

# Bass Strait Islands



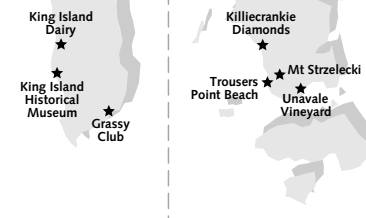
Think Tasmania is relaxed? King Island and Flinders Islands, to Tassie's north, bring a new meaning to the word. If you're inclined to eat, sleep and suck down some fresh air, you'll be glad you made the effort. Even in January, the busiest month, you're unlikely to encounter many other cars on your explorations – be sure to raise a friendly hand from the driving wheel, because the locals will notice if you don't.

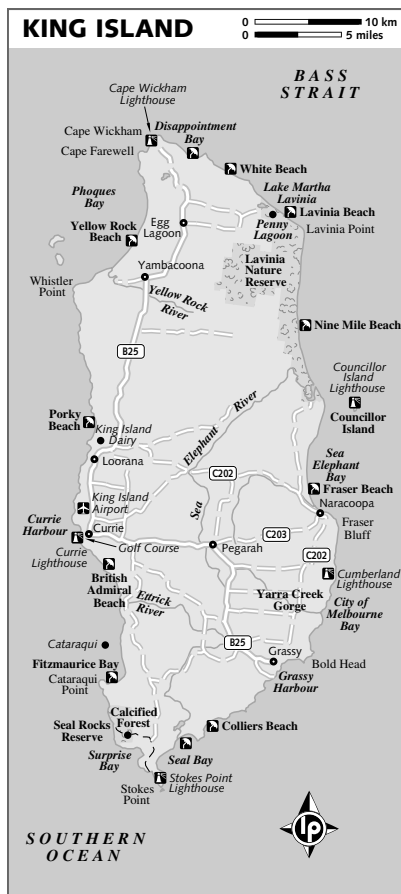
Apart from the remote freedom of these islands, the unmistakable highlight is the food, which lives up to its 'pure' reputation very well (the water that's bottled here is called 'Cloud Juice'). King Island's dairy products are ranked highly by cheese connoisseurs. There's excellent seafood, beef and lamb on Flinders Island, too. Walk it all off on great hiking tracks, or explore natural coastal beauty rich in marine and other wildlife. If privacy is what you're craving, you're almost guaranteed a beach to yourself. King Island is the largest island in the Hunter Group, planted at the western end of Bass Strait, and Flinders Island is the largest of the Furneaux Group in Bass Strait's east. Although they are quiet rural communities these days, both islands have troubled histories. Both served as the transient homes of prospectors, sealers and sailors, and as a long-term destination for Tasmanian Aborigines who were 'resettled' here (see p26).

You can access both islands by air from Melbourne (from Moorabbin, one hour southeast of the city), or from a number of locations in northern Tasmania.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Tasting the triple cream brie and chewing the cheddar at the splendidly generous **King Island Dairy** (p307)
- Dropping a line at **Trousers Point Beach** (p312), great for fishing, swimming and sunset costume changes
- Learning about King Island's tragic flotilla of **shipwrecks** (p306)
- Downing an ale with an ex-miner or two at **Grassy Club** (p309) on King Island
- Picking through whalebones and rusty shipwreck flotsam at the **King Island Historical Museum** (p307)
- Sipping sauvignon blanc at **Unavale Vineyard** (p312) – one of Australia's most isolated wineries
- Dawdling up to contemplate the well-deserved view from atop **Mt Strzelecki** (p312)
- Imagining untold wealth as you fossick for the misleadingly titled **Killiecrankie Diamonds** (p312) on Flinders Island





**KING ISLAND**

☎ 03 / pop 1570

A local website reads ‘There are no traffic lights on King Island. There are several Policemen.’ However, the only illegal thing here is the quality of the cheese. It seems unfair to farmers on Australia’s arid mainland that such a small place could produce such bounty.

A skinny 64km long and 27km across at its widest point, King Island’s wild beaches, rocky coastline, seafood and rustic atmosphere more than compensate for its size. In 1798 the island was named after Governor King of New South Wales (who, ironically, was born in Launceston, Cornwall). The main township is one-horse-town Currie, the local

harbour, which is close to the airport. Most of the island’s facilities are located here.

Sealers and sailors, known collectively as ‘Straitsmen’, were attracted to these waters as a breeding ground for seals and sea elephants, which they hunted close to extinction. The surrounding seas proved perilous for many vessels (divers will note there are at least 57 shipwrecks nearby). The worst maritime disaster was in 1845, when the immigrant boat *Catarauqui* went down with 399 people aboard; all lives were lost.

King Island opened up for settlement and land selection in 1888. In addition to superb dairy produce, valuable exports include kelp and large crayfish. Another industry was the production of scheelite – used in the manufacture of armaments – until the mine and factory at Grassy closed in 1990. Rumours of it reopening surround the otherwise quiet little settlement to the southeast, which is well worth a drive: the views from here are some of the island’s best. The other main settlement is Naracoopa, on the east coast.

**Information**

Most businesses on the island have Eftpos facilities.

**King Island Tourism** (☎ 1800 645 014, 6462 1313; www.kingisland.org.au; PO Box 269, Currie 7256) Provides information in person or via its comprehensive website. Also see www.kingisland.net.au for community news.

**Main post office** (☎ 6462 1792; www.auspost.com.au; 1 Main St, Currie; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri)

**Online Access Centre** (☎ 6462 1778; 5 George St, Currie; ☎ 10am-5pm Mon, 10am-7pm Wed, 1-5pm Thu, 10am-9pm Fri, 10am-noon Sat) Charges \$5 per 30 minutes.

**The Trend** (☎ 6462 1360; 26 Edward St, Currie; trend@kingisland.net.au; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun) Tourist information once you reach the island.

**Westpac Bank** (cnr Main & Edward Sts, Currie; ☎ 24hr) ATM.

**Sights**

**LIGHTHOUSES & SHIPWRECKS**

King Island has a treacherous coast and a disastrous record when it comes to shipwrecks and lives lost. If you’re interested in this history, track down a copy of *The King Island Maritime Trail: Shipwrecks & Safe Havens*, a booklet with information on a dozen shipwreck sites around the island, complete with simple maps and details of the relevant coastal memorial cairns.

Alternatively, get information online from www.kingisland.net.au/~maritime/.

Four lighthouses guard the island. The one at Cape Wickham was built in 1861 and is the tallest in the southern hemisphere. Despite this, ship captains often mistook its light for that of the Otway Ranges in Victoria and sailed straight onto the coast. In response, the lighthouse at Currie was built in 1880. Neither is open but you’ll find information on the lighthouse keepers at the museum. There’s another lighthouse at Stokes Point, the southernmost point of the island, while Cumberland lighthouse is south of Naracoopa on the eastern side of the island.

**KING ISLAND HISTORICAL MUSEUM**

The island’s **museum** (☎ 6462 1572; Lighthouse St, Currie; adult/child \$4/1; ☎ 2-4pm Mon & Thu-Sun Dec-Feb, Sat & Sun only Mar-Nov), staffed by volunteers and located in the cottage that once housed the chief light-keeper, features many local-history displays with an emphasis on shipwrecks.

**KING ISLAND DAIRY**

An undisputed highlight, the low-key **King Island Dairy** (☎ 1800 004 950, 6462 1348; www.kidairy.com.au; North Rd, Loorana; ☎ noon-4.30pm, Sun-Fri Oct-Apr, noon-4.30pm Sun-Tue, Thu & Fri May-Sep) is 8km north of Currie (just beyond the airport). Tuck into free tastings of the award-winning brie, cheddar, thick cream and yoghurt for which the island is renowned; keep a scorecard (ranging from ‘delicious’ to ‘unrivalled’) in case you want to make any purchases. The outstanding produce of the dairy is cheaper here and you can buy sizeable rounds of cheese, so you may want to bring an Esky to take home.

**KELP INDUSTRY**

**Kelp Industries Pty Ltd** (☎ 6462 1340; www.kelpind.com.au; 89 Netherby Rd, Currie; ☎ 8am-4pm Mon-Fri) was established in 1975 to commercially harvest the masses of bull kelp that wash up onto the island’s rocks and beaches: if you’re up early you might see the tractors hauling the seaweed in along the coast. The factory is the only kelp-processing plant in Australia. From the roadway next to Currie Golf Course you can see the kelp being air-dried on racks. It’s left on the racks for about two weeks, kiln-dried, crushed, then shipped to Scotland where it’s blended with kelp from other countries to create alginates, which are used in the manufacture of a va-

riety of products including sauces, lotions and detergents.

**CALCIFIED FOREST**

A geological graveyard, the **Calcified Forest** has a sombre, almost eerie feel; some experts believe the tree remains to be up to 30 million years old. From Currie, head south to the **Seal Rocks Reserve** (off South Rd). A 20-minute stroll to the forest, 1km from the car park, leads to a viewing platform from where the ancient petrified tree trunks can be seen. There’s a BBQ and shelter at the car park if you want to bring lunch.

**Activities**

Surf and freshwater **fishing** are popular here, especially from Naracoopa jetty. Do some **surfing** at the southern end of British Admiral Beach, Currie’s main sandy stretch. You can **swim** at many of the island’s unpopulated beaches and freshwater lagoons.

Diving among southern rock lobsters, dolphins, southern right whales and shipwrecks is recommended. **King Island Dive Charter** (☎ 6461 1133; www.kingislanddivecharter.com.au) provides single boat dives for \$75, as well as good-value three- to seven-day packages (including dives on the *Catarauqui* wreck).

**Golfing** is popular on the island. The views are pretty spectacular at Currie Golf Course (☎ 6462 1126; arrange through King Island Golf and Bowling Club), near Boomerang by the Sea (see p308). So is **bushwalking**, particularly in the fern gullies of Yarra Creek Gorge, where you can see some of the island’s 78 bird species (ten of which are confined to Tasmania, including the near-extinct orange-bellied parrot).

If you’re keen on Australian **fauna**, King Island’s decent-sized wildlife is plentiful and easy to observe and includes quails, wallabies, pademelons and platypuses. Tiger, copper-head and white-lipped snakes are also at large, and you’ll see feral pheasants and flocks of wild turkeys. On the coast you may glimpse fur, elephant and leopard seals, and in the summer months a colony of little (fairy) penguins comes ashore just before dark at the end of the breakwater at Grassy.

**Sleeping**

**CURRIE**

**Bass Caravan Park & Cabins** (☎ 6462 1168; dinjohn@bigpond.com; 100 Main St, Currie; on-site van \$45, cabin \$100)

## EVEREST IN A KAYAK

Kayaking across dangerously large stretches of water (read: 'the ditch' between Australia's East Coast and New Zealand) is quite the done thing by Australians at the time of writing, with two journeys completed in the last few months. Sydneysiders James Castrission, 25, and Justin Jones, 24, paddled over 3000km across the Tasman, for 62 days, from Forster in NSW to New Plymouth on New Zealand's North Island; at the same time two men and two women paddled back the other way and made it to the Australian shore in 31 days.

Remarkably, the stormy, bitterly cold, often treacherous waters of Bass Strait have also proved an irresistible attraction to occasional parties of the very hardest sea-kayakers, battling strong currents and stronger winds to cross between the mainland and Tasmania. The first successful crossing was made, it's thought, in 1971 by a trio of Victorians in slalom kayaks. Since then a number of parties have attempted the crossing, although only about 50 kayakers (so far) have successfully made it across.

If you trace the usual route south on a map, kayakers run from Wilsons Promontory, the southernmost tip of the Australian mainland, to Hogan Island, Erith Island (Kent Group), Flinders Island, Preservation Island and Clarke Island. Landfall on Tasmanian terra firma is usually at Little Musselroe Bay in Tasmania's northeast.

It's 'only' a 250km trip measured on the map, but currents, tides and wind drift mean that the kayakers travel much further than that. Bass Strait crossings involve a two-week, or longer, itinerary with entire days often lost to bad weather. Overnight, kayakers stay huddled in tents on the bleak, windswept rocks that pass for islands in the Bass Strait. After a full day's paddling through often 3m-high waves, exhausted paddlers, who just want to crawl into a tent and collapse, are sometimes required to scour rugged island coasts for a safe landing spot where their kayaks won't be dashed to pieces against the rocks. This is the Mt Everest of sea-kayaking!

As affordable as KI gets, this small and somewhat desperate-looking park offers a handful of on-site caravans with en suite, plus relatively new two-bedroom cabins with kitchen and bathroom. Prices are based on two people. It's a few kilometres from the beach.

**King Island Hotel** (☎ 6462 1633; www.kingislandhotel.com.au; 7 Main St; d incl breakfast \$125) Also known as Parer's, this double-storey number will never replace the grand old pub which burnt down in 1964, but it is clean and central (with easy access to shops, harbour and golf course), and has straightforward motel-style suites. There's a sports bar and pokies. The main bar has a large open fireplace and bang-up counter meals (mains \$16 to \$29).

**Boomerang by the Sea** (☎ 6462 1288; www.bythesea.com.au; Golf Club Rd; s/d \$100/120) Time travel back to the pastel '80s. This block of decently equipped motel rooms all enjoy views across the golf course. It feels pleasantly isolated but it's only a short stroll into town, and there's an upstairs restaurant (opposite) on site for sunset vistas with your chardonnay.

**our pick** **Devil's Gap Retreat and Craypot Cottage** (☎ 6462 1180, 0429-621 180; www.kingisland.net.au/~devilsgap; Charles St, Currie; d \$130) Retreat you will, like a devil into a gap (or a cray into a pot).

These weathered, one-bedroom cottages on the foreshore 1km northwest of Currie are a wild place to stay: self-contained, with ceiling-high stone hearths, open fires and tubs that spy the ocean. Owned by a local artist, the décor whispers 'rustic escape' (if you're listening) and the price includes breakfast provisions. Craypot Cottage, in central Currie, is another arty, comfortable option and better value than most.

**Shannon Coastal Cottages** (☎ 6461 1074; www.shannoncoastalcottages.com.au; Charles St; d \$150-160, extra adult \$30-40) These two windswept cottages (two-bed Shannon and one-bed Blencathra) are 3km northwest of Currie with rolling green and blue views, cosy gas fires, spa, and baby gear available. Walk back to the harbour via the beach.

## NARACOOPA

**Baudins Cottages** (☎ 6461 1110; baudins@kingisland.net.au; The Esplanade, Naracoopa; d \$140-175, extra person \$40) Less 'French explorer' and more 'Australian retiree', these four clean, self-contained cabins (one- and two-bedroom) are across the road from the beachfront. There's an eatery on site, a veranda to relax on (sherry and cards in hand) and long-sighted views across the bay.

**Naracoopa Holiday Units** (☎ 6461 1326; www.naracoopaholidayunits.com.au; 125 The Esplanade, Naracoopa; d \$110, extra adult/child \$25/15) In a seafront location on Sea Elephant Bay, these self-contained, one- and two-bedroom cottages are well equipped for self-catering and longer stays (read: games room including pool table).

## GRASSY

**King Island Holiday Village** (☎ 6461 1177; kiholiday@kingisland.net.au; 1a Blue Gum Drive; d \$120-150, extra person \$30-40) The more remote Grassy village maintains a slow, relaxed pace. This accommodation has a number of houses and units of varying sizes, some spa-equipped. Prices increase with ocean views and include breakfast provisions. The amenable host can arrange cheaper car hire and a 'penguin pack' for viewing the little creatures at dusk.

## Eating

There are good eating options in Currie within walking distance of most accommodation, plus two supermarkets on Main St (both open daily). There's also a supermarket and a butcher in Grassy.

## CURRIE

**Boathouse** (Currie Harbour; ☎ 24hr) A short scramble around the harbour, this 'restaurant without food' is the perfect chance to self-cater by the water in a tumbledown shack decorated by a local artist. The crockery, glasses and cutlery are in the cupboard – you bring the wine at any hour.

**King Island Bakery** (☎ 6462 1337; 5 Main St; snacks \$3-6; ☎ breakfast & lunch daily, dinner Fri) Grab your picnic supplies here: freshly baked goods include gourmet pies with special KI fillings like crayfish and beef. Friday night is pizza night.

**Nautilus Coffee Lounge** (☎ 6462 1868; Edward St; mains \$5-18; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) Downstairs, in a courtyard beside the roundabout, this café-gallery is your best bet for a big breakfast and an okay coffee. Try crayfish rolls, soup, burgers and other light meals. Croissant combos are rich and inventive (\$16).

**Boomerang by the Sea** (☎ 6462 1288; Golf Club Rd; mains from \$22; ☎ dinner from 6pm daily) Recognised as one of the island's best eating options, this roomy restaurant has fabulous ocean views and serves up locally sourced produce: beef, cheese and seafood.

## NARACOOPA & GRASSY

**Bert's Cafe** (☎ 6461 1458; The Esplanade, Naracoopa; ☎ 10-6 Sat & Sun) Bert makes a mean toasted sandwich washed down with a lime spider milkshake. Also available on his veranda: Devonshire tea with a view of Sea Elephant bay.

**Bold Head Brasserie and Grassy Club** (☎ 6461 1341; 10 Main Rd, Grassy; mains \$18-25; ☎ lunch Thu-Sun, dinner Wed-Mon, bar open daily) After a coldie at the traditional country bar (be sure to grab a souvenir stubby holder) wander next door for dim-lit, attentive service in this one-room restaurant. The chef is a fan of tapas dishes and the local cheeses (no complaints!), and his considered modern menu showcases local gourmet goodies, like Sea Elephant River oysters or rhubarb from Old Grassy Rd.

## Getting There & Away

Flying is the only way to access King Island.

**King Island Airlines** (☎ 9580 3777; www.kingislandair.com.au) flies to King Island daily from Melbourne's Moorabbin airport (45 minutes southeast from the city). Return flights cost around \$300.

**Regional Express** (Rex; ☎ 13 17 13; www.regionalexpress.com.au) flies from Tullamarine airport (Melbourne) to King Island, with return fares around \$300.

**Tasair** (☎ 1800 062 900, 6248 5088; www.tasair.com.au) flies daily from Devonport and Burnie/Wynyard to King Island (costing \$385 return from both destinations).

You can usually save yourself some money through an airline package deal. King Island Airlines has deals starting at around \$360 to \$420 per person for two nights' accommodation and air fares (car hire is extra). Rex also has package deals.

## Getting Around

There's no public transport on the island. Hire-car companies will meet you at the airport and bookings are highly recommended.

Most of King Island's 500km of roads are not sealed, so drive carefully. Unless you have a four-wheel drive, take extra care choosing which roads or tracks you take, or be prepared to dig yourself out of some sandy or muddy situations.

In Currie, you can rent cars from **Cheapa Island Car Rental** (☎ 6462 1603; kicars@kingisland.net.au; 1 Netherby Rd, Currie) from around \$65 per day; you can reduce your excess from \$800 to \$330

by paying an extra \$6 per day. **King Island Car Rental** (☎ 1800 777 282, 6462 1282; kicars@bigpond.com; 2 Meech St, Currie) has cars from \$62 to \$110 per day; you can reduce the excess from \$1100 to \$330 by paying an extra \$8.80 per day.

The island's light traffic and flat roads make it straightforward for cycling. You can hire mountain bikes from **The Trend** (☎ 6462 1360; 26 Edward St, Currie; trend@kingisland.net.au; ☎ 8.30am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5pm Sat, 9.30am-5pm Sun).

The island's **taxi service** (☎ 6462 1138) might also prove useful.

## FLINDERS ISLAND

☎ 03 / pop 900

Coming in by light plane over these magnificent, bald grey granite peaks is a highlight in itself: think of it as an aerial tour, taking in what remains of the original land bridge to Australia. At the very least, be thankful you've been spared the kind of landing some vessels endured in the 1900s, when ships were beckoned onto rocks by the false lanterns of the sealers, or Straitsmen. These pirates were a rough group who eked out a living through the slaughter of tens of thousands of seals. The most tragic part of Flinders Island's history, however, was its role in the dismal treatment of Tasmanian Aborigines. Between 1829 and 1834, 135 indigenous people were transported to Wybalenna (an Aboriginal word that means 'Black Man's Houses') to be 'civilised and educated'. After 14 years, only 47 survived to make the journey to Oyster Cove, near Hobart, in 1847. See p26 for more.

These days, the remote, unassuming vibe and wild natural loveliness of the place make it appealing to travellers wanting a proper break (even mobiles are out of range). Activities on offer include outstanding fishing, great bushwalks, kayaking, photography and a safe family environment. There are gorgeous beaches (especially on the western side) and most are safe for swimming.

The largest of the 52 islands that make up the Furneaux Group (about 70km long and 45km wide), Flinders is also the richest in natural attractions. A protected habitat of between 800 and 900 species of plants support a wide variety of wildlife and more than 120 bird species, including the Cape Barren goose – the second-rarest goose in the world.

Beyond its brutal history, Flinders Island today is a rural community. Whitemark is the main administrative centre. Lady Barron, in

the south, is the main fishing area and deep-water port. The island's main industries are sheep, farming and wool, cattle, milk-fed lambs, crayfish, abalone, poppies and seed cultivation. This makes for seasonal employment in shearing shed work, gumnut picking or as a deckhand.

## Information

The best sources of information are the local tourism operators and shop managers on the island; see also [www.focusflinders.com.au](http://www.focusflinders.com.au). Note that regular mobile phones don't work here. Petrol can be purchased only in Whitemark and Lady Barron. There are no ATMs, but most businesses have Eftpos facilities.

**Flinders Island visitors centre** (☎ 1800 994 477, 6359 2380; 2 Lagoon Rd, Whitemark; [www.visitflindersisland.com.au](http://www.visitflindersisland.com.au); ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri) Can help with bookings, packages and car hire.

**Main post office** (☎ 13 13 18; 7 Patrick St, Whitemark; [www.auspost.com.au](http://www.auspost.com.au); ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Agent for Westpac Bank.

**Online Access Centre** (☎ 6359 2396; cnr Patrick & Davies Sts, Whitemark; ☎ 4-7pm Mon, 10am-4pm Wed-Fri, closed Tue, Sat & Sun) At Flinders Island library, free half-hour net access.

**Service Tasmania** (☎ 6359 2201, ranger 6359 2217; [www.servicetasmania.tas.gov.au](http://www.servicetasmania.tas.gov.au); 2 Lagoon Rd, Whitemark; ☎ 10am-4pm Mon-Fri) Advice from Parks & Wildlife on maps, walking trails and national-park day passes (\$22).

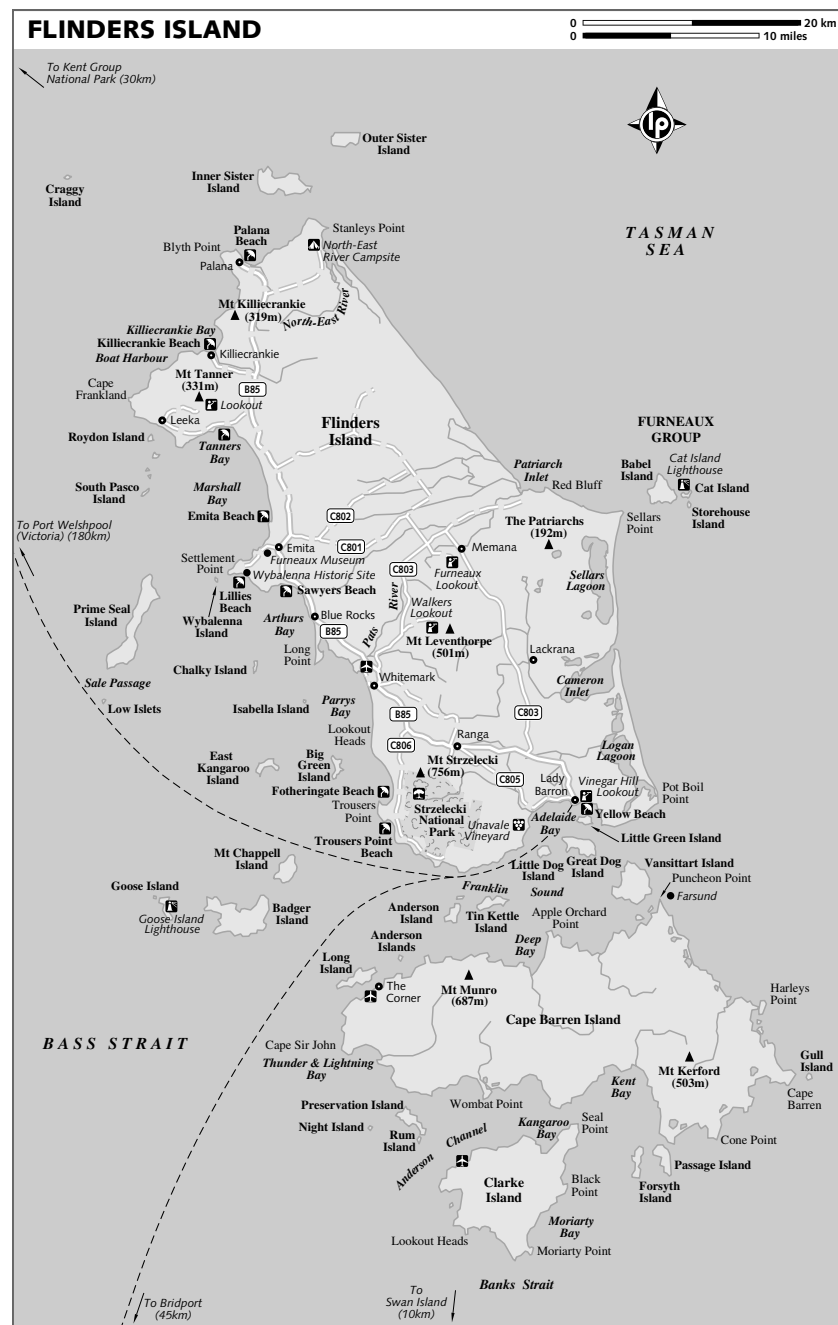
## Sights

### WYBALENNA HISTORIC SITE

Rated as one of the most important historic sites in the state, the **Wybalenna Historic Site** is all that remains of this unfortunate settlement set up to 'care for' the Aboriginal people. In truth, the opposite was achieved, with most of the people sent here succumbing to disease – including Mannaalgenna and Tongerlongger, the chiefs of the Portland and Oyster Bay groups. Close by are the cemetery (though no-one knows where the 100 or more Aboriginal people are buried) and memorial chapel. In 1999 Wybalenna was returned to the descendants of the indigenous people who lived there. For more information see p26.

### FURNEAUX MUSEUM

In a slick new building not far from Wybalenna, the **Furneaux Museum** (☎ 6359 2010; [furneauxmuseum@hotmail.com](mailto:furneauxmuseum@hotmail.com); 8 Fowlers Rd, Emita; adult/child \$4/free; ☎ 1-5pm daily late Dec-Jan, 1-4pm Sat & Sun Feb-Nov) lies in grounds strewn with



whalebones, blubber pots and rusty wrecks. Staffed by volunteers, it displays a variety of Aboriginal artefacts (including beautiful shell necklaces), sealing, sailing and mutton-bird industry relics.

### TROUSERS POINT

Aptly named after a trouserless escapee from the wreck of the *Sarah Anne Blanche* (a mutton bird oil boat), Trousers Point, on the island's southwestern tip, is well worth a peek. Explore the spectacular **Fotheringate** and **Trousers Point beaches**, have a quick dip, catch a sunset or bring supplies – there are picnic tables, barbecues and toilets in the free camping ground under the breezy she-oaks. Other native flora includes native tobacco (no, not that kind of tobacco), laurel, paperbark and bottlebrush. The colourful, accessible rocks surrounding the point are the perfect place to drop a fishing line and contemplate views of the Strzelecki peaks.

### UNAVALE VINEYARD

Seven years old, the boutique **Unavale Vineyard** (☎ 6359 3632; unavale@bordnet.com.au; 10 Badger Corner Rd; tastings free; ☒ by appointment) receives most recognition for its sauvignon blanc. Everything is done on site, right down to the labels. The cellar door is free, by appointment (or just call before you rock up).

### Activities

#### BUSHWALKING & LOOKOUTS

The **Strzelecki Peaks Walk**, part of the annual Three Peaks Race, is a key route into the Strzelecki National Park. A medium-difficulty walk, it's four- to six-hours return and 5.6km long, starting about 12km south of Whitemark on Trousers Point Rd. The well-signposted track ascends through farmland and teatree scrub to emerge at rocky viewpoints on Mt Strzelecki (756m), and gives awesome views of the Furneaux group of 52 islands. Be sure to carry warm clothing, wet-weather gear, food and water at any time of the year.

The 3.4km circuit walk to **Trousers Point** (1½- to two-hours return) exposes you to the magnificent coast, its dunes, she-oak woodlands and kooky granite boulder formations. National park fees apply (see Service Tasmania, p310).

Ask at the visitors centre about the **Flinders Island Ecology Trail** that takes in five sites around the island, ranging from 20-minute to 60-

minute walks, each of which will teach you something new about the birds, wildlife and landforms of the region.

Other walks of varying length and difficulty along beach and coastal-heath trails can be linked with hinterland and mountain tracks throughout the island. Grab *A Walking Guide to Flinders Island and Cape Barren Island* by Doreen Lovegrove and Steve Summers (\$11).

There are also a number of lookouts on the island, including **Furneaux Lookout** and **Walkers Lookout**, almost in the centre of the island, plus **Vinegar Hill** in the south and **Mt Tanner** in the north.

### ROCK CLIMBING

Mt Killiecrankie (319m) has some very steep granite faces rising from sea level. The rock climbs within Strzelecki National Park and the ridge walk along the Strzelecki peaks should be attempted only by experienced walkers and climbers.

### FOSSICKING

The elusive Killiecrankie 'diamond' is actually the semiprecious stone topaz. Most are clear, but some are pale blue or pink. **Killiecrankie Enterprises** (☎ 6359 8560; 7 Lagoon Rd, Whitemark; ☒ 9.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, to 12.30pm Sat) stocks jewellery, hires shovels (\$2) and sieves (\$2), and will tell you where to look.

### FISHING

Rock fishing along the southern, northern and northwestern coasts is good all year. Bait is easily obtained from the rocks and fishing tackle can be purchased from stores; however, you need to bring your own rod. Beach fishing is popular on the eastern coast and from Red Bluff. The North-East River (northeast of Killiecrankie) also has good fishing and a free campsite.

A number of local operators can arrange charter boats and fishing trips, including **Flinders Island Adventures** (☎ 6359 4507; www.flindersisland.com.au). Two- and three-day charters for six anglers costs \$500 to \$1000 per person, with gear, bait and accommodation supplied.

### Tours

**Flinders Island Adventures** (☎ 6359 4507; www.flindersisland.com.au) Arranges fishing charters, evening mutton bird-viewing cruises (December to March, \$35),

4WD tours (half- or full-day \$100/166 per person) and other customised touring options.

### Sleeping

The bulk of the options are in the island's south, but there's a spread of accommodation on the island – everything from laid-back camping to motel rooms, holiday houses and a retreat offering guaranteed rest and relaxation.

### WHITEMARK

**Interstate Hotel** (☎ 6359 2114; interstatehotel@trump.net.au; Patrick St; s \$22-65, d \$38-95, incl cooked breakfast) In the centre of Whitemark is this amenable pub, built in 1911 and renovated in Federation green and burgundy, with no-frills budget rooms (shared facilities). Better rooms have private shower and TV.

**Flinders Island Cabin Park** (☎ 6359 2188; www.flindersislandcp.com.au; 1 Bluff Rd; camp sites for two people \$14, cabin s \$35, d \$60-95, extra person \$15) Close to the airport, this park is about 4km north of Whitemark. Eight family-sized, quality cabins are on offer, some with private bathroom, all with cooker and TV. The friendly owner also has cars (\$66 per day) and bikes (\$25 per day) for rent.

### LADY BARRON

**Furneaux Tavern** (☎ 6359 3521; www.focusonflinders.com.au/tavern; Franklin Pde; s/d \$80/110, extra person \$30) The local drinking hole has 10 spacey, timber-panelled motel cabins with wrap-around decks, set in native gardens behind the bar-restaurant. Each has en suite, TV, fridge, kettle and toaster (continental breakfast provisions cost extra). Note that some road signage still refers to this place as the Flinders Island Lodge.

**Silas Beach** (☎ 6359 3521; Franklin Pde; d \$130, extra person \$35) The beach is a sprint away. You'll enjoy great views across the banksias from the big deck of this modern, three-bedroom holiday house (sleeping six). You can self-cater here and the contemporary, open plan, lofty living spaces are enhanced by the sound of the sea. Book through the tavern.

**Partridge Farm** (☎ 6359 3554; 310 Badger Corner Rd; d \$130-135, extra person \$27) Even locals take advantage of three options: the Bungalow B&B, the Top House three-bed abode or the Retreat, a self-contained one-bed unit. All have bush settings, lofty ceilings and views of Franklin Sound. Evening meals are

available on request. Watch out for roaming Cape Barron geese and guinea pigs.

Other holiday homes for rent here (usually with a two-night minimum stay):

**Bucks at Lady Barron** (☎ 0408-351 599; www.flindersisland.net; 15 Franklin Pde, Lady Barron; d/tr/q \$122/126/140) Next to the tavern, this suburban brick option has a wood heater, leather couches, timber floors and sleeps six.

**Lady Barron Holiday Home** (☎ 6359 3555; www.ladybarron.com; 31 Franklin Pde; d \$100, extra person \$20) A homely, renovated 1940s place with three bedrooms (sleeps six), small deck and lawns.

### TROUSERS POINT AREA

There is free camping in a lovely campground on Trousers Point, where facilities include toilets and gas barbecues (no powered sites, no showers).

**Healing Dreams Retreat** (☎ 6359 4588; www.healingdreams.com.au; 855 Trousers Point Rd; s/r \$160/260) Even if you're not here to heal, join the locals and book in for a massage/spa/lunch combo (\$80 for the full day). Dreamy dinners are also possible in the conservatory extension. This small retreat (maximum 14 guests) is in a great location at the foot of the Strzelecki Peaks, with Trousers Point beach close by. Guests can embrace the wilderness on 2km walks or mountain-bike rides through bush grounds shared with wallabies and wombats. The spacious, well-equipped rooms have eclectic décor. The rate listed here is for bed and breakfast only; there are 'spa' and 'outdoor' deals that include treatments, activities and all meals (certified organic) – see the website for more.

### KILLIECRANKIE AREA

**Killiecrankie Bay Holiday Houses** (☎ 6359 8560; www.thecrayfishclub.com; 531 Killiecrankie Rd; d \$120, extra person \$30) Crayfish Club Holiday House is a two-storey, self-contained house in the island's north, close to lovely Killiecrankie Bay. It's perfect for groups and extended families, with five bedrooms that sleep up to ten people, including two bathrooms, two kitchens, laundry and barbecue. The two bedroom Killiecrankie Cottage, within cooee and owned by the same people, sleeps four people.

Killiecrankie also has a very basic and thus unbelievably cheap **camping** (504 Killiecrankie Rd, per site \$5) but there's a much better (and free) option just 10km north at **North-East River Campsite** (Foochow Beach; free). Camp under the

she-oaks behind the dunes. The tidal estuary of the river is a breeding ground for fish (salmon, flathead, prawns) and this brings in the sea birds. There are two toilets and a picnic table here.

## Eating

### WHITEMARK

**Walkers Supermarket** (☎ 6359 2010; Patrick St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, to noon Sat) Across from the pub, Flinders Island's IGA has a reasonable range of basic groceries, as well as fuel.

**Flinders Island Bakery** (☎ 6359 2105; 4 Lagoon Rd; sandwiches & pies \$3-6; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Mon-Fri) The only decent coffee on the island is at the only bakery – try a wallaby and red-wine pie or pick up some preservative-free bread made with rainwater. Two words: lemon tart. Open on weekends in summer.

**Sweet Surprises** (☎ 6359 2138; 5 Lagoon Rd; snacks & meals \$3-12; ☎ 7.30am-4.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-1pm Sat) Mostly savoury and deep fried, you'll find fish and chips, toasted sandwiches and burgers at this friendly, low-key coffee shop opposite the bakery.

**Interstate Hotel** (☎ 6359 2114; Patrick St; lunch \$10-12, dinner mains \$16-27; ☎ lunch noon-1.30pm Mon-Fri, dinner 6-7.30pm Mon-Sat) A rockin' jukebox, pool table, Boag's on tap and the biggest ocean catches up on the wall: this country pub in the centre of Whitemark is the hub of island life. Its dining room serves a range of well-priced lunches and dinners, with the usual array of pub grub on offer and a natural emphasis on local seafood. Call to see if Sunday dinner is available.

### LADY BARRON

This township's **store** (☎ 6359 3503; 11 Henwood St; ☎ 9am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 9am-3pm Sat, 10am-5pm Sun) has chemist basics, magazines and newspapers, fruit and veg, plus fuel.

**Furieux Tavern** (☎ 6359 3521; Franklin Pde; bar meals \$10-15, restaurant mains \$22-35; ☎ bar lunch & dinner daily, restaurant lunch & dinner Wed-Sun) A first-name-basis oasis, this is your only option for meals in Lady Barron. The tavern has beautiful views over Franklin Sound to Cape Barron Island and the wharf, where you can watch the fishing boats chugging in as you sip a cold Boag's. Filling bar meals include the wallaby burger (no kidding!) or a solid steak sandwich, and the Shearwater restaurant menu has daily specials for the locavore: fish (perhaps ling), scallops or lamb.

## Getting There & Away

### AIR

**Airlines of Tasmania** (☎ 1800 144 460, 6359 2312; www.airtasmania.com.au) offers daily scheduled services between Launceston and Flinders Island (\$300 return), as well as services to Moorabbin in Victoria three times a week (\$404 return).

**Flinders Island Travel** (☎ 1800 674 719; www.flindersislandtravel.com.au) can help arrange tailor-made package deals (including flights, accommodation and car rental). Most accommodation on the island has signed up; see the website for comprehensive details.

### FERRY

**Southern Shipping Company** (☎ 6356 3333; www.southernshipping.com.au; Main St Bridport; ☎ 8am-4.30pm Mon-Fri) operates a weekly ferry (departing Monday) from Bridport in Tasmania's north-east to Flinders Island; the ferry continues to Port Welshpool in Victoria on demand. A return trip to Flinders Island costs \$97 per person (transporting a vehicle costs from \$515 to \$930 (including driver). The journey takes 8½ hours one way. Bookings essential (at least four weeks in advance).

## Getting Around

There is no public transport on the island. Hire-car companies will meet you at the airport and bookings are essential. **Flinders Island Car Hire** (☎ 6359 2168), based in Whitemark, rents vehicles for between \$70 and \$80 per day. The Flinders Island Cabin Park (p313) has cars for similar rates (\$66 per day), as well as bikes.

There is one **taxi** (☎ 6359 2112) for hire on the island (if you've been having drink at Whitemark and need to get back to Lady Barron, phone Jim).

Unsealed roads make it necessary to drive carefully, particularly around the more remote areas. Unless you have a four-wheel drive, try not to end up in sandy or slippery places.

## OTHER ISLANDS

### Cape Barron Island

Cape Barron Island is around 10km to the south of Flinders Island and is the only other island in the Furieux Group to have a permanent settlement, which started when the sealers and their Aboriginal wives moved here in the early 19th century. The community adopted a mix of European and Aboriginal ways and some traditions, like mutton-birding

and shell-necklace making, are practised today. Kent Bay, on the island's southern side, was the first settlement south of Sydney.

The main settlement on Cape Barron Island, known as the **Corner**, has a small school, church and medical centre. Today's islanders number about 70.

For experienced bushwalkers, the circuit walk of the shoreline offers great coastal views, including the wreck of the *Farsund*, lovely beaches and interesting rock formations. Ask at the Flinders Island visitors centre if you are interested in visiting.

### Kent Group National Park

Named by Matthew Flinders after a fellow naval officer in 1798, this 27.5-sq-km region qualified for park status partly due to its cultural heritage, which includes human occupation dating back at least 8000 years, the presence of seal hunters in the 19th century and an old lighthouse on Deal Island. It also qualified because of its outstanding wildlife, such as the sizable fur seal colony at Judgement Rocks and roosting sea birds – short-tailed shearwaters, oystercatchers, petrels and penguins. The waters surrounding the islands are a marine reserve.

In 2001, the half-dozen tiny land masses of the Kent Group, located 55km northwest of Flinders Island, and with only Deal, Dover and Erith big enough to qualify as islands (the other three are islets), became Tasmania's 19th national park.

### Swan Island

Fancy hiring out your own island with five mates? The owners live in one house here and rent out the other house. The island has eight

beaches and the immediate area has decent fishing, but the main attraction is a get-away-from-it-all experience.

Just 3km off the northeast coast of Tasmania (a mere fifteen minutes by plane), this island is 3km long and is dominated by its lighthouse, built in 1845 and automated in 1986 when the government sold the island. Many sea birds nest in its environs and you can watch the mutton birds and penguins returning to their nests around sunset.

**Swan Island Retreat** (☎ /fax 6357 2211; s/d \$55/77, extra adult \$55) is a self-contained cottage that sleeps up to six (no cygnets under 16). There's an open fire and the cottage is well equipped. Discuss charter-flight possibilities with the owners when making your booking.

### Three Hummock Island

Aboriginal people once swam the 5km across from Hunter Island to use this as a summer hunting ground. A reserve since the 1970s, this place 25km off Tasmania's northwestern tip is home to over 90 species of birds, including thousands of mutton birds in the summer. Family-owned **Eagle Hill Lodge** (☎ 6452 1405; www.threehummockisland.com.au; \$80 per person) is the only accommodation here, sleeping up to 10 people. It has a fully equipped kitchen, lounge and ocean views. Guests must bring their own food.

Charter flights to Three Hummock Island are possible leaving from Burnie/Wynyard airport in Tasmania, and from Melbourne's Moorabbin airport. Roaring 40s Ocean Kayaking (p136), basing itself at Kettering in Tasmania's southeast, organises an annual five-day trip to Three Hummock Island, which involves circumnavigating the island by kayak.

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