

The Northeast



If you dream of endless beaches, where you're the only soul about – of picture-perfect clear-blue waters, powder-white sands and peace – then Tasmania's northeast is the place to head. This part of the state has the dazzling natural beauty of the east coast, but gets far fewer visitors and still feels quite wild. The northeast corner is also the sunniest part of Tasmania, so you're likely to be overarched by blue skies, summer and winter.

Fishers love Tasmania's northeast. There's outstanding game fishing off St Helens, or you can cast a line off the beach at gorgeous Binalong Bay. Divers can take to underwater worlds here, and snorkellers can explore the coast's rocky gulches. For walkers there are endless beach strolls in the Bay of Fires. Wildlife-rich Mt William National Park is perhaps the best spot for beachside camping in Tasmania. Seafood, of course, is top of the menu: the crayfish, abalone and deep-sea fish are just-off-the-boat fresh. There are several great food experiences worth travelling a long way for here: arrive on an empty stomach.

The northeast is not all about surf and sand either. The hills and valleys behind the coast are coloured in deepest green. This is rainforest, waterfall and prime pasture country. At Pyengana you can sample handmade cheeses and ice creams, feed beer to a famous imbibing pig or stand in awe at the amazing St Columba Falls. There's the purple geometry of lavender farming near Scottsdale, the historic tin-mining town of Derby, and sinuous, scenic routes that connect it all.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Being awe-inspired by the remote beauty of the **Bay of Fires** (p194)
- Detouring to the green fields and forests of **Pyengana** (p193)
- Throwing in a line and **catching your dinner** (p191)
- Hiking to waterfalls like **Ralphs Falls** and **St Columba Falls** (p193)
- Wandering through the wildlife at **Mt William National Park** (p196)
- Kayaking the placid waters of Ansons River and floating in your boat on the mirror-calm lagoon with the **Bay of Fires Walk** (p195)
- Smelling the heady scent of lavender at **Bridestowe Lavender Estate** (p198)
- Being a water baby (or beach babe) at **Binalong Bay** (p194)

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.northeasttasmania.com.au

■ www.parks.tas.gov.au/reserves/bayoffires



GETTING THERE & AROUND Bicycle

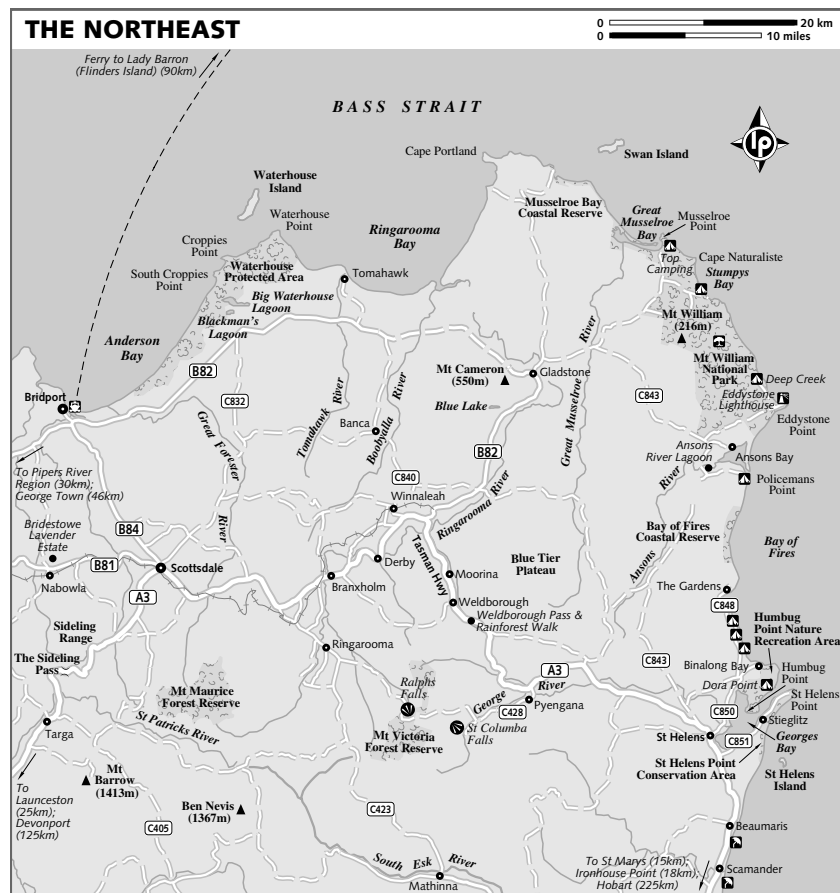
Cyclists who take on the challenge of the northern part of the A3 (Tasman Hwy) will love its winding, narrow passes and scenic lookouts, but need to be traffic-aware. Alternatively, take the secondary roads like the gravel C843, where there's little traffic and fewer hills. Pack a tent to enjoy camping at Mt William National Park (p196), the Weldborough Hotel (p196), Tomahawk (p198) and Bridport (p198).

Bus

Redline Coaches (☎ 6336 1446, 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) runs daily, except Saturday, from Launceston to Conara Junction. Here

you transfer onto a **Calows** (☎ 6372 5166; ticketing through Redline) coach and continue through Fingal (\$19.70, 1½ hours) and St Marys (\$23.40, 1¾ hours) to St Helens (\$29, 2½ hours). Redline services from Hobart connect with this service in Conara daily except Saturday. There's a daily Redline service (except Saturday) from Launceston to Scottsdale (\$15.80, 1½ hours), Derby (\$22.30, 2½ hours) and Winnaleah (\$25.10, 3½ hours), from where you can continue with Broadby's to St Helens.

Broadby's (☎ 6376 3488) makes a weekday postal run – with an informal lift-share system – between St Helens and St Marys, departing the Mobil in St Helens at 7.30am and leaving St Marys post office at 8.20am for



THE TRAIL OF THE TIN DRAGON

There's an interesting piece of history in Tasmania's northeast, and it's one with an unexpected twist. Tin was discovered in these hills in the late 1800s, attracting thousands of miners. Many came from the goldfields of Victoria, and many were Chinese.

At its peak, the Chinese community in and around Derby, Weldborough and Moorina numbered a thousand people. The Chinese were allocated the smaller workings further away from the central mines, and they developed their own settlements and mining practices, of which there are many remnants today. There's currently a major project underway here to document this Chinese mining heritage and to map it in a route that tourists can follow called the **Trail of the Tin Dragon**.

The route – with interpretative attractions along the way – is scheduled for completion in 2009. It will lead between Scottsdale and St Helens, its centrepiece being the new **Tin Centre** (☎ 6354 1062; ☎ 9am-5pm; adult/child/family \$16/8/40) in Derby. Set in an architecturally innovative building on the edge of the Ringarooma River, the centre has an informative exhibition, 'Life, the Universe and Tin', with detailed stories from the lives of Chinese and European miners, as well as a strong environmental message about restoration and regeneration after mining. At Moorina, visitors can see a **Burning Tower**, inscribed with Chinese characters where paper offerings were burnt for good fortune. Chinese miners congregated for recreation at Weldborough, where there was once a **Daoist temple** (currently in the Queen Victoria Museum & Art Gallery in Launceston; see p205). There's the remains of a second burning tower here, and interpretation including a new offering wall is planned: visitors will be able to get offering tokens to speed their own journeys. The trail will be book-ended with snazzy holographic displays at the visitors centres in Scottsdale (p198) and St Helens (opposite). There are currently all sorts of Chinese mining artefacts on display in the latter. Ask at either centre for a map/brochure on the trail from early 2009.

See also www.trailofthetindragon.com.

\$5 in petrol money each way. Broadby's also does the St Helens–Derby–Winnaleah–St Helens postal run. This departs St Helens post office weekdays at 10.15am, leaves Derby at 12.30pm and Winnaleah around 1pm; the contribution is \$7 to \$10 one way to/from either Derby or Winnaleah.

Tassielink (☎ 6230 8904, 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) runs the service from Hobart to St Helens via the Midlands Hwy and Epping Forest. There's a transfer at Epping Forest onto Calows Coaches to continue to St Helens. Buses go Monday to Thursday (four hours) costing \$46 one way.

Tours

If you really want to get off the beaten track, **Beach to Bush Adventures** (☎ 6372 5468; www.beachto bushadventures.com.au; day trip adult/child \$220/66) offers catered 4WD and guided walking tours of the northeast, taking in out-of-the-way spots in the Bay of Fires, Eddystone Point and the Blue Tier.

Pepper Bush Adventures (☎ 6352 2263; www.pepperbush.com.au; from \$375 per person) runs premium tours in a luxury 4WD to give you a taste of the Tasmanian back country in style. Choose

the Wilderness and Wildlife Tour with the Gourmet Bush Tucker experience for an afternoon/evening of creature-spotting and feasting on game like venison, wallaby and trout. The Waterfalls and Wilderness Day Tour takes in the wilder sides of the northeast rainforest.

ST HELENS

☎ 03 / pop 2000

Set on the wide and protected sweep of Georges Bay, St Helens began life as a whaling and sealing settlement in the 1830s. Soon the 'swanners' came to plunder here, harvesting the bay's black swans for their downy underfeathers. By the 1850s, the town was a permanent farming settlement, which burgeoned in 1874 when tin was discovered. St Helens has long been an important Tasmanian fishing port and today harbours the state's largest fishing fleet. All that fish means there's plenty of excitement for anglers: charter boats will take you out to where the big game fish swim. For landlubbers this sweet little town is a lively holiday spot. There's good eating and accommodation, and good beaches nearby. There's also the outstanding **Suncoast Jazz Jamboree** held each year in June.

Information

The **St Helens visitors centre** (☎ 6376 1744; 61 Cecilia St; ☎ 9am-5pm), just off the main street behind the library, will ply you with brochures and help with bookings. It also houses the town's interesting History Room, which gives a good insight into St Helens' past.

Services, including the post office, supermarkets and banks (with ATMs) can be found along Cecilia St. There's internet access at the **Online Access Centre** (☎ 6376 1116; 61 Cecilia St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon Sat & Sun).

Visit **Service Tasmania** (☎ 1300 135 513; 23 Quail St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) for national parks passes.

Sights & Activities

Both sides of the entrance to Georges Bay are state reserves and have some gentle walking tracks. A good track circles around **St Helens Point** (one hour return; take St Helens Point Rd out). On the north side, Skeleton Bay (10km north) and Dora Point (11km north), both in **Humbug Point Recreation Area** off Binalong Bay Rd, offer hours of walking on well-marked tracks.

There are some beautiful rainforest walks and overgrown ruins of the area's mining past on the **Blue Tier** plateau, northwest of St Helens. You can purchase a map outlining walks in the Tier at the visitors centre.

Because it's set on a muddy, tidal bay, St Helens' beaches aren't tops for swimming. **Stieglitz** (7km east at St Helens Point) and the beaches at St Helens and Humbug Points are better options, though check surf conditions as there can be rips. Also on St Helens Point are the spectacular **Peron Dunes**.

The calm waters of Georges Bay are excellent for water sports. **East Lines** (☎ 6376 1720; 28 Cecilia St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-2pm Sat & Sun) hires equipment (surfboards, wetsuits, snorkelling gear and fishing rods) and also has bikes for rent (\$5/15/25 per hour/four hours/day). For diving, contact Bay of Fires Dive (p195) at Binalong Bay. To get out onto the water you can hire sea kayaks and aluminium dinghies at the St Helens Youth Hostel (right).

If you are at all into the sport of fishing, then St Helens – Tasmania's game-fishing capital – is the place to collect stories about the big one that didn't get away. The following operators offer game-fishing charters:

Keen Angler (☎ 0409 964 847)

Professional Charters (☎ 6376 3083; www.gamefish.net.au)

Roban Coastal Charters (☎ 6376 3631; www.robancostalcharters.com.au)

Tours

Barefoot Adventures (☎ 0408-018 088; www.barefootadventures.com.au) Got a yen to get out on the water for a bit of hunter-gathering? These guys can take you to the top spots for snorkelling, abalone hunting, cray fishing and gourmet beach picnics. Shoes not required.

Johno's 'Quickly' 4WD Tas Tours (☎ 6376 3604, 0418-132 155; www.johnos4wdtours.com.au) Venture up dry riverbeds, make wet river crossings and climb steep hills around St Helens for sublime views on one of Johno's 'quickies' (1½ hours, \$35). Half-day tours (\$80, including lunch) discover the Bay of Fires or Pyengana, taking in secret spots along the way, and full-day excursions visit both coast and rainforest (\$145). Night spotlight tours in search of native wildlife are \$30.

Sleeping

You can sleep much more affordably St Helens than in other popular parts of the state. There's little of the top-notch variety here though.

BUDGET

There are free camping sites in bushland north of St Helens at Humbug Point Nature Recreation Area. The turn-off is 7km out of town, en route to Binalong Bay. The camping area is a further 5km through the reserve, at Dora Point.

St Helens Youth Hostel (☎ 6376 1661; 5 Cameron St; non-members dm \$22-27, d 55-70, 10% member discount; ☑) This YHA has bunk and double rooms, but the highlight here is all the gear for hire. Bikes (\$25 per day), kayaks (\$15 to \$20 per hour), tinnies (\$80 to \$90 for two hours) will get you out onto the water and into the bush, and there's even camping gear for rent, so that you can go walkabout at the breathtaking Bay of Fires.

Kellrairie Units (☎ 6376 1169; 72 Tully St; d \$70, extra adult/child 40/20) Just north of St Helens' centre, on the route out of town, these spic-and-span units (one with wheelchair access) are incredibly good value. Each has a full kitchen, laundry and spacious living area. The friendly owners tend a good video library, too.

St Helens Caravan Park (☎ 6376 1290; reception@sthelenscp.com.au; Penelope St; unpowered sites for two \$23-27, powered sites for two \$22-28, cabin d \$75-110, villa d \$100-120) This park has a pleasant, green

this little place, just off the main street, or take away good, simple fare including Caesar salad, lamb korma and butter chicken.

Pasta Resistance (☎ 6376 2074; 22 Cecilia St; mains \$5-15.50; ☎ 8am-9pm summer, 11am-7pm winter) This little eatery serves abundant dishes of pasta that's freshly made daily. They do a killer chilli gnocchi, carbonara that'll have you ordering seconds, and there's gelati to finish.

our pick **The Village Store & More** (☎ 6376 1666; 55 Cecilia St; \$7.90-15; ☎ breakfast & lunch; ☎) This great deli/café serves what it calls 'peasant food' on big wooden tables among funky décor. There are wood-fired organic breads, gourmet Tassie titbits to take away, scrumptious breakfasts and lunch items like focaccias, rotis and homemade meat pies. Try the Salmon Mardi Gras: 'like a party in your mouth'.

Captain's Catch (☎ 6376 1170; Wharf Area; takeaway meals \$9-14; ☎ lunch daily) At the time of research, this popular fish-and-chip spot on the water had just received the go-ahead for a major expansion to include a new restaurant. If their usual formula is anything to go by, this will be the best spot for consistently good food in St Helens. Our mouths are watering.

Bayside Inn Bistro (☎ 6376 1466; 2 Cecilia St; mains \$15-28; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) A big, crowd-pleasing menu is on offer here, with lots of the expected meat and fish dishes (roast of the day, schnitzel, steak, and fish and chips), but also crayfish at market prices and a few veg options.

Salty Seas (☎ 6376 1252; 16 Medeas Cove Esplanade; mussels/crayfish per kg \$7/50; ☎ daily) Crayfish are the special here – you can choose them right out of the tanks – but there are also oysters, mussels and fish fresh off the boat. You can feast on this marine abundance on their deck overlooking a bird sanctuary.

Getting There & Away

The Redline/Calows depot is at 2 Circassian St, while Broadby's depart from the United service station or the post office, depending on the route. See p189 for detailed bus info.

BAY OF FIRES

The Bay of Fires is a 29km sweep of powder-white sand and crystal-clear seas that's been called one of the best beaches in the world. In 2005 *Condé Nast Traveller* named it second, behind only Anse Du Grand Colombier in the French West Indies. The word is out about this unspoiled spot so if you're after beachside solitude, go now.

To call the Bay of Fires one beach is really a misnomer. The Bay itself is made up of a string of superb beaches, punctuated by lagoons and rocky headlands, and backed by coastal heath and bush. There are gulches full of crayfish and abalone, and there's great recreational diving in the bay's clear waters (see opposite). The ocean beaches provide some good surfing but are prone to rips. Check conditions with locals before swimming, or plunge into one of the tiny rock-protected coves.

There's no road that runs the length of the bay. The C850 heads out of St Helens to the gorgeous beachside holiday settlement of **Binalong Bay** (see below), which marks the southern end of the Bay of Fires. The road (C848) continues north to holiday 'shacks' at **The Gardens**, but stops here. There are some deliriously beautiful bush camping sites behind the beaches all along this stretch; **Swimcart Beach** and **Cosy Corner** are the most popular and have pit toilets. **Seatons Cove** and **Sloop Beach** are generally quieter. Bring your own water and firewood: fires are allowed outside fire ban periods.

The bay's northern end is reached via the gravel C843, which leads to **Ansons Bay** and then Mt William National Park. Pretty Ansons Bay is a quiet holiday village that's a popular fishing, boating and swimming spot: if you have kayaks, **Ansons River Lagoon** is perfect for sheltered paddling. **Policemans Point** has free camping spots. There are no petrol stations or shops at Ansons Bay, so fill up at either St Helens or Gladstone.

Eddystone Point, just north of Ansons Bay, marks the Bay of Fires' northern extremity. Since 1889 the imposing granite tower of **Eddystone Point Lighthouse** (37m) has warned ships off this rocky shoreline. The complex, which includes historic lighthouse keepers' cottages, is worth a visit. There's bush camping at nearby **Deep Creek** within Mt William National Park.

BINALONG BAY

☎ 03 / pop 200

Set on a sheltered gulch, and drenched in picture-perfect views of sea and sand, Binalong Bay is the only permanent settlement on the Bay of Fires. It was first used by fishermen and farmers around 1900, and only by the 1940s were there any permanent residents. Now, this quiet spot is growing in popularity as a beachside holiday idyll. There's not much

FIRE WALKING *Tony Wheeler*

Stretching south of Mt William National Park is the Bay of Fires, a long sweep of white sand named in 1773 by French explorer Tobias Furneaux after the Aboriginal fires spotted along the coastline. Middens (piles of discarded mollusc shells and bones) are mute evidence of the area's Aboriginal history.

From November to May the **Bay of Fires Walk** (☎ 6391 9339; www.bayoffires.com.au) conducts a four-day, three-night Bay of Fires experience, where a maximum of 10 people embark on a well-catered journey of natural discovery. It costs \$1950 per person.

Perched on a ridge top high above the bay's blue waters is the stunning Bay of Fires Lodge. Architecturally it's good enough to grace the title page of *Australian Architecture Now*, a weighty coffee-table book featuring some of the 1990s' most noteworthy Australian buildings. But the lodge is far more than simply a beautiful design. It's also built according to the very best ecological principles, right down to composting toilets, and showers for which water has to be hand-pumped up to a holding tank.

To ensure prospective guests really appreciate the environmentally sensitive luxury, the superb views and the fine food and wine, they have to pass a test before reaching it: they have to walk for two days.

The first day sees participants do a 9km walk to a permanent tented camp hidden in dunes behind the beach. The second day's exertions alternate between beachside and inland walks, and include fording Deep Creek, lunch near Eddystone Point lighthouse, and, finally, crossing a series of headlands and dramatic coves before climbing up to the lodge.

The next morning, guests can do a spot of kayaking on Ansons River or simply laze around enjoying the views while working up an appetite for dinner. The final day comprises a short walk out to a waiting minibus, which whisks you back to Launceston.

here – no shops, just some holiday cottages, a dive operator and one fabulous restaurant – but it is precisely this quiet, low-key atmosphere that most people come for.

Swimming, snorkelling and surfing draw water babies. There's good surf in and around the bay, and great swimming on calm days. Snorkellers head to **Binalong Gulch** where they can pick up abalone (with a licence). This is one of the best spots in Tasmania for diving: the elusive weedy seadragon is often spotted here. **Bay of Fires Dive** (☎ 6376 8173; 0419-372 342; www.bayoffiresdive.com.au) rents out scuba equipment and does boat dives and sub-aqua training. They also rent out kayaks, body boards, wetsuits, snorkelling gear and mountain bikes. They'll even take you on a boat cruise to catch your own crayfish.

Sleeping & Eating

Bay of Fires Character Cottages (☎ 6376 8262; www.bayoffirescottages.com.au; 64-74 Main Rd; d \$150-250, extra person \$30) These well-kitted-out cottages have a million-dollar location overlooking the bay. All have mesmerising views, in which you can absorb yourself as you hang out and have a BBQ on the deck. There are full kitchen and laundry facilities in each.

Point Break (☎ 6331 1224; www.pointbreakbinalong.com; 20 Beven Heights; d 180-190, extra person \$30) Surely the coolest beach house at Binalong Bay. All timber floors, high ceilings and bright, nautical white, this beautifully furnished house is a place to chill with friends after a day in the surf. It has every possible mod con, and sleeps up to eight.

Angasi Apartment (☎ 6376 8222; www.angasi.com.au; Main Rd; d \$220, extra person \$50) From the outside this looks like a humble little fisherman's cottage, but inside it's been funkily modernised to make it a cool beachside apartment: perfect for romantic escapes. The price includes breakfast at wonderful Angasi restaurant (below) next door.

Bay of Fires Retreat (☎ 0418-145 984; Jeanneret Beach, up to 6 people \$220-260) Thirty minutes' stroll along the beach from Binalong Bay, this breezy, private beach house sleeps up to six in classy surroundings with Tasmanian art on the walls.

Angasi (☎ 6376 8222; www.angasi.com.au; Main Rd; mains \$27-38; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner) People come for miles to eat at Angasi, and it's not just because of the sublime views. This little restaurant is making a name for itself as one of the best in the state. Try the oysters six

ways – chilled and grilled – or the rock lobster medallions with coriander lime custard. Meat eaters also well catered for.

WELDBOROUGH

☎ 03 / pop 50

As the Tasman Hwy approaches the Weldborough Pass, an arabesque cutting that is famously popular with motorcyclists, it follows a high ridge with vistas of surrounding forests and mountains. Near the top, stop at the **Weldborough Pass Rainforest Walk** for a 15-minute interpretative circuit through moss-covered myrtle rainforest.

Tiny Weldborough is almost a ghost town today, compared with the bustling settlement it must have been in the midst of the tin rush here in the late 1800s. In mining days Weldborough had 800 inhabitants, mostly Chinese, and there are still remains of their culture here. See boxed text, p190.

In a quiet, forest setting, the characterful **Weldborough Hotel** (☎ 6354 2223; Tasman Hwy; d/f \$60/75; meals \$12-22; ☎ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) is a wonderful lunchtime or overnight stop. Painted in deep colours and decorated in period style, it serves up hearty pub food and has comfortable rooms. There's also free camping, with hot showers, in an attractive setting out back. The only condition is that you order a main meal in the pub. It's a favourite spot with cyclists.

GLADSTONE

☎ 03 / pop 100

About 25km north of Weldborough, off the Tasman Hwy between St Helens and Scottsdale, is the tiny town of Gladstone. It was one of the last tin-mining centres in northeastern Tasmania, and when the mine closed in 1982 its inhabitants were forced to look for new ways to eke out a living. Gladstone also had a large Chinese population, evidence of which can be seen in the historic cemetery. There's a general store selling supplies, takeaways and fuel. The **Gladstone Hotel** (☎ 6357 2143; Chaffey St; s/d \$40/70; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Mon-Sat) does pub meals and has simple accommodation (shared facilities).

MT WILLIAM NATIONAL PARK

Beautiful Mt William in Tasmania's far northeast corner is one of the state's most gloriously unvisited national parks. It's the kind of place to come and camp for a few days, stroll the

beaches, fish, swim or surf, and let the wildlife come to you. It's a land of shimmering turquoise waters, dazzling white beaches, coastal woodlands and heath that's abundant with native animals, birds and flowers. The area was declared a national park in 1973 to protect the endangered Forester kangaroo, which now flourishes here.

The high point of the park is 216m **Mt William**. It's an easy, gradual climb (two hours return) and affords wide views of the coastline and the islands of the Furneaux group. These were the high points of the Bassian Plane that formed the land bridge linking Tasmania to what's now the mainland, via which the first inhabitants crossed to Tasmania. Aboriginal habitation of the area is illustrated by the large shell midden at **Musselroe Point**. To the south, the lighthouse at **Eddystone Point** (see p194) is clearly visible, its night-time beam a beacon to ships entering dangerous Banks Strait.

There's idyllic (free) beachside **camping** under the she-oaks at Stumpys Bay, at Top Camp near Musselroe Bay and also beside lovely tannin-stained Deep Creek in the park's south. Campground 4 at Stumpys has a shelter, picnic tables and gas BBQs that are free to use. All the sites have pit toilets but no drinking water. Fires are allowed in designated fire spots, but bring your own firewood and beware of fire restrictions.

National park entry fees apply. You can register and pay at the kiosk on the northern access road or, if approaching from the south, buy a pass from the general store in Gladstone or **Service Tasmania** (☎ 1300 135 513; 23 Quail St; ☎ 8.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) in St Helens.

Getting There & Around

The northern end of Mt William is 17km from Gladstone and the southern end is around 60km from St Helens. From Bridport, take the road towards Tomahawk and continue to Gladstone. The nearest petrol stops to the park are in Gladstone or St Helens. There's no petrol station at Ansons Bay. Be careful driving at night as there's always wildlife on the road.

DERBY

☎ 03 / pop 170

Today little Derby (pronounced *dur-bee*) is a quiet, attractive town set in the valley of the peaceful Ringarooma River. One hundred years ago this was a large, thriving mining centre, which began when tin was

discovered here in 1874. The northeast's tin rush attracted thousands and several mines operated in Derby and its surrounds. At its boom-time height, it numbered 3000 souls. In 1929, after heavy rains, a mining dam burst in Derby and 14 people died in the resulting flood. The mines closed for five years after this tragedy, then reopened in 1935 but closed again after WWII, causing an exodus. Today, Derby sells itself on this mining history and has an appealing streetscape that's a pleasure to wander and browse.

Sights & Activities

The new **Tin Centre** (☎ 6354 1062; adult/child/family \$16/8/40; ☎ 9am-5pm) is in an architecturally striking building by the Ringarooma River. The centrepiece of Derby's tale of tin, it has an interesting multimedia presentation on the mining history of the area (see boxed text, p190).

In the historic Old Schoolhouse building adjacent, the **Derby History Room** (admission by donation) has a display on the social history of Derby, as opposed to its mining past. Opening hours vary as it's staffed by volunteers, and the Tin Centre can tell you when.

Next door to the Old Schoolhouse is **Bankhouse Manor** (☎ 6354 2222; 51 Main St), a restored timber bank building dating from 1888. It's owned by an artist and houses a gallery showcasing local arts and craft, as well as a collection relating to Chinese history here. It may offer B&B rooms, though at time of research the manor's future was uncertain. They also sell wonderful homemade ice cream.

Derby gets as many as 10,000 visitors in late October for its annual **Derby River Derby**. The derby sees around 500 competitors in all sorts of inflatable craft, with the emphasis on the distinctly homemade, racing down a 5km river course. The primary goal in this good-humoured contest is not so much to reach the finish line, but to sabotage your neighbours' vessels and be the last one still floating. As a free-for-all spectacle, it's hard to beat.

If you're driving from the north, check out the gigantic trout mural splashed across the riverside cliffs as you cross the bridge into Derby.

Sleeping & Eating

There's not much accommodation in Derby. Free short-term **camping** is allowed in Derby Park by the Ringarooma River, including

caravan spots, but there are but no powered sites. Facilities include toilet blocks, a kids' playground, gas BBQs, picnic tables and a tennis court nearby. Washing is *au naturel*: you can swim in the river.

Cloverlea Gardens Bed & Breakfast (☎ 6354 6370; 27 Legerwood Lane; d \$88-110) The Gardens' pretty *Camelia Cottage* at Branhholm is the best accommodation option near Derby. The glorious gardens here are reason enough to visit, and the cute, cosy cottage (that comes with breakfast provisions) is a peaceful spot to stay.

Cobbler's Cottage (☎ 6354 2145; 63 Main St; d \$120, extra person \$20) This old timber miner's cottage in the main street is pretty low key, but if you don't mind a basic overnight stop, it's a good self-contained option. It's run by Federal Tavern, just up the street.

Berries Café (☎ 6354 2520; 72 Main St; meals \$5-14.50; ☎ 10am-5pm summer, reduced hr winter) This welcoming café is housed in a pretty mining-era weatherboard cottage where you can sit on the veranda in summer or beside the log fire in winter. Try the smoked salmon and King Island brie quiche, homemade with free-range eggs, or the great pavlovas with home grown berries.

The old mining-era pubs in the area offer budget accommodation and pub meals. There's the lovely 1907 **Imperial Hotel** (☎ 6354 6121; Stoke St; s/d \$35/55; ☎ lunch & dinner) in nearby Branhholm and the **Winnaleah Hotel** (☎ 6354 2331; Main St, s \$45, d with/without bathroom \$70/50; ☎ lunch & dinner) in Winnaleah, north of Derby. The **Dorset Hotel** (☎ 6354 2360; Main St; s/d \$35/75) in Derby sometimes offers very basic rooms, and does decent pizzas of an evening.

Getting There & Away

See p189 for buses servicing Derby.

SCOTSDALE

☎ 03 / pop 2000

Scottsdale is the largest town in Tasmania's northeast and services the farming communities that work the rich agricultural here. The town was named for surveyor James Scott, who opened the area to European settlement from 1855. Potato, poppy and dairy farming are now mainstays, as are forestry operations in the pine and eucalypt forests nearby. Scottsdale and surrounds are recently most famous for being the base of a 2006 smear campaign by members of the conservative

Exclusive Brethren religious sect against the Australian Greens. Exclusive Brethren members are successful businesspeople in the town.

Information

The architecturally innovative **Forest EcoCentre** (☎ 6352 6466; King St; admission free; ☞ 9am–5pm), run by Forestry Tasmania, houses an interactive forest interpretation centre (and also a café and gift shop selling local handicrafts). In the same building is the **Scottsdale visitors centre** (☎ 6352 6520; scottsdale@tasvisinfo.com.au), which stocks plenty of good handouts on drives, walks and places to stay. It can also make tour and accommodation bookings.

There are services and banks with ATMs located along King St, the main road through town.

Sights & Activities

Near Nabowla, 22km west of Scottsdale, is the turn-off to the **Bridestow Estate Lavender Farm** (☎ 6352 8182; www.bridestowelavender.com.au; 296 Gillespies Rd; ☞ 9am–5pm daily Nov–April, 10am–4pm Mon–Fri rest of year). This is the largest lavender farm in the southern hemisphere, and the deep purple display here in the flowering season (mid–December to late January) is unforgettable. The farm produces lavender oil for the perfume industry, and you can take a tour of the operation, including the farm and distillery in the flowering season (adult/child under 16 \$5/free). There's also a café and gift shop that sell everything lavender, from drawer scents to lavender fudge and honey to lavender-flavoured muffins and ice cream.

The road from Scottsdale to Launceston crosses a pass called the **Sideling** (about 15km south of Scottsdale). Outfitted with toilets, picnic tables and outstanding views as far as Flinders Island on a clear day, it makes a great respite from the winding road.

Sleeping & Eating

Lords Hotel (☎ 6352 2319; 2 King Sts/d \$30/50; ☞ lunch & dinner) Lord's has been a Scottsdale landmark since 1911 and is still known for better-than-counter pub meals (\$10 to \$23.50) like its signature chicken Oscar, as well as good roasts and steaks. There's recently refurbished accommodation with shared facilities.

Scottsdale Hotel-Motel (☎ 6352 2510; 18–24 George St; s/d \$47/59) This hotel describes itself as a working man's pub, and doesn't try to be

anything fancy, but it does have budget rooms and bistro meals (\$12 to \$19.50) for lunch and dinner daily (no lunches on Saturdays).

Willow Lodge (☎ 6352 2552; 119 Kings; s \$70–90, d \$90–125, extra person \$30) Surely one of the most lovely places to stay in the northeast, this wonderful B&B in an Federation home is presented with absolute attention to detail. The bright, colourful rooms look over lovely gardens. They spoil with you traditional Devonshire tea on arrival and after-dinner liqueurs.

Beulah (☎ 6352 3723; 9 King St; s \$95, d \$125–145; ☞) This elegantly decorated 1878 home has three luxurious rooms decked out in heritage style. To be completely spoilt, pick the spa and sauna suite with an open fireplace. There's also a cosy guest lounge, where you can enjoy a good port by the fire or an indulgent afternoon tea.

Anabel's of Scottsdale (☎ 6352 3277; www.vision.net.au/~anabels; 46 King St; s/d \$110/130, extra adult \$15; mains \$20–28; ☞ dinner Tue–Sat) Anabel's is a National Trust–classified home with accommodation in spacious modern motel-style units (some with cooking facilities) overlooking a woodland garden. There's relaxed fine dining in the restaurant with seafood, game, great eye fillet and quality Tasmanian wine.

Pop into the **Cottage Bakery** (☎ 6352 2273; 9 Victoria St; ☞ 6am–5.30pm Mon–Fri) to pick up picnic fodder – they do fine pies, too.

TOMAHAWK

☎ 03 / pop 12

The small holiday settlement of Tomahawk is out on an isolated bit of the north coast, 40km from Bridport on a sealed road. For most of the year its beaches are largely deserted, so it's a good place to get away from your travelling peers. It has excellent fishing for keen anglers; particularly good is the trout fishing at **Blackman's Lagoon** in the Waterhouse Protected Area, about 10km west of Tomahawk.

Tomahawk Caravan Park (☎ 6355 2268; Main Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$18/23, on-site vans & cabins \$65–75) is the only place to stay in these parts. The basic vans and cabins use the communal amenities block. BYO linen. There's petrol, a small shop and café serving a limited range of food.

BRIDPORT

☎ 03 / pop 1235

This well-entrenched holiday resort is on the shore of Anderson Bay. Just 85km from Launceston, it's popular with Tasmanians seeking leisure and there are plenty of holi-

day houses lazing about town. This is also a good base from which to explore the wineries of the Pipers River region, 30km west of here (p221).

Sights & Activities

Bridport has safe swimming beaches and its sheltered waters are also ideal for water skiing. Sea, lake and river fishing are key attractions here, and there's trout fishing in nearby lakes and dams.

The area is renowned for its native orchids, which flower from September to December. The **Bridport Wildflower Reserve** (Richard St; admission free) is 2km past the caravan park and protects a swathe of largely virgin coastal bush and heathland. There are walking tracks here, and you might spot endangered flora like the juniper wattle (*Acacia ulicifolia*), some of the 49 bird species, or threatened species like the eastern barred bandicoot, spotted-tail quoll or wedge-tailed eagle.

Golfers rave about **Barnbogle Dunes** (☎ 6356 0094; www.barnboggledunes.com) golf course, just 5km east of Bridport. It's been variously named the number-one public golf course in Australia, the world number-seven public-access course, and overall 35th-best course in the world – quite some praise for a course in this remote spot that only opened in 2004. Barnbogle is a par-71 links course, in rolling sand dunes right on the edge of Bass Strait. There are also attractive self-contained timber cottages (single/double \$140/160) and villas (sleeping up to eight, \$750) on site, and a bar and restaurant in the clubhouse, serving breakfast, lunch and dinner daily. Green fees for nine holes/18 holes/all day are \$60/98/120; golf set hire is from \$55.

Sleeping & Eating

Bridport Caravan Park (☎ 6356 1227; Bentley St; unpowered/powerd sites \$16/20) Strung out for three kilometres of foreshore, this must be the longest caravan park in Tasmania. It fills up quickly during summer's tourist high tide, so book ahead if your heart's set on staying here. There's no camp kitchen, but there are BBQs nearby, as well as a kids' playground and a tennis court.

Bridport Seaside Lodge Backpackers (☎ 6356 1585; www.bridportseidelodge.com; 47 Main St; dm/tw/d \$22.50/25/50, en suite d \$77) There are great water views from this friendly hostel, and it feels

more like a beach house than a backpackers. You can hire bikes and canoes too, or just hang out on the deck and have a BBQ. The dorms and comfortable doubles have shared facilities, and one has its own en suite.

Bridport Hotel (☎ 6356 1114; Main Rd; s/d \$25/50) This probably isn't the kind of place you'd escape to for a quiet romantic weekend, but it does have cheap rooms with shared facilities to crash in after a full day on the beach. Lunch and dinner (mains \$13 to \$24) are available in the hangar-like dining room with the usual suspects in pub dining well represented: surf 'n' turf, chicken schnitzel, calamari and seafood plates.

Platypus Park Country Retreat (☎ 6356 1873; www.platypuspark.com.au; Ada St; d \$90–165) In a quiet spot beside the Brid River, Platypus Park has a range of appealing self-contained cottages and units, overseen by the friendly owners who are fifth-generation Tasmanians and can tell you all about the area. There's trout fishing in well-stocked dams nearby.

Bridport Bay Inn (☎ 6356 1238; 105 Main St; s/d \$100–110, cottage d \$130, extra person \$15; mains \$17–28; ☞ lunch & dinner) There's row of simple, comfortable motel units behind this restaurant–bar. Inside they serve a satisfying menu including good fresh locally caught seafood, trevalla, roasts, fillet mignon, Atlantic salmon and delicious wood-fired pizzas.

Bridport Resort (☎ 6356 1789; www.bridport-resort.com.au; 35 Main St; 1-2-/3-bedroom villa \$150/180/210; ☞) A low-key little complex set in bushland right by the sea, this place has a range of pin-neat, timber-lined cabins. Kids will love the resort's play areas, games room and heated indoor pool. There are also a tennis court, BBQs and a great restaurant on site.

The Flying Teapot (☎ 6356 1918; 1800 Bridport Rd; light meals \$7–20; ☞ 10am–4pm Sat & Sun, closed in inclement weather) Want to get up close and personal with light planes – and perhaps watch some land and soar off as you sip on your afternoon tea? Then visit this café on the side of a private airstrip that's a meeting point for pilots and aviation enthusiasts. They serve wholesome, homemade food, including quiches, frittatas, smoked salmon stacks and enticing crepes of both the savoury and sweet variety. Ultralight joy flights can be taken from here by prior arrangement.

Joseph's (☎ 6356 1789; 35 Main St; mains \$21–35; ☞ dinner Tue–Sat) Have a predinner drink on the deck and then take a seat by the windows here

to savour dishes big on fresh local produce. There's an amazing Harvest of the Sea platter, overflowing with seafood, spicy New Orleans gumbo or tender Flinders Island lamb.

Getting There & Away

There is a **bus service** (☎ 0409-561 662) that runs twice a day Monday to Friday between

Scottsdale and Bridport (\$5 one way). The service connects with Redline coaches in Scottsdale and does door-to-door pickups/drop-offs on request.

See p314 for details of the weekly ferry service connecting Bridport to Flinders Island (which occasionally calls at Port Welshpool in Victoria too).