

# The West



There are no two ways about it: Tasmania's west truly is its wilder side. We're talking endless ocean beaches where the surf pounds in from South America, ancient mossy rainforests dripping emerald green, whisky-tinted rivers, glacier-sculpted mountain peaks and boundless untamed horizons that make you feel you're the only soul in the world.

There's a rugged human side to this part of Tasmania too. The first inhabitants braved the west's ferocious weather indomitably; but convicts transported into aching isolation on Sarah Island suffered extreme privations, leaving behind desperate legends of mutiny and cannibalism. Later piners and miners ventured into rivers and forests here. Outdoor adventurers were the next to feel the lure of the wild west. Their depictions of this region's beauty helped win Australia's most intense environmental protest, the battle to save the Gordon and Franklin Rivers from a hydroelectric dam. Even today, west-coasters are different: they have a certain rough-at-the-edges, no-nonsense charm. The visitor will find a vast outdoor playground: multiday hikes, such as the Overland Track, to tackle and river rafting on the incredible Franklin River. There's sailing, jet-boating, sandboarding and helicopter flights, or more gentle outdoor pleasures like chasing the reflections on a mirror-calm Gordon River cruise, riding through the rainforests on a restored heritage railway or being driven to the heart of it all in a comfortable 4WD.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Sand-boarding on the towering sand dunes at **Henty Dunes** (p278)
- Waking up on a sailboat on the **Gordon River** (p279) to reflections so perfect, they'll have you puzzling which way is up
- Shouldering a backpack and striding out through Tasmania's breathtaking alpine heart on the **Overland Track** (p290)
- Getting some full wilderness immersion on a 10-day rafting journey down the wild **Franklin River** (p288)
- Watching the sun sink towards South America and feeling the awesome power of the waves on 33km-long **Ocean Beach** (p278)
- Riding the rails through the rainforest between Strahan and Queenstown on the **West Coast Wilderness Railway** (p286)
- Swooping low over the King River and landing on the forested Teepookana Plateau on a **scenic helicopter flight** (p281)
- Climbing from the mud to the quartzite peak of remote **Frenchmans Cap** (p288), one of Tasmania's more off-the-beaten-track bushwalks





**Tullah Village Café** (☎ 6473 4377; Farrell St; mains around \$15-19; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) You can get cooked breakfasts, snack takeaways and heavier fare and decent hamburgers, schnitzels, and fish and chips here. It also does kids' meals.

### Getting There & Away

See p272 for transport information. Buses arrive at and depart from the BP service station.

### ROSEBERY

☎ 03 / pop 1500

Rosebery's best asset is its beautiful location. It nestles in a valley of temperate rainforest with Mt Murchison to the east, imposing Mt Black (950m) to the north, and Mt Read (which has Tasmania's highest rainfall) to the south. Rosebery itself gets 3.5m of rainfall on average each year. The town was founded in 1893 when gold was discovered in the area; the mine here now extracts zinc, lead and copper from the earth, employing much of the populace. Rosebery is what you might call a rough diamond: unpolished on the outside but possessed of a good heart. You may not linger long here, but if you do you should find the locals friendly, and there's some wonderful nature nearby.

### Information

**Newsagency** (☎ 6473 1142; Agnes St; ☺ 5.30am-5.30pm Mon-Fri, 6am-3pm Sat, 7am-1pm Sun) Also handles ANZ transactions and has a 24-hour ATM.

**Online access centre** (☎ 6473 1938; ☺ 9am or 10am-4pm or 5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-1pm Sat) In the District School on Morrisby St.

**Post office** (Agnes St) Also a Commonwealth Bank agent.

### Sights & Activities

The high school has some interesting old **mine remnants** (Propsting St) along its front fence, including a water wheel and railway carriage for steep inclines. The school also contains a small **mining museum** (admission free) that displays artefacts and old photos; ask at the school's reception. There's a **heritage centre** next to the Pasminc Mine site containing pictures and other memorabilia of the town's history.

In late March or early April each year, the town comes alive with the **Rosebery Festival**. There's live music, horseback rides, a puppet theatre, food stalls, fireworks and, of course, that old Tassie favourite: wood-chopping.

With all that rain, Rosebery's naturally a top spot for waterfalls. The picnic area at the

southern entrance to town is the start of a short (10-minute) walk along the Stitt River and over Park Rd to pretty **Stitt Falls**. And then there's incredible **Montezuma Falls**, 104m tall and the highest in Tasmania, that plume down a rain-forest cliffside. Head out of Rosebery towards Strahan and follow signs to the falls 2km south of town. At the end of the road is Williamsford, the site of an abandoned mining town. From here an easy three-hour return walk leads to the falls. You can venture out onto the narrow (but safe) swing bridge suspended over the yawning chasm to get a great view.

If you prefer a guided walk to Montezuma Falls, **Hay's Adventure Tours** (☎ 6473 1247; www.hays.tour.com; 10-12 Esplanade) runs trips for groups of two or more in summer. Hay's is also the only operator allowed into the **Lake Johnston Nature Reserve** to see an extraordinary 10,000-year-old stand of Huon pine. Its 4WD nature tours here cost \$70 per person and take 2½ to three hours. Departure is usually about 11am in summer; in winter, whenever the fog lifts.

Additionally, Hay's offers trout fishing tours on Lakes Mackintosh, Rosebery and Murchison near Tullah for \$165 per person for a half-day and \$440 for a full day. All gear is supplied.

### Sleeping & Eating

**Rosebery Caravan Park** (☎ 6473 1366; Park Rd; unpowered/power sites \$20/25, cabins \$50-90) This park is surrounded by hills and has a small, grassy camping area, a gravel caravan area and basic cabins. It's so shady it can get quite cool once it loses the sun. Prices are for two people.

**Rosebery Top Pub** (☎ 6473 1351; Agnes St; s with/without bathroom \$65/40, d \$80/60, extra person \$20) On Rosebery's main street and right in the centre of town, this pub has clean and quiet budget rooms over a friendly bar where you're sure to get chatting with locals. Counter meals are served in the restaurant nightly (mains \$18 to \$28).

**Our pick Mount Black Lodge** (☎ 6473 1039; www.mountblacklodge.com; Hospital Rd; d \$110-130) What a pleasure this rustic little lodge is. This cosy place run by friendly owners looks towards Mt Murchison and Mt Read, so ask for a mountain-view room. There's an appealing lounge where you can stay warm by the wood heater.

**Blue Moon Restaurant & Gallery** (mains \$18.50-28; ☺ dinner) In Mount Black Lodge, serves excellent home-cooked food including such enticing dishes as Blue Moon beef with

strawberry chilli jus, and fantastic fresh lasagne and ravioli.

### Getting There & Away

Buses arrive at and depart from Mackrell's Milkbar at 24 Agnes St. See p272 for more information.

### ZEEHAN

☎ 03 / pop 900

For Zeehan – as for much of the west coast – the big thing in town has always been mining. In 1882, Frank Long discovered silver and lead on the banks of Pea Soup Creek, marking the first days of a boomtown that became known as Silver City with a population of 10,000 and 27 pubs, the famous Gaiety Theatre – seating 1000 people – and even its own stock exchange.

When boom had evolved to bust, in the 1960s Zeehan revived its fortunes as dormitory town for the nearby Renison Bell Tin mine. In the 1980s, Renison Bell was Australia's largest underground tin mine and produced 46% of all the country's tin. Boom became bust again in the 1990s, but like much of the west coast, Zeehan is now feeding a minerals-hungry world again. In 2008 Zeehan Zinc expected to make \$30 million from its open-cut zinc and lead mine in just six weeks, and the Renison Bell mine opened once again, hoping to ride high on the back of record tin prices.

Despite the present boom, Zeehan still has that quiet one-horse town feel where you could be forgiven for believing you just saw some tumbleweed roll down the main street. It's worth stopping, though, for the excellent museum complex, a couple of quirky private collections, or simply to wander Main St and appreciate the period architecture. In November each year the Zeehan Gem & Mineral Fair features gems, jewellery, minerals, crystals and fossils for sale or simply for wondering at; as well as gem-fossicking-related activities including gem-panning and crystal hunts.

### Orientation & Information

The town is the administrative centre for the region and has branches of the ANZ and Commonwealth Banks. There's tourist information at the West Coast Pioneers Museum.

### GETTING AWAY FROM IT ALL

Avoid the tourist hoards during peak season and head out to remote **Granville Harbour** (p276). A sometimes rough gravel road leads to this tranquil seaside haven northwest of Zeehan, making it the perfect respite from the hectic touring routes. Be sure to check the road conditions with a local before you go.

**Online access centre** (☎ 6471 7684; Zeehan Library, Main St; ☺ 2-4.30pm Mon, 3-7pm Tue, 3-7pm Wed, 2-4.30pm Thu, 11am-1pm Fri, 10am-noon Sat) Has internet access for \$2 per 15 minutes.

### Sights & Activities

#### WEST COAST PIONEERS MUSEUM

This excellent **museum** (☎ 6471 6225; Main St; adult/child & concession/family \$10/9/22; ☺ 9am-5pm) is in the 1894 School of Mines building, and is one of the best regional mining museums in the nation. It also includes displays on the west's rail and shipping heritage. The ground floor features a world-class mineral display, including samples of bright orange crocoite, which is Tasmania's official mineral emblem and only found in this area. Upstairs there's a fascinating photographic history of the west coast. To one side of the museum is an exhibit of steam locomotives and carriages from the early west coast railways, and downstairs is a display of early mining equipment.

#### GAIETY GRAND

Just down the road from West Coast Pioneers Museum and covered by the same entry fee is the Gaiety Grand Complex. The Gaiety was one of the biggest, most modern theatres in the world when it opened in February 1898, and what a bonus it must have been for the miners to be able to move between the pub and the theatre through connecting doors. To mark the Gaiety's opening a troupe of 60 was brought to town from Melbourne and played to 1000 spectators every night for a week. Audiences came from as far afield as Queenstown, at that time a six-hour journey away. Such luminaries as Dame Nellie Melba were included on the billings.

The theatre has recently been beautifully restored to its former glory – complete with gorgeous red velvet drapes – and has occasional ballet and orchestra touring performances as well as local music hall gigs. There's

also a very worthwhile gallery collection by Tasmanian and local artists of the west coast. The friendly staff are a veritable (err....) mine of information.

### HISTORIC WALK

Starting at the museum, this circuit walk follows Main St west, and turns left down Fowler St towards the golf course. The route leads through the **Spray Tunnel**, a former railway tunnel. Turn left again to follow the Comstock track (an old tramway) south to **Florence Dam**. Follow the right track at the fork, winding around Keel Ridge, then descend to the southern end of Main St. The walk takes two to three hours and passes a lot of old mine sites. More detailed information on this walk and others in the area can be obtained at the pioneers museum.

### PRIVATE MUSEUMS

Zeehan has two off-beat private collections that are part of local lore and popular with visitors. There's **Shorty's Private Collection** (☎ 6471 6595; 22 Shaw St; admission by gold coin donation; ☞ 10am-5pm), an unusual and pleasingly tongue-in-cheek assemblage of minerals, mining odds and ends, and 'bushcraft oddities' – a display so all-encompassing it even includes a witches' coven! Near here you'll also find the eccentric **Dr Frankenstein's Museum of Monsters** (☎ 6471 6580; 12 Whyte St; admission by donation). This local funhouse is open in the afternoon: ring the doorbell to alert the monster of your arrival. Look out for the sinister two-headed Tasmanian babies. Know the joke, don't you?

### OTHER ATTRACTIONS

There are plenty of old mining relics outside town. Four kilometres south of Zeehan you'll find some old **smelters** beside the highway. For panoramic views you can follow the track starting near the smelters to the top of **Mt Zeehan**; the walk takes three hours return.

Northwest of Zeehan, the quiet C249 leads to the **Reece Dam**, part of the Pieman River hydroelectric scheme, that's known as a top spot for trout fishing. This road allows access to remote **Granville Harbour** on a rough dirt track (see boxed text, p275), one of the best spots in Tasmania for crayfish. The C249 also leads to peaceful Corinna, which is the jumping-off point for the Pieman River Cruise (see p269) and driving the Western Explorer (see p268). On the way to Reece Dam you can take a one-

### WARNING

If walking off marked tracks in the bush close to Zeehan or at Trial Harbour, beware of abandoned mine shafts hidden by vegetation.

hour return walk to **Heemskirk Falls**, which is signposted off the road.

Directly west of Zeehan there's a gravel road to **Trial Harbour**. This was Zeehan's port and is now a ragged collection of holiday shacks and the odd permanent home. There are endless coastal walks here, good fishing and great free camping in the vicinity – but no shops or facilities. You can get your fix of the past at the local **history room** (☞ opening times vary), run by volunteers, which gives an insight into the early days including tales of the ships that came in and the colourful local identities.

Driving south from Zeehan towards Strahan on the B27, you'll pass close to Ocean Beach and **Henty Dunes** (see p278).

### Sleeping & Eating

**Treasure Island Caravan Park** (☎ 6471 6633; tiz@dodo.com.au; Hurst St; unpowered/power sites d \$19/25, on-site vans \$45-65, cabins \$77-90) This park is spread out alongside the Zeehan Rivulet on the northern edge of town. It has friendly management and plenty of greenery surrounds it.

**Hotel Cecil** (☎ 6471 6221; fax 6471 6599; Main St; s \$55, d with/without bathroom \$75/65, cottages \$105) Characterful Hotel Cecil has spic-and-span pub rooms upstairs which come with their own ghost, Maud. The owners will tell you her story. If you're wary of otherworldly happenings, you might prefer the innocuous self-contained miners' cottages just outside.

**Mt Zeehan Retreat** (☎ 6471 6424; fax 6471 6430; 12 Runcom St; d with shared bathroom \$90, with en suite \$100-120) Just out of town in a quiet setting, this neat B&B is run by a charming couple who cook up wonderful breakfasts including home-grown strawberries in season. The wood-lined rooms have nice views over the surrounding hills. There are no credit-card facilities.

**Heemskirk Motor Hotel** (☎ 6471 6107; fax 6471 6694; Main St; d \$100-140) At the eastern entrance to town, this hotel won't win any architectural design awards, but it does have large, clean motel rooms.

**Coffee Stop** (☎ 6471 6709; 110 Main St; ☞ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri) The light meals here include

quiche, soups and sandwiches, and there are decent fish-and-chip takeaways. It also sells little ornaments made of west coast minerals.

**Cribb Hutt Zeehan** (☎ 6471 6122; 79 Main St; ☞ 5am-8pm winter, 5am-9pm summer) This friendly café/takeaway is the town's meeting place, and does pizzas, steaks, burgers and excellent homemade egg and bacon pies all day. In the evening it does takeaway meals catering to the young mining men in town, and you can also fill up on its chicken curry, spag bol, casseroles or roasts.

**Infusion Restaurant** (mains \$15-22; ☞ lunch & dinner Mon-Sat) At Hotel Cecil, Infusion serves great, imaginative food – including a delicious eggplant parmigiana for vegetarians – in the atmospheric, old-fashioned dining room.

**Abel Tasman Bistro** (mains \$15-25; ☞ lunch & dinner) Friendly dining at Heemskirk Motor Hotel that serves an excellent Moroccan chicken salad, salt and pepper squid and a super-spicy Thai green curry, among the usual steaks and fish and chips.

### Getting There & Away

Buses arrive at and depart from the Coffee Stop on the main street. See p272 for more information.

### STRAHAN

☎ 03 / pop 700

Strahan was once dubbed by an American travel writer 'the best little town in the world'. With its perfect location, nestled between the waters of Macquarie Harbour and the rainforest, it has faultlessly natural assets. Add to that the painstakingly restored pioneer buildings – the cutesy shops, hotels and cottages crowding up the slope from the compact waterfront – and you've got a scene that's almost Disney-Utopian. If you're more into rugged wilderness you might find Strahan just a bit sugary-sweet, but it certainly has all the services to help get you out easily into the wilds – and will wrap you in comfort when you return. It's no wonder that tourists flock here.

Strahan's present as the west coast's greatest tourist drawcard could have been very different had it not been for a turn of events in the early 1980s. When Tasmania's Hydro-Electric Commission (HEC; now Hydro Tasmania) began construction of a new mega-dam as part of the planned Gordon-below-Franklin

power scheme, Strahan became the launching point for Australia's largest and most effective environmental protest. The Franklin River Blockade (see p287) lasted for months in 1982, and was eventually successful in saving from the floodwaters what's now one of the jewels of Tasmania's World Heritage Area: the mirror calm, tannin-brown waters of the lower Gordon River.

Several boats now ply these waters daily, from luxury catamarans to sailing yachts. There are also high-speed adventures to be had around Strahan in jet boats or helicopters, guided explorations by 4WD, or more slow-paced immersion in nature in the form of rainforest and beach walks. While you're here you'll hear about some of the incredible tales of mutiny and escape from the convict settlement on Sarah Island, and the swashbuckling stories of some of the early pioneers. You shouldn't miss Strahan's nightly theatrical performance (see p283) that's an entertaining primer on all this history.

### Information

**ATM** Next to Banjo's Bakery.

**Online access centre** (per 30min \$3) In the library, housed in the Customs House, a fine Federation structure on the Esplanade.

**Parks & Wildlife Service** (PWS; ☎ 6471 7122;

☞ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Also in the Customs House building, adjacent to the library.

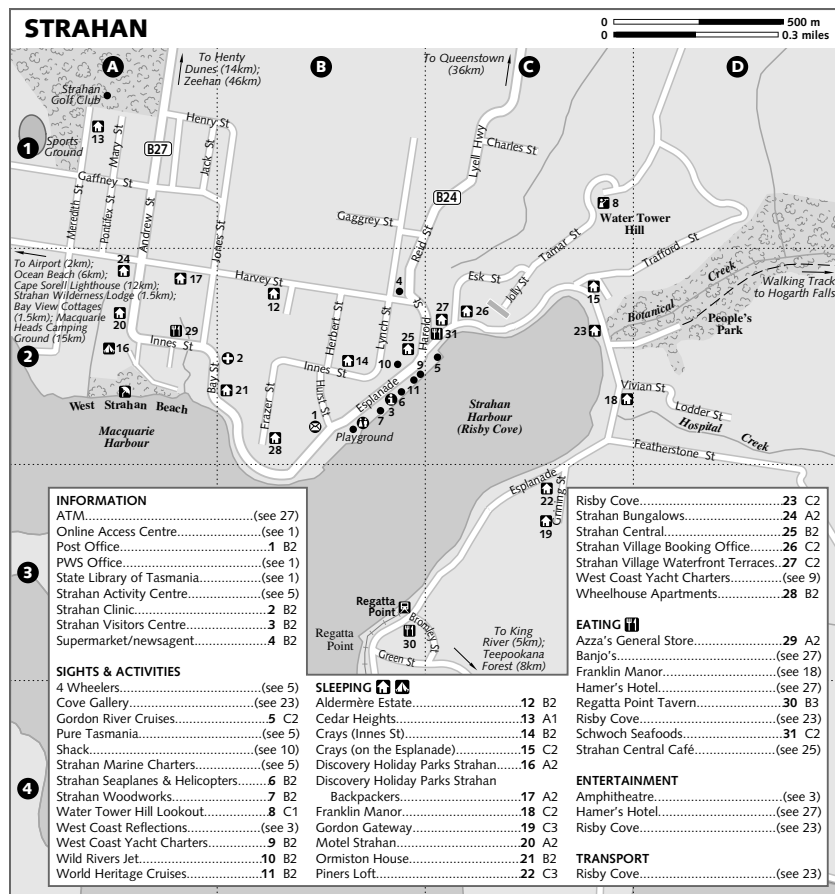
**Post office** Also in the Customs House building; a Commonwealth Bank agent.

**Strahan Activity Centre** (☎ 6471 4300, 1800 084 620; www.puretasmania.com.au; Esplanade) Hotel conglomerate Pure Tasmania now owns much of Strahan, and has its own activity/information centre and gift shop on the water in the town centre. You can book its Gordon River Cruise (see p279), kayak tours (see p280), the West Coast Wilderness Railway (see boxed text, p286) and fishing charters (see p279) here. It also books (privately owned) 4WD quad-bike tours (see p280).

**Strahan Clinic** (☎ 6471 7152; Bay St) For health-related matters.

**Strahan visitors centre** (☎ 6472 6800; wcvibcs@westcoast.tas.gov.au; Esplanade; ☞ 10am-8pm summer, 9am-6pm winter) This architecturally innovative centre incorporates an insightful display on the area's history (see p278) and adjacent is the amphitheatre that shows *The Ship that Never Was* (see p283). Also doles out info and makes tour and accommodation bookings.

**Supermarket/newsagent** (Reid St) Also handles ANZ accounts.



## Sights

### MUSEUMS & GALLERIES

**West Coast Reflections** (☎ 6471 7622; Esplanade; ☎ 10am-8pm summer, 9am-6pm winter) is the museum section of the Strahan visitors centre, installed beyond the Huon-pine reception desk. It's a creative and thought-provoking display on the history of the west coast, with a refreshingly blunt appraisal of the region's environmental disappointments and achievements, including the Franklin Blockade.

Nearby is **Strahan Woodworks** (☎ 6471 7244; 12 Esplanade; ☎ 8.30am-5pm), where you can see Huon pine, sassafras and myrtle being turned, and then buy the end results, mainly kitchen knick-knacks, platters and ornamental objects. For more arts and crafts, check out the **Cove**

**Gallery** (☎ 6471 7572; Esplanade; ☎ 8am-6pm summer, 10am-4pm winter), around the bay at Risby Cove.

### OCEAN BEACH & HENTY DUNES

Six kilometres from town is **Ocean Beach**, awesome as much for its 33km length as for the strength of the surf that pounds it. This stretch of sand and sea runs uninterrupted from Trial Harbour in the north to Macquarie Heads in the south – and is *the* place to watch the orange orb of the sun melt into the sea. The water is treacherous: don't swim. The dunes behind the beach become a **mutton bird rookery** from October, when the birds return from their 15,000km winter migration. They remain here until April, providing an evening spectacle as they return to their nests at dusk.

Fourteen kilometres along the road from Strahan to Zeehan are the spectacular **Henty Dunes**, a series of 30m-high sugary-fine sand dunes backing Ocean Beach. Unfortunately, the peaceful beauty is marred by the strident, peace-shattering noises of off-road vehicles, which are permitted here. You can also sand-board down the slopes of these sandy giants. From the picnic area take the 1½-hour return walk through the dunes and out to Ocean Beach; remember to carry drinking water. You can have fun here playing Lawrence of Arabia crossing the Sahara.

### TEEPOOKANA FOREST & KING RIVER

Although its condition is slowly improving, the **King River** has long served as a graphic example of that other west-coast feature: environmental degradation. It was used for many years as a waste sump for mining operations in Queenstown and has sterile, rust-coloured sludge along its banks. Nature is slowly healing itself here, however – it's thought that within a century, the King River could again run clean. You can see much of the length of the river from the West Coast Wilderness Railway (see boxed text, p286) which plies its steep banks. The gorgeous myrtle-rich forest that climbs the hillsides around the river is known as the **Teepookana Rainforest**. Through it, you can climb up to the Teepookana Plateau, which was once logged for fine-grained, blond, rot-resistant Huon pine. The timber is now so valuable that Huon limbs and stumps left behind by early piners are now salvaged. There are still a few gnarled trees standing, and you can walk through a young pine plantation which will be perfectly ripe for harvesting in a few thousand years. Climb the **Teepookana Tower** lookout for a magnificent view over the forests.

### OTHER ATTRACTIONS

There's a lookout over the town at **Water Tower Hill**, accessed by following Esk St beside the Strahan Village booking office; it's less than 1km from the Esplanade.

**Hogarth Falls** is a pleasant 50-minute return walk through the rainforest beside the platypus-inhabited Botanical Creek. The track starts at People's Park.

The 45m-high **Cape Sorell Lighthouse**, at the harbour's southern head, is purportedly the second-highest in Australia. You'll need a boat to cross the heads unless you can find an accommodating fisher to take you over.

A return walk of two to three hours along a vehicle track from the jetty at Macquarie Heads leads to the lighthouse.

## Activities

### RIVER & HARBOUR CRUISES

A Gordon River cruise is what most visitors to Strahan come to do, and no matter how much wilderness beauty you've seen, you can't help but be inspired by the magic of this river: the perfect reflections in its treacle-darkness, the complete peace and the deeply green rainforest that surrounds it.

You can cruise the Gordon on a large, fancy catamaran in the company of a crowd of fellow river admirers (with plenty of comforts laid on) or be a bit more adventurous and visit with a small group by sailing boat. All cruises cross vast Macquarie Harbour before entering the mouth of the Gordon and proceeding to Heritage Landing for a rainforest walk. Most cruises visit Sarah Island – site of Van Diemen's Land's most infamously cruel penal colony – as well as Macquarie Heads and Hells Gates: the narrow harbour entrance. If you visit under sail, you can sneak a little further up the river than other cruise vessels are allowed to go, to beautiful Sir John Falls.

**World Heritage Cruises** (☎ 6471 7174, 1800 611 796; www.worldheritagecruises.com.au; Esplanade) is run by the Grining family, which has been taking visitors to the Gordon since 1896, and is Strahan's true river experts. You can join the Grinings aboard their new low-wash environmentally sensitive catamaran, the *Eagle*, for a morning cruise from 9am to 2.45pm year-round, or an afternoon cruise from 3pm to 8.30pm in the summer season (December to March) only. Prices, depending on whether you take a window seat (premium) or one in the centre of the boat (standard), are adult/child/family at \$65/25/165 (standard) and \$85/35/220 (premium). With the premium seats you can also purchase a Gold Pass for \$105 per person, which includes a lunch or dinner buffet with wine, or you can simply pay an additional \$15/8 per adult/child to graze on the buffet.

Also operating on the River is **Gordon River Cruises** (☎ 6471 4300, 1800 628 286; www.puretasmania.com.au; Esplanade), run by the conglomerate that now calls itself Pure Tasmania and seems to own half of Strahan (and other tourism concerns in Tasmania, for that matter). You'll cruise on the *Lady Jane Franklin II*, departing Strahan at 8.30am and returning 2.15pm,

and in peak season only also departing at 2.45pm and returning at 8.30pm. There are three levels of service: the Captain's Premium Upper Deck (\$195 for all tickets), a Window Recliner seat (adult/child/family \$115/65/295) and Atrium seating in the centre of the vessel (\$90/35/235). Lunch and your fill of tea and coffee are included in the fare.

If you'd like your Gordon River experience with a little soft adventure – and fewer people in the mix – then sailing on *Stormbreaker* with **West Coast Yacht Charters** (☎ 6471 7422; Esplanade) is the way to do it. There's a wonderful crayfish lunch, kayaking and fishing cruise that departs on demand most days at noon and returns at 3pm (adult/child \$80/60). There's also an overnight trip up the Gordon River, so you can be first to see the undisturbed river reflections when you wake up on the water. The trip costs per adult/child \$320/160. It departs Strahan at 2pm and returns at 1pm the following day. There's a visit to Sarah Island and all meals are included. The only cruise licensed to get a full 37km up the Gordon as far as magical Sir John Falls is *Stormbreaker's* River Rafter Collection Trip (adult/child \$250/125) that departs Strahan at 2pm and returns at 1pm the next day. You'll hear tales of rafting the west's wild rivers as you cruise back to Strahan. On all trips you can hook some of Macquarie Harbour's giant fish and take a short paddle in a sea kayak. Just for fun, you could also make this yacht your floating hotel for the night when it's docked in Strahan (see opposite).

**Strahan Marine Charters** (☎ 6471 4300, 0418-135 983) will do boat trips on demand for \$145 per hour to Sarah Island, Hells Gates, the fish farms on Macquarie Harbour or anywhere else you'd like to visit – though if you do want to go as far as the Gordon River, it could cost you an arm and a leg. It will also pick up and drop off kayakers at remote spots on the harbour or river. Fishing gear and a BBQ can be provided.

### SEA-KAYAKING

**Pure Tasmania** (☎ 1800 084 620, www.puretasmania.com.au; Strahan Activity Centre, Esplanade) combines its Gordon River trip with a spot of sea-kayaking on the river's mirror-calm waters for those who want to spend a little time away from the hubbub of the cruise vessels and enjoy the silence of the river. Between 1 January and the end of March, the full-day tours depart on the *Lady Jane Franklin* at 8.30am. The kayaks are launched on arrival at Heritage Landing and

you paddle upstream into the extreme peace of the river. You pull up for a rainforest lunch stop before drifting back downstream to the cruise boat – then return with the afternoon cruise boat back to Strahan via Sarah Island, arriving at 8.30pm. All meals are included in the cost of \$345 per person.

### JET-BOAT RIDES

**Wild Rivers Jet** (☎ 6471 7396; www.wildriversjet.com.au; 'The Shack', Esplanade) runs exhilaratingly speedy 50-minute jet-boat rides up the rainforested gorges of the King River, with Huon pine-spotting stops, for adult/child/family \$65/38/175. Take the longer 1¼-hour combined boat/4WD trip (adult/child/family \$85/46/220) and you'll also be able to visit the Teepookana Plateau with its ancient (and newly planted) Huon pines, and eagle's-eye forest lookout. Bookings recommended.

### QUAD BIKING

**4 Wheelers** (☎ 6471 4300, 0419 508 175; \$45) offers 45-minute guided hooning over the Henty Dunes on four-wheeled motorbikes. There's a 12km/h speed limit and participants must have a full drivers licence. Trips usually leave hourly in the summer season from the Henty Sand Dunes car park, 10 minutes' drive north of Strahan, and you can buy tickets here or from the Strahan Activity Centre. Kids can hop on a buggy (adult driver/first child/second child \$50/30/20) as passengers.

### SAND-BOARDING

Towering Henty Dunes are the spot to try your hand at a bit of sand-boarding. You climb the highest dune around, jump on your board and skid down at breakneck speed. **'The Shack'** (☎ 6471 7396) and the **Strahan Activity Centre** (☎ 6471 4300) both rent boards for \$35 for a half-day.

### PINERS & MINERS EXPERIENCE

Immerse yourself in west coast history and get comfortably into the back blocks with these **luxury 4WD tours** (☎ 6471 4300, 1800 628 286) offered by Pure Tasmania. You ride in a Hi-Rail (a Landrover converted to ride on the rail tracks of the West Coast Wilderness Railway; see boxed text, p286) before the vehicle retracts its rail-riding wheels and proceeds deep into the bush. You hike to abandoned mining sites and settlements, and learn of the unique history and nature here, before cruising back to

Strahan on Macquarie Harbour. The tour costs \$345 per person with gourmet food laid on.

### SCENIC FLIGHTS

You can't help but be excited when you hear the distinctive buzz of a seaplane: it speaks of adventure and remoteness. In Strahan, you can get on one with **Strahan Seaplanes and Helicopters** (☎ 6471 7718; www.adventureflights.com.au; Strahan Wharf; ☎ 8.30am-5pm Sep-Jul) to take an 80-minute flight (adult/child \$179/105, maximum four people) over Ocean Beach and Macquarie Harbour, landing on the Gordon River at Sir John Falls. There are also 15-minute helicopter joyrides taking in Ocean Beach, Hells Gates, Cape Sorell and Macquarie Harbour (\$105/60, maximum three people), and 60-minute helicopter trips (including 25 minutes in the air) up to the Huon pines of the Teepookana Plateau, with hair-raising low flying over the King River (\$199/105).

### SWIMMING

Next to the caravan park is **West Strahan Beach**, with a gently shelving sandy bottom that provides safe swimming.

### Sleeping

Much of the accommodation in the centre of town is now run by Pure Tasmania under the banner of **Strahan Village** (☎ 6471 4200, 1800 628 286; www.puretasmania.com.au; ☎ 7am-7pm May-Oct, 7am-9pm Nov-Apr), which has its booking office under the clock tower on the Esplanade. Book well ahead, particularly during the peak seasons.

### BUDGET

Camping is possible at the basic **camping ground** (unpowered sites \$5) at Macquarie Heads, 15km southwest of Strahan – follow the signs to Ocean Beach and see the caretaker. Prices are for up to two people.

**Discovery Holiday Parks Strahan** (☎ 6471 7239; cnr Andrew & Innes Sts; unpowered sites \$20-35, powered sites \$25-45, cabins \$95-150; ☎) Right on Strahan's West Beach, this neat and friendly park has good facilities including a kiosk, a camp kitchen, BBQs and a kids' playground. Site prices are for up to two people.

**Discovery Holiday Parks Strahan Backpackers** (☎ 6472 6200; 43 Harvey St; dm \$25-35, d \$50-75, cottages \$55-75) This place is in a nice bush setting some 15 minutes' walk from the town centre. It has very plain bunks and doubles, tiny, A-frame cabins and self-contained cottages.

There are shared facilities, a kitchen block and a laundry.

**West Coast Yacht Charters** (☎ 6471 7422, 0419-300 994; Esplanade; d \$100, dm adult/child \$50/25) If you're hankering to sleep in a floating bunk on a wharf-moored yacht, then this is a great option. Because the yacht is used for charters, it has late check-in and early check-out (be prepared to check in after 7.30pm and disembark before 9am). The yacht isn't moored every night, so you'll need to book ahead. Prices include continental breakfast.

**Strahan Wilderness Lodge** (☎ 6471 7142; www.bayviewcottages-cabins.com.au; Ocean Beach Rd; d without bathroom \$70, tw with bathroom \$80) A kilometre or two north of town, you can hear nothing but birdsong among 11 peaceful hectares of coastal vegetation. This old-style, laid-back place has spacious rooms and great views of gardens and harbour. Prices include continental breakfast.

### MIDRANGE

#### Self-Contained Apartments

**Bay View Cottages** (☎ 6471 7142; www.bayviewcottages-cabins.com.au; Ocean Beach Rd; d \$90, extra person \$20) The same people who manage Strahan Wilderness Lodge run these private one-, two- and three-bedroom self-contained cottages. Each includes linen, tea- and coffee-making facilities, TV and heating.

**Cedar Heights** (☎ 6471 7717; cedarheights@vision.net.au; 7 Meredith St; d \$100-120) These timber cabins with private courtyards are set back in a quiet street away from the hustle and bustle; the most you'll hear are the sounds of a golf ball being thwacked at the nearby golf course or a game of footy at the oval opposite. One apartment has a spa.

**Strahan Bungalows** (☎ 6471 7268; www.strahanbungalows.com.au; cnr Andrew & Harvey Sts; d \$100-150, extra adult/child \$25/20) Decorated with a nautical theme, these five lovely little bungalows are bright, light and friendly, and are equipped with everything you need for a self-contained stay. They're close to the beach and the golf course, and less than 15 minutes' walk from the centre of town.

**Crays** (☎ 6471 7422; www.thecraysaccommodation.com; 11 Innes St & 59 Esplanade; d \$130-160, extra adult/child \$50/30) The Crays has two self-contained units on Innes St and six new bright, roomy architect-designed cottages on the Esplanade opposite Risby Cove. All units have harbour panoramas or views of beautiful bird-filled gardens. Guests who stay three nights are rewarded with a succulent Tasmanian crayfish on the house; and there are reduced

prices for cruises on the yacht *Stormbreaker* (see p288).

## Motels & Units

**Motel Strahan** (☎ 6471 7555; www.motelstrahan.com.au; 3 Andrew St; d \$110-170) This funky new complex is surely as good as motels get anywhere. The rooms are spic-and-span and decorated with care, the service is welcoming, and the whole effect is pleasingly clean, quiet and simple without compromising on style. It's also wheelchair-friendly.

**Gordon Gateway** (☎ 6471 7165, 1300 134 425; www.gordongateway.com.au; Grining St; studios \$155-180, chalets \$220-290, ste \$180-290, extra person \$35-55) In a scenic hillside location on the way to Regatta Point, this place has 10 modern, well-outfitted studio units and several larger A-frame chalets. All units have excellent views out to Macquarie Harbour and the township. Breakfast provisions supplied on request.

## TOP END

### Hotels, Guesthouses & B&Bs

**our pick Ormiston House** (☎ 6471 7077; www.ormistonhouse.com.au; Esplanade; d \$130-230; 🚻) This grand but informal historic house is the pick of the accommodation in Strahan. Built in 1899 by Frederick Ormiston, Strahan's founder, it's a genuine stately home, now beautifully refurbished and gracefully attended as a top-notch B&B. There are just five rooms, antique-furnished in Queen Anne style. Climb up to the widow's walk for some of the best harbour views in Strahan.

**Risby Cove** (☎ 6471 7572; www.risbycove.com.au; Esplanade; d \$151-233, extra adult/child \$42/25) Once a waterfront sawmill complex, Risby Cove is now a smart little enclave all done up in corrugated-iron cool. There's a restaurant (see opposite), a gallery, and eight rooms and one- and two-bedroom spa suites, most with water views. Bike and kayak hire are also available here, and you can go for a row in the Cove's little wooden dinghy.

**Franklin Manor** (☎ 6471 7311; www.franklinmanor.com.au; Esplanade; standard d \$165, stables d \$190, deluxe d \$190-210) On the Strahan waterfront, just out of town is this historic weatherboard mansion, nestled in lovely gardens. This was long one of Strahan's top spots to stay and it still has smart rooms, an enviable wine cellar and a restaurant (mains \$32 to 35; open for dinner Monday to Saturday) with a fancy-looking menu. Since the Michelin star winning French chef/owner left here a few

years ago, though, things haven't been quite the same.

**Strahan Central** (☎ 6471 7612; fax 6471 7513; 1 Harold St; d \$168-190) Above Strahan Central Café, these attractive split-level suites are charmingly decorated in fittingly country style. There are good views over the water and the price includes continental breakfast.

**Strahan Village Waterfront Terraces** (☎ 6471 4200, 1800 628 286; fax 6471 4389; Esplanade; d \$170-230) The heritage-listed Hamer's (formerly Hamer's Hotel) offers stylishly enhanced en suite accommodation, including a balcony room with superb views across the harbour.

**Piners Loft** (☎ 6471 7036, 1300 134 425; www.pinersloft.com.au; Grining St; d from \$295, extra person \$45) This handsome two-storey timber house (sleeping six) can be your own private lookout. It's built atop towering poles of King Billy and Celery-top pine, has good modern facilities, a sense of style and great views of the water.

### Self-Contained Apartments

**Aldermere Estate** (☎ /fax 6471 7418; aldermereonharvey@bigpond.com; 27 Harvey St; d \$160-220, spa apt \$240, extra person \$40) Aldermere has several stylish and luxuriously modern fully self-contained two-storey apartments, with one- or two-bedroom configurations and a self-contained cottage. The apartments are serviced daily and include gas log fires and a hearty continental brekkie.

**Wheelhouse Apartments** (☎ 6471 7777; www.wheelhouseapartments.com.au; 4 Frazer St; d \$320, extra adult/child \$65/35) Talk about a room with a view! Perched up high above the harbour, these smart and luxurious cottages have seamless acres of glass to give you jaw-droppingly good views of the harbour. Breakfast provisions are supplied, and its wheelchair-accessible.

### Eating

**Strahan Central Café** (☎ 6471 7612; 1 Harold St; mains \$6.50-10.50; ☎ 7am-5pm) This unpretentious little café does reasonable breakfasts and better lunches proffering homemade quiche, focaccia with smoked salmon and pesto, toasted sandwiches and wraps. Of an afternoon, it also does fine scones and jam.

**Banjo's** (☎ 6471 7794; Esplanade; pizzas from \$10; ☎ 6am-6pm) This popular central bakery next to Hamer's Hotel serves a decent breakfast menu along with snacks such as sandwiches, hot chunky pies and other savouries and pastries.

**Schwach Seafoods** (☎ 6471 7157; Esplanade; mains \$8-15; ☎ 9am-9pm daily) Run by a local cray fisherman, this little eatery serves up the freshest fish and seafood in town. Come for eat-in or takeaway and savour fish encrusted in incredibly light and golden batter that just melts in the mouth or oysters split fresh to order. Does a fine gourmet pizza too.

**Hamer's Hotel** (☎ 6471 7191; Esplanade; lunch mains \$8-17, dinner mains \$17-27; ☎ lunch & dinner) This done-up historic pub is now the casual eating hub in Strahan and serves a commendable menu of better-than-pub fare. Forget soggy pub roasts: starters here include such delicacies as grilled haloumi cheese with macadamia, rocket and zucchini salad, followed by steaming piles of black-lipped mussels. Hamer's is deservedly popular and often packed. Come here hungry.

**Regatta Point Tavern** (☎ 6471 7103; Esplanade; mains \$15-32; ☎ lunch & dinner) If you want to eat with the locals away from the glitz, make your way to this down-to-earth pub near the railway terminus 2km around the bay from Strahan's centre. There are the usual steaks and burgers as well as good fresh fish, including Macquarie Harbour ocean trout. Check out the crayfish mornay (\$80) if you're after something fancy.

**Risby Cove** (☎ 6471 7572; Esplanade; mains \$22-33; ☎ dinner) People come from all over to dine at the Cove. The menu features such local delights as myrtle-infused blue eye trevalla. It's all classy and cool here with good, unpretentious service and consistently praiseworthy food. Perhaps the best place to dine in Strahan.

**Franklin Manor** (☎ 6471 7311; Esplanade; mains \$30-35; ☎ breakfast & dinner) Franklin Manor has a grand menu available not only to house guests, but all comers. This is thoroughly fancy cuisine: menu items are the likes of hot smoked cured ocean trout on a port-glazed apple salad or chicken roulade filled with green chilli, prawn and coriander mousse. There's also a well-stocked wine room under the glass atrium that sometimes does tastings.

Drop by **Azza's general store** (Innes St; ☎ 6.30am-9pm) for basic food supplies and takeaways.

### Entertainment

The Strahan visitors centre stages *The Ship That Never Was* in its **amphitheatre** (☎ 6471 7622; Esplanade; adult/concession/teenager or student \$15/11/7.50, children under 13 yr free). The play is the

entertainingly theatrical story of some convicts who escaped from Sarah Island in 1834 by building their own ship, and pleases all age groups. Performances are held at 5.30pm year-round, and also at 8.30pm in January.

**Risby Cove** (☎ 6471 7572; www.risbycove.com.au; Esplanade; adult/child \$8.50/5.50) Risby Cove shows films nightly on the big screen in its newly refurbished theatre. Ring for showing times and film details.

**Hamer's Hotel** (☎ 6471 4200; Esplanade) This pub sometimes stages live music entertainment. Watch the billboards for what's on.

### Getting There & Around

Buses arrive at and depart from the visitors centre. **Strahan Taxis** (☎ 0417-516071) can run you to surrounding attractions like Ocean Beach (about \$15 each way) and Henty Dunes (\$25 each way) and does hotel pick-ups and drop-offs for the morning river cruise departures. If you prefer to get around under your own steam **Risby Cove** (☎ 6471 7572) rents out bicycles (full-/half-day \$30/20).

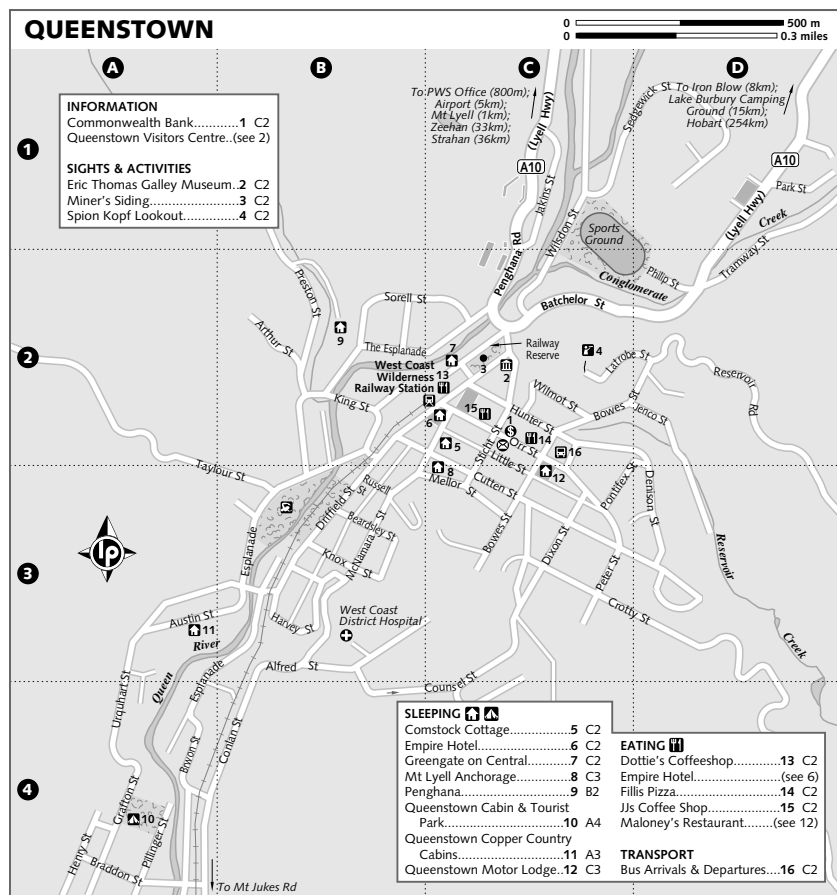
Those embarking on a cruise can park for free at the wharf car park. Spaces in front of the main shopping area have 30- to 60-minute time limits, and unbelievably, parking tickets do happen here!

## QUEENSTOWN

☎ 03 / pop 3400

The winding descent into Queenstown from the Lyell Hwy is unforgettable for its moon-scape of bare, dusty hills and eroded gullies, where once there was rainforest. The area is the clearest testimony anywhere to the scarification of the west coast's environment by mining. Copper was discovered here in the 1890s and mining has continued ever since, but today pollution is closely monitored and sulphur emissions controlled. Ironically, when green started to creep back to these barren hills, Queenstown residents were perplexed: they felt the town's identity was so closely tied to the surrounding barrenness that hills covered in green simply wouldn't do.

Although Queenstown is now getting in on the tourism trend, unlike overcommercialised Strahan it's still got that authentic, rough-and-ready pioneer town feel. You can spot miners in boilersuits wandering the streets and there's a rich social and industrial history that still feels alive. With the completion of the West Coast Wilderness Railway, Queenstown now



has a real tourist hub that is breathing new life into the town.

### Orientation & Information

The main drag here is Orr St, which meets Driffield St almost directly opposite the West Coast Wilderness Railway station. Most shops, hotels and businesses are either on this street or close by. There's a Commonwealth Bank with ATM on Orr St.

**Queenstown visitors centre** (☎ 6471 1483; 1-7 Driffield St) A veritable treasure-trove of social and industrial history and run by volunteers with comprehensive information on the region. In the Eric Thomas Galley Museum.

**Parks & Wildlife Service (PWS)** (☎ 6471 2511; Penghana Rd; ⏰ 8.30am-9.30am) Close to the mine entrance, this is the place to get advice on nearby walking tracks and to buy

national park passes if you haven't obtained them from the visitors centre. If you intend to use the Mt McCall Rd 4WD track from the southern end of Lake Burbury to the Franklin River, ask the ranger for a free permit and a key to the gate. Ring and book the key prior to coming to Queenstown.

### Sights & Activities

#### ERIC THOMAS GALLEY MUSEUM

This museum (☎ 6471 1483; 1-7 Driffield St; adult/concession/pensioner/family \$4/2.50/3/10; ⏰ 9.30am-5pm Mon-Fri, 12.30-5pm Sat & Sun, winter hours vary) started life as the Imperial Hotel in 1898 and now houses an extensive photographic collection with wonderfully idiosyncratic captions showing the people and places of Tasmania's west coast, including an exposé of the Mount Lyell mining disaster which claimed 42 lives. There's also a clutter of

old memorabilia, household items and clothing, right down to grandma's undies!

#### MINER'S SIDING

Opposite the museum, on the site of the original train station, is the Miner's Siding, a public monument with rail memorabilia and sculptures. The locomotive that was once parked here is now restored as part of the West Coast Wilderness Railway.

#### SPION KOPF LOOKOUT

Follow Hunter St uphill, turn left onto Bowes St, then do a sharp left onto Latrobe St to a small car park, from where a short, steep track leads to the summit of Spion Kopf (named by soldiers after a battle in the Boer War). The rhododendron-lined track features a rail adit near the car park and the top of the hill has a pithead on it. The panoramic views of town are excellent, particularly at sunset when the bare hills are flaming orange.

#### IRON BLOW

On top of Gormanston Hill on the Lyell Hwy, just before the final descent along hairpin bends into Queenstown, is a sealed side road leading to a lookout over the geological wound of Iron Blow. This is the now-deserted and flooded open-cut mine where the town's illustrious mining career began. Pay attention to signage on the road as the site's not always fully open due to changing conditions in the area.

#### MT JUKES RD

Continue south along Conlan St to Mt Jukes Rd, which will take you to side roads leading to sections of the West Coast Wilderness Railway. Further along this scenic road (9km south of Queenstown) is **Newall Creek**, where a platform provides access to a patch of superb King Billy and Huon-pine rainforest. The bitumen section of the road ends at **Lake Burbury**, a mountain-surrounded Hydro Tasmania lake that can be seen to magnificent effect from a lookout on the descent to its shores (see also boxed text, p287).

#### Tours

**Dougies Mine Tours** (☎ 6471 1472, 0407-049 612) An underground mine tour (\$70 per person, 2½ hours). These are intensely worthwhile tours that take you right down into the working heart of Queenstown's copper mine with interpretation by characterful Duggie himself. Underground

tours leave at 10.15am and 1.15pm (and 7pm by demand). You're able to view the working machinery and get to chat with the miners themselves. There are also surface tours at 8.45am and 4.30pm. No kids under 14 years.

**Mt Lyell Enviro Tours** (☎ 0419-104 138) During the summer season this company offers three-hour tours (\$55 per person) departing at 10am and 2pm, which interpret over 100 years of copper mining at Mt Lyell. The tours visit the mine's surface and tailings dam only, and consider especially the environmental impact of, and remediation after, mining. Can also arrange trips to Lakes Margaret and Burbury on request.

#### Sleeping BUDGET

Lake Burbury camping ground, a 15-minute drive from Queenstown, is a scenic, quiet spot to put up a tent. Sites cost \$5, payable to the caretaker. There are toilets but no showers.

**Queenstown Cabin & Tourist Park** (☎ 6471 1332; fax 6471 1125; 17 Grafton St; unpowered/powered sites \$25/30, on-site vans d \$50, d cabins \$70-90, extra adult \$10-15, extra child \$5) You have to drive through run-down suburbs to get here, and though the park's set on gravel and is a bit bare, it has clean vans and cabins, a communal kitchen and a sheltered BBQ area.

**Empire Hotel** (☎ 6471 1699; empire@tassie.net.au; 2 Orr St; s \$25, d with/without bathroom \$60/45) The rooms here aren't as magnificent as the imposing Blackwood staircase that's a National Trust-listed treasure, but they are clean and tended by friendly staff who make you feel at home. It serves fine meals in the dining room downstairs; see p287.

**Mt Lyell Anchorage** (☎ 6471 1900; 17 Cutten St; s/d \$50/\$80) This friendly budget place in an old weatherboard home has clean singles and doubles with shared bathroom, as well as good kitchen and laundry facilities. It's just back from the main drag, making it quiet but central.

**Queenstown Copper Country Cabins** (☎ 0417-398 343; fax 6471 1086; 13 Austin St; s \$70-80, d \$80-100, extra person \$15) This is a compact collection of modern, self-contained timber cabins, one of which is equipped for disabled travellers. The cabins are incredibly neat and tidy, and there are laundry facilities nearby.

#### MIDRANGE

**Queenstown Motor Lodge** (☎ 6471 1866; www.queens townmotorlodge.com.au; 54-58 Orr St; d \$96-120, extra person \$20; ☎) While it's no architectural gem, this compact little motel has friendly owners and



### THE WEST COAST WILDERNESS RAILWAY

Love the romance of the days of steam? The old wood-lined carriages with shiny brass trimmings, the breathy puffing of steam engines and the evocative, echoing train whistle? Then you should hop on board Tasmania's newest restored railway, and make the breathtaking 35km rainforest rail journey between Strahan and Queenstown.

When it was first built in 1896, much as is the case today, this train and its route through tortuously remote country was a marvel of engineering. It clings to the steep-sided gorge of the King River, passing through dense myrtle rainforest, over 40 bridges and on gradients that few other rolling stock could handle. Over 8km of its route the train uses the Abt rack and pinion system named after its inventor, Dr Roman Abt. In this arrangement, a third toothed rack rail is positioned between the two conventional rails. Locomotives are equipped with geared pinion wheels that lock into the rack rail, allowing trains to climb and descend gradients that would otherwise be too steep for them to negotiate.

The railway was the lifeblood of the Mt Lyell Mining & Railway Co in Queenstown, connecting it for ore and people haulage to the port of Teepookana on the King River, and later with Strahan. From 1896 the line ran along the Queen River and up the one-in-16 gradient Abt section to Rinadeena Saddle, before heading down the one-in-20 gradient Abt section through magnificent rainforest to the King River. Here it crossed a marvellously curved 400m-long bridge high above the water, before continuing to Teepookana and Regatta Point. The original railway closed in 1963.

Today the track is magnificently restored, and steam and diesel locomotives take passengers on a four-hour journey over its entire length. Trains depart from Queenstown at 10am and 3pm and Strahan at 10.15am and 3.15pm from the end of December to the end of March. Between April and September, there's a Strahan to Queenstown trip at 10.15am on Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday and Sunday, and a Queenstown to Strahan trip on Monday, Thursday and Saturday at 11am. Costs for riding the full length one way are \$105/60 per adult/child, including lunch. Alternatively, for the same cost, you can ride halfway to the rainforest station at Dubbil Barrel and then hop on the train going back to where you boarded. If you've ridden one way and need to return to your embarkation point there's a bus service costing an additional \$16/9 per adult/child. There's also a Premier Carriage 1st-class service (\$195 per person) which includes extra special food, drinks and service. Inquiries and ticket purchases are at **Queenstown Station** (☎ 6471 1700; Driffield St) or the **Strahan Activity Centre** (☎ 6471 4300, 1800 628 286; Esplanade).

decent, clean rooms, and is on the quiet part of Queenstown's main street. There's also a good on-site restaurant.

**Greengate on Central** (☎ 6471 1144; fax 6471 2507; 7 Railway Reserve; apt from d \$100, extra person \$20, family of 4 \$160) Set around with a shady veranda, this two-bedroom house sleeps up to five, and is pin-neat with polished boards and is fully self-contained. It's set just a hop and skip from the train station.

**Comstock Cottage** (☎ 6471 1200, 0409 711 614; 5 McNamara St; d \$130-140, extra adult/child \$40/25) This pretty miner's cottage set in attractive gardens has its original pressed-tin ceilings and sleeps up to four. The master bedroom has a romantic four-poster bed and the house is antique-decorated throughout. The price includes cooked breakfast provisions so you can cook up a morning storm.

### TOP END

**Ourpick Penghana** (☎ 6471 2560; www.penghana.com.au; 32 The Esplanade; d with/without bathroom from \$150/140, ste \$175; ☎) This National Trust-listed mansion was built in 1898 for the first general manager of the Mt Lyell Mining & Railway Co, and, as befits its managerial stature, is located on a hill above town amid a rare number of trees. The B&B accommodation here is first-rate and includes a billiards room and a grand dining room for enjoying chef-prepared à la carte meals nightly. Packed lunches on request. Entry is access via Preston St.

### Eating

**Dotties Coffeeshop** (☎ 6471 1700; Queenstown Station, Driffield St; ☎ breakfast & lunch) Dotties is a good option if you're a bit of a train spotter. Serving smooth, creamy coffee and a selection of café

delights, such as gourmet pies, pastries, cakes and biscuits, you can also sit alfresco on the train platform itself.

**JJ's Coffee Shop** (☎ 6471 1793; 13 Orr St; ☎ 7.30am-5.30pm) What a great place to hang out for breakfasts, lunches and good homemade snacks. JJ's does beautiful cakes, excellent soups, sandwiches, savoury crepes and a damn fine coffee too.

**Filis Pizza** (☎ 6471 2006; 21 Orr St; pizzas \$8.90-23.90; ☎ 11am-10pm) This friendly place suggests over 40 different takes on the humble pizza – if you need a filling meal you can't go wrong with this fab option. Try the heavenly roast garlic and olive supreme with roasted chicken. It does good roast dinners (\$10) at Sunday lunchtime, too.

**Empire Hotel** (☎ 6471 1699; 2 Orr St; mains \$12-17; ☎ lunch & dinner) This old miner's pub has survived the ages and includes an atmospheric heritage dining room serving a changing menu of hearty pub standards, including roasts, pastas, including an excellent lasagne, and a divine seafood chowder.

**Maloney's Restaurant** (☎ 6471 1866; 54-58 Orr St; mains \$22-24; ☎ dinner Mon-Sat) Who would expect such good food in a small-town motel? You can order the likes of garlic-infused chicken breast stuffed with roasted pine nuts, pesto and semi-dried tomatoes. There's also good steak, lamb, pork and seafood all cooked fresh to order.

### Getting There & Away

Buses arrive at and depart from the milk bar at 65 Orr St. See p272 for more information.

### FRANKLIN-GORDON WILD RIVERS NATIONAL PARK

The centrepieces of this environmentally awesome park are the wild, pristine rivers that twist their way through the infinitely rugged landscapes here and give the national park its name. The park is part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and encompasses the catchments of the Franklin, Olga and Gordon Rivers. It was proclaimed in 1981 after the failed campaign to stop the flooding of precious Lake Pedder under the waters of the Pedder/Gordon hydroelectric dam scheme (see p301). The park is probably best known as the site of Australia's biggest-ever environmental battle, the Franklin Blockade, which drew national and international attention and was ultimately successful in saving the wilderness from further dams.

### DETOUR: LAKE BURBURY

Heading south out of Queenstown along Conlan St to Mt Jukes Rd for about 15 minutes you'll come to the end of the bitumen road that leads to **Lake Burbury**. Built as a large hydroelectric dam, its construction flooded 6km of the old Lyell Hwy. The lake is surrounded by the Princess River Conservation Area, and the scenery around it is magnificent – especially when there's snow on the nearby peaks. There are impressive vistas from the attractive shoreline **camping ground** (unpowered sites for 2 people \$5) just east of Bradshaw Bridge. Here there's also a public picnic area with sheltered electric BBQs and a children's playground. Fishermen say the trout in Lake Burbury make for some of the best fishing in Tasmania.

The battle to save the lower Gordon and Franklin Rivers was played out in Tasmania in the early 1980s. Despite National Park status and then World Heritage nomination, dam-building plans here by the then-HEC continued. In the aftermath of Lake Pedder's flooding, public opinion on the matter was clear: when a 1981 referendum asked Tasmanians to decide between two different dam schemes, 46% of voters scribbled 'No Dams' across their ballot papers. Politically, the state was in turmoil, and both the premier and opposition party leader were dumped over the dams issue. A state election resulted in a change of government, but no change in plans to go ahead with a new mega-dam. When the World Heritage Committee eventually announced the area's World Heritage listing and expressed concern over the proposed dam, the new state premier attempted to have the listing withdrawn.

Antidam and proconservation lobbyists then turned their attention to the federal arena. In May 1982, at a Canberra by-election, 41% of voters wrote 'No Dams' on their ballot papers, but the federal government still refused to intervene.

Dam construction began in 1982 and protesters from all over Tasmania set off from Strahan to stage what became known as the 'Franklin River Blockade'. Press pictures from the time show flotillas of blow-up dinghies stretched across the river, blocking the HEC boats' access to the dam work site. Despite the peaceful protests, the Tasmanian government passed special

laws allowing protesters to be arrested, fined and jailed. In the summer of 1982–83, 1400 people were arrested in a confrontation so intense it received international news coverage.

The Franklin River became a major issue in the 1983 federal election, which was won partly on a 'No Dams' promise by the incoming Labor party, which then fully implemented the Franklin and Gordon Rivers' World Heritage assignment, finally protecting the rivers and rainforests fully.

The national park's most significant peak is **Frenchmans Cap** (1443m), with a magnificent white-quartzite top that can be seen from the west coast and from the Lyell Hwy. The mountain was formed by glacial action and has Tasmania's tallest cliff face.

The park also contains a number of unique plant species and major Aboriginal sites. The most significant is **Kutikina Cave**, where over 50,000 artefacts have been found, dating from the cave's 5000-year-long occupation between 14,000 and 20,000 years ago. The only way to reach the cave, which is on Aboriginal land in remote forest, is by rafting down the Franklin.

Much of the park consists of deep river gorges and impenetrable rainforest, but the Lyell Hwy traverses its northern end. Along this road are a number of signposted features of note, including a few short walks that you can take to see just what this park is all about:

**Collingwood River** This is the usual put-in point for rafting the Franklin River, of which the Collingwood is a tributary.

You can camp for free here; there are pit toilets and fireplaces.

**Donaghy's Hill** Located 4km east of the bridge over the Collingwood River, this 40-minute return walk leads to the top of the hill above the junction of the Collingwood and Franklin Rivers. It has spectacular views of the Franklin and Frenchmans Cap.

**Franklin River Nature Trail** From the picnic ground where the highway crosses the river, a 25-minute return nature trail has been marked through the forest.

**Frenchmans Cap** Six kilometres further east is the start of the three- to five-day walk to Frenchmans Cap. There are two shelter huts along the way (though you'll need a tent) and much infamous mud, particularly on the plains known as the Sodden Loddens. Even if you don't intend doing the whole bush walk, you'll enjoy the initial 15-minute walk along the banks of the Franklin River. You can take a Tassielink-scheduled service to the beginning of this walk – see p272 for details.

**Nelson River** Just east of Lake Burbury, at the bottom of Victoria Pass, is an easy 20-minute return walk through rainforest to the excellent, 35m-high Nelson Falls. Signs beside the track highlight common plants of the area.

## Rafting the Franklin

Rafting the Franklin River is about as wild and thrilling a journey as it's possible to make in Tasmania. This is really extreme adventure. Experienced rafters can tackle it independently if they're fully equipped and prepared, but for anyone who's less than completely river-savvy (and that's about 90% of all Franklin rafters), there are tour companies offering complete rafting packages. Whether you go with an independent group or a tour operator, you should contact the park rangers at the **Lake St Clair visitors centre** (☎ 6289 1172; Cynthia Bay; ☽ 8am–5pm winter, to 7pm or 8pm summer), which also has the latest information on permits and regulations, or the **Queenstown PWS** (☎ 6471 2511; Penghana Rd) for current information on permits, regulations and environmental considerations. You should also check out the detailed Franklin rafting notes on the PWS website at [www.parks.tas.gov.au](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au).

All expeditions should register at the booth at the junction of the Lyell Hwy and the Collingwood River, 49km west of Derwent Bridge. The trip down the Franklin, starting at Collingwood River and ending at Sir John Falls, takes between eight and 14 days, depending on river conditions. Shorter trips on certain sections of the river are also possible. From the exit point at Sir John Falls, you can be picked up by a **Strahan Seaplanes & Helicopters** (☎ 6471 7718) seaplane or by **West Coast Yacht Charters** (☎ 6471 7422) *Stormbreaker* for the trip back to Strahan. You can also just do half the river. The upper Franklin takes around eight days from Collingwood River to the Fincham Track – it passes through the bewitchingly beautiful Irenabyss Gorge and you can scale Frenchmans Cap as a side trip. The lower Franklin takes seven days from the Fincham Track to Sir John Falls and passes through Great Ravine.

These tour companies offer complete rafting packages:

**Rafting Tasmania** (☎ 6239 1080; [www.raftingtassmania.com](http://www.raftingtassmania.com)) Has five-/seven-/10-day trips costing \$1650/2000/2600.

**Tasmanian Expeditions** (☎ 6339 3999, 1800 030 230; [www.tas-ex.com](http://www.tas-ex.com)) An operator with nine-/11-day trips for \$2450/2650.

**Water By Nature** (☎ 1800 111 142, 0408-242 941; [www.franklinriver.com](http://www.franklinriver.com)) This provides five-/seven-/10-day trips for \$1740/2040/2660 and you get to fly out in a seaplane straight back to Hobart. Also climbs Frenchmans Cap.

## MAPS

For adventures in this region, you'll need Tasmapi's 1:100,000 *Olga and Franklin* and 1:25,000 *Loddon* maps, available from the Tasmanian Map Centre and Service Tasmania in Hobart (see Maps, p81).

## CRADLE MOUNTAIN–LAKE ST CLAIR NATIONAL PARK

### 03

Cradle Mountain – that perfect new-moon curve of rock that photographers love to capture reflected in mirror-still waters – has become something of a symbol of Tasmania. It's perhaps the best-known feature of the island and is regarded as the crowning glory of the 1262-sq-km Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park. Its glacier-sculpted mountain peaks, profound river gorges, lakes, tarns and wild alpine moorlands extend from the Great Western Tiers in the north to Derwent Bridge in the south. The park encompasses Mt Ossa (1617m), Tasmania's highest peak, and Lake St Clair (200m), the deepest lake in Australia, brimming with the clear, fresh waters of this pristine environment.

The legendary adventure within the park is the celebrated Overland Track – a week-long hike that's become something of a holy grail for bushwalkers. The 80km track stretching from Cradle Mountain to Cynthia Bay on Lake St Clair (Leeawuleena or 'sleeping water' to Tasmania's indigenous people), is an unforgettable journey through Tasmania's alpine heart. For detailed information on the Overland Track, including a route description, see p290.

## INFORMATION Cradle Valley

There are now two visitor information centres: one outside the park boundary and one just within it. You'll find the first at the alarmingly named Cradle Mountain Transit Terminal – and unfortunately the crowds and the acres of car parking here do little for your sense of wilderness. Still, you'll find helpful staff at the **Cradle visitors centre** (☎ 6492 1110; Cradle Mountain Rd; ☽ 8.30am–4.30pm), who will ply you with park passes and bushwalking infor-

mation. Food and fuel are available. This is also the spot to jump on the bus shuttle service (p297) to Dove Lake at the foot of Cradle Mountain. Then there's the **Cradle Mountain visitors centre** (☎ 6492 1133; [www.parks.tas.gov.au](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au); ☽ 8am–5pm Jun–Aug, 8am–6pm Dec–March), where rangers provide detailed bushwalking information, weather condition updates, advice on bushwalking gear and tips on bush safety and etiquette. There's also an interpretative display here on the flora, fauna and history of the park. In summer there's a free ranger-run activity program, including guided nature walks. The centre has toilets, a small shop, drinking water and Eftpos (maximum withdrawal \$50). It's also wheelchair-accessible and accepts major credit cards.

Dove Lake has flushing toilets, but no drinking water. Waldheim now has flushing toilets, drinking water and a very good day-use hut with gas heaters.

Whatever time of the year you visit, be prepared for cold, wet weather in Cradle Valley and on the Overland Track: it rains on seven out of 10 days, is cloudy on eight out of 10 days, the sun shines all day only one day in 10, and it snows in Cradle Valley on 54 days each year. You could find yourself camping in the snow at any time of year, but you also need to be aware of sunburn, not just in summer. Winds can be extreme. Be well prepared with warm and waterproof gear, and be weather savvy – check expected conditions and be prepared for these to change.

In mid-June you can come in from the cold and enjoy **Tastings at the Top**, a three-day festival of gastronomic delights held at Cradle Mountain Lodge (p295).

The top new attraction in Cradle Valley is the excellent **Devils@Cradle** (☎ 6492 1491; adult/child/family \$25/10/45; ☽ 10am–4pm). This little Tasmanian devil park is the place to have close encounters with these fascinating creatures and learn about the facial tumour disease that's threatening their survival. There are feedings nightly at 5.30pm and 8.30pm.

## Cynthia Bay

Cynthia Bay, on the southern boundary of the park, has the **Lake St Clair visitors centre** (☎ 6289 1172; ☽ 8am–6pm Dec & Jan, to 8pm Feb, to 5pm Mar–Nov). Apart from providing information on the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park (and the Franklin–Gordon Wild Rivers National Park), the centre has displays on the

area's geology, flora and fauna, bushwalking and Aboriginal heritage. There's a display of woven reed handicrafts by three indigenous artists (for details of the indigenous cultural walk at Cynthia Bay, see p294), an eerie hologram of the thylacine, and a relief model of lake and mountains. If you've forgotten your rain gear you can pick up some waterproof attire in the Parks shop too.

At the adjacent, separately run **Lake St Clair Wilderness Resort** (☎ 6289 1137; www.lakestclairresort.com.au; 🕒 8am–8pm summer, 10am–3pm winter), you can book a range of accommodation (see p296), a seat on a ferry or cruise (p297), and there are also canoes for hire in the summer months.

## THE OVERLAND TRACK Information

A handy pocket-sized reference for the walk is the PWS *Overland Track: One walk, many journeys*, which has notes on ecology and history plus illustrations of flora and fauna you may see along the way. You can get all the latest on the track and walk-planning at www.overlandtrack.com.au. The reference map for the track and surrounds is the 1:100,000 Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair map published by Tasmap.

Most hikers walk the Overland Track during summer when alpine plants are fragrantly in flower, daylight hours are long, and one can work up enough heat to swim in one of the frigid alpine tarns. The track's also most busy at this time and is subject to a crowd-limiting booked permit system from 1 December to 30 April; see boxed text, opposite. If you're well prepared and experienced, the track is quiet and icily beautiful in winter. Spring and autumn have their own charms, and fewer walkers than in summer.

### The Track

Apart from in the peak time, when a north-south walking regulation is enforced, the track can be walked in either direction. The trail is well marked for its entire length and takes around six days. Side trips lead to features like **Mt Ossa**, and some fantastic **waterfalls** – so it's worth budgeting time for some of these. Apart from in the dead of winter, you can expect to meet many walkers each day: some 9000 people hike this path annually.

There are unattended huts with bare wooden bunks and coal or gas heaters spaced

at a day's walking distance along the track: but don't count on any room inside in summer, and carry a tent. Camp fires are banned and you must carry a fuel stove for cooking.

The walk itself is extremely varied, negotiating high alpine moors, rocky scree, gorges and tall forest. A detailed description of the walk and major side trips is given in Lonely Planet's *Walking in Australia*. For further notes on the tracks in the park, read *Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair and Walls of Jerusalem National Parks* by John Chapman and John Siseman.

### CRADLE VALLEY TO WATERFALL VALLEY HUTS (3½ TO FIVE HOURS; 13KM)

From Ronny Creek, beyond the side road to Waldheim Chalet, follow the signs for the Overland Track past Crater Falls and Crater Lake to Marions Lookout. Avoid taking the track to Lake Lilla and Dove Lake (to the left of the Overland Track) and the Horse Track (to the right of the Overland Track).

Continue on the Overland Track past Marions Lookout to Kitchen Hut, a tiny emergency shelter. Follow the track to the west of Cradle Mountain to Cradle Cirque, where there are good views of Waterfall Valley, then continue down into the valley and take the signposted track to the Waterfall Valley Hut, sleeping 28. Tent sites are in the forest a short distance upstream of the original hut.

### WATERFALL VALLEY HUT TO WINDERMERE HUT (THREE HOURS; 9KM)

Walk back to the Overland Track and follow it over an exposed plain and down to Lake Windermere. Follow the shore to some tent sites before turning southeast to the hut, which sleeps 40 people. Camping isn't allowed on the fragile moorland around the lake. Wombats are especially common here.

### WINDERMERE HUT TO PELION HUTS (FIVE HOURS; 14KM)

Follow the track across a creek to Lake Curran and through Pine Forest Moor. Continue to Frog Flats, over the Forth River and on to Pelion Plains, where a muddy side track leads to the Old Pelion Hut. New Pelion Hut, which is indeed modern and sleeps 60, is further along the main track. Large sections of the track before and after these huts can be heavy going following rain. Less experienced walkers may find the combination of mud, leeches and exposed roots challenging.

### LICENCE TO WALK

The Overland Track is struggling under the weight of its own popularity. Recent years have seen 9000 walkers tread its paths annually – that figure was less than 1000 in 1953. With all those feet on the ground, washing up scraps around camps, and human waste to deal with, there have been some big questions about environmental sustainability. There's had to be careful management of late to prevent this route and the wilderness it traverses from being loved to death. To help keep walker numbers manageable and the walking experience one of wilderness, not crowd-dodging, the following rules have been put in place:

- There's a booking system in place from 1 November to 30 April, during which time a maximum of 34 walkers can depart each day.
- There are fees of \$150/120 per adult/child aged six to 16 and concession, to cover costs of the sustainable management of the track (these apply from November to April only).
- The compulsory walking direction from November to April is north to south.

There's a web-based booking system for walking permits on the Overland Track website at www.overlandtrack.com.au.

### PELION HUTS TO KIA ORA HUT (THREE TO FOUR HOURS; 8KM)

Follow the track south to Pelion Gap, from where you can climb to Mt Pelion East (1½ hours return) or Tasmania's highest mountain, Mt Ossa (three hours return). From Pelion Gap, the track descends into Pinestone Valley and crosses Pinestone Creek. Continue to cute, cosy Kia Ora Hut, which sleeps 24 people. There are tent platforms nearby.

### KIA ORA HUT TO WINDY RIDGE HUT (THREE TO FOUR HOURS; 11KM)

Follow the track across Kia Ora Creek and on to shingled Du Cane Hut – only for emergencies and best used as a lunch stop. Continue about 2.5km to the signposted turn-off to Hartnett Falls, a thoroughly worthwhile 1½-hour side trip through the forest to a gorgeous cascade. Return to the Overland Track and climb to Du Cane Gap, then descend to Windy Ridge Hut, which sleeps 24. Camp sites are available a little to the north.

### WINDY RIDGE HUT TO NARCISSUS HUT (THREE HOURS; 9KM)

There's easy cruising on lengthy sections of boardwalk here, and you should see plenty of wildlife in the open buttongrass plains. About halfway along, a track on the right leads to Pine Valley and onward to the Labyrinth and the Acropolis (1471m), a highly recommended side trip. To reach Pine Valley Hut takes 1½ hours, and from there you should allow another three to five hours to ascend

the Acropolis summit, where the views on a clear day are magnificent.

Continuing on the main track, you know you're near pretty Narcissus Hut at the northern end of Lake St Clair when you cross the swing bridge over Marion Creek. There are camp spots on the buttongrass plains nearby.

### NARCISSUS HUT TO CYNTHIA BAY (FIVE HOURS; 16KM)

The last day of the Overland Track is a long, undulating walk through lakeside forest that's quite rough under foot due to exposed routes. You'll want to take a rest stop at the tiny hut at beautiful Echo Point before skipping along the last few kilometres to Cynthia Bay and a celebration of the end of your journey.

Alternatively, you can radio Lake St Clair Wilderness Resort from Narcissus Hut to reserve a place on one of its lake ferries; see p297. In peak season especially, it pays to have booked in advance, and always reconfirm by radio when you arrive at Narcissus.

### OTHER BUSHWALKS Cradle Valley

From the visitors centre you can take an easy but quite spectacular 10-minute circular **Rainforest Walk**. It's all on boardwalk and suitable for wheelchairs and prams. There's another boarded path nearby leading to **Pencil Pine Falls** and on to **Knyvet Falls** (25 minutes return), as well as the **Enchanted Nature Walk** alongside Pencil Pine Creek (25 minutes return). The boardwalk running the 8.5km-long



**Cradle Valley walk** between the visitors centre and Dove Lake is also wheelchair-friendly.

**Crater Lake** is a popular two-hour return walk from Ronny Creek. You can also make the spectacular climb to the summit of **Cradle Mountain**: the views are incredible in fine weather, but it's not advised in bad visibility or when it's snowy and icy in winter. Allow about eight hours.

Otherwise, marvel at Cradle Mountain from below – if the weather gods oblige – from the easy two- to three-hour circuit track around **Dove Lake**. Other walks in the area involve steep climbs. The **Twisted Lakes** walk via **Hansons Peak** provides great views of Cradle Mountain.

## Cynthia Bay

The **Larmairremener tabelti** is an Aboriginal cultural-interpretative walk that winds through the traditional lands of the Larmairremener, the indigenous people of the region. This easy one-hour return walk starts at the visitors centre and loops through the lakeside forest before leading along the lake's shoreline back to the centre. From Watersmeet, near the visitors centre, you can also take the **Platypus Bay Circuit** (30 minutes return). Most other walks are fairly long: the circuit of **Shadow Lake** takes four hours return, while the highly worthwhile **Mt Rufus** circuit is at least seven hours return.

To take in just a little of the Overland Track magic, you can also catch the ferry to Echo Point (three hours back to Cynthia) or Narcissus Hut – five to six hours' walk back to Cynthia Bay along the lakeshore.

## TOURS

### Bushwalking

**Craclair** (☎ 6339 4488; www.craclair.com.au) Craclair was the pioneer of Tasmanian bushwalking and has been guiding walkers on the Overland Track longer than any other company. It offers eight-day classic Overland Track trips for \$1950, as well as shorter circuits. They supply you with packs, sleeping bags, tents, waterproof jackets and over-trousers – and camp food cooked by their friendly guides. All you have to do is walk and smile.

**Cradle Mountain Huts** (☎ 6391 9339; www.cradlehuts.com.au) If camping isn't for you, then from October to May you can take a six-day guided walk in a small group (four to 10 people) along the Overland Track which includes accommodation in private huts. The \$2500 fee includes meals, national park entry fees and transfer to/from Launceston. Gear hire is also available.

**Tasmanian Expeditions** (☎ 6334 3477, 1800 030 230; www.tas-ex.com) Between October and May Tasmanian Expeditions does an eight-day Overland Track trek for

\$1850, and a six-day Cradle Mountain/Walls of Jerusalem walk for \$1390 (see p243).

## Bus/4WD-based Tours

**Cradle Park Explorer Tour** (☎ 6394 3535) You can take a Park Explorer tour (adult/child \$15/10) that will get you conveniently to the park's bus-accessible highlights for a spot of walking, or a 4WD tour for evening wildlife-spotting (\$25/12.50).

**Grayline** (☎ 6234 3336; www.grayline.com) Offers a day coach tour from Launceston to Cradle Mountain (adult/child \$141/70.50) including a hike around Dove Lake on Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Saturdays leaving at 8.30am and returning at 5pm.

## Horse Riding & Quad Biking

**Cradle Country Adventures** (☎ 1300 656 069; www.cradlecountryparkadventures.com.au; 2hr trip \$89, full-day from \$220) The country around Cradle is perfect riding territory, and travelling on the back of one of this operator's friendly horses is a perfect way to see it. Half-day, full-day and multi-day riding trips are available.

**Quad Biking @ Cradle** (☎ 1300 656 069; www.cradlemountainquadbikes.com.au; 2hr trip \$89) For some muddy, wheel-spinning adventures, just outside the World Heritage Areas, these guys are the go.

## Scenic Flights

You can get a spectacular bird's-eye view over Tasmania's alpine heart by taking a joy ride with **Cradle Mountain Helicopters** (☎ 6492 1132; www.adventureflights.com.au). The choppers leave from the airstrip next to the Transit Terminal, and half-hour flights cost \$190/115 per adult/child. You can get all you postcard-perfect shots of sights like Cradle Mountain, Dove Lake and little-seen Fury Gorge.

## SLEEPING & EATING Cradle Valley

The Cradle Valley has heaps of accommodation options, but if you find yourself unable to secure a booking you could always try Gowrie Park (p244) or Tullah (p272). A lot of the accommodation here is self-catering but there's not much in the way of supermarket shopping, so bring your supplies with you.

**Discovery Holiday Parks Cradle Mountain** (☎ 6492 1395, 1800 068 574; Cradle Mountain Rd; unpowered/powered sites \$25/35, dm \$30, cabins \$112-175; 📶) This is a bushland complex situated 2.5km outside the national park. It has well-separated sites (prices are for up to two people), a YHA-affiliated hostel, a camp kitchen and laundry and self-contained cabins.

## THE WEINDORFERS' LEGACY

If not for the forward-looking vision of one Gustav Weindorfer, Cradle Mountain might never have been incorporated into a national park. Weindorfer, an Austrian immigrant, first came to Cradle in 1910 and built a wooden cabin, Waldheim (German for 'Forest Home'), in 1912 in this rugged and isolated wonderland. Weindorfer and his Australian wife, Kate, took their honeymoon at Waldheim and fell in love with Tasmania's alpine heart. Recognising its uniqueness, they lobbied successive governments for its preservation.

Kate Weindorfer had a passion for botany and became an expert in the area's bushland and flora, encouraging Gustav's appreciation of the landscape. Their spirit was tenacious: in those days a horse and cart could only get within 15km of Cradle Mountain, and from there they walked to Waldheim while packhorses carried supplies. The Weindorfers encouraged visitors to come to this remote place and share in its marvels.

Kate died in 1916 from a long illness, and Gustav moved to Waldheim permanently, devoting his life to preserving the mountain he loved. He died in 1932, and half a century later Cradle Mountain was finally declared a national park.

The original chalet burnt down in a bushfire in 1974, but was rebuilt using traditional carpentry techniques and stands as a monument to the Weindorfers. Just inside the doorway is Gustav's original inscription: 'This is Waldheim/Where there is no time/And nothing matters.'

**Waldheim Chalet & Cabins** (☎ 6492 1110; cradle@depha.tas.gov.au; cabins from \$70) Set in the forest near the original Weindorfers' chalet (see boxed text, above) are some rustic wood-lined cabins with bunks sleeping eight, six and four. Each has kitchen facilities and there's a shared shower and toilet. Bookings are handled by Cradle Mountain visitors centre (see p289).

**Cradle Mountain Highlanders Cottages** (☎ 6492 1116; www.cradlehighlander.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; cabins \$115-290) This genuinely hospitable place has a charming collection of self-contained timber cottages with wood or gas fires, queen-sized beds, electric blankets and hearty continental breakfast provisions. Three cabins include a spa; all cabins include linen and are serviced daily. The surrounding bush is peaceful and wildlife-filled.

**Cradle Mountain Wilderness Village** (☎ 6492 1500; www.cradlevillage.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; cottages d \$180, chalets & villas sleeping up to 4 \$260; 📶) When you walk into the reception here on a clear day, you'll be treated to some exceptional views of Cradle Mountain. There are some quite luxurious chalets and cabins set peacefully in the trees, but they're painted in such perfect eucalypt greys and greens that it feels almost like army-barrack camouflage.

**Cradle Mountain Chateau** (☎ 6492 1404, 1800 420 155; www.puretasmania.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; standard d \$200-280, spa d \$223-315, ste \$230-351; 📶) This large complex is the first you come to on the way into Cradle Valley, and heralds its presence with a grand porticoed gate. Though the public areas

are pleasantly timbered and feature the obligatory log fires, the rooms are frankly rather motel-ish. Get one on the front side to be sure your morning view isn't one of the gravel car park. There's a bistro here serving good nosh (open lunch and dinner) and, not to be outdone by the Lodge, there's also the new Calm day spa where you can have relaxing treatments.

The highlight of this complex is undoubtedly the impressive **Wilderness Gallery** (☎ 6492 1404; www.wildernessgallery.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; admission \$5, free for guests; 🕒 10am-5pm) showcasing incredible environmental photography. There's also a well-stocked gift shop.

**Cradle Mountain Lodge** (☎ 6492 2100, 1300 134 044; www.voyages.com.au; Cradle Mountain Rd; d \$260-620; 📶) When this mountain resort of wooden cabins emerges – pungent with woodsmoke – from the swirling mist on a cold winter's day, you can't help but be charmed by it. There are various standards of cabin here – the most luxurious are the King Billy Suites, privately secluded in the forest and with hot tubs on their decks. There is a little lake to fish in and plenty of short walks nearby, and the lodge puts on a plethora of guided activities to keep you busy. You can also be thoroughly pampered in the Waldheim Alpine Spa (☎ 6492 2133), which offers all sorts of massages and beauty treatments in a relaxing setting. Good, casual mountain fare is served in the Tavern (mains \$8 to \$24, open lunch and dinner), but the Highland Restaurant (two/three courses \$55/64, dinner only) is the real culinary experience here, serving the likes

of prosciutto-wrapped wild rabbit saddle with mustard potato gnocchi – all accompanied by fine Tasmanian wines. The Lodge is also the venue for the renowned winter foodie event, Tastings at the Top (see p289).

**Cradle Wilderness Cafe** (☎ 6492 1400; Cradle Mountain Rd; mains \$7–20; ☎ 9am–5pm Mar–Nov, 9am–8pm Dec–Feb) This café at the Cradle Mountain Transit Terminal is welcomingly warm and has a good range of drinks and snacks – you can pick up last-minute sandwiches for your walk here, too.

### Road to Cradle Mountain

**Lemonthyme Lodge** (☎ 6492 1112; www.lemonthyme.com.au; Dolcoath Rd, Moina; lodge d from \$120, cabins \$190–375, extra adult/child \$35/25; ☎) Off Cradle Mountain Rd at Moina is this secluded mountain retreat offering self-contained cabins, some with spa, and rooms in the main lodge (shared facilities). You can eat in the reputable restaurant (two/three courses \$45/60, open breakfast and dinner). There's an animal feeding nightly at 8.30pm and there are some good walks on the property. Driving to Cradle Mountain from Devonport, turn onto the gravel Dolcoath Rd 3km south of Moina and follow it for a scenic 8km to get here.

**Cradle Chalet** (☎ 6492 1401; www.cradlechalet.com.au; 1422 Cradle Mountain Rd, Moina; d \$198–280) There are attractive timber chalets in a bushland setting here. You can soak up the peace from your own private deck or chat with the friendly hosts, who are a mine of regional advice. The rooms include continental breakfast, and home-cooked evening meals are by arrangement (two/three courses \$50/63).

### Cynthia Bay

**Lake St Clair Wilderness Resort** (☎ 6289 1137; www.lakestclairresort.com.au; unpowered/powerd sites per person/2 people \$10/25, dm \$28, cabins d \$130–190, extra person \$25) There are unpowered bush camping sites on the lakeshore here, and powered caravan spots. The backpackers lodge has two- to four-bunk rooms and kitchen facilities. There are also comfortably upmarket self-contained alpine cabins. In the main building opposite the Lake St Clair visitors centre there's a great café (mains \$8 to \$26, open 7.30am to 9pm summer, 10am to 3pm winter), serving a hearty menu to fill you up before or after a bushwalk, light snacks, and coffee that's been voted the best in Tasmania. There are a few basic food supplies, some outdoor gear and souvenirs in the shop.

You can camp for free at Fergy's Paddock, 10 minutes' walk back along the Overland Track. There are pit toilets, and fires are not allowed.

### Derwent Bridge & Bronte Park

Derwent Bridge is just 2km from Lake St Clair and has a few good accommodation options, otherwise the nearest place to stay is Bronte Park, 30km from Lake St Clair, in the direction of Hobart. On your journey between Derwent Bridge and Bronte Park, don't miss the **Wall in the Wilderness** (☎ 6289 1134; www.thewalltasmania.com; adult/child \$7.50/5; ☎ 9am–5pm Sep–May, 9am–4pm Jun–Aug). This amazing creation is a work of art in progress. Wood sculptor Greg Duncan is carving a panorama in wood panels depicting the history of the Tasmanian highlands. The scale is incredible: when it's finished the scene will be 100m long, which will take an estimated ten years to complete. Though the tableau is large-scale it's carved with breathtaking skill and detail: from the veins in the workers' hands, to the creases in their shirts, to the hair of their beards. The Wall is 2km east of Derwent Bridge, and is definitely worth making time for.

**Bronte Park Holiday Village** (☎ 6289 1126; www.bronteparkvillage.com.au; 378 Marlborough Hwy, Bronte Park; unpowered/powerd sites \$12/14, chalet d \$100–110, cottage d \$90–120) Just off the Lyell Hwy 30km east of Derwent Bridge, this place has a wide variety of accommodation, plus a bar and restaurant (mains \$11.50 to \$27.50, open breakfast, lunch and dinner) serving a changing menu featuring such favourites as beef 'n' reef (\$27.50), good old chicken parmigiana, and rainbow trout with lemon and spinach, from the highland lakes nearby. The hotel can also help arrange a spot of fishing with Trout Adventures (☎ 6289 1009, 0418–139 048) or evening wildlife-spotting tours.

**Derwent Bridge Wilderness Hotel** (☎ 6289 1144; fax 6289 1173; Derwent Bridge; dm \$25, d with/without bathroom \$115/95) This chalet-style pub has a high-beamed roof and a pleasingly country feel. The lounge bar has a warm, expansive atmosphere in which to enjoy a beer and a meal in front of a massive log fire. The hostel and hotel accommodation is plain but comfortable, and the restaurant (mains \$18 to \$39.50, open breakfast, lunch and dinner) serves commendable pub fare, including excellent roasts, pasta dishes, steaks and daily fresh soups with inviting hot crusty bread.

**Derwent Bridge Chalets & Studios** (☎ 6289 1000; www.derwent-bridge.com; Lyell Hwy, Derwent Bridge; d \$155–

230) Just 5km from Lake St Clair (500m east of the turn-off), this gay- and lesbian-friendly place has one-, two- and three-bedroom self-contained roomy cabins, some with spa but all with full kitchen and laundry facilities, and back-porch bush views.

**Hungry Wombat Café** (☎ 6289 1125; Lyell Hwy, Derwent Bridge; mains \$5–10.30; ☎ 8am–6pm summer, 9am–5pm winter) Part of the Caltex service station, this friendly café is well placed to feed the famished, serving breakfasts to keep you going all day. For lunch there are soups, sandwiches, focaccias, wraps and burgers, and there's a range of all-day snacks, coffees and cakes. Everything's homemade and jolly good. There's a small grocery section too.

### GETTING THERE & AWAY

See p272 for details of year-round services to Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair. During summer, there are extra services.

**Tassielink** (☎ 6239 8900, 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) has services to Cradle Mountain Transit Centre from Launceston, every day in summer and twice a week in winter (\$53.30, three to 3¾ hours). This service travels to Cradle Mountain via Devonport, and pick-up at the ferry terminal can be arranged (the fare from Devonport is \$36.70).

Tassielink also has services to Lake St Clair from Hobart daily/four days weekly in summer/winter (\$46.40, 2¾ hours). There's no direct service from Launceston to Lake St Clair any more, but you can get here by taking Tassielink's West Coast service to Queenstown, overnighing there, and hopping on its bus to Lake St Clair the following day (\$92.50).

For Overland Track walkers, there's a Launceston–Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair–Hobart package costing \$90. It can also do baggage storage and transfers so you can go light on the track, at a cost of \$10 per bag. A bushwalkers' package from Launceston to Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair to Launceston costs \$131.

**Maxwells** (☎ 6492 1431, 0418–584 004) runs services on demand from Devonport to Cradle Mountain (one to four passengers \$160, five or more \$40 per passenger), Launceston to Cradle Mountain (\$240/60) via Walls of Jerusalem (p243), Devonport and Launceston to Lake St Clair (\$280/70), and Lake St Clair to Bronte Park and Frenchmans Cap (\$65/15).

If driving, fill up with petrol before heading out to Cradle Mountain – prices are sig-

nificantly higher there than in the towns. The road north from Bronte Park to Gear Great Lake (35km) is mostly gravel. Though it's usually in a good condition, it's worth checking with a local before you depart.

### GETTING AROUND Cradle Valley

To avoid overcrowding on the narrow road into Cradle Mountain and gridlock at the Dove Lake car park, there's now a shuttle bus service to Dove Lake from the Cradle Mountain Transit Terminal at the new visitors centre outside the park. At peak times, travel to Dove Lake is *only* by bus and you must leave your car at the car park here. Shuttle buses (adult/child/family \$7.50/3.75/18.75) leave at 10- to 20-minute intervals all day (mid-September to mid-May) and visitors can alight at stops along the way. There may be substantial queues at peak times. Contact the Cradle Mountain visitors centre (p289) for the shuttle's reduced winter timetable. Note: the bus is free if you have a holiday parks pass or a year's pass for your vehicle.

### Cynthia Bay

Also run by **Maxwells** (☎ 6289 1125, 0418–328 427) is an on-demand service between Cynthia Bay/Lake St Clair and Derwent Bridge (\$7 per person one way).

**Lake St Clair Wilderness Resort** (☎ 6289 1137; www.lakestclairresort.com.au) operates the all-important bushwalkers' ferry trips to and from Narcissus Hut at the northern end of Lake St Clair (45 minutes), and also offers the return trip as a lake cruise for nonwalkers. The one-way fare is adult/child \$25/15, while the return cruise trip costs \$35/18 and takes 1½ hours return. The boat departs Cynthia Bay three times daily from October to early May (9am, 12.30pm and 3pm) and collects bushwalkers at Narcissus Hut at 9.30am, 1pm and 3.30pm. If you're using the ferry service at the end of your Overland Track hike, you *must* radio the ferry operator when you arrive at Narcissus. Bookings are essential for both directions and there's a four-person minimum on any trip. In winter there's only one scheduled departure leaving Cynthia Bay at 11am and picking up walkers at Narcissus at noon. The service is based on demand and minimum numbers. Be sure to book and reconfirm. You can also ride the ferry one way to Echo Point (20 minutes) costing \$18/15.

© Lonely Planet Publications. To make it easier for you to use, access to this chapter is not digitally restricted. In return, we think it's fair to ask you to use it for personal, non-commercial purposes only. In other words, please don't upload this chapter to a peer-to-peer site, mass email it to everyone you know, or resell it. See the terms and conditions on our site for a longer way of saying the above - 'Do the right thing with our content.'