

WALKING IN WILD TASMANIA

13 days

Created on: 26 Apr, 2024

Day 1 Arrival in Hobart, Tasmania

Welcome to Tasmania!

As Australia's only island state (and its southernmost), Tasmania is chock full of natural wonders as well as fascinating Aboriginal and European settlement history. Hobart, the island's state capital and largest city, is home to nearly 40% of Tasmania's population, located on the Derwent River Estuary. Nestled along a picturesque deep natural port, with the imposing Mount Wellington looming large to the north, this charming city serves as the start and finish point of our counterclockwise Tasmania exploration!

Overnight in Hobart.

Included Meal(s): Dinner, if required.

Day 2 Activities from Hobart: Port Arthur, Coal Mines Historic Site & Tasman Cliffs

This morning we focus on the splendid southeast corner of Tasmania, beginning with an historic and moving visit to Port Arthur, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and one of Britain's early penal colonies in Australia. Despite its beautiful location, Port Arthur served as a place of punishment and hardship for countless decades. We discover fascinating stories and gain a deeper appreciation of Tasmania's early settlement history on a guided walk among Port Arthur's many historic buildings, including prison ruins, gardens, restored houses, and an impressive skeleton of a church.

Following lunch at Port Arthur, our history lesson continues with a brief visit and walk at Coal Mines Historic Site, a tranquil and beautiful site along the shallow waters of Ironstone Bay, where unfortunate convicts were forced into unrelenting and confining work in the peninsula's coal mines. By mid-afternoon, we escape from the prison-theme and gaze in wonder at stunning cliffs and dazzling sea arches on an exciting walk from Waterfall Bay to Devils Kitchen. Prepare to be wowed! Finishing off our first full day of activity, we savor a brief stop at a geological oddity known as the Tessellated Pavements, a strange collection of naturally occurring rectangular blocks in a gorgeous seaside setting. Due to the fullness of our day (and tomorrow), and due to lingering jetlag, we leave dinner free this evening back in the city.

Walk summary: 3-4 hours of relaxed walking in two historic sites with several breaks along with mildly undulating nature walk along sea cliffs; distance of 8-9 km (5-6 mi) for the day; terrain is generally flat and walk is mostly on sidewalks and compact natural path with a few gentle hills and a few stairs throughout the day.

Overnight in Hobart.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 3 Hobart - Freycinet National Park: Maria Island Walks

An early morning drive north from Hobart brings us to the quaint little hamlet of Triabunna, where we board a ferry bound for a truly delightful experience on Maria Island, which boasts historic ruins, dramatic cliffs, beautiful bays, and a treasure trove of wildlife encounters. Following a short stroll to Darlington, site of a former prison colony, the first of our two featured walks takes us through blue gum forests and likely includes a few marsupial sightings, bringing us ultimately to the grand ocean views and geological riches of Fossil Cliffs. Take a moment and see how many 300-million year old clam and scallop fossils you can identify at this extraordinary site!

Following a break for lunch back at Darlington, our second walk of the day takes us on a different hiking loop that features sweeping views of Darlington Bay and the pretty little Hopground Beach. Arriving at the featured attraction, Painted Cliffs, marvel at the rich palette of colours that mother nature has revealed in these strangely eroded sandstones. Wave action and sea spray have worked their sculpting magic over millennia and created honeycomb patterns, potholes, and notches that are quite picturesque.

Full of Maria Island memories, we take a mid-afternoon ferry back to Triabunna and drive to another one of Tasmania's treasures, Freycinet National Park, for the first of a two-night stay.

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Walk Summary: About 4 hours of relatively easy walking throughout the day with about 120m (400 feet) elevation gain/loss; distance of about 4 km (2.5 mi) for each walk for a total of 8 km (5 mi) today; terrain is mildly undulating on crushed gravel and natural path with some stairs, open fields, rocks, and beach. High likelihood of seeing kangaroos, wombats, and other marsupials!

Overnight in Freycinet National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 4 Activities in Freycinet National Park: Wineglass Bay, Cape Tourville & Friendly Beaches

Freycinet National Park is an absolute gem along Tasmania's east coast! Today we bask in several splendid vistas that are among Australia's prettiest postcard scenes. This park is probably most known for the breathtaking and stunning exquisiteness of Wineglass Bay, which we witness on our morning walk. Ascending a short and steep track through coastal woodland and gigantic granite boulders, the reward is well worth the effort when you arrive at a saddle in the mountain and gaze down at the crystal clear waters and curvaceous white sand beach below. Following this wow moment, only a short drive away, a much easier but equally scenic stroll awaits us on a dramatic boardwalk at Cape Tourville Lighthouse, majestically set high above the crashing surf.

A relaxing lunch (included in lieu of dinner today) awaits us on the pink granite shores of Honeymoon Bay, which looks out upon the larger Great Oyster Bay. After this rejuvenating break in the middle of our day, you can either choose to enjoy free time on your own near our beachside lodge, or you can take a short drive with your guide down to Friendly Beaches for a couple hours of late afternoon enjoyment at one of the prettiest, long, white sand beaches you'll likely come across. One thing is certain.... This day will leave you wishing you had more time to stay in Freycinet!

Walk Summary: About 1.5 - 2 hours of walking in the morning that starts out rather steep, with about 170 meters (550 ft) elevation gain/loss. In the afternoon at Friendly Beaches, the walk is flat and on sand; distance of about 4-5 km (2.5-3 mi) in the morning with additional 1-5 km possible on afternoon Friendly Beaches walk; terrain in the morning is mostly on crushed gravel, natural path, with lots of stairs, some boardwalk, and beach walking in the afternoon.

Overnight in Freycinet National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 5 Freycinet National Park - Launceston: Apsley Waterhole & Gorge and Hollybank Reserve

Continuing toward the northern end of Tasmania, today we begin with a walk to Apsley Waterhole and Gorge, located in Douglas-Apsley National Park. Our hike starts as a gentle stroll through open woodland before reaching the surprising and lovely Apsley Waterhole. The beautifully tranquil pool in the Apsley River begs you to stop and gaze into its waters. Or if the weather's right, you might want to wade or swim in the delightfully clear water. Crossing the river and climbing through dry, open forest, the path eventually descends to Apsley Gorge for some wonderful views. After returning to our walk start, we find a nice lunch spot on our drive to Launceston, the second largest city in Tasmania.

This afternoon, we explore the Hollybank Reserve, where an easy 2 km track takes us through an exotic mixture of native forest and ash trees that were originally planted here as a wood supply for cricket bats and tennis racquets. Following our walk, for those that would like a bit of extra adventure, Hollybank is full of opportunities for outdoor thrill-seekers. Consider an invigorating ride on Tasmania's longest zip line or perhaps a forested Segway tour. For those who would rather not participate in optional activities, an earlier return to your hotel is possible. Be sure during our two-night stay to check out Charlie's Dessert Restaurant, a Launceston landmark that serves only dessert 12 hours a day!

Walk Summary: About 3-4 hours of nature hiking with about 275 meters (900 ft) of elevation gain/loss at Apsley Gorge and flat at Hollybank Reserve; distance of about 8-9 km (5-6 mi) throughout the day; terrain is mostly natural path with some hill sections and occasional steps at Apsley Gorge and flat even surface at Hollybank Reserve.

Overnight in Launceston.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 6 Activities from Launceston: Cataract Gorge & Tamar Island

Near the heart of Launceston, in the beautiful Cataract Gorge, is a great walk that bears witness to the power of water. Starting from Kings Bridge, near the First Basin, experience the South Esk River rushing below you as you continue up the east side of the river to the historic Duck Reach Power Station, one of the earliest hydro-electric power stations in the world, operated from 1895 to 1955.

Lunch today will be in the highly touted Tamar Valley, one of the top wine routes in the world. Countless vineyards adorn the banks of this northerly-flowing river, and we aim to sample the delights of an award-winning winery before continuing to our afternoon walk. In the middle of the river lies Tamar Island, a wonderful wetland hosting bountiful bird life, including the likes of pelicans and swans. A user-friendly boardwalk allows for a very comfortable stroll as you observe numerous species of water birds along with the remains of dredging machinery that was once used to improve navigation for ships.

Walk Summary: 1-1.5 hours of mildly challenging hiking with about 240 meters (750 ft) of elevation gain/loss in the Cataract Gorge and about 1.5 hours of easy, flat walking on Tamar Island; distance of about 8 km (5 mi) for day; terrain is a mix of natural path, some hilly sections, rough surfaces, and many steps in Cataract Gorge, while Tamar Island will have boardwalk and flat trails throughout.

Overnight in Launceston.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 7 Launceston - Devonport: Narawntapu National Park & Archer's Knob

Continuing toward the north central coast this morning, we pause for a small slice of Switzerland at Grindelwald, a lovely little town that was developed in the style of a Swiss village in the 1980s, surrounded by glassy lakes and views of the Tamar Valley. Most of our day will be spent in Narawntapu National Park enjoying the wonderful Archer's Knob Walk. Meandering from the visitor center on a raised boardwalk through paperbark swamp, we'll be on the lookout for birds, wallabies, and pademelons on our way to the panoramic beach views offered from Archer's Knob. Completing our circuit, we descend to the pristine sands of Bakers Beach before completing our journey past Springlawn Lagoon. Our late afternoon arrival into the small town of Devonport should give us enough time for a quick photo stop at Mersey Bluff Lighthouse, with its distinctive vertical red and white stripes.

Walk Summary: 3-4 hours of relatively flat walking with one short and steep hill, with about 165 meters (540 ft) elevation gain/loss overall; distance of about 9-10 km (5-6 mi) for the day; terrain is a mix of natural path, boardwalk, beach walking and a few stairs.

Overnight in Devonport.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 8 Activities from Devonport: Rocky Cape National Park & Fern Glade Reserve

Venturing toward the northwest coast of Tasmania, our morning drive brings us first to a tranquil riverside walk that is both short and sweet. Fern Glade Reserve is a shady oasis blessed with soft tree ferns. Wandering along the waters of the Emu River, you may even be lucky enough to spot a platypus!

Following this peaceful introduction, the majority of our day will be spent just up the coastline at Rocky Cape National Park, featuring gnarly rock formations, great botanical variety, and important pieces of Aboriginal heritage, all set along the shores of Bass Strait. A cornucopia of great walks are available today, and we will likely feature Rocky Cape Circuit, a challenging but rewarding loop that features extensive coastal views. Other shorter routes are also available that show off the many facets of this geologically and culturally rich park, including the Banksia Grove and Caves Circuit, which includes caves that were once used as Aboriginal shelters. After our full and fun foray, we return for an evening free in Devonport.

Walk Summary: About 4-5 hours of walking/hiking along national park trails, with up to 300m (1,000 feet) elevation gain/loss throughout the day depending on which hikes are chosen; distance of about 10-12 km (6-7.5 mi) for the day is possible; terrain is mostly natural paths with some short, steep hill sections, rough surfaces and many steps.

Overnight in Devonport.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast

Day 9 Devonport - Strahan: Cradle Mountain National Park (Dove Lake)

Cradle Mountain is a place of outstanding beauty and is one of Tasmania's iconic wilderness destinations! This morning's hour and a half drive brings us to Dove Lake and one of the premier walks on this island. Our circumnavigation of this glacially carved lake offers both intimate and epic views of the famous Cradle Mountain, undulating along rainforest paths and introducing us to vegetation like buttongrass, myrtle, sassafras, fagus, and King Billy pine. If time and energy allows, we may also offer an additional hike up to the stunning views at Crater Lake.

In the mid-afternoon, our two hour drive takes us to Tasmania's rough and rocky Western Wilderness, where we will settle in for the evening at Strahan, a small port-town on massive Macquarie Harbour, an expanse of water six times the size of Sydney Harbour and surrounded by rugged mountains, ancient forests, and fascinating history.

Walk Summary: About 3-4 hours of hiking on national park trails with about 250m (800 ft) of elevation gain/loss; distance of about 7-8 km (4-5 mi) for the day; terrain is mostly natural path with some steep short uphill sections, rough surfaces, and many steps.

Overnight in Strahan.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 10 Activities from Strahan: Full-Day West Coast Wilderness Railway Adventure

In the late 1800's, when Andrew Bowes Kelly discovered the richest copper mine in the world near Strahan, he faced the huge challenge of how to mine this valuable resource with no roads in or out of the wilderness on Tasmania's west coast. He decided to build a railway, which was an incredibly challenging undertaking due to an impossibly steep hill in the middle of the route. Through grit and ingenuity, Bowes Kelly implemented a rack and pinion railway that allowed him to cash in on the riches of his natural resources.

Today, we spend the entire day on this West Coast Wilderness Railway that Bowes Kelly pioneered. Our memorable steam train journey includes sparkling wine, morning tea, a lunch in Queenstown, and other goodies along the route. Soak up the views of Macquarie Harbour as the route transitions to cool temperate rainforest and the beautiful King River, crossing historic bridges and a 244-meter trestle. At Dubbil Barril, we'll de-board the train for a short rainforest walk before continuing our journey to Queenstown. During our 90-minute lunch stopover, a guided walking tour of the town will also be included, giving you a greater understanding of the region's significant mining history. Returning to Strahan for the evening, more on-board commentary will bring to life the stories and traditions of the wild west coast!

Walk Summary: About 1-1.5 hours of very relaxed walking at a couple of stops on our train journey; distance of about 2-3 km (1.3-2 mi) for the day; terrain is mostly natural path and paved sidewalk.

Overnight in Strahan.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Lunch

Day 11 Strahan - Mt. Field National Park: Nelson Falls & Lake St. Clair

Driving through the West Coast Range this morning, we begin our day with a lovely short walk at Nelson Falls, just off the Lyell Highway, along a burbling river to a picturesque cascade. The mossy forest, full of at least seven species of ferns, gives hints of the high rainfall in the area. Along the boardwalk to Nelson Falls, interpretation panels take us on a journey back in time to when Tasmania was connected to the great supercontinent Gondwana.

Continuing our journey east, we arrive at gorgeous Lake St. Clair, where a 20-minute ferry ride escorts us three-quarters of the way up the western shore of the lake to Echo Point. From here, a walk from the jetty brings us into a dense and mossy forest and a return hike to Cynthia Bay along the lake shore, with views of Mount Ida's sharp peak, a remnant left by glaciers that carved not only the mountain itself but also excavated the hollow now filled by Lake St. Clair. As the day winds down, we drive southeast and settle in for the evening near Mt. Field

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National Park.

Walk Summary: About 4-5 hours of walking today. Walk at Nelson Falls will be relatively gentle and flat, while Lake St. Clair walk will have more short and steep hill sections and about 300m (1,000 ft) elevation gain/loss; distance of about 12-13 km (7.5-8 mi) for the day; terrain is mostly flat at Nelson Falls, and Lake St. Clair will have a lot of short up and down sections, some rough surfaces, and many steps.

Overnight in Mt. Field National Park.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 12 Mt. Field - Hobart: Mount Field National Park

Mount Field is one of Tasmania's oldest national parks and is also one of its most diverse, often called "the park for all seasons" due to its topographical variety. This magical place has just about everything but a coastline, including glaciated alpine landscapes, gorgeous waterfalls, and some of the world's tallest eucalyptus trees. Our morning begins with a drive to the higher elevations of the park and a short but wonderful walk around Lake Dobson and through the splendid Pandani Grove. The pandani is the tallest heath in the world and can only be found in Tasmania. Its tough, drooping foliage sheds snow and ice, which helps protect it at high altitude.

Descending back down to the visitor center, our second walk of the day takes us on a lovely loop trail which features Russell Falls, one of Tasmania's favourite and most recognizable natural wonders. This two-tiered beauty is the first highlight along a trail that will also take us to Horseshoe Falls and Lady Barron Falls, along with an amazing short stroll among the Tall Trees. You'll feel quite small among the massive swamp gums (a species of eucalyptus), the tallest flowering plants in the world, some of which can reach 100 meters in height. In fact, the largest trees in this grove were growing when Abel Tasman first sighted Tasmania in 1642. After departing Mt. Field, an hour-long drive returns us to the start of our adventure in the capital city of Hobart. Enjoying a farewell dinner together, we take time to reminisce about all the Tasmanian wonders encountered during our journey!

Walk Summary: About 3-4 hours of relaxed walking on national park paths with about 150m (500 feet) of elevation gain/loss; distance of about 8-9 km (5-6 mi) for the day; terrain is almost natural path with some gentle hill sections, occasional steps, and some paved trails.

Overnight in Hobart.

Included Meal(s): Breakfast and Dinner

Day 13 Departure from Hobart

Departure from Hobart

BON VOYAGE!!

Included Meal(s): Breakfast