

Tasmania

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About TASMANIA



Wineglass Bay - Freycinet National Park

Where

Latitude 40° south, longitude 144° east.

Features

Australia's smallest and most southerly state Tasmania, is also the only island state of Australia. It's located 250 kilometres (150 miles) south of the Australian mainland, separated by Bass Strait.

About the same size as the Republic of Ireland and a little larger than West Virginia, Hokkaido or Switzerland, Tasmania is 315 kilometres (189 miles) from west to east and 286 kilometres (175 miles) north to south. The main island is at the centre of an archipelago of more than 300 islands, with a coastline of more than approximately 5400 kilometres (1864 miles).

Climate

Tasmania has a cool temperate climate with four distinct seasons and rarely experiences hot or cold extremes. Summer is from December to February. Tasmania escapes the searing heat and high humidity of mainland Australia with average maximum temperatures on the coast of 21°C and an inland average of 24°C. Winter, from June to August brings an average maximum temperature of 12°C. Snow falls in the mountains, although most cities and towns are near the coast where the ocean moderates the temperature. Hobart saw warmer than usual weather in 2012.

Annual Rainfall

Rainfall in Tasmania is spread fairly evenly throughout the year, with winter seeing the most rainfall.

The west coast of Tasmania experiences the highest rainfall of the state with 1626.8mm recorded in Strahan in 2012. Hobart is not only the second driest capital city in Australia (after Adelaide), with 457mm of rain, but was drier than most towns in Tasmania in 2012, with only the Midlands seeing less rain. Luckily for the locals, Hobart escapes the severe water shortages and restrictions experienced in mainland Australian cities as reservoirs are fed by mountain catchments. In 2012, rainfall was average to below average across the state, with some sites particularly dry.

Island Population

Tasmania's population is 512,422 people (December quarter 2012) with nearly half the population in Hobart - 216,959 people live in the greater Hobart area. Other major population centres include Launceston with 106,153 people, Devonport with 25,551 people and Burnie with 19,160 people.

Capital City

The second smallest Australian capital and largest city in Tasmania is Hobart. Founded in 1804 as a penal colony, Hobart is Australia's second oldest capital city after Sydney. Hobart is located in the south-east corner of the island, tightly nestled between Mount Wellington standing at 1271m (4169ft) and the estuary of the River Derwent. Rich in character, it features colonial Georgian and Regency buildings. Hobart's harbour bustles with fishing vessels, yachts and restaurants by the sea.

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Tasmanian devil

Hobart has been reinventing itself as a vibrant cultural hub – an evolution that led to it being named one of the top 10 cities in the world to visit in 2013 by Lonely Planet. MONA, a museum owned by gambling millionaire David Walsh has become a beacon for international attention. High-end dining venues combine traditional artisan methods and paddock to plate produce to create memorable fine dining experiences. Festivals are held throughout the year including MOFO a music festival curated by former Violent Femmes member Brian Richie. The largest outdoor market in Australia is held every Saturday alongside Georgian warehouses once merchant storage, now housing art galleries, cafés and wine bars.

Land Information

The mountain ranges of Tasmania's south west date back 100 million years when ancient sediments were deeply buried, folded and heated under enormous pressure to form glistening white quartzites and schists. In the south west and central highlands, there are remnants of a dolerite plateau cap, with mountains such as Precipitous Bluff and Tasmania's highest peak, Mt Ossa. Nearly 37 per cent of Tasmania is made up of World Heritage Area, National Park, Conservation Areas and Reserves (data retrieved May 2007).

Flora

Tasmania has extremely diverse vegetation. In a single day you could travel through any combination of grasslands, temperate rainforests, tall eucalypt forests, alpine heathlands, or moorlands. Unique native conifers include Huon pines, with one strand on Mt Read estimated to be 10,000 years old. Many plant species are unique to Tasmania. Their ancestors grew on the ancient supercontinent Gondwana, before it broke up 50 million years ago. A colony of 500 Kings Lomatia was discovered in 1937 in Tasmania's remote south west. Believed to be the only colony of King's Lomatia left in the world, each specimen is genetically identical due to its unique reproduction method of cloning. One specimen has been estimated by botanists to be 43,000 years old.

Fauna

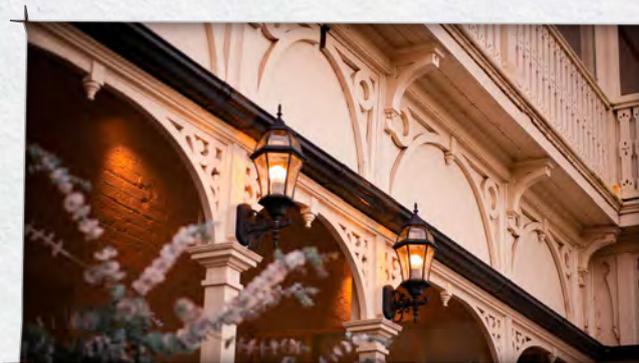
Geographically and genetically isolated, Tasmania is the last home to species that once roamed the Australian continent. It is the only place to see a Tasmanian devil, Eastern quoll or Spotted-tailed quoll in the wild. The Tasmanian devil can still be found in the wild in Tasmania. A scavenger the size of a small dog, it has a loud screeching growl and a vicious temper. The Tasmanian devil population was significantly reduced by up to 80 per cent in parts of Tasmania by a facial tumor disease, which has gradually spread throughout the island. Breeding and isolation programs have been relatively successful ensuring a future for the cute and feisty mammals. The last known Thylacine, more commonly known as the Tasmanian tiger for the distinctive striping across its back, died in captivity in 1936 at the Hobart Zoo. Though the animal is considered extinct, there have been many unsubstantiated sightings since then. Once Australia's largest carnivorous marsupial, it is now a modern-day mystery.

History and Heritage

The history of Tasmania begins at the end of the most recent ice age, when it is believed the island was joined to the Australian mainland. Tasmania was inhabited by Aborigines with evidence of their presence at least 35,000 years ago. They became separated from the Australian mainland 12,000 years ago when the seas rose to form Bass Strait and flooded the land-bridge. At the time of British settlement in 1803 there were an estimated 5000 Aborigines but through persecution and disease much of the population was eradicated. The last Tasmanian Aborigine Truganini died in 1876.

In 1642 Dutch explorer Abel Tasman sighted Tasmania and named the island Anthoonij van Diemenslandt, later shortened to Van Diemen's Land by the British. The island was settled by the British as a penal colony in 1803 and the name was changed once more to Tasmania when convict transportation stopped in 1853.

Tasmania has preserved a rich legacy of heritage, including Australia's oldest continuously operating theatre, the



Hatherley House, Launceston



Cradle Mountain

Theatre Royal in Hobart; the country's first Jewish Synagogue, still in use in Hobart; and its oldest golf course, in the historic town of Bothwell. The nation's oldest bridge and church are at Richmond, and on the corner of Murray and Macquarie streets in Hobart, the only remaining Georgian intersection in the country. Many colonial dwellings are in use as private homes or tourist accommodation.

Economy

The Tasmanian economy comprises a number of niche industries: high speed catamaran ferries are literally shipped all over the world, while The Wooden Boat Centre School of Boatbuilding has established a new industry preserving the skills and traditions of another age.

Tasmania is a natural larder: clean air, unpolluted water and rich soils help produce speciality cheeses and dairy products, mouth-watering seafood, Atlantic salmon, beef, premium and boutique beers, fine wines, specialty honey, mineral waters, fine chocolates, fresh fruits, and crisp vegetables. Other export agricultural products include essential oils such as lavender, premium wool popular in Europe and Japan, and pharmaceutical products.



Josef Chromy Vineyard

Getting to Tasmania

Travel is easy, whether by air from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane, Adelaide or Canberra, or by sea from Melbourne. The Spirit of Tasmania, a passenger and vehicle ship operates Bass Strait crossings. For more information visit: www.spiritoftasmania.com.au

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