

## Tasmania

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Sunset over Freycinet National Park, viewed from Freycinet Lodge

The Dutch explorer **Abel Tasman** really got around, becoming the first, in 1642, to reach the islands of Van Diemen's Land a.k.a. **Tasmania**, "Australia's Natural State," 150 miles from the mainland. "Tassie," home to under half-a-million, satiates with a topographical buffet of rainforest, highland lakes and beaches—all within a 90-minute drive.

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Several nights in [Sydney](#) or [Melbourne](#) are apropos after a long trans-Pacific **Qantas** flight, before hopping across Bass Strait to **Hobart, South Tasmania**, the departure point for an east-coast **Tassie** itinerary.

Luxury boutique accommodation awaits at **The Lodge, Tarraleah**, which rests on a cliff face, affording magnificent views, not far from the ingenious pipe system that funnels precious water from the rushing **River Derwent** for power generation. A tiny village appears in repose, with a shop, pub and school; it was once home to 2,000 migrant workers.

Nine distinctive lodge rooms and suites have Tasmanian Oak floors, brown mohair throws, delicate shuttered doors and vibrant splashes of signature "bull's blood red" throughout—some have fireplaces and balconies. Co-owner and Manager **Julian Homer** enthusiastically pours from his collection of more than 200 single-malt whiskies, fireside at **Tarraleah's Library Bar**. Scotch goes down smoothly after a gourmet repast from the adjacent **Wildside Restaurant**. Separate and charming Art Deco cottages with fireplaces are a favorite with guests.

Here, grassy yards welcome bouncing wallabies and a soothing mountaintop massage in the spa facility awaits your clients after cycling, golf or fly-fishing. Zoologist **Hans Naarding** hosts informative wildlife tours; he is reputed to be the last person to have seen a Tasmanian tiger even after it was considered extinct in the 1930s.

On the way back to **Hobart** via **Berridale**, guests drive into **Moorilla**, an intriguing combination of winery, micro-brewery (try the **Moo Brew**), restaurant and event venue to go with the accommodation and, most strikingly, the **Museum of Old and New Art**. Owner **David Walsh** is constructing a \$55 million four-level, free-admission museum in the cliffs on this **Derwent River** peninsula to house privately collected art worth \$150 million.

Four accommodation pavilions are soon to be renovated, while, adjacent, four outstanding new structures housing a pool, sauna and gym debut in November.

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Then, in Hobart, [The Henry Jones Art Hotel](#) showcases 300 original, signed works of emerging and established artists in its public spaces and in 56 rooms and suites. Situated harborside in a historical jam warehouse, the **Henry Jones** smartly melds old and new, with handsome natural timber furnishings, trapeze lighting and glass and steel bathrooms. One can confidently recommend the stand-alone Art Installation Suite with a private gallery suitable for cocktails or dinner.

The guest services and history liaison officer researches clients' family connections to Tasmania's early convict settlers. Friday cocktail hour hosted by the resident art curator includes a guided art and history tour.

Bound for **Port Arthur** via **Taranna**, south of Hobart on the **Tasman Peninsula**, visitors can "meet" Tasmania's famed scavengers, and its most famous symbol, at the [Tasmanian Devil Conservation Park](#). From 130,000 devils in 1995, tragically less than a third remain due to facial tumors threatening the species' extinction, says the devil's most ardent conservationist, park founder and Director **John Hamilton**. His facility—home to 24 healthy little devils—is undergoing significant user-friendly renovations.

Close by, the scenic [Port Arthur Historic Site](#) on Tasman Peninsula, a penal establishment from 1833 to 1877, lets visitors earn their stripes like its former convicts. The daring may even don the shackles where's that key? Ghosts are said to haunt the old prison at sundown.

Continuing along the **East Coast**, outdoor lovers choose [Freycinet Lodge](#) in the national park of the same name, just two-and-a-half hours north of Hobart. Its 60 enviro-friendly cabins lack telephones and TVs: Who needs them when the raucous kookaburra's cackle works as a wake-up call?

A sure cure for "Tassie-mania" is an adventure to this stress-less natural wonderland. Be prepared: visit [www.DiscoverTasmania.com](#) before you go.

#### FLY IN STYLE

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Qantas has more than 30 nonstop flights from **Los Angeles** (to Sydney, Melbourne, **Brisbane** and **Auckland**), five from **San Francisco**, a daily direct service from **JFK** and three from **Honolulu**.

#### Tassie Tour With Virtuoso

The best of Tasmania was recently experienced by a select group of 10 specialists on a smartly organized Virtuoso Australia Educational. Leading the enthusiastic pack were informative and flexible hosts **Mark Punshon**, vice president of sales, Travel2, **El Segundo, CA**; New York City-based **Malcolm Griffiths** of Tourism Tasmania; **Maggy Hughes** of Tourism Australia in **Los Angeles**; and from Virtuoso in **Seattle**, **Tony Logan**, manager-member, sales & service.

"I always suggest staying for a week in Tassie, but of course, no one has that much time," says **Marion Huiberts**, Virtuoso **Premiere** Australia specialist and independent contractor for Worldview Travel in **Santa Ana, CA**. Huiberts, an Australian herself, says, "I tend to push the East Coast more," and suggests five days and four nights to understand this land that is the polar opposite of the more familiar Outback. "I learned so much more and I really experienced firsthand what I sell my clients. That makes my job easier," adds Huiberts.

The only premier Australian specialist in **Hawaii**, Travel Dynamics' **Betty O'Brien** called Tassie "a real driving destination, beautiful and rural." She favors **Hobart**, saying, "I like its style, with a little bit of everything, a very individual, relaxed destination."

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