

# Tasmania

Words Jamie Christian Desplaces

The mainlanders love to make jokes at the Tasmanians' expense, and tongue-in-cheek though the quips may be, complimentary they most certainly are not. A faint trace of irony lies in the fact that the satellite state of Australia, the nation's smallest in fact, packs one mighty punch. The beauty of the mainland is undeniable, but while great swathes are covered in barren, monotonous desert, in Tasmania nothing goes to waste. Relatively under-explored, it's often cited as Australia's best-kept secret with each inch packed with jaw-dropping splendour and what feels like a new surprise around every corner of the many winding roads that make Tasmania an absolute driving paradise.

Wineglass Bay on the east coast can be found in just about every "World's Best Beaches" list. It's a fairly rigorous hike to get there but one of the most rewarding that you'll ever undertake and often through wallaby-infested wilderness. Likely you'll also witness the rather adorable knee-high marsupials bounding across the sandy cove upon arrival and pods of dolphins frolicking just offshore are not an uncommon sight either.

More wondrous hikes lie in wait at the Cradle Mountain – St Claire Lake National Park tucked into the island's Central Highlands. For those that don't fancy trekking to the summit, the path round the glacier-formed Dove Lake offers some spectacular (relatively) perspiration-free photo opportunities.

Tasmania's west coast is sparsely populated, elegant, rugged and at times unimaginably green and much remains still so untouched that the only access is via trails and the formidable Gordon River.

Founded as one of the southern hemisphere's first penal colonies of the British Empire, the ruins at Port Arthur make for a fascinating, though harrowing journey into the island's troubled history and the Airwalk at Tahune Forest is another must-do too.

Much of Tasmania is about enchanting woodlands, mesmeric hikes and sweeping coastlines, but there are also plenty of quaint towns and hamlets scattered throughout. The island's capital, Hobart, is one of the prettiest Australia has to



Top:  
Wineglass Bay

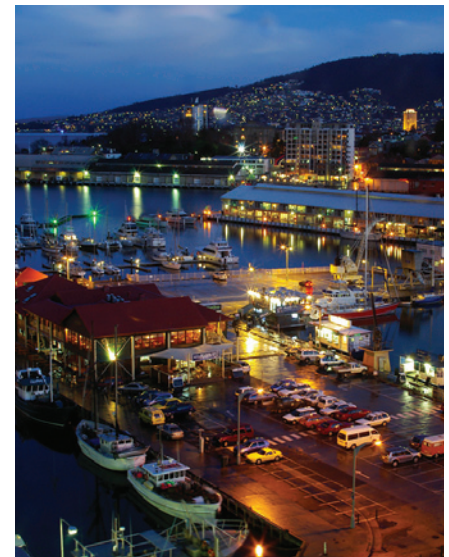
Bottom left:  
Cradle Mountain

Bottom right:  
Hobart



offer, with a harbour and charm that has few rivals and its Museum of Old and New Art is an absolute sensory treat – not just its contents, but the building itself.

And don't take too much notice of the mainlanders' jokes, the Tasmanians really are a welcoming bunch. Just watch out for the devils.



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