

Midlands & Lake Country



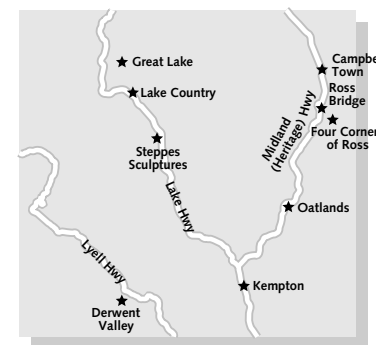
Baked, straw-coloured plains, hawthorn hedgerows, fertile river valleys lined with willows and poplars, roadside mansions: Tasmania's Midlands have a distinctly English-countryside feel. The area's agricultural potential fuelled Tasmania's settlement. Coach stations, garrison towns, stone villages and pastoral properties sprang from the dirt as convict gangs hammered out the road between Hobart and Launceston. The course of the Midland Hwy (aka the Heritage Highway) has veered from its original route. Many old towns are now bypassed, so it's worth making a few detours to explore their Georgian main streets, rose-filled gardens, antique shops and country pubs. Pick up a free *Heritage Highway* touring map at visitors centres around the state. Of all the towns, Ross is probably your safest bet for accommodation and eateries.

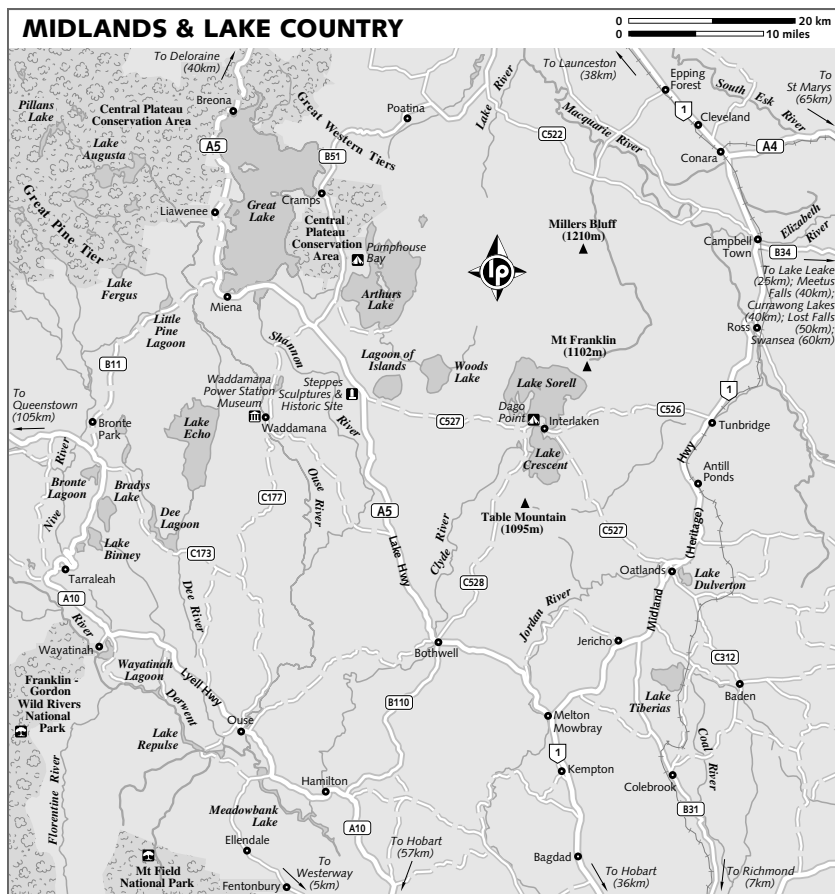
The under-populated Lake Country atop Tasmania's Central Plateau is about as far from the well-worn tourist track as Tassie gets – reason enough to visit its subalpine moorlands and trout-filled lakes. On the southern fringe of the highlands is the fertile Derwent Valley, a fecund fold studded with vineyards, hop fields, orchards and old oast houses. If you consulted a dictionary for the definition of 'sleepy backwater', you'd probably find a list of Derwent Valley towns.

The region's three major highways are the Lyell Hwy, between Hobart and Queenstown; the Lake Hwy, which ascends the lofty Central Plateau; and the Midland Hwy, a sinewy umbilical between Hobart and Launceston.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Arcing a fly across a highland stream and snaring a trout in the **Lake Country** (p161)
- Trying to find the carving of Jorgen Jorgenson, former king of Iceland, on the **Ross Bridge** (p156)
- Reading the heinous convict histories in the red bricks along the main street of **Campbell Town** (p158)
- Questioning your moral direction at the **Four Corners of Ross** (p157)
- Haunting yourself silly on a ghost tour of **Kempton** (p155) or **Oatlands** (p155)
- Pondering the quiet, middle-of-nowhere beauty of the **Steppes Sculptures** (p161)
- Watching the mist descend on **Great Lake** (p161) in winter
- Touring through the hop fields, hedgerows and hamlets of the **Derwent Valley** (p162)





MIDLAND (HERITAGE) HIGHWAY

Hobart was founded in 1804 and Launceston in 1805. By 1807, the need for a land link between the two prompted surveyor Charles Grimes to map an appropriate route. The road was constructed by convict gangs, and by 1821 was suitable for horses and carriages. Two years later a mail cart operated between the two towns, which became the first coach service (it sometimes carried passengers). The main towns on this road were established in the 1820s as garrisons for prisoners and guards, protecting travellers from the menace of bushrangers.

Getting There & Around

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) powers along the Midland Hwy two to four times daily; you can jump off at any of the main towns – Kempton, Oatlands, Ross or Campbell Town – except on express services. The Hobart to Launceston one-way fare is \$35 (about 2½ hours). For info on individual towns, see the Getting There & Away sections under each town.

KEMPTON

☎ 03 / pop 340

Pipsqueak Kempton, about 50km north of Hobart, was founded in 1838, making it one of the state's earliest settlements. Originally known as Green Ponds, it's notable for its an-

THE FATHER OF TASMANIA

Anthony Fenn Kemp (1773–1868) was a charismatic character: one half egotistical bankrupt with scant moral fibre, one half progressive patriot who was critical in Tasmania's evolution from convict dump to independent colony. Fleeing debts in England, he became embroiled in the 1808 ousting of Governor Bligh in NSW, then shifted focus to commercial opportunities in Van Diemen's Land in 1816. In the heady days of the new colony, he became a dedicated pastoralist, merchant and political sabre-rattler. Never far from controversy, and left behind more than a dozen children – a fact that has seen him dubbed the 'Father of Tasmania'. For a critical (and comical) look at Kemp's exploits, read Nicholas Shakespeare's excellent *In Tasmania*.

tiques stores and breezy bucolic surrounds, and as the one-time residence of notorious rabble-rouser Anthony Fenn Kemp (see the boxed text above), after whom the town was named.

Chase Kemp's ghost up and down the long main street on **Kempton Historic & Ghost Tours** (☎ 0411-120 138; www.kempton.com.au; 1½hr tours per person \$15; ☼ sunset), a mystery-soaked stroll around the old town's haunts. Bookings essential.

Hospitable **Wilmot Arms Inn** (☎ 6259 1272; wilmotarms@trump.net.au; 120 Main Rd; s/d from \$90/110) is a former coaching inn with authentically aged B&B rooms and a flower-filled garden. Across the street is the faux-colonial **Huntington Tavern** (☎ 6259 1292; 121 Main St; mains \$17-25; ☼ 11am-9pm Mon, to 10pm Tue-Sat, noon-7pm Sun), serving classic pub fare in the bar (with pool table) or bistro out the back.

OATLANDS

☎ 03 / pop 550

More tidy-town than twee, Oatlands contains Australia's largest collection of Georgian architecture. On the stately main street alone (which feels like a film set) there are 87 historic buildings, many of which are now galleries and craft shops.

The town's site was chosen in 1821 as one of four military posts on the Hobart-George Town road, but was slow to develop. In 1832 an optimistic town surveyor marked out 50 miles (80km) of streets on the assumption

Oatlands would become the Midlands capital. Many folks made the town home in the 1830s, erecting solid buildings with the help of former convicts and soldiers who were skilled carpenters and stonemasons. Alas, Oatlands never grew into the hoped-for capital. Today the town is soporifically rural – lonesome dogs and utes plastered with Bundaberg Rum stickers cruise the wide streets, and nothing's open after 8pm.

Information

The keen-to-assist **Oatlands visitors centre** (☎ 6254 1212; oatlands@tasvisinfo.com.au; 85 High St; ☼ 9am-5pm) proffers general info and handles accommodation bookings. There's a post office and a couple of banks on the main street, but the banks have restricted opening hours. There's a multcard ATM inside the **BP Service Station** (☎ 6254 1533; 52 High St; ☼ 8am-8pm).

Sights & Activities

Much of the sandstone for Oatlands' early buildings came from the shores of adjacent **Lake Dulverton**, an aquatic reserve that climate change has rendered bone dry.

Behind the visitors centre is a sandstone **History Room** (admission free; ☼ 9am-5pm) full of photos, relics and old knickknacks. While you're here, pick up the free handouts *Welcome to Historic Oatlands*, which includes self-guided town tour directions, and *Lake Dulverton Walkway Guide*, for ex-lake explorations.

Peter Fielding's Oatlands Tours (☎ 6254 1135; departs from 7 Gay St; tours \$10) offers a one-hour town tour departing on demand from 9am to 5pm daily. Peter also runs 90-minute candle-lit ghost tours, starting at 8pm from May to September, and at 9pm from October to April, taking in the old gaol, courthouse and other spirited convict sites. Book via phone or the visitors centre.

Callington Mill (☎ 6254 0039; fax 6254 5014; Mill Lane; admission free; ☼ 9am-5pm), off High St, was built in 1837 and ground flour until 1891. Restoration work has begun after a century of neglect. The eerie sounds of chickens and laughing children are piped through restored outbuildings, including the 15m-high mill tower (climb the wobbly stairs to the top). Also here is **Dolls at the Mill** (admission \$2), a collection of over 2000 dolls from around the world.

Sleeping

There's free **camping** (one night maximum) in the picnic area beside Lake Dulverton, at

the northern end of the Esplanade. There are toilets and barbecues here.

The town's two pubs, the **Kentish Hotel** (☎ 6254 1119; www.view.com.au/kentishhotel; 60 High St; s/d \$55/75) and **Midlands Hotel** (☎ 6254 1103; fax 6254 1450; 91 High St; s/d \$50/65), offer reasonable rooms. The Kentish gets a better recommendation for its en suite facilities, DVD players, fresh coat of paint and Licorice Allsort linen.

Blossom's Cottage (☎/fax 6254 1516; 116 High St; d incl breakfast \$110) Behind Blossom's cute cottage tearooms (see below) is a near-new self-contained garden studio. It's bright and cheerful, with a cast-iron bed, blackwood timber floors, leadlight windows and a small kitchenette. Great value.

Oatlands Lodge (☎ 6254 1444; fax 6254 1456; 92 High St; s/d incl breakfast \$100/120) Warm and inviting in two-storey, hen-pecked sandstone splendour, Oatlands Lodge is the cream of the town's accommodation. Rates include a huge breakfast spread (dinners by arrangement).

Waverley Cottages (☎ 6254 1264, 0408 125 049; waverleycottages@bigpond.com; s/d \$130/160, extra person \$25) This is a fully equipped, thoroughly colonial collection of cottages: Amelia Cottage (104 High St), opposite the Midlands Hotel; Forget-me-not Cottage (17 Dulverton St), directly behind Amelia; and Waverley Cottage and Waverley Croft, both 7km west of town. Stand-by rates sink to \$125 per double.

Eating

Blossom's Georgian Tea Rooms (☎ 6254 1516; 116 High St; light meals \$4-12; ☒ lunch Thu-Mon) At the northern end of the main street, Blossom's exudes old-fashioned warmth, and is a great place for a Devonshire tea, some raisin toast or a light meal (like Tassie smoked salmon with homemade bread and salad).

The Stables (☎ 6254 0013; 85 High St; light meals \$4-12; ☒ breakfast & lunch) Next door to the visitors centre is this low-key café with office furnishings and wailing Cold Chisel, but reasonably priced snacks like toasted focaccias, wraps, fish and chips, and sandwiches.

Kentish Hotel (☎ 6254 1119; 60 High St; mains \$14-22, bakery items \$3-8; ☒ bistro lunch & dinner, bakery breakfast & lunch) Our pick for lunch and evening dining in Oatlands. Favourites include steak, fish and chips, seafood crepes, smoked salmon salad and daily specials. There's usually a few sly locals sipping frothies at the bar from opening time, and the bakery next door sells pies, pasties, rolls, coffee and fabulously

quivering 'snot blocks' (vanilla slices for the uninitiated).

Self-caterers can head to the **Oatlands Foodmarket** (☎ 6254 1246; cnr Church & High Sts; ☒ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Thu, to 7pm Fri, to 5pm Sat & Sun).

Getting There & Away

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) services Oatlands from Hobart (\$19, one hour) and Launceston (\$25, 1¼ hours), with buses arriving at and departing from Oatlands Roadhouse at 47 High St, 500m from the visitors centre.

ROSS

☎ 03 / pop 300

Another tidy (nay, immaculate) Midlands town is Ross, an ex-garrison town 120km north of Hobart. Established in 1812 to protect Hobart-Launceston travellers from bushrangers, Ross became an important coach staging post at the centre of Tasmania's burgeoning wool industry, and, before the famous Ross Bridge was built in 1836, a fording point across the Macquarie River.

These days Ross' elm-lined streets are almost gagging on colonial charm and history. Accommodation owners charge like wounded bulls, but strict rules on development restrain the possibility of overcommercialisation. Soak up the ambience on foot – assess the architecture, check out the craft and antiques stores, and scoff down a Devonshire tea at one of the town's cafés.

Information

The **Ross visitors centre** (☎ 6381 5466; www.taswoolcentre.com.au; Church St; ☒ 9am-5pm) is inside the Tasmanian Wool Centre (see opposite). Pick up a brochure (purchased by donation) detailing the town's historic buildings. There are no ATMs or banking facilities in town.

Sights & Activities

The oft-photographed 1836 **Ross Bridge** is the third-oldest bridge in Australia. Its graceful arches were designed by colonial architect John Lee Archer, and it was built by two convict stonemasons, Colbeck and Herbert, who were granted pardons for their efforts. Herbert chiselled out the 186 intricate carvings decorating the arches, which include Celtic symbols, animals and the faces of notable people (including Governor Arthur and Anglo-Danish convict Jorgen Jorgenson,

the farcical ex-king of Iceland). At night the bridge is lit up and the carvings shimmer with spooky shadows.

The crossroads in the middle of town is known as the **Four Corners of Ross**, leading your soul in one of four directions: temptation (represented by the Man O'Ross Hotel), salvation (the Catholic church), recreation (the town hall) or damnation (the old gaol).

Other notable historic edifices include the 1832 **Scotch Thistle Inn** (Church St), now a private residence; the 1830 **Barracks** (Bridge St), restored by the National Trust and also a private residence; the 1885 **Uniting Church** (Church St); the 1868 **St John's Anglican Church** (cnr Church & Badajos Sts); and the still-operating 1896 **Post Office** (26 Church St).

Off Bond St, the **Ross Female Factory** (☎ 6278 7398; www.femalefactory.com.au/FFRG/ross.htm; admission free; ☒ 9am-5pm) was one of Tasmania's two female convict prisons (the other was in Hobart; see p87). Only one building remains, but archaeological excavations among the sunburnt grass are underway, and descriptive signs and stories provide insight into these women's lives. Pick up a copy of the *Ross Female Factory* brochure from the visitors centre, then walk along the track near the Uniting Church at the top of Church St to get here. Nearby is the wind-blown **Old Ross Burial Ground**, with headstones carved by the same stonemasons who worked on the bridge.

The **Tasmanian Wool Centre** (☎ 6381 5466; www.taswoolcentre.com.au; Church St; ☒ 9am-5pm) houses a wool exhibition, **museum** (admission by donation) and craft shop – pick up a beanie if you have a cold head. The museum focuses on convict times and the Australian wool industry – there are hands-on bales of wool and a woolly audio-visual display. If you've got a group of eight or more, the centre also runs guided **town tours** (adult/child \$5/free). Bookings essential.

Sleeping

Ross Caravan Park (☎ 6381 5224; http://caravanpark.rossstasmania.com; Bridge St; unpowered/powerd sites \$17/20, cabins/s/d \$45/60) This is an appealing patch of green near Ross Bridge on the banks of the fish-filled Macquarie River. Utilitarian, barracks-style cabins sleep two to four people, have cooking facilities and offer the cheapest accommodation in town. Bathrooms are shared, and you'll need your own linen. Reception is at Ross Motel.

Man O'Ross Hotel (☎ 6381 5445; www.manoross.com.au; 35 Church St; s/d without bathroom incl breakfast \$70/85) Accommodation prices at this gracious old pub are a bit steep given the shared bathrooms, but the sunny, modernised rooms are better than average, there's a roomy guest lounge and continental breakfast is included.

Ross Motel (☎ 6381 5224; www.rossmotel.com.au; 2 High St; d/f incl breakfast from \$120/160) Barely old enough to have a minibar, the independently owned Ross Motel offers spic-and-span Georgian-style cottage units, each with microwave, fridge, TV and DVD (prices include breakfast provisions). Family units sleep four.

Willowbank Cottage (☎/fax 6381 5219; 28 Church St; d \$120-140, extra person \$20) There's plenty of elbow room at this two-bedroom, two-bathroom, two-TV cedar house, which is perfect for families (the kids won't mind the naff carpet). Check in at the adjacent Antiques & Treasures at Ross store.

Ross B&B (☎ 6381 5354; www.rossaccommodation.com.au; 12 Church St; d \$125-130) B&B rooms are in a 1927 house, managed by the same folks that run Colonial Cottages of Ross. Choose from two en suite rooms, both queen-sized (how big is a queen?), or a two-bedroom retreat in a separate wing. Plenty of peachy colours; garden setting with warbling birds.

Ross Bakery Inn (☎ 6381 5246; www.rossbakery.com.au; 15 Church St; s/d incl breakfast from \$70/140) Wake up to breakfast fresh from a 100-year-old wood-fired oven when you stay in this 1830s coaching house, adjacent to the Ross Village Bakery (p158). Small, cosy rooms are offset by a guest lounge with an open fire and complimentary bakery treats. Groups of five or six can bed down in Kirsty's Cottage, a three-bedroom self-contained cottage across the street (\$175).

Colonial Cottages of Ross (☎ 6381 5354; www.rossaccommodation.com.au; reception at 12 Church St; d \$145-154, extra person \$25-33) This organisation manages three carefully restored, self-contained abodes: **Captain Samuel's Cottage** (Church St), **Hudson Cottage** (High St) and **Church Mouse Cottage** (cnr High & Bond Sts). Sizes vary from one to three bedrooms (sleeping up to six people). Continental breakfast provisions provided.

Somercotes (☎ 6381 5231; www.somercotes.com; off Mona Vale Rd; d \$170, extra person \$25) Off the Midland Hwy about 4km south of Ross is this rambling estate with a Georgian homestead and B&B in four restored cottages. Each cottage is

self-contained (breakfast provisions provided) and sleeps two or four people. Guided tours of the estate's historic buildings (including homestead) are available by appointment.

Eating

Ross General Store, Bakery & Tearooms (☎ 6381 5422; 31 Church St; light meals \$4-10; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This jack-of-all-trades store has an olden-days vibe, an open fire and a fuss-free menu of breakfast, pies, soups, homemade cakes and sandwiches, plus the omnipresent Devonshire tea. People have travelled from North Dakota specifically for the scallop pies.

Ross Village Bakery (☎ 6381 5246; 15 Church St; items \$4-14; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Overdose on carbs at the legendary Ross Bakery (the caramel slice is a cardiac arrest in disguise). They also do savoury stuff: wood-fired pizzas, soups, salads and pies of all denominations.

Man O'Ross Hotel (☎ 6381 5445; 35 Church St; mains \$15-24; ☎ lunch & dinner) Dinner options in Ross are thin on the ground, so you may end up eating bangers and mash or a chicken schnitzel at the pub. The rose- and birch-dappled beer garden is ideal for lunch and Plenty O'Beer, and there's a kids' menu too.

Getting There & Away

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) services Ross, with buses pulling up to Ross Newsagency at 38 Church St. The 1½-hour trip to Hobart costs \$25; the one-hour ride to Launceston is \$17.

CAMPBELL TOWN

☎ 03 / pop 900

Campbell Town, 12km north of Ross, is another former garrison settlement. Unlike Oatlands and Ross, the Midlands Hwy still trucks right on through town. The local catch-cry 'Campbell Town is reaching out to you!' overstates things just a little – the vibe here is more introspective and agrarian – but the town does make a handy pee-and-pie stop between Hobart and Launceston (or between Cradle Mountain and the east coast). Along the main drag are a couple of hotels, a supermarket, pharmacy, bank, post office and general shops.

The first white settlers here were Irish timber-workers who spoke Gaelic and had a particularly debauched reputation. Today, Campbell Town is ground zero for Tassie's cattle and sheep farming industries. In late May/early June every year, the showgrounds

behind the high school host the annual **Campbell Town Show** (www.campbelltownshow.com.au), aka the Midlands Agricultural Show. Running strong since 1839, it's the oldest show in Australia.

Information

Pick up a free brochure detailing a self-guided Campbell Town tour at the **Campbell Town visitors centre** (☎ 6381 1353; www.campbelltown Tasmania.com; 103 High St; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, occasional weekends). It's beside the post office in the old courthouse, a 1905 building still used occasionally for judicial proceedings. Also here is the Heritage Highway Museum (below). The opening hours listed here are a rough guide – the centre is volunteer-run so hours vary. If you're looking for info outside of opening hours, the takeaway shop two doors down (next to the police station) stocks useful brochures.

There's a multicaud ATM inside the Festival IGA Supermarket (opposite), and internet access at Zeps restaurant (opposite).

Sights & Activities

The curio-strewn **Heritage Highway Museum** (☎ 6381 1353; 103 High St; admission free; ☎ 10am-3pm Mon-Fri, occasional weekends) features histories of figures like John Batman and Martin Cash (a local bushranger), and artefacts like a 1930s film projector, old toys, coins and books. The museum is volunteer-run and has unpredictable opening hours.

Be sure to look down as you wander along High St. Rows of **red bricks** set into the footpath detail the crimes, sentences and arrival dates of convicts like Ephram Brain and English Corney, sent to Van Diemen's Land for such crimes as various as stealing potatoes, bigamy and murder.

Campbell Town has a crop of buildings in the over-100-years-old category, mostly along High and Bridge Sts. Highlights include the 1835 **St Luke's Church of England** (High St); the 1840 **Campbell Town Inn** (100 High St); the 1834 **Fox Hunters Return** (132 High St); **The Grange** (High St), an impossible-to-miss 1847 mansion, now a conference centre; and the 1878 **Old School** (Hamilton St), in the current school's grounds.

The bridge across the Elizabeth River here was completed in 1838, making it almost as archaic as the Ross Bridge. Locals call it the **Red Bridge** because it was convict-built from more than 1.5 million red bricks baked on-site. There's a comprehensive booklet on the bridge available at the visitors centre.

DETOUR: LAKE LEAKE

The secondary B34 road from Campbell Town heads east through the excellent fishing and bushwalking area around Lake Leake (33km from Campbell Town) to Swansea (69km) on the east coast. Redline buses ply this route once a day from Monday to Friday, and can drop you at the Lake Leake turn-off, 4km from the lake.

The shimmering surface of Lake Leake itself is punctuated by ghostly tree stumps, and is encircled by holiday shacks. For passers-by there's a **camping area** (powered/unpowered sites \$8/5) and a rough-and-tumble, shingle-covered pub, the **Lake Leake Hotel** (☎ 6381 1329; www.lakeleakehotel.com.au; 340 Lake Leake Rd; s/d \$40/75). The hotel offers lunch and dinner daily (mains \$14 to \$20) and basic accommodation, plus boat hire (\$90 per day) and guided fishing trips (from \$600).

After checking out the lake and maybe casting a fly or two across the water, those with their own wheels can explore further east to the **Meetus Falls** and **Lost Falls** forest reserves. Meetus Falls is the pick of the two – it's 10km from the signposted turn-off and has a sheltered picnic area, barbecues and toilets.

If you're really into trout fishing, **Currawong Lakes** (☎ 6381 1148; www.troutfish Tasmania.com.au; 1204 Long Marsh Rd, Lake Leake; d \$175) is the place for you. It's a private trout fishery 12km west of the Lake Leake turn-off along an unsealed road. The property is home to trout-filled lakes, a handful of good-quality self-contained cabins, and plenty of peace and quiet. Fly fisherman can fish for a full day for \$150, with no licence required. Equipment hire (rod, waders, flies) costs \$50.

Sleeping & Eating

Campbell Town Hotel (☎ 6381 1158; www.goodstone.com.au; 118 High St; s/d \$65/75) It seems unlikely from the outside, but part of this building predates all the other hotels in town. This pub offers 10 down-at-heel and anonymous (but clean enough) motel units out the back, and reasonably priced meals (mains \$8 to \$18) for lunch and dinner.

St Andrews Inn (☎ 6391 5525; standrewsinn@southcom.com.au; Midland Hwy, Cleveland; s/d incl breakfast \$90/120) Convict-built in 1845, this National Trust-classified roadside coaching inn is 16km north of Campbell Town at Cleveland. Upstairs are two large en suite B&B rooms (with TVs and complimentary port); downstairs is a bubbly little café (meals \$10 to \$24) with an outdoor deck. It's open for breakfast and lunch Tuesday to Sunday and for dinner by arrangement. Walking up and down the stairs, you might rub shoulders with Juicy Lucy, the friendly resident ghost.

Fox Hunters Return (☎ 6381 1602; www.foxhunters.com.au; 132 High St; s/d from \$130/150) On the left as you enter town from Hobart is this pukka establishment, built with convict labour in 1833 as a coaching inn and now offering spacious rooms, each with private bathroom and sitting area. The cellar under the main building housed convicts during the construction of the neighbouring Red Bridge.

our pick **Zeps** (☎ 6381 1344; 92 High St; meals \$7-22; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) Easily the best

choice in town to refuel is hyperactive Zeps, serving brekky, *panini*, pasta, fat pies and good coffee throughout the day, plus pizza and Mod Oz mains in the evening. Takeaways and internet access is available too.

Tassie Thai (☎ 6381 1020; 80 High St; mains \$11-16; ☎ lunch & dinner Wed & Sat) What a surprise! Chilli-laced Thai classics like pad Thai, *tom yum gung* and Massaman curry are served in a brick booth shop amid the pie-and-burger highway wastelands. Tartan placemats pay homage to Campbell Town's Celtic roots. Takeaways available.

Self-caterers can stock up at the **Festival IGA Supermarket** (☎ 6381 1311; 113 High St; ☎ 8am-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-5.30pm Sat & Sun).

Getting There & Away

Redline Coaches (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) buses run to Campbell Town, chugging up to the milk bar at 107 High St, next to the police station. The 1¼-hour Hobart run costs \$29; the 45-minute journey to Launceston costs \$15.

LAKE COUNTRY

The people-free Lake Country on Tasmania's Central Plateau is spiked with steep mountains and perforated with glacial lakes, waterfalls, abundant wildlife and unusual flora, including the ancient pencil pine. The

plateau's northwestern sector, roughly one-third of its total area, is part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. The region is also known for its world-class trout fishing and for its socially divisive hydroelectric schemes, which have seen the damming of rivers, the creation of artificial lakes, the building of power stations (both above and below ground), and the construction of massive pipelines arcing over rough terrain like giant metal worms. If you want to see the developments first-hand, check out the active Tungatinah, Tarraleah and Liapootah power stations on the extensive Derwent scheme between Queenstown and Hobart.

On the western edge of the Central Plateau is the Walls of Jerusalem National Park (see p243), a perennial fave of mountaineers, bushwalkers and cross-country skiers. Experienced hikers can walk across the Central Plateau into 'The Walls', and also into Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park.

BOTHWELL

☎ 03 / pop 340

Encircling a village green, Bothwell is a low-key (some would say catatonic) historic town 74km north of Hobart in the Clyde River Valley. Standout National Trust-acknowledged buildings include an old **Bootmaker's Shop** (☎ 6259 5649; High St), open by appointment; the 1820s **Thorpe Mill** (Dennistown Rd); the **Castle Hotel** (14 Patrick St), first licensed in 1821, and the endearing 1831 **St Luke's Church** (Dennistown Rd).

The **Bothwell visitors centre** (☎ 6259 4033; www.bothwell.com.au; Market Pl; ☎ 10am-4pm Sep-May, 11am-3pm Jun-Aug) doubles as the Australasian Golf Museum (see below). Pick up the free leaflet *Let's Browse in Bothwell* and check out the wee map, marked with locations of historic buildings.

Bothwell is best known for its proximity to Trout Heaven, but the town also lays claim to Australia's oldest golf course, known as **Ratho** (☎ 0409-595 702; www.rathogolf.com; Highland Lakes Rd; greens fees \$15; ☎ 8am-dusk). The course was rolled out of the dust in 1822 by the Scottish settlers who built Bothwell. It's still in use today, and is open to all golfers. You can hire clubs from the **Australasian Golf Museum** (☎ 6259 4033; www.ausgolfmuseum.com; Market Pl; admission adult/child \$4/2; ☎ 10am-4pm Sep-May, 11am-3pm Jun-Aug), set up in Bothwell's 1887 schoolhouse (this is also the visitors centre).

DAISY CHAIN, ANYONE?

Adjacent to St Luke's Church in Bothwell is the age-old St Luke's Cemetery. Botanists marvel over the fact that here, dotted among the crumbling tombstones, grows the ultra-rare Lanky Button Daisy (*Leptorhynchus elongatus*). It's a diminutive native flower, and this obscure boneyard is one of only four known places it grows in Tasmania. Just the right mix of nutrients in the soil, perhaps?

Bothwell is also home to **Thorpe Farm** (☎ 6259 5678), which produces sensational goat's milk cheese under the label Tasmanian Highland Cheese (often available at the visitors centre, the Fat Doe Bakery and select Hobart delicatessens). The farm also makes *wasabi* and stone-ground flour. Visits by appointment; call ahead for directions.

Sleeping & Eating

Bothwell Caravan Park (☎ 6259 5503; http://bothwell.50webs.com/caravanpg.htm; Market Pl; unpowered/powered sites \$10/15) This isn't exactly a park, more a small patch of gravel behind the visitors centre. Check in at the Central Highlands Council on Alexander St (9am to 4.30pm Monday to Friday), or after hours at the Bothwell Garage (☎ 6259 5599) on Patrick St. Site prices are for two people.

On Alexander St there are a couple of decent, self-contained houses for rent. An unremarkable 1950s red-brick number, **Park House** (☎/fax 6259 5676; 25 Alexander St; d \$80, extra person \$20) sleeps six; inquire at 28 Elizabeth St. Next door is the far more appealing but more expensive **Batt's Cottage** (☎ 6265 9481, 0409 659 480; 23 Alexander St; d \$115, extra person \$20), a symmetrical National Trust-registered cottage with warped brick walls, dating from 1840.

Bothwell Grange (☎ 6259 5556; bothwell_grange@skyoptics.com.au; 15 Alexander St; d \$99 incl breakfast) A highway hotel built in 1836, the once-grandiose Grange has a snug Georgian atmosphere and comfortable B&B accommodation. There are six rooms, all with bathrooms, antique beds and timber ceilings. Evening meals by arrangement. Mind your head – the doorways were built for diminutive 19th-century bumpkins.

Castle Hotel (☎ 6259 5502; fax 6259 4021; 14 Patrick St; mains \$14-19; ☎ lunch daily, dinner Fri & Sat) The affable, country-aired Castle has been continually

licensed since 1829. The Cascade and Boag's continue to flow, washing down better-than-average meals (heavy on the meat and local produce). There are a couple of surprisingly good en suite rooms upstairs, with bathrooms, TVs and DVDs (\$90 per double).

Fat Doe Bakery & Coffee Shop (☎ 6259 5551; 12 Patrick St; items \$3-8; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) Make the unpretentious Doe a quick pit stop for a sandwich, lamington, fresh-from-the-oven cake or one of the tasty range of pies on offer (as always, we recommend the scallop version).

Getting There & Away

Metro Tasmania (☎ 132 201; www.metrotas.com.au) runs bus 140 from stop F on Elizabeth St at 4pm each weekday to Bothwell (one-way adult/child \$15/8, 1½ hours).

BOTHWELL TO GREAT LAKE

On the dirt road looping off the Lake Hwy between Bothwell and Great Lake is the hydroelectric ghost town of Waddamana, and the **Waddamana Power Station Museum** (☎ 6259 6158; www.townsoftasmania.com/waddamana; admission free; ☎ 10am-4pm). Originally a private venture, the hydroelectric station was built between 1910 and 1916. Financial difficulties resulted in a government takeover and the creation of a Hydro-Electric Department, which today is the omnipotent Hydro Tasmania. Check out displays on Tassie's hydro history, and the massive operational turbines.

Signposted off the highway 35km north of Bothwell (25km south of Miena) are the ethereal **Steppes Sculptures**, a ring of 12 stones with affixed iron representations of Midlands life – wildlife, cattle drovers and Tasmanian Aborigines – created by Tassie sculptor Stephen Walker in 1992. A 900m track leads north from the stones to the ruins of the **Steppes Historic Site**, the homestead of the locally notable Wilson family for 112 years from 1863. For detailed info see the Parks & Wildlife Service brochure *The Steppes Historic Site* from visitors information centres.

THE LAKES

Levelling out at 1050m above sea level on the Central Plateau, **Great Lake** is the largest natural freshwater lake in Australia. The first European to dip his toe here was John Beaumont in 1817; his servant circumnavigated the lake in three days. In 1870 brown trout were released into

the lake and it soon became a fishing fantasia. Rainbow trout were added in 1910 and also thrived. Attempts were made to introduce salmon, but this recalcitrant species refused to multiply. Trout have now penetrated most of the streams across the plateau; some of the best fishing is in the smaller streams and lakes west of Great Lake.

In the seminal days of hydroelectric ambition, a small Great Lake dam was constructed to raise water levels near Miena. Great Lake is linked to nearby Arthurs Lake by canals and a pumping station, and supplies water to the Poatina Power Station on its northeastern shore.

For lake and bushwalking info, try the sporadically staffed **Parks & Wildlife Service Ranger Station** (☎ 6259 8148; www.parks.tas.gov.au) at Liawenee, 10km north of Miena on the western side of Great Lake.

Public transport services to the area is non-existent.

Fishing

There's brilliant fishing right across the Central Plateau, with good access to most of the larger lakes. Great Lake, Lake Sorell, Arthurs Lake and Little Pine Lagoon are all popular haunts. The plateau itself actually contains thousands of lakes; many are tiny, but most still contain trout. You'll have to walk to most of the smaller lakes, which means carrying lightweight camping gear, as the region is prone to snowfalls.

A long list of regulations apply to fishing in the area, aimed at ensuring fish continue to breed and stocks aren't depleted. On some parts of Great Lake, for instance, you can use only artificial lures, and you're not allowed to fish in streams flowing into the lake. On the Central Plateau, some waters are reserved for fly-fishing. Bag, size and seasonal limits apply to all areas. The **Inland Fisheries Service** (www.ifs.tas.gov.au) website offers priceless advice. See p59 for more fishy business.

Sleeping & Eating

Campers can try the basic camping ground at **Dago Point** (camping per adult/child \$3.30/1.65), beside Lake Sorell. A better bet for families is the camping ground on Arthurs Lake at **Pumphouse Bay** (camping per adult/child \$3.30/1.65), which has better facilities including hot showers. Campers self-register at both sites and fee payments rely on an honour system. Bring

SHOUT ABOUT TROUT

Catching a trout in Tasmania should be as easy as getting your feet wet – most of the state's rivers and lakes have been stocked with brown and rainbow species – but you still need to be in the right place at the right time. There are also restrictions on the types of tackle permitted in various areas in different seasons.

Live bait is tried-and-true (impaling a grasshopper, grub or worm on a hook), but bait fishing is banned in most inland Tasmanian waters – it's too effective to give the fish a sporting chance! Artificial lures are more acceptable, coming in myriad shapes, sizes, weights and colours. Depending on the season, a 'Cobra' wobbler or Devon-type 'spinner' might work for you in lakes, while your preferred stream lure might be a 'Celta'. Other winners include claret dabblers, brown bead head buggers and yum-yum emergers.

The most artful form of trout fishing is of course fly-fishing, which often involves wading through rivers and lakes in the early morning. Fly-fiends tie their own flies, but a huge variety is available in fishing shops. In Hobart try Spot On Fishing Tackle (p107). Many areas in Tasmania are dedicated fly-fishing reserves.

When fishing in the Lake Country, prepare for Tasmania's riotously changeable weather – bring warm, waterproof clothing, even in summer. Engaging a professional guide for lessons or a guided trip is a stellar idea: try **Fish-Wild Tasmania** (☎ 6223 8917, 0418 348 223; www.fishwildtasmania.com), **Rod & Fly Tasmania** (☎ 6266 4480, 0408 469 771; www.rodandfly.com.au), or check out **Trout Guides & Lodges Tasmania** (www.troutguidest Tasmania.com.au).

all your supplies. It's recommended that you boil tap water.

Great Lake Hotel (☎ 6259 8163; www.greatlakehotel.com.au; Swan Bay, Miena; dm \$35, d from \$95, f \$135) From Miena, take the turn-off to Bronte Park and you'll soon come across this small-town pub, offering a accommodation from bog-basic anglers' cabins with shared facilities to self-contained motel-style units. The meat-based meals in the bar (mains \$10 to \$23; open lunch and dinner) will reduce vegetarians to tears.

Central Highlands Lodge (☎ 6259 8179; www.centralhighlandslodge.com.au; Haddens Bay, Miena; s/d \$108/136) On the southern outskirts of Miena, this jaunty, rough-sawn timber lodge offers clean, comfortable cabins. The Eagles twang over the sound system in the lodge restaurant (mains \$13 to \$26; open lunch and dinner) – a great place to rejuvenate with a cold beer and a hot meal (try the venison hot pot) and talk about the one that got away.

The **Great Lake General Store** (☎ 6259 8149; Swan Bay, Miena; ☎ 8am-5pm Sun-Thu, 8am-7pm Fri & Sat), next door to the Great Lake Hotel, sells petrol, fishing supplies and takeaway food.

DERWENT VALLEY

Lake St Clair is the head of the Derwent River, which flows southeast towards Hobart through the fertile Derwent Valley.

New Norfolk, the valley's lynchpin town, is covered in the Hobart chapter (see p112). The Lyell Hwy largely mimics the flow of the Derwent River to the Central Plateau, continuing past Derwent Bridge west to Queenstown.

HAMILTON

☎ 03 / pop 150

National Trust-classified Hamilton was planned with great expectations, but it never evolved beyond a small, soporific village. Historic sandstone buildings adorn the main street, with photo-worthy views of mountain ranges and peaks to the west. Lyell Hwy rolls through town – it's called Franklin Pl along this short stretch.

Hamilton was settled in 1808 when New Norfolk was established, and was a mid-19th century boomtown. By 1835 it had 800 residents, well watered by 11 hotels and two breweries. Grids of streets were surveyed, but the dry local soils defeated many farmers. The town stagnated, and several buildings were eventually removed. There's a lonesome sense of abandon to the place these days – even the pub was closed when we visited.

Hamilton's history is documented in the **Hamilton Heritage Centre** (☎ 6286 3218; Cumberland St; admission adult/child \$1/50c; ☎ 9am-5pm), set up in an 1840 Warder's Cottage. It is a DIY arrangement: keys are available from the ad-

jacent council chambers or Glen Clyde House (right).

Take a fascinating tour of the locally owned, 300-hectare working **Curringa Farm** (☎ 6286 3332; www.curringafarm.com; 5831 Lyell Hwy; 45min tour per person \$35), 3km west of Hamilton. The owners aim to strike a balance between business and sustainability, an approach applied to the 3000 sheep, poppies, oats and cabbage seed farmed here. Alternatively, take a woolly angle on things with a sheep shearing tour. Bookings required (call the night before).

Sleeping

Cherry Villa (☎ /fax 6286 3418; 38 Arthur St; d \$110-150) The 1834 Cherry Villa offers two attractive rooms amid bee-buzzing rose gardens. Straight out of an architectural textbook, it's a classically symmetrical Georgian house, with twin dormer windows and chimneys. It's also Hamilton's only traditional, hosted B&B (continental breakfast). Dinners by arrangement.

Emma's, George's, Victoria's and Edward's (☎ 6286 3270; www.newnorfolk.org/~hamilton_cottages; reception Uralla House, 33 Franklin Pl; d \$120, extra adult/child \$35/25) are old sandstone cottages with authentic furnishings, strung out along the main road in the town centre and nestled in cute-as-can-be country gardens. They sleep between two and five slumberers.

Olde School House (☎ 6286 3292; www.hamiltonschoolhouse.com; 39 Franklin Pl; d \$150, extra adult/child \$50/30) Pay attention class! This educational edifice was built in 1856 and served as the school until 1935. Two self-contained units sleep up to five, and the owners have managed to restrain themselves just enough on the frilly-doyley-floral decoration front. Full breakfast provisions supplied.

our pick Over the Back (☎ 6286 3333; www.curringa farm.com.au; 5831 Lyell Hwy; d \$175, extra person \$30) You feel a long way from anywhere at Over the Back, but that's the appeal. About 3km west of Hamilton, it's a fully self-contained log cabin sleeping five, offering a secluded slice of rural life on the 300-hectare Curringa Farm. The spa cottage is a further 3km from the farmhouse, beside Meadowbank Lake (good for fishing and swimming) – the lake and gum tree views from the deck are quintessentially Australian. The owners are active in preserving local ecosystems, and run tours of their property (above). There's also a three-bedroom house available, sleeping up to eight.

Jackson's Emporium (below) also provides accommodation around town.

Eating

Platter Pie Café (☎ 6286 3206; 32 Franklin Pl; items \$4-6; ☎ breakfast & lunch) This roadside pull-in has little external appeal, but redeems itself with sensational homemade pies (curried steak, corn and bacon, steak and kidney), fresh burgers, quiches, coffee and sandwiches.

Glen Clyde House (☎ 6286 3276; 2 Grace St; meals \$7-22; ☎ breakfast & lunch) On a sharp bend at the town's northern end is this hefty 1840 sandstone house: part licensed café (Devonshire teas, pies, steaks, smoked trout pâté), part Tasmanian craft gallery. The outdoor deck is a top spot for a snack.

Jackson's Emporium (☎ 6286 3258; www.jacksonsemporium.com.au; 13 Franklin Pl; mains \$10-15; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner; ☎) Ramshackle Jackson's (an emporium since the 1850s) cleverly caters to visitors staying in Hamilton's self-contained accommodation, proffering a range of chef-prepared frozen meals (spaghetti bolognese, beef stroganoff, Thai chicken), desserts, wine and beer. Ask about their three accommodation options – McCauley's, Kelleher's and Arcadia (doubles from \$130).

You might also want to try the 1826 convict-built **Hamilton Inn** (☎ 6286 3204; Tarleton St) to see if anything's cookin' in the kitchen.

Getting There & Away

Tassielink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) runs buses once daily (except Monday and Wednesday) between Hobart and Queenstown via Hamilton, Ouse and Lake St Clair. The 1½-hour trip from Hobart to Hamilton costs \$13. Buses stop at Hamilton Newsagency.

ELLENDALE

☎ 03 / pop 470

Hamlet-sized Ellendale rests on a narrow link road between Lyell Hwy and Westerway – a nifty shortcut to Mt Field National Park (p116). Ellendale was once a hop-growing area, though few remnants of the industry remain. There's little here apart from a creek-side picnic shelter, a general store and some accommodation, but it's a quiet base for day trips to Mt Field or the southwest.

Not far along Ellendale Rd (off Lyell Hwy midway between Hamilton and Ouse, not serviced by bus), you cross **Meadowbank Lake**, part of the Derwent River hydroelectric scheme.

Sleeping

Platypus Cottage (☎ 0419-875 890, 0427-881 281; nigel.tomlin@bigpond.com; 38 The Avenue; d \$90-120) This magic wee weatherboard cottage comes as sweet relief – not a colonial curlicue or floral bedspread in sight! It's fully equipped with kitchen, washing machine, TV and video, plus light breakfast provisions and a verdant rural setting.

Hamlet Downs (☎ 6288 1212; www.users.bigpond.com/hamletdowns; 50 Gully Rd; d incl breakfast from \$140, extra adult/child from \$10/35) Amid spectacular flower beds 6km south of Ellendale at Fentonbury, Hamlet Downs sleeps up to nine in self-contained comfort. Take a walk down to Fentonbury Creek to look for a platypus. Light or cooked breakfast included. Off-season rates as low as \$100.

Hopfield Cottages (☎ 6288 1223; hopfieldcots@trump.net.au; 990 Ellendale Rd; d \$140-145, extra person \$25) Main street Hopfield offers two self-contained abodes under the one conjoined, corrugated-iron roof, including full breakfast provisions and lots of quaint touches. Hollyhocks and roses succeed to raspberry canes out the back, running down to the river.

OUSE

☎ 03 / pop 160

Ouse (pronounced, rather deliciously, 'Ooze') was proclaimed early in Tassie's colonial saga, but for a long time there was just a river crossing here. Most of the town's ordinary weatherboard buildings were knocked up more recently, but Ouse remains a popular highway food stop, with a pub, takeaway (renowned for its pies) and supermarket. The riverside picnic ground is a serene spot.

Lachlan Hotel (☎ 6287 1215; ousepub@bigpond.com; Lyell Hwy; s/d \$45/65) The rough-as-guts Lachlan offers serviceable, sunny pub rooms with shared facilities, plus bar lunches and dinners daily (mains \$12 to \$19).

Sassa-del-Gallo (☎ 6287 1289; fax 6287 1289; cnr Ticknell St & Lyell Hwy; d \$90, extra person \$25) Shamelessly suburban, Sassa-del-Gallo (Spanish for 'No Style?') fails to deliver the Mediterranean flair suggested by its name. Still, it's clean and serviceable if all you're after is a bed. Room for six.

TARRALEAH

☎ 03 / pop 10

Halfway between Hobart and Queenstown, **Tarraleah** (☎ 6289 3222; www.tarraleah.com) is a surreal place. It was built in the 1920s and '30s as a residential village for hydroelectric workers, and at its peak it had a population

BLACK BOBS

You won't find it on any maps, but somewhere around the upper Derwent Valley was once the notorious town of Black Bobs. Tasmania has only recently shaken off its 'two-headed Tasmanian' tag, a throw-away insult used by mainlanders who viewed Tasmanians as hopeless inbreds wading through the shallow end of the gene pool. Isolated in the backwoods for decades, Black Bobs was allegedly rife with cousin-love; a place of evil, depraved men and their questionable spouses, existing in unnatural harmony. It seems Black Bobs has been lost to myth and history – no-one's really sure where it was, or if it ever actually existed – but keep an ear out for lonesome banjos on the back roads while you're passing through...

of hundreds, complete with police station, town hall, shops, church, golf course and 100 houses. Once the hydro work dried up, the village declined and the population plummeted. Hydro sold off most of the houses for removal in the 1990s, and then put the remainder of the village up for sale.

In 2002 Tarraleah (pronounced 'Tarra-lee-uh') was purchased by a family from Queensland ('The Family that Bought a Town', as the tabloids tagged them). They poured buckets of cash into the place, but recently sold the whole shebang to private interests who've spent further millions. It still feels like a ghost town if you visit outside peak season, but there's a full range of accommodation here, including **camp-sites** (unpowered/powerd sites \$12/26), rooms in the **Scholars House** (d from \$130), self-contained one- to three-bedroom **cottages** (d from \$190), and ritzy rooms in the luxury Art Deco **Lodge** (☎ 6289 1199; www.tarraleahlodge.com; Wild River Rd; d from \$590).

On the food front there's a pub called the **Highlander Arms** (mains \$15-25; ☎ dinner), the casual **Teez Café** (light meals \$5-15; ☎ breakfast & lunch) and **Wildside Restaurant** (4-course degustation menu \$85; ☎ dinner) in the Lodge (bookings essential).

Activities include mountain biking, bush-walking, golf, bird-watching, fishing, kayaking and squash – whatever floats your boat.

Hobart-to-Strahan **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) buses stop here on request daily (except Monday and Wednesday). The two-hour jaunt from Hobart costs \$26; from Strahan it's 3½ hours and \$43.

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