

Outside the ski season, driving is your only transport option. Note that the track up to the plateau is unsealed and includes Jacob's Ladder, a very steep climb with six dramatic hairpin bends and no safety barriers. During the snow season chains are standard equipment. Don't forget antifreeze in winter.

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