

Tasmania

Lying 240km south of Victoria across tempestuous Bass Strait, and the last significant outpost before Antarctica, the island state of Tasmania feels remote. But despite its compact size (68,332 sq km), Tasmania is home to some of the best walking in Australia. Promoted as 'the natural state' in tourist literature and even on local car number plates, it's an apt description. More than a third of the state lies within some form of conservation reserve, including 19 national parks, containing an awesome diversity of environments: highland lakes, windswept beaches, complex caves, wild rivers, dramatic coastline, wildlife-rich islands, rugged mountain ranges and dense temperate rainforest. Much of this is accessible via more than 2000km of walking tracks, ranging from easy rambles to the most adventurous and challenging walking in the country.

Despite a long history of bad environmental management, Tasmania is famous for its wilderness areas, among the least-disturbed temperate wild lands on earth. Both the air and water in parts of the state are claimed to be the purest on the planet, while the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, which covers 20% of the island, is internationally renowned. Yet, ironically, the preservation of much of the environment Tasmania is now proud of has been achieved only by protracted environmental campaigns on rivers and in forests, and in the media, parliaments and courts.

Tasmania is a generally friendly, unhurried and safe holiday destination. Furthermore, the establishment of fast Bass Strait ferries and low-cost flights in recent years have made Tasmania more accessible than ever, so there is even less reason for walkers to leave this walking wonderland off any travel itinerary.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Exploring rugged peaks, waterfalls and temperate rainforests on the classic **Overland Track** (p214)
- Looking out across World Heritage-listed wilderness from the high summit of **Frenchmans Cap** (p229)
- Cooling off in the turquoise waters of **Wineglass Bay** (p242) after a hot morning's walk
- Trying not to get dizzy peering over Australia's highest sea cliffs at **Cape Pillar** (p200)
- Gazing across the surf towards Antarctica while walking the windswept sands of **Prion Beach** (p240)

■ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

■ www.parks.tas.gov.au

■ www.discovertasmania.com.au

ENVIRONMENT

Tasmania's coastline, a multitude of bays and estuaries often interspersed with bold headlands, resulted from river valleys and coastal plains being flooded by rising sea levels after the last ice age, 10,000 years ago. By contrast, the Central Plateau, which was covered by a single ice sheet, is a sometimes-bleak environment dotted with thousands of lakes. Most of the island's western half is a maze of mountainous ridges bearing signs of recent glaciation. The major environmental differences across the state are largely due to the interaction of prevailing moist westerly winds with these mountains; the rainforest valleys and sometimes-snow-capped western mountains contrasting with the mild climate of the eastern 'sun coast'.

The diverse flora ranges from the dry forests of the east, to the alpine moorlands of the centre and the rainforests of the west. Many of the state's plants are unlike those found in the rest of Australia and have ties with species that grew more than 50 million years ago, when the southern continents were joined as Gondwana (p25). Tasmania's eucalyptus trees range from the very tall swamp gum (*Eucalyptus regnans*; the tallest flowering plant in the world, which can grow to 100m) to the smallest, the shrubby alpine varnished gum (*E. vernicosa*).

Tasmania's fauna is not as varied as that of the rest of Australia and it has relatively few large mammals, with its largest marsupial, the Tasmanian tiger (thylacine), now extinct for some 70 years. Nevertheless, Tasmania is the final refuge for a number of species that have long disappeared from the mainland (the eastern quoll and pademelton, for example). The carnivorous Tasmanian devil is endemic (and under threat; see p28), while wallabies, wombats and possums are common, and there's a wide variety of seabirds, parrots, cockatoos, honeyeaters and wrens. Birds of prey such as falcons and eagles are also readily seen.

INFORMATION

When to Walk

Frequent wet weather is a fact of life when walking in Tasmania, at any time of year, especially in the west. But if suitably equipped, walking in the rain can be enjoyable, with the vegetation colours appearing more vivid and the mist focusing your at-

tention on near details. Even so, winter days are cooler and more likely to be wet, especially in the west and the highlands, where snow is also likely. November to April is generally the best time to walk in Tasmania. Late summer (February to March) can be particularly pleasant, but there may be restricted availability of water in some eastern areas at this time.

Maps

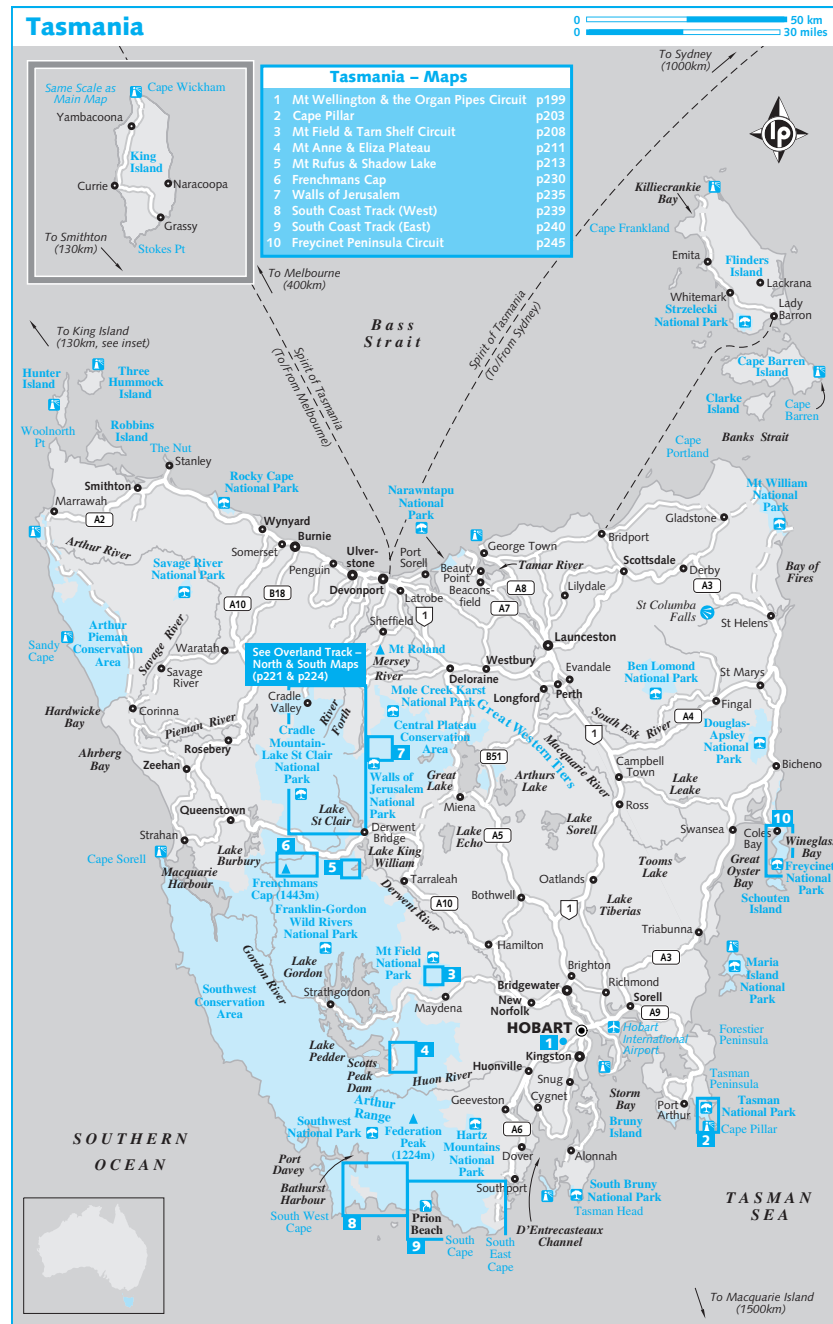
The best maps for the walks described in this chapter are published by Tasmapi (previously known as Land Information Services). Tasmapi's 1:500,000 *Tasmania Visitor Map* is a good reference for planning your trip around the island; it shows the various national parks and features road maps of major towns on the reverse. For maps covering individual walks in this chapter, see the Planning section in the introduction to each walk. The maps can be purchased from various outlets in Hobart (see p193) or ordered direct from Tasmapi (☎ 03-6233 7741; tasmapi@dpw.gov.au).

Books

Lonely Planet's *Tasmania* guide is an excellent in-depth supplement to the general travel information given in this chapter.

For information on national parks and many shorter walks throughout the state look for *A Visitor's Guide to Tasmania's National Parks* by Greg Buckman. Tyrone Thomas' *120 Walks in Tasmania* is also a useful reference, covering mostly day walks. Another guide to shorter walks is the glossy *Day Walks Tasmania* by John and Monica Chapman. John Chapman is also the author of *South West Tasmania* and, with John Siseman, *Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair and Walls of Jerusalem National Parks*, which describe a range of often more challenging overnight walks. At the time of research, the available editions of some of these guides were a bit dated. For other titles about walking in specific areas, see Maps and Books in each section.

The photogenic qualities of the Tasmanian wilderness and its unique flora and fauna have given rise to a plethora of pictorial and natural history books. For example, Peter Dombrowski's *Wild Rivers* is an early classic whereas *Primal Places* by Chris Bell is a recent offering.



Alpine Tasmania by Jamie Kirkpatrick is an illustrated guide to the flora of the mountainous regions of the island. *Tasmanian Mammals* by wildlife photographer Dave Watts is an excellent field guide. You might also want to look at *The Fauna of Tasmania – Birds* and *The Fauna of Tasmania – Mammals*, both by RH Green.

Leatherwood Online (www.leatherwoodonline.com) is an online magazine with good articles and photography.

Information Sources

The **Parks & Wildlife Service** (PWS; www.parks.tas.gov.au) has an excellent website with information on Tasmania's national parks, World Heritage Area (WHA), environment, and basic information on some walks. Also available is **Tasmania's Essential Bushwalking Guide & Trip Planner** (www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/itmb.html), with sections on the planning, minimal-impact bushwalking, first aid and what gear you need to cope with Tasmania's changeable weather.

Tourism Tasmania (☎ 03-6230 8235, 1800 806 846; www.discovertasmania.com) disseminates loads of information about Tasmania, and its website contains details of key destinations, festivals, tours and accommodation.

The website of the government-run **Tasmanian Travel Centres** (☎ 1300 655 145; www.tastravel.com.au) is good for planning a travel itinerary. There are privately run Tasmanian Travel & Information Centres (TTICs) in several Tasmanian cities and visitor information centres in some smaller towns. These are noted in Information sections in this chapter.

Park Fees & Regulations

Apart from the Overland Track (p214), no walks in Tasmania require permits or are otherwise regulated. However, entry fees do apply to all national parks and these encompass most of the walks described in this chapter. There are passes for pedestrians or vehicles, so make sure that your pass will cover your needs. For example, if you plan to visit the Walls of Jerusalem National Park by car you'll only need a pedestrian pass as the car park is just outside the boundary of the park. For visiting walkers, the most convenient option is the eight-week Holiday Pass (\$30 per person or \$50 per vehicle with up to eight seats), but see the **PWS website**

(www.parks.tas.gov.au) for the range of options. Application forms can be downloaded from the website. Passes can also be obtained from major park visitor information centres, Service Tasmania's state-wide offices, and on board the Spirit of Tasmania (during summer). Tasmanian Travel Centres in Melbourne and Sydney also sell passes.

Most popular tracks have a registration book at the start and finish, which walkers are encouraged to fill in to give the PWS more information about track use. The books are not used for safety purposes, so tell someone reliable where you're going, or register (and de-register) your trip with a local police station.

Many of Tasmania's national parks, including the entire Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, are fuel-stove-only areas in which campfires are either banned, or only permitted at a few designated sites. This is a good policy to adopt when walking anywhere in Tasmania. During days of Total Fire Ban (p25) all fires are forbidden, even fuel stoves.

Guided Walks

Several companies offer guided walks in Tasmania, including on some of the routes described in this book. For the Overland Track, a few options are available (p218).

Tarkine Trails (☎ 03-6234 3931; www.tarkinetrails.com.au) For something different, you could try this small company focusing on walks among the forests and beaches of Tasmania's less-visited northwest.

Tasmanian Expeditions (☎ 03-6339 3999, 1300 666 856; www.tas-ex.com) Has the most extensive range of itineraries.

Leaving Luggage

Most hostels will let you leave gear for a few days while you are out on a walk. The Backpackers Barn & Wilderness Centre in Devonport (p195) has luggage storage in secure lockers for \$10 per week. All of the track-transport bus services operated by Tassielink feature an option to have your luggage forwarded to your next destination and stored for \$5.

GETTING AROUND

Buses run along most major highways year-round. **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) runs from both Hobart and Launceston to the state's west, the east coast, from

Hobart to Port Arthur, and south from Hobart down the Huon Valley. **Redline** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) services the Midland Hwy, Bass Hwy (north coast) and the east coast.

During summer, Tassielink buses also run along some minor roads to popular bushwalking destinations. Special fares that enable you to be dropped off at the start of a walk and picked up at the end are offered. Most track services will only run with a certain number of passengers, so the onus is on the walker to book in advance.

Tassielink also has discount Explorer passes for people planning to do a lot of bus travel. Used efficiently they can save you money, but they don't allow much time for getting out walking and they can't be used for routes specifically servicing walking tracks. The shortest pass gives seven days' travel in 10 days (\$175) and the longest gives 21 days' travel in 30 days (\$280). Redline offers its Tassie Pass, from \$135 for seven days, but Redline's route network is not nearly as extensive as Tassielink's.

GATEWAYS

Hobart

☎ 03 / pop 200,000

Straddling the Derwent River and backed by the forested and sometimes-snow-capped bulk of Mt Wellington (1270m), Hobart is the second-oldest, smallest and most southerly of Australia's capital cities. It combines a rich colonial heritage with a splendid natural setting, a lively waterfront area and good access to the WHA and east coast.

INFORMATION

The **Hobart visitor information centre** (☎ 6230 8233; www.tasmaniasouth.com; tasbookings@tasvisinfo.com.au; cnr Davey & Elizabeth Sts) has loads of brochures, maps and information for travellers, plus a booking service covering the entire state (\$3 booking fee).

Bushwalking advisory staff at the **Parks & Wildlife Service** (PWS; ☎ 1300 135 513; www.parks.tas.gov.au; 134 Macquarie St) are inside the Service Tasmania office from December to March. Information and fact sheets for all national parks are also available here.

Maps

A range of maps and some walking guide books can be purchased directly from **Serv-**

ice Tasmania (☎ 1300 135 513; www.service.tas.gov.au; 134 Macquarie St).

Tasmanian Map Centre (☎ 6231 9043; www.map-centre.com.au; 100 Elizabeth St) stocks a good range of walking maps and books.

Many outdoor equipment shops also stock relevant maps.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

You can buy stove fuel and lightweight freeze-dried meals, as well as outdoor equipment, at **Mountain Designs** (☎ 6234 3900; www.mountaindesigns.com; 111 Elizabeth St); **Paddy Pallin** (☎ 6231 0777; www.paddypallin.com.au; 119 Elizabeth St); **Snowgum** (☎ 6234 7877; www.snowgum.com.au; 104 Elizabeth St); **Jolly Swagman** (☎ 6234 3999; 107 Elizabeth St); and **Mountain Creek** (☎ 6234 4395; 75-77 Bathurst St). Paddy Pallin, Mountain Creek and Jolly Swagman also hire some walking gear.

Emergency Position Indicating Radio Beacons (EPIRBs; p388) can be hired from **Service Tasmania** (☎ 1300 135 513; www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/epirbs/epirbs.html; 134 Macquarie St; ☎ Mon-Fri), and also in Launceston, Burnie and Devonport, for \$30 per week.

The most central option for self-caterers and those stocking up for walks is **City Supermarket** (148 Liverpool St). Otherwise Woolworths and Coles have large supermarkets just off Sandy Bay Rd, 2km south of the central business district (CBD).

SLEEPING & EATING

Hobart has a variety of accommodation catering to all tastes and price brackets. The most convenient for walkers are in and around the CBD and the older suburbs to the north and west.

There are no camping grounds anywhere near the city. Self-contained cabins are available at **Elwick Cabin & Tourist Park** (☎ 6272 7115; www.islandcabins.com.au; 19 Goodwood Rd, Glenorchy; \$65-90 for 2), about 8km north of the city centre, but the nearest park with a camping option is **Barilla Holiday Park** (☎ 1800 465 453, 6248 5453; www.barilla.com.au; 75 Richmond Rd, Cambridge; unpowered/powerd site for 2 \$17/22, cabins for 2 from \$75), 13km from town and near the airport. It has an on-site restaurant.

Central City Backpackers (☎ 6224 2404; www.centralbackpackers.com.au; 138 Collins St; dm \$20-25, s/d \$50/60), in the heart of the CBD, is a rambling hostel with loads of communal space, OK rooms, friendly staff and extras such

as baggage storage. There is no parking, although it is possible to park on the street outside meter hours.

Travellers with a car might prefer to stay at **Adelphi Court YHA** (☎ 6228 4829; adelphi@yhata.org.au; 17 Stoke St, New Town; dm \$25, d with/without/en suite \$60/70), although Tasmanian Redline Coaches' airport shuttle provides a drop-off and pick-up service. The hostel is 3km from the CBD but reasonably close to the North Hobart restaurant strip.

The **Astor Private Hotel** (☎ 6234 6611; www.astorprivatehotel.com.au; 157 Macquarie St; s/d with shared bathroom \$60/85, d with en suite from \$130) is a large, central 1920s guesthouse that has retained much of its character. There are old-style rooms with shared bathrooms plus brand new and very appealing en suite rooms, and rates include breakfast.

Wellington Lodge (☎ 6231 0614; www.wwt.com.au/wellingtonlodge; 7 Scott St; s/d \$90/130-140) is in the small suburb of Glebe, next to Queen's Domain. The four comfortable rooms are in a restored Victorian townhouse set in magnificent gardens and rates include breakfast.

Hobart Macquarie Motor Inn (☎ 6234 4422, 1800 060 954; www.leisureinns.com.au; 167 Macquarie St; r \$90-125; P) is a large central motel that won't win any architectural awards but is well equipped. At the time of research, refurbishment was planned after which rates will increase by \$15 to \$30.

Hobart's CBD has some good spots for brunch and lunch, but evening options are generally better closer to the water or historic precincts. Salamanca Pl is a good choice for cafés and restaurants. For the most diverse selection of eateries, head to Elizabeth St in North Hobart, a cosmopolitan strip of pubs, cafés and restaurants.

Seafood is on offer everywhere you look near the waterfront. Constitution Dock has a number of permanently moored barges that serve as floating takeaway seafood stalls. Nearby, **Mures** (☎ 6231 2121; www.mures.com.au; Victoria Dock) offers a ground-level fishmonger and an inexpensive seafood bistro (meals \$7-13; ☎ lunch & dinner), with an à la carte restaurant upstairs.

Jackman & McCross (☎ 6223 3186; 57-59 Hampden Rd; ☎ breakfast & lunch) is a deservedly popular bakery-café in Battery Point.

The **New Sydney Hotel** (☎ 6234 4516; 87 Bathurst St; mains \$9-19; ☎ lunch Mon-Sat, dinner nightly) is a

cosy watering hole, popular for cheap, filling counter meals.

Sirens (☎ 6234 2634; 6 Victoria St; lunch \$8-13, dinner mains \$16-23; ☎ lunch Mon-Fri, dinner Tue-Sat) serves up creative vegetarian and vegan food in a warm, welcoming space.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Hobart is within easy driving distance of most of the national parks and major towns in Tasmania.

Air

Several airlines service routes between Hobart and the Australian mainland. **Virgin Blue** (☎ 13 67 89; www.virginblue.com.au) and **Jetstar** (☎ 13 15 38; www.jetstar.com.au) have direct flights to/from Melbourne (from \$70), Sydney (from \$100), Brisbane (from \$150) and Adelaide (from \$130). **Qantas** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au) has direct flights to/from Sydney and Melbourne; usually they're more expensive than the budget airlines. The airport is 16km from the city centre; there's a **shuttle bus** (☎ 0419 382 240; \$10) and a taxi should cost about \$35.

Bus

Two main bus companies service other towns and, in summer, some walking tracks to/from Hobart; **Tassielink** (☎ 6271 7320, 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au; 64 Brisbane St) and **Redline** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au; 199 Collins St).

There are multiple daily services on the major routes between Hobart and Launceston or Devonport (for the Spirit of Tasmania ferry) and fares are about \$30 and \$50, respectively. See p192 for more travel details.

Car

Most car-rental firms have representation at the airport. City offices include **AutoRent-Hertz** (☎ 6237 1111; www.aurorent.com.au; cnr Bathurst & Harrington Sts), **Avis** (☎ 6234 4222; www.avis.com.au; 125 Bathurst St), **Budget** (☎ 6234 5222, 13 27 27; www.budget.com.au; 96 Harrington St), **Europcar** (☎ 6231 1077, 1800 030 118; www.europcar.com.au; 112 Harrington St) and **Thrifty** (☎ 6234 1341, 1800 030 730; www.tasvacations.com.au; 11-17 Argyle St).

Some of the cheaper local firms include **Lo-Cost Auto Rent** (☎ 6231 0550, 1800 647 060; www.rentforless.com.au; 105 Murray St), **Rent-a-Bug** (☎ 6231 0300, 1800 647 060; www.rentforless.com.au;

105 Murray St) and **Selective Car Rentals** (☎ 6234 3311, 1800 300 102; www.selectivecarrentals.com.au; 47 Bathurst St).

Devonport

☎ 03 / pop 25,000

The town of Devonport is a popular arrival point for travellers, being the Tasmanian port for the Spirit of Tasmania car-ferries that operate routes to/from Melbourne and Sydney. It is a convenient base for walkers heading for the Overland Track and the Walls of Jerusalem National Park.

INFORMATION

The waterfront **Devonport visitor information centre** (☎ 6424 4466; tourism@dcc.tas.gov.au; 92 Formy Rd; ☎ daily from 7.30am) is open for all Spirit of Tasmania ferry arrivals. It can make most travel and accommodation bookings, and also sells national parks passes.

For walking-related information (including travel and accommodation) head for the **Backpackers Barn & Wilderness Centre** (☎ 6424 3628; www.backpackersbarn.com.au; 10-12 Edward St; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat). It can also organise a charter bus to areas not serviced by public transport.

SUPPLIES & EQUIPMENT

As well as a source of walking information, the Backpackers Barn & Wilderness Centre (above) is an excellent bushwalking shop with gear for sale or hire (including tents, sleeping bags and mats, backpacks and cooking sets). It also offers a day relaxation area, with a shower for those sprinting back to catch a ferry or plane post-walk.

Mountain Designs (☎ 6424 8699; www.mountaindesigns.com; 2 Rooke St) also stocks a full range of outdoor gear, including freeze-dried food and stove fuels.

EPIRBs (p388) can be hired from the **Service Tasmania shop** (☎ 1300 135 513; www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/epirbs/epirbs.html; 21 Oldaker St; ☎ Mon-Fri), and also in Hobart, Launceston and Burnie, for \$30 per week.

For food supplies, head for the large **Coles/K-Mart** (cnr Gunn & Best Sts) or **Woolworths** (74 Best St) supermarkets, less than 10 minutes' walk from the city centre.

SLEEPING & EATING

Abel Tasman Caravan Park (☎ 6427 8794; 6 Wright St; unpowered/powerd sites \$17/23, on-site vans/cabins

\$45/95) offers very clean amenities and a good beachfront location in East Devonport, just five minutes' walk from the ferry terminal.

Tasman House (☎ 6423 2335; www.tasmanhouse.com; 114 Tasman St; dm \$15, d without/with bathroom \$35/40) is a large hostel with good facilities, 20 minutes' walk from town (or you can arrange transport when booking). The building was once part of Devonport hospital and looks it. Camping and hiking equipment is also available for hire, but the quality may not be great. Guided walks can also be arranged, but there are better operators around.

There's nothing fancy about centrally-located **Molly Malone's** (☎ 6424 1898; mollymalones@vantagegroup.com.au; 34 Best St; dm \$15, d without/with bathroom \$35/50), above Molly Malone's Irish pub, but it has clean, basic four-bed dorms and a comfy lounge. It can be noisy on Friday and Saturday nights.

The foreshore **River View Lodge** (☎ 6424 7357; www.riverviewlodge.com.au; 18 Victoria Pde; s without/with bathroom \$75/90, d from \$105/85) is a friendly, old-fashioned country-style place opposite a strip of picnic table-dotted greenery. The en suite rooms are good value and the rates include breakfast.

Rannoch House (☎ 6427 9818; www.rannochhouse.com.au; 5 Cedar Ct; s/d from \$105/125) is a homestead set among relaxing landscaped grounds in East Devonport. All five rooms have en suites and rates include a cooked breakfast.

Located near the ferry terminal, **Alice Beside the Sea** (☎/fax 6427 8605; www.alicebesidethesea.com; 1 Wright St; d \$130) offers comfortable, self-contained units within cooe of the beach and a supermarket.

A wander along Rooke St will pass quite a wide selection of eateries. For example, **Bellas Café and Restaurant** (☎ 6424 7933; 157-159 Rooke St; mains \$13-20; ☎ breakfast, lunch & dinner Tue-Sun) offers focaccias, Italian fare and some attractive desserts.

Next door, **Sharkies Seafood Restaurant and Takeaway** (☎ 6423 1911; 155 Rooke St; mains from \$17; ☎ lunch Wed-Sun, dinner nightly) provides a completely different menu.

Rosehip Café (☎ 6424 1917; 12 Edward St; meals \$6-10; ☎ breakfast & lunch Mon-Fri), at the Backpackers Barn & Wilderness Centre, does healthy burgers, salads, focaccias and soups.

The **Alexander Hotel** (☎ 6424 2252; 78 Formy Rd; mains \$10-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) is a local favourite that churns out good counter meals with exotic panache.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Devonport is 100km from Launceston along the Bass Hwy; Hobart is another 200km further south along the Midlands Hwy.

Air

There are regular flights to/from Melbourne with **Qantaslink** (☎ 13 13 13; www.qantas.com.au; fares from \$110).

The airport is 5km east of town. A **shuttle bus** (☎ 0400 035 995) runs between the airport, ferry terminals, the visitor centre and your accommodation for \$10 per person. The shuttle can meet all arrivals into Devonport. Bookings for departures are essential. A **taxi** (☎ 6424 1431) will cost \$12 to \$15.

Bus

TassieLink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) operates an 'express' service that connects ferry arrivals/departures with Launceston (\$18) and Hobart (\$45). It also delivers embarking passengers from Strahan/Queenstown and Hobart. TassieLink also runs from Launceston to Devonport (drop-off only) and then via Sheffield to Cradle Mountain (and on to Queenstown and the west coast).

Redline (☎ 1300 360 000, 6336 1446; www.tasredline.com.au; 9 Edward St) operates a service from Launceston to Devonport and on to Burnie. Its terminal is opposite the Backpackers Barn & Wilderness Centre (p195) and will also stop at the ferry terminal when the ferry is in, while TassieLink coaches pull up outside the Devonport visitor information centre and the Spirit of Tasmania terminal.

If none of the scheduled services suit your particular bushwalking needs, charter a minibus from **Maxwells** (☎ 6492 1431, 0418 584 004) or through the Backpackers Barn & Wilderness Centre (p195).

Car

Devonport has several cheap car-rental firms, such as **Rent-a-Bug** (☎ 6427 9034; www.rentforless.com.au; 5 Murray St) and **Lo-Cost Auto Rent** (☎ 1800 802 724, 6424 9922; www.rentforless.com.au; 22 King St). **Budget** (☎ 13 27 27, 6427 0650; www.budget.com.au) and **Thrifty** (☎ 1800 030 730, 6427 9119; www.tasvacations.com.au) have representatives at the airport and ferry terminal.

Sea

There are three high-speed **Spirit of Tasmania vehicular ferries** (☎ 13 20 10; www.spiritoftasmania

.com.au) operated by TT-Line. One ferry leaves nightly in each direction to/from Melbourne, with additional day sailings during summer; one-way fares (per adult) are up to \$145 for a seat and \$215 for the cheapest cabin option, depending on season; for an extra \$60 you can take your car. The third ferry sails twice weekly to/from Sydney but at the time of writing the future of this service appeared uncertain; one-way fares are up to \$190 for a hostel bunk and \$270 for the cheapest cabin option, depending on season; cars are an extra \$60. Terminal locations are in Devonport (Esplanade, East Devonport; ie across the river from the CBD), Melbourne (Station Pier, Port Melbourne) and Sydney (47-51 Hickson Rd, Gate D8N, Darling Harbour). For all ferry crossings there are limited, discounted advance purchase fares available – inquire when booking.

HOBART REGION & THE SOUTHEAST

Tasmania's capital city is well endowed with nearby natural areas and many contain a range of day and overnight walking options, from sea level to treeless mountain summits. Not the least of these is Mt Wellington, rising directly from Hobart's western suburbs. The cliffs and beaches of the Tasman Peninsula, the waterfalls and alpine lakes of Mt Field National Park (p206) and several other walking destinations (p246) are also within 100km of the city.

ACCESS TOWN

See Hobart (p193).

MT WELLINGTON & THE ORGAN PIPES CIRCUIT

Duration	5–7 hours
Distance	13km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Fern Tree
Nearest Town	Hobart (p193)
Transport	bus
Summary	Walk forest tracks past a waterfall and the impressive Organ Pipes, climb to the summit and return via the alpine plateau and some 19th-century ice-house ruins.

Mt Wellington's forested slopes rise directly west of Hobart, with the 1270m summit less than 10km from the wharfs, marinas and office blocks of the city. It holds a special place in the hearts of many Hobart residents and, for many Tasmanian walkers, the tracks on Mt Wellington are the first tackled. A trip up the mountain is a good way for walkers who have just arrived in Tasmania to get out and stretch.

On a clear day there are stunning all-round views from the top – the city, Derwent estuary and Storm Bay, with the World Heritage Area's rugged skyline to the west. Crossing the boulder-strewn summit plateau evokes a sense of wildness that contrasts with the proximity of the city centre. A network of tracks and paths wind their way through the bush picking out points of interest like O'Gradys Falls, Sphinx Rock, Myrtle Gully and the soaring dolerite columns of the Organ Pipes.

The ascent is more straightforward these days than in 1836, when Charles Darwin ascended the mountain during his now-famous round-the-world voyage on HMS *Beagle*; he found it 'a severe day's work'.

With your own transport, you could drive to the Springs and undertake a shorter circuit from there, starting along the Lenah Valley or Pinnacle Tracks. The extensive network of tracks provides many alternative options for those with less time, in a lazier mood or who wish to avoid the summit due to cloud or snow.

ENVIRONMENT

Mt Wellington's altitudinal range and fire history give rise to a wide variety of veg-

etation communities, many traversed on this walk. Various eucalyptus forest types occur on the lower slopes, with remnant rainforest in damp gullies. On the upper slopes, subalpine forest and shrubs give way to the prostrate alpine plants of the summit plateau.

Mt Wellington is the eastern focus of the 18,250-hectare Wellington Park. Sections of the mountain's slopes form part of Hobart's drinking water catchment area; walkers are asked to use toilets before entering the region.

PLANNING When to Walk

There is somewhere to walk on Mt Wellington at any time of year. Even periodic winter snow can be enjoyable, on a fine day with appropriate gear, but ice can form on the summit tracks and white outs develop very quickly. Because of its height, Mt Wellington's summit can experience atrocious weather at any time of the year; if the summit is shrouded in cloud it is best to stick to the lower slopes. The walk described here is a high level circuit so is best tackled outside the winter months.

Maps & Books

Tasmap's 1:20,000 *Wellington Park Recreation Map* shows the entire Mt Wellington track network, including the route described here. It also has some good background information on the history and environment of the mountain.

The Hobart City Council's free booklet *Hobart Walks* describes a number of walks on the mountain as well as other areas of urban bushland. *Mt Wellington Walks* by Jan Hardy and Bert Elson might also be worth checking out.

Emily Stoddart's *The Mountain – A People's Perspective* provides just that, from the point of view of a range of those living on and around 'the mountain'.

On The Mountain is a classy large format book by photographer Peter Dombrovskis (who lived on the mountain's slopes), writer Richard Flanagan and ecologist Jamie Kirkpatrick.

Information Sources

The **Wellington Park website** (www.wellingtonpark.tas.gov.au) has a range of information on the

park, including some useful pre-visit information and a live weather update from the Mt Wellington summit. An information centre is planned at the Springs and may be constructed by the time you read this.

NEAREST TOWN

See Hobart (p193).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Metro bus numbers 48 and 49 from Franklin Square, opposite the Hobart GPO, take you to Fern Tree, where the tracks to Mt Wellington and the Organ Pipes begin.

THE WALK

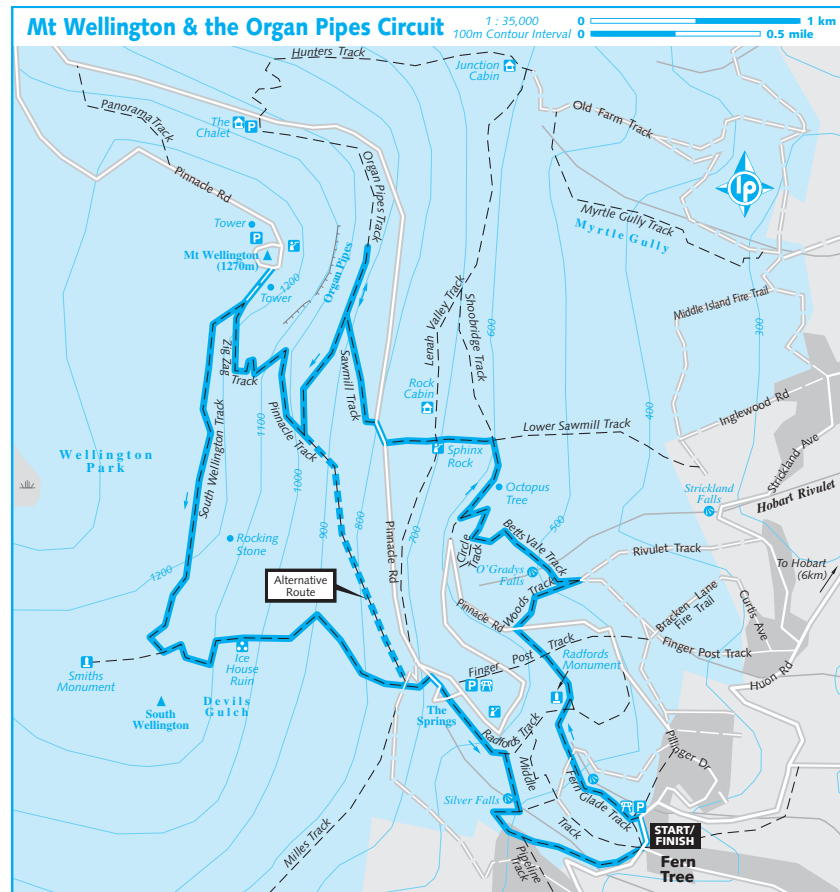
The small suburb of **Fern Tree** has a general store, café and tavern. From the tavern walk 60m north down Huon Rd to a small car park and picnic area; the Fern Glade Track ascends stone steps into the trees here. Follow this track, ignoring all side tracks, as it ascends beside the fern-lined creek, crossing it several times, to reach **Radfords Monument** at a major track junction. The monument is dedicated to GH Radford who died in a snow storm descending from the Pinnacle during a 1903 race from the city to the summit and back. Cross Radfords Track and continue on for 10 minutes, crossing Finger Post Track, to Pinnacle Rd. Cross the road and descend Woods Track to the signed junction with Betts Vale Track. Turn left (west) here and stroll up to pretty **O'Grady's Falls** (30 to 45 minutes from Fern Tree).

Cross the bridge and continue on Betts Vale Track, ascending a damp gully to the junction with Circle Track. Turn right and then right again soon after, to follow Shoobridge Track north past the **Octopus Tree**, its

tentacle-like roots clasp a large boulder. Watch for the junction with Sawmill Track (the sign faces away from you), then turn left and follow this track uphill, past the overhang of Sphinx Rock. Continue on Sawmill Track, crossing the Lenah Valley Track and Pinnacle Rd, then angling up to join the Organ Pipes Track (45 to 60 minutes from O'Grady Falls). The views have opened up now, with Hobart and the Derwent estuary below and the towering **Organ Pipes** above, and only get better as you ascend further. It's worth walking north along the Organ Pipes Track for 10 to 15 minutes to take in the full extent of the cliffs and perhaps get a stiff neck watching the climbers who frequent these crags in summer.

Return along the Organ Pipes Track and continue contouring south on this track, rather than turning off back down the Sawmill Track. After 10-15 minutes it joins the Pinnacle Track at a rustic seat with a view of the Organ Pipes; if the weather is poor and the summit in cloud, bear left and follow this track down to the Springs (20 to 30 minutes). Otherwise, turn right uphill and climb ever more steeply. The Zig Zag Track emerges on the summit plateau just south of the huge communications tower. The summit itself, marked by a trig beacon and 2¼ to 3¼ hours from Fern Tree, is just beyond the tower in the middle of a parking area. Below the car park is a **viewing platform** from where you can take in the expansive views of Hobart, and the bays and islands beyond. It's also worth a wander across to the western side of the summit car park to a display that explains the significance of the mountain (known as Kunanyi) to the local Aboriginal community.

Return south past the communications tower and, ignoring Zig Zag Track, bear right and follow the South Wellington Track, a rough, marked route along the edge of the summit plateau. The alpine landscape on this section is wonderful, with odd jumbles of frost-weathered, egg-shaped dolerite boulders littering the plateau. In the gaps, hardy alpine plants find shelter to grow. After about 30 minutes, the track begins to descend gently, opening up new views to the south across Bruny Island and the Huon Valley, and passing a sign for the **Rocking Stone**, a perched boulder on the plateau edge 100m east of the track. The track enters



stunted trees and soon reaches the turn-off west to Smiths Monument; bear left (east) here. Dr John Smith died after becoming lost while descending from Mt Wellington in 1858. The route now becomes a well-defined stony track and leaves the plateau to begin its descent through bush. During the steep descent you'll pass several old **ice house ruins**, built to make ice in the days before refrigeration. Look out for a short side track on the right soon after starting the descent; it leads to the most obvious ruin. When in operation, the structures were packed with snow, which would become ice over winter, after which it was carved into blocks and carried down the mountain on ponies. Continue descending to the junction with Milles

Track, then turn left (north) and follow this contouring gravel path a short distance to a major signed track junction. Turn right here and descend stone steps to a road beside a grassy opening. Dream of the ale you might have enjoyed at the old Springs Hotel which stood here until destroyed in the bushfires that ravaged Mt Wellington in 1967. Cross the road and continue descending to the Springs picnic area (1½ to 2½ hours from the summit). Radfords Track enters the bush on the south side of the picnic area. Descend this track for a few minutes (this track section is shared with mountain bikers, so keep watch for them), then turn right downhill at the first junction, adjacent to a large drain. Follow the steep narrow track

WARNING

Cold winds can strafe the summit plateau any time of year. Even leaving Hobart on a fine summer's day, it can be a bit of a shock to feel the need for gloves and fleece jackets on the summit of Mt Wellington. It will be at least 10°C cooler than downtown Hobart (without allowing for the wind). Bring everything you would normally bring on a day trip to an alpine area if you are going to the summit.

down to meet a major track just above **Silver Falls**, a small cascade framed by tree ferns. Pass the falls and continue down the wide path back to Fern Tree (45 minutes from the Springs), bearing left at the major intersection en route.

CAPE PILLAR

Duration	3 days
Distance	33km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Fortescue Bay (p202)
Nearest Towns	Port Arthur (opposite), Eaglehawk Neck (p201)
Transport	private

Summary Walk along the edge of the highest sea cliffs in Australia, with bush and heath-cloaked hills above and the sea foaming around stacks below.

Visitors to the Port Arthur Historic Site on the Tasman Peninsula rarely realise that just a few kilometres away, hidden by bush-clad hills, are the highest and most spectacular sea cliffs in Australia. The impressive scenery on offer can be seen from roadside lookouts near Eaglehawk Neck, but to fully appreciate the vertigo-inducing dolerite cliffs and sea stacks below, a cliff-top walk is necessary. The highest cliffs (almost 300m) are at Cape Pillar, with the isolated Tasman Island opposite, while the slender Totem Pole (see boxed text, p204) lies off Cape Haüy. This walk links both these areas with a circuit via Mt Fortescue. If you have little time, a day trip to Cape Haüy provides a coastal landscape taster.

DOLERITE

The dark massive rock known as dolerite is such a ubiquitous feature of the Tasmanian landscape, capping the highest peaks and backing many coasts, that few give it a second thought. But in both volume and form it is unlike such rocks in most other parts of the world.

As molten rock (magma), at a temperature of 1100°C, it flooded into the crust 175 million years ago during the initial phase of the Gondwana break-up (p25). The intrusive event lasted a geological blink-of-an-eye, perhaps less than one million years, during which 40,000 cu km of magma was emplaced, mostly as sheets 300m to 500m thick, termed sills. As the magma cooled and crystallised to form dolerite, the distinctive columnar joints developed.

The thick, massive sills and columnar structure of dolerite facilitate the development of tall, steep cliffs with separated towers or pinnacles. In coastal settings, the sea either obscures or removes the debris or talus aprons that would occur below such cliffs on land, steepening them. Nowhere are such cliffs better developed than in the Cape Pillar area.

PLANNING

If you have extra days, the Cape Pillar walk can be combined with the Tasman Coastal Trail for a four-day extended walk. The best way to do this might be to first sort out transport to Fortescue Bay and undertake the circuit walk described here, continue along the Tasman Coastal Trail around Fortescue Bay to Bivouac Bay campsite on Day 3, and north along the cliff-girt coast to Waterfall Bay or Devils Kitchen on Day 4. This is just south of Eaglehawk Neck, where public transport is available.

When to Walk

You can walk this track at any time of the year. However, the few creeks on the walk only have small catchment areas and often stop flowing or dry up later in summer, after a few weeks without significant rainfall, so finding fresh water can be difficult during this period.

What to Bring

Drinking water can be scarce or brackish in the Cape Pillar area and you'll need containers to carry water to the recommended camp sites. It's best to fill up at every opportunity along the route. You'll also need a fuel stove (see opposite).

Maps & Books

Tasmap's 1:75,000 *Tasman National Park Map & Notes* covers the walk, and also shows the Tasman Coastal Trail and other walks on the Tasman Peninsula. *Peninsula Tracks* by Peter and Shirley Storey covers 35 popular walks in the area and is worth checking out if you plan to spend more time there.

WARNING

While this is a coastal walk, the long Cape Pillar peninsula cops a fair amount of bad weather, and names like Tornado Flat and Hurricane Heath give an indication of what it can be like. The cliffs in particular are often exposed to violent, gusty winds and the route traverses their very edge in places; if a gale is forecast, it may not be the best time to go.

Permits & Regulations

The area is a national park so you'll need a pass (p192).

Campfires are not permitted in the park, except at Fortescue Bay camping ground, so you'll need a fuel stove.

Phytophthora (p47) is not present in the southern part of the walk area; to maintain this situation and help prevent the spread of this fungus, clean mud and soil from boots and other gear at the Lunchtime Creek washdown station.

NEAREST TOWNS & FACILITIES

Port Arthur

☎ 03 / pop 170

As one of the biggest mainstream tourist draws in Tasmania, it is a surprise to discover that Port Arthur, the location of the infamous mid-19th century convict prison, is not much more than the historic site plus a scattering of motels and guesthouses. Just before the turn-off to the historic site is a general store and petrol station. Bring all your camping needs from Hobart.

SLEEPING & EATING

All accommodation options in Port Arthur can be heavily booked in summer.

The spacious and well-equipped **Port Arthur Caravan & Cabin Park** (☎ 6250 2340, 1800 620 708; www.portarthurcaravan-cabinpark.com.au; Garden Point Rd; unpowered/powerd sites \$17/19, dm \$16, cabins \$85-95) is 2km north of Port Arthur, above Stewarts Bay Beach.

Roseview Youth Hostel (☎ 6250 2311; yhas@yhas.org.au; Champ St, off Safety Cove Rd; dm/d \$20/45) has OK facilities and crowded dorms but a great location at the edge of the historic site.

Port Arthur Villas (☎ 6250 2239, 1800 815 775; www.portarthurvillas.com.au; 52 Safety Cove Rd; d \$130-

145) has older-style self-contained units sleeping up to four, and a nice garden and outdoor barbecue area.

Comfort Inn Port Arthur (☎ 6250 2101, 1800 030 747; www.portarthur-inn.com.au; 29 Safety Cove Rd; d \$140-180) is a motel with flash views over the historic site and unremarkable accommodation. Dining options inside the pub are the **Convict Kitchen** (meals \$12-18; ☎ lunch & dinner) and the more formal **Commandant's Table** (mains \$17-28, ☎ dinner).

Daytime food options also include takeaways from the general store and a café inside the historic site visitor information centre.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Public transport connections to the Port Arthur area are surprisingly poor. **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) connects Hobart and the Tasman Peninsula, but the timetable is geared more to school students than to travellers. There's a weekday bus service between Hobart and Port Arthur (\$22) during school terms, and a 4pm service from Hobart on Monday, Wednesday and Friday during school holidays. Buses stop at all the main towns on the peninsula.

Eaglehawk Neck

☎ 03 / pop 90

The small settlement of Eaglehawk Neck is on the isthmus that joins the Tasman Peninsula to the mainland. It is about 15 minutes' drive north (on the A9 Arthur Hwy) of the turn-off for Fortescue Bay (the start of the walk) and near the northern end of the Tasman Coastal Trail. It has a basic general store, but you'd be wise to bring all camping and walking needs from Hobart.

SLEEPING & EATING

Eaglehawk Neck Backpackers (☎ 6250 3248; 94 Old Jetty Rd; camp sites per person \$7, dm \$18) is a simple, endearing hostel, with a tiny camping area, in a peaceful location west of the isthmus.

Eaglehawk Café & Guesthouse (☎ 6250 3331; eaglehawkcafe@bigpond.com; 5131 Arthur Hwy; d \$110-130; mains \$7-15; ☎ breakfast & lunch) is a classy eatery and has three inviting B&B rooms above the dining area. Rates include breakfast.

Rooms at the **Lufra Hotel** (☎ 6250 3262; www.lufrahotel.com; Pirates Bay Dr; s/d \$75/110), perched above Tessellated Pavement, are pretty standard but comfortable. There are good eating options downstairs: a **café** (☎ breakfast

& lunch) and **restaurant** (mains \$15-27; ☺ dinner) and a public bar with traditional pub grub.

Officers Mess (☎ 6250 3635; off Arthur Hwy; mains \$10-22; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) has a pretty basic general store and café, but it does serve hot food and takeaways, and there's an ATM here.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Buses from Hobart to Port Arthur (p201) pass through Eaglehawk Neck.

Fortescue Bay

☎ 03

Hidden down a gravel road off the highway and right at the start/finish of the walk, **Fortescue Bay camping ground** (☎ 6250 2433; sites for 2-6 people \$11) sits behind a sweeping sandy beach backed by thick forests. It lacks powered sites, but firewood is available and there are fireplaces, gas barbecues, toilets and cold showers. Booking is advised during holiday periods. Fortescue Bay is part of the Tasman National Park so the usual park entry fees apply. There are no shops here so bring in all your own food.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

With the start of the walk 12km off the main highway down a gravel road, the logistics of getting to and from the walk from Port Arthur or Eaglehawk Neck will not be easy for those relying on public transport. You can get to the turn-off from the main highway by bus, after which you'll be facing an unappealing two- to three-hour road bash to reach Fortescue Bay. Alternatively, you could try to hitch or negotiate a lift from the owners of wherever you are staying.

If you are driving, Fortescue Rd turns left (east) off the Arthur Hwy 13km south of Eaglehawk Neck. Follow the road past the beach camping area to the Mill Creek car park and picnic area at its end.

THE WALK

Day 1: Fortescue Bay to Bare Knoll

4½–5½ hours, 13km, 630m ascent, 400m descent
From the day-use car park, follow the foreshore path 150m east to Mill Creek camping area. The track to Cape Haüy and Mt Fortescue are signposted from the boat ramp.

The track initially follows the water's edge, but then swings east and climbs gently inland. The forest throughout this area

was burnt in a bushfire in 2003, but lots of green regrowth has softened the previously stark landscape. After a steep stony section, the track undulates over several rises, with planking across wetter sections, reaching the Cape Haüy Track junction, about one hour from Fortescue Bay. The side trip down to Cape Haüy (below), overlooking the Candlestick and slender Totem Pole (see p204) sea stacks is well worth the effort.

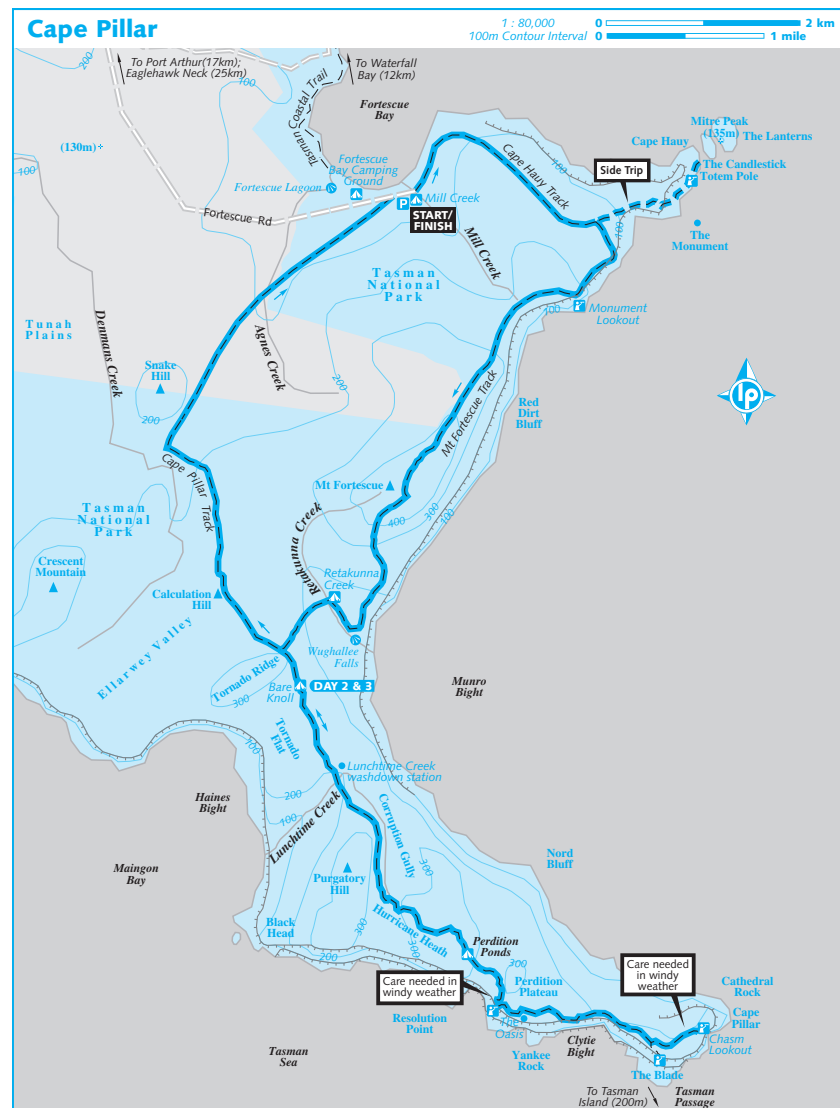
Take the rocky track to the right (south), signposted to Mt Fortescue. Vague at first, it rises gently for 10 minutes to emerge on the cliff top at **Monument Lookout**. To the south the sweep of Munro Bight is backed by bedded sandstone cliffs, giving way to dolerite (p200) towards distant Cape Pillar, with the white tower of Tasman Island lighthouse visible beyond. The track continues near the cliff edge, passing several other lookouts. You eventually leave the burnt area and traverse wetter forest, with tree ferns and mossy trunks and rocks, ascending steadily towards the wooded summit of **Mt Fortescue** (490m; 1¼ to 1½ hours from the Cape Haüy Track junction). Nearby rocks provide a view towards Cape Pillar.

Continue beyond the summit and descend south, steeply in places; the leaf litter and mud underfoot can be very slippery. The track crosses Retakunna Creek just above **Wughallee Falls** (45 to 60 minutes from Mt Fortescue) and heads upstream for a few minutes to a track junction. There's a good camp site down the short side track to the right, on the creek bank among slender eucalypts and tree ferns. If continuing to the Bare Knoll camp site, which has no water, fill up your water containers here.

Follow the onward track southwest from Retakunna Creek, climbing steeply to a junction with the Cape Pillar Track on the side of Tornado Ridge (30 to 40 minutes). Turn left (south) and follow the Cape Pillar Track for 10 minutes to Bare Knoll and a sheltered camp site among wind-tossed trees.

SIDE TRIP: CAPE HAÜY

1½–2 hours, 3km return, 130m ascent/descent
Head east from the track junction and follow the track down across rock slabs. The trees fade away and views south open out across the cliffs beneath Mt Fortescue and into the hazy distance to Cape Pillar itself. Climb across a steep rise and descend



towards Cape Haüy where the track gradually deteriorates. Continue to follow the crest of the headland until you reach a warning sign. Just beyond this are dizzying views of the **Totem Pole** slotted in a turbulent chasm between the end of Cape Haüy and the sheer-sided island that marks the continuation of the headland into the ocean.

You can scramble down a little further to get a more impressive view, but the descent becomes more dangerous as you continue. Return via your outward route.

Day 2: Bare Knoll to Cape Pillar Return

4½–5½ hours, 12km return, 420m ascent/descent
Leaving your camp at Bare Knoll, head

THE TOTEM POLE

It is difficult not to be impressed by the sight of the Totem Pole, a 65m-high vertical finger of rock standing at the end of Cape Hauy in defiance of gravity and the relentless ocean swells. Seen from the right angle, the Totem Pole looks as though it might just topple over into the chasm it occupies. The thought of climbing it would terrify most people (just looking at it is a dizzying experience), but it has been climbed a number of times.

In 1997 top British climber Paul Pritchard almost died attempting an ascent of the Totem Pole. Low down on the route he was hit by a falling block, suffering serious head injuries. He survived an epic rescue to be told he'd never walk again. He tells the story of his painstaking journey back to relative mobility in his books *The Totem Pole and a Whole New Adventure* (1999) and *The Longest Climb: Back from the Abyss* (2005).

southeast with just a day pack, but remember to take some water containers with you in order to top up at Lunchtime Creek on the way back for your second night. After tunnelling through dense vegetation across Tornado Flat, the track descends steeply to **Lunchtime Creek** (20 to 30 minutes). This creek is generally the last reliable water source when heading south. There is also a boot-cleaning station here where you should clean boots and gaiters to prevent phytophobia (p47) spreading further south.

Climb south from Lunchtime Creek through low heath, with views west across Maingong Bay to the long finger of Cape Raoul and distant Bruny Island. The track then enters a wonderful patch of forest, contouring east of Purgatory Hill, with twisted crowns of stringybark above banksia and other flowering shrubs.

Swinging back to the southeast again you then cross **Hurricane Heath**, a mass of mauve-flowering tea-tree shrubs in November. On the far side of this area a narrow side track heads right (southwest) towards a patch of taller vegetation for 100m and a sheltered camp site (one to 1½ hours from Bare Knoll).

A 10 minute descent across an open wind-blasted area leads to the brackish Perdicion Ponds. Walkers have camped here in the past, but this is not recommended; the site is exposed and the sandy soil prone to erosion. A narrow corridor through thick scrub leads up and across Perdicion Plateau to a **cliff edge viewpoint**. The view along the cliffs of Clytie Bight to the Blade pinnacle and the inaccessible Tasman Island is nothing short of spectacular. The track continues along the cliff edge to a sandy area known as the Oasis, where the track

heads inland for a short time before rejoining the cliff edge and continuing to below the **Blade** (45 to 60 minutes from Perdicion Ponds). If it isn't too windy, take a few minutes to scramble out to the end of this exposed promontory for airy views of Tasman Island. The white-stained slabs near sea level on Tasman Island are fur seal haul-outs and, if the wind is right, you may hear them barking.

The main track continues for 15 minutes to **Chasm Lookout**, with a steep final climb to this highest point of Cape Pillar, the cliffs falling a sheer 280m into the sea.

Retrace your steps to Bare Knoll campsite.

Day 3: Bare Knoll to Fortescue Bay

2–3 hours, 8km, 90m ascent, 320m descent

The walk out to Fortescue Bay is an easy stroll. Retrace your Day 1 steps to the Tornado Ridge Track junction, and then bear left and continue to follow the Cape Pillar Track north. The track soon enters forest burnt in 2003, although, as elsewhere, regrowth is progressing. Traversing open buttongrass country, extended sections of planking ease wetter areas. The track re-enters forest near Snake Hill and eventually commences a steady descent, winding down to cross Agnes Creek. About 15 minutes later Fortescue Rd is reached, 150m west of the camping ground.

WEST & WORLD HERITAGE AREA

Tasmania's west really is wild. The most rugged region of Tasmania, formidable mountains, buttongrass plains, tranquil

lakes, dense rainforests and a treacherous coast are all compelling features of this beautiful region. One of three southern temperate wilderness regions (the others are in New Zealand and Patagonia), this isn't the only link between these regions (see right).

A large part of Tasmania's western wilderness is World Heritage-listed on Unesco's register of natural and cultural places of world significance – see www.parks.tas.gov.au/wha. The World Heritage Area (WHA) was listed in 1982 and granted Australian legal status in 1983, following a failed attempt by the Tasmanian government to dam the Franklin River (below). When Unesco was asked to consider the nomination of the area for listing, it was accepted on the basis of satisfying a record seven out of a possible 10 criteria. After a number of significant additions, the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area today encompasses 1.38 million hectares, which is some 20% of Tasmania's land area.

This West & World Heritage Area section features many of the most difficult and strenuous walks in Tasmania, covering high and potentially dangerous terrain on rough tracks exposed to the worst weather. But their wildness and isolation are also what many walkers come to Tasmania to experience.

HISTORY

Arriving in Tasmania via a land bridge from the mainland at least 35,000 years ago, the Tasmanian Aboriginal people lived in the then-grassy valleys of western Tasmania through the last ice age, the southernmost humans on earth at that time. These valleys were abandoned by about 12,000 years ago as the forests expanded after the end of the ice age, but occupation continued mainly around the resource-rich coast until the 1830s, a few decades after the arrival of Europeans.

ENVIRONMENT

In the southwest, convoluted quartzite ranges rise from rolling buttongrass plains and are cut by deep gorges cloaked in dense rainforest. The dolerite-capped mountains and plateaus of the central highlands are often rimmed by columnar cliffs, a dramatic backdrop to the many lakes. The WHA was covered by ice during several ice ages over the last two million years (to current sea level at one point) and these glaciers have sculpted many highland landforms.

While the most extensive temperate rainforest lies in the northwest Tarkine region, rainforest is also well developed in and characteristic of western Tasmania and the WHA. Tasmania's rainforest and alpine areas contain a distinctive suite of plants that evolved on the supercontinent

THE WORLD HERITAGE AREA – THE FIGHT FOR PROTECTION

Few World Heritage Areas (WHAs) have been embroiled in as much contentious environmental debate as the Tasmanian Wilderness WHA. The flooding of Lake Pedder, then part of Southwest National Park, by the HEC (Hydro Electric Commission) in 1972 prompted concern over the levels of protection afforded by national park status.

The Tasmanian Wilderness Society (now The Wilderness Society) was founded in 1976 to provide organised opposition to the HEC's planned damming of the Gordon and Franklin Rivers. The Society was instrumental in having the area World Heritage-listed by Unesco in 1982. But that, and a change in state government, did not prevent the beginning of dam construction on the lower Gordon. In the summer of 1982–83 the issue burst onto the national arena with the 'Franklin River Blockade' and the arrest of 1400 protesters. In the 1983 Federal election, the Australian Labor Party was elected on a promise to enforce the WHA's protection. Despite a legal challenge by the Tasmanian government, the Franklin River scheme was abandoned. This was a landmark decision, further clarifying the constitutional powers of the federal government over state governments.

After further controversy, many protests and a government inquiry, this time over forestry, the WHA was enlarged in 1989 and now covers 20% of Tasmania. Despite this, the scale of industrial forestry has expanded dramatically and the Wilderness Society and others continue to argue for appropriate protection for additional areas.

Gondwana (p25). Many animals, especially invertebrates, also display a Gondwanan heritage. Subsequent evolution has produced many species unique to Tasmania. Such species include conifers like King Billy, pencil and Huon pine, and invertebrates like the mountain shrimp inhabiting highland tarns or velvet worms found in rotting logs. Nor are Gondwanan affinities restricted to plants and animals; Tasmania has more geological similarities with Antarctica than with much of mainland Australia.

Forests dominated by tall – sometimes very tall – eucalyptus trees also exist in the west, the wet climate contributing to a rain-forest understorey in many areas. If the area remains free of bushfires for 300 years or so, this understorey may eventually supplant the eucalypts as they die.

In some alpine areas, the arrangement of dwarf shrubs, small tarns and rich green cushion plants brings to mind a landscaped rock garden. In the southwest, many broad valleys are blanketed by peat soils with buttongrass, their seed ‘buttons’ waving on long stalks.

PLANNING

When to Walk

The summer months (November to April) are generally the best time for walking in Tasmania’s western areas. The days are longer and the prevalence of cool and wet weather is generally somewhat less. However, the weather can be fickle and changeable at any time of the year, so be prepared for the worst.

WARNING

The walking in western Tasmania and the WHA is often at significant altitudes, and the weather can be very changeable. This brings with it the potential difficulties of low temperatures, high winds, poor visibility and heavy rain or snow. Snow is a possibility in the alpine areas of Tasmania at any time of the year. Although the Overland Track is now quite well constructed, many of the other tracks can be rough and muddy in places. Even if just heading off for a day walk, walkers considering walking in the West & WHA should be well equipped for mountain weather.

What to Bring

Many walks in western Tasmania traverse highland areas, so it’s essential to be properly prepared (see Gearing Up For the Mountains, p39). As the entire WHA is a fuel-stove-only area (p192), fuel stoves are required for all overnight walks.

Books

The thin booklet *Tasmania World Heritage* includes work by some of Tasmania’s best photographers and provides an excellent overview of the WHA and its values. For scientific detail you could seek out *Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Values*, published by the Royal Society of Tasmania.

MT FIELD & TARN SHELF CIRCUIT

Duration	5–6 hours
Distance	12km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Lake Dobson
Nearest Town	National Park (opposite)
Transport	private

Summary Explore the glaciated uplands of Mt Field National Park, traversing snow gum woodland, alpine vegetation and bouldery crests, returning along the beautiful Tarn Shelf.

Mt Field National Park lies adjacent to the eastern fringes of the WHA and only an hour’s drive from Hobart. From the towering swamp gums and tree ferns around Russell Falls and the park entrance, a dirt road winds up to Lake Dobson and the start of several fine walking tracks exploring the alpine forests, moors and boulder fields.

The one-day walk described here makes a beautiful alpine circuit across the Rodway Range, returning along Tarn Shelf. While there are no tough ascents or large gains in altitude, parts of the route can still be quite arduous. Scrambling and hopping across jumbles of boulders is the order of the day on the ascent to Rodway Range. Fit walkers can consider visiting Mt Field West, but adding this side trip makes for a long day, with a more demanding level of difficulty; start early from Lake Dobson (see p208). Given clear weather, the views from the high sections of this walk are absolutely tremendous, but the exposed alpine environment is unforgiving in poor conditions.

HISTORY

Mt Field National Park was created in 1916. It was an expansion of a reserve created around Russell Falls in 1885, making it (along with Freycinet) one of Tasmania’s oldest parks. At this time, the park area was a mere 2000 hectares and it has subsequently increased to 16,756 hectares. However, in 1949 timber interests managed to excise 1472 hectares for logging, much of which was tall swamp gum, with 1500 hectares of mixed forest added in return. Logging continues in the Florentine Valley, in uncomfortable proximity to both Mt Field and the eastern fringes of the WHA. The operations in the Florentine Valley are readily viewed from the summit of Mt Field West.

ENVIRONMENT

The upper reaches of the park show plenty of evidence of past glaciation; U-shaped valleys, cirques, tarns and jumbles of moraine debris. Lake Seal lies within an impressive glacial trough, and ice that accumulated on Tarn Shelf, in the lee of the Rodway Range, fed a glacier that flowed down the Broad River valley during the last ice age.

Few other national parks in Australia offer Mt Field’s diversity of vegetation; tall swamp gum forests with tree ferns near the park entrance, temperate rainforest along the Lake Dobson road, then alpine woodland and moorland at higher elevations.

PLANNING

The national park contains a number of other walking options, both alpine and lowland. At the very least, before going up to Lake Dobson, it’s worth taking the short stroll to Russell Falls from the visitor information centre, not just to view the waterfall, but also to see the huge swamp gums and tree ferns along the way. The Tall Trees circuit a short distance up the Lake Dobson road is also worth a look.

If cloud hides the tops of the Rodway Range you might consider a lower level circuit along Tarn Shelf to Twilight Tarn, returning via Lake Webster, instead of the route described here.

When to Walk

Walking in the alpine regions of Mt Field is normally feasible from October to April,

but the high ridges are very exposed to bad weather, low cloud can render visibility poor and the track is not always well defined, so err on the side of caution when deciding on suitable weather for this walk. See also the Warning boxed text on p210.

Maps

Tasmap’s 1:50,000 *Mt Field National Park Map & Notes* shows this and other walks in the national park.

Information Sources

The **national park visitor information centre** (☎ 6288 1149), at the park entrance, has lots of information on the area’s walks, can provide updates on weather and snow conditions, sells park passes, and contains a café and a good, small interpretive display.

NEAREST TOWN

National Park

☎ 03 / pop 170

National Park consists of only a few houses and a pub just outside the park entrance. It is, however, a convenient base for both the Mt Field and Mt Anne (p209) walks. Russell Falls is only a short stroll away, and if viewing marsupials is your thing, then a visit to the open lawns at the park entrance at dusk will reward you with plenty of possums and pademelons.

SLEEPING & EATING

Land of the Giants Campground (unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$20/25) is a privately run, self-registration camping ground with good facilities (toilets, showers, laundry, free barbecues) just inside the park. Bookings not required. Site fees are in addition to national park entry fees.

The **Lake Dobson Cabins** (☎ 6288 1149; s & d \$22) are three simple six-bed cabins located near the lake and make a good base for exploring the highland parts of the park. They are equipped with mattresses, cold water and wood stoves, but lack power. Book at the visitor information centre.

National Park Hotel (☎ 6288 1103; Gordon River Rd; s/d \$40/80) is a laid-back pub offering reasonable rooms with shared facilities, plus counter meals most nights. Rates include breakfast.

Russell Falls Holiday Cottages (☎ 6288 1198; Lake Dobson Hwy; d \$120) are conveniently located next to the park’s entrance. These spotless

cottages have rather dated furnishings, but are roomy and well equipped.

Waterfalls Café (☎ 6288 1516; meals \$7-15; ☺ lunch) is a simple eatery inside the visitor information centre.

Groceries are available from small stores at Westerway (8km east on the B61) and Maydena (13km west on the B61). However, it is best to bring fuel and walk-food supplies from Hobart.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Public transport connections to Mt Field National Park are not regular. From December through March, **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au; 64 Brisbane St, Hobart) runs one bus on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday from Hobart to Mt Field (\$28); bookings are essential.

Unfortunately the service does not run to the top car park so to undertake the alpine walks you really need your own transport. If driving, Mt Field National Park is 75km northwest of Hobart along the Brooker Hwy, B62 and then the Gordon River Rd.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

From the national park visitor information centre, drive up the narrow, winding gravel road to the car park at Lake Dobson. In winter this road is sometimes snow-covered and may be closed.

THE WALK

Leave the Lake Dobson car park and follow the path around the southern shores of the lake. Just after the end of the boardwalk, bear left uphill onto Urquart Track and follow this to meet the ski field access road. Alternatively you might take a longer route straight ahead around the lake, traversing **Pandanis Grove**, to meet the ski field road lower down. Pandanis grow only in Tasmania and, despite their palm-like appearance, are actually a giant heath.

Turn onto the road and climb through several hairpin bends to reach a cluster of ski lodges. Follow the 'Alpine Tracks' signposts along the front of the buildings, where the road deteriorates into a rocky walking track. Views across the eastern section of the park are fairly unobstructed as you side

through stands of beautiful snow gums. The track is rough and rocky in places before it emerges onto a broad shoulder 15 minutes from the ski lodges. Extensive duckboards carry you across wet flat ground towards Rodway Hut. Along the way the **Seal Lookout** provides views across the impressive glacial trough containing Lake Seal. Ten minutes of easy walking on the duckboards brings you to a track junction just above Rodway Hut (day shelter and emergency use only), about one hour from Lake Dobson. The Tarn Shelf Track descends to the north past the hut (a snow pole line climbs in the opposite direction onto the Mawson Plateau). Continue straight ahead (west) on a third track signposted for the Rodway Range. The track quickly deteriorates into a route marked with snow poles and splashes of red paint. The going is arduous, hopping between boulders, but the dolerite provides excellent friction.

After a short climb the route traverses northwest along the crest of the **Rodway Range**. In clear conditions views extend right across the Southwest National Park, and north across the Central Plateau towards the distant peaks of Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park. More immediately, Mt Field West (1434m) is the highest point on the impressive ridge stretching 3km to the northwest from K Col.

Descend to K Col (45 to 60 minutes from Rodway Hut), where the boulders give way to wet ground carpeted with alpine flora. Fitter walkers with time and good conditions on their side can now make the side trip to Mt Field West (right). Otherwise follow the muddy, marked track north, rising towards the bluff of The Watcher and Newdegate Pass (30 minutes from K Col). The track is vague in the area of Newdegate Pass and is very easy to lose – it's best to look carefully for markers as the route swings sharply to the east. If you do lose the route, climb to higher ground and look for a section of duckboard. **Newdegate Pass** is also carpeted with alpine flora, including bright green cushion plants, in places forming into tiered series of small tarns.

The route descends steeply east then southeast from Newdegate Pass, on a defined track, to reach Lake Newdegate Hut (day shelter and emergency use only) at the northern end of Lake Newdegate. After crossing the

lake outlet, turn right onto the Tarn Shelf Track. This track skirts the eastern shores of **Lake Newdegate**, passing through the stark dead trunks of numerous native pines, killed by a bushfire that started in logging areas below Mt Field West in 1966. The southern end of Tarn Shelf escaped this fire and living pencil pines protrude from thickets of deciduous beech, which turn golden before losing their leaves in autumn.

Continue following the track generally southeast along Tarn Shelf, passing lakes and tarns and crossing glacier-scoured ridges to Rodway Hut (one hour from Lake Newdegate). Turn left at the junction above the hut and retrace your steps back to Lake Dobson car park (45 minutes).

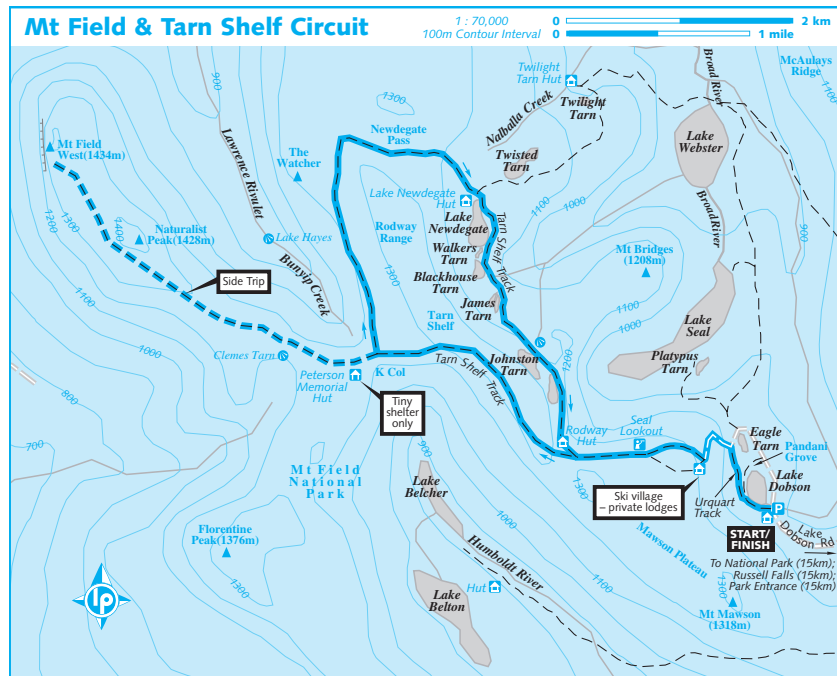
SIDE TRIP: MT FIELD WEST

3–3½ hours, 6.5km return, 240m ascent/descent
Mt Field West (1434m) is the highest summit in the national park. It offers great views on a clear day but makes for a long outing if combined with the full circuit described above. Cross the boggy flats of K Col, past the small stone Peterson Memorial Hut (day shelter and emergency use only) and climb steadily past Clemes Tarn, then northwest up the spur towards Naturalist Peak (1428m). Passing this peak, a generally level walk of 1km or so crosses a beautiful alpine plateau with many small tarns to the summit of Mt Field West. The views across the heavily logged Florentine Valley into the WHA present a stark juxtaposition of wilderness lost and wilderness protected. Return to K Col by the route of ascent.

MT ANNE & ELIZA PLATEAU

Duration	7–8½ hours
Distance	15km
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Condominium Creek
Nearest Towns	National Park (p207)
Transport	bus (summer only)
Summary	Climb the highest peak in the southwest on an exposed alpine walk with stunning mountain scenery.

From most angles, Mt Anne (1423m) looks like improbable terrain for walkers. It rises to the east of Lake Pedder, a towering fang of dolerite with sheer faces on all sides,



connected to the more rounded peak of Mt Eliza (1289m) by a rolling plateau carpeted by alpine vegetation. Parts of this walk offer incredible views across much of the southwest wilderness, and also of the tremendous glacial scenery of the Anne Range itself.

PLANNING

This description describes a there-and-back visit to Mt Anne. This is a fairly long one-day effort, involving some 1400m of total ascent, so start early (there is a good camp site beside Condominium Creek at the start of the track that may facilitate this). Or you could make the walk a more leisurely 1½-day outing by staying overnight at High Camp Memorial Hut. Even if you don't make it to the summit, the views of both Mt Anne and the WHA from Mt Eliza are well worth the effort.

It is possible to continue beyond Mt Anne, but walkers attempting the demanding three-day Anne Circuit should be fit, well equipped and very comfortable on steep, exposed ground, as well as with scrambling over boulders, all with a full pack.

When to Walk

The summer months (November to April) are generally the best time for walking in Tasmania's western mountains. See also the Warning boxed text below.

High and isolated, Mt Anne can experience particularly awful weather. Given the exposed nature of Eliza Plateau (where the track is not always well-defined) and the extent of steep and dangerous ground around the ridges, the walk should only be attempted in clear and stable weather. Snow and ice build-up in winter can make the summit a realm for mountaineers only.

Maps

Tasmap's 1:25,000 topographic map *Anne* is the most suitable for this walk.

WARNING

A good head for heights and confidence on steep ground is required for the final summit ascent, but the views are good and extensive from many parts of the walk even if you don't proceed to the actual summit.

NEAREST TOWN

See National Park (p207).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

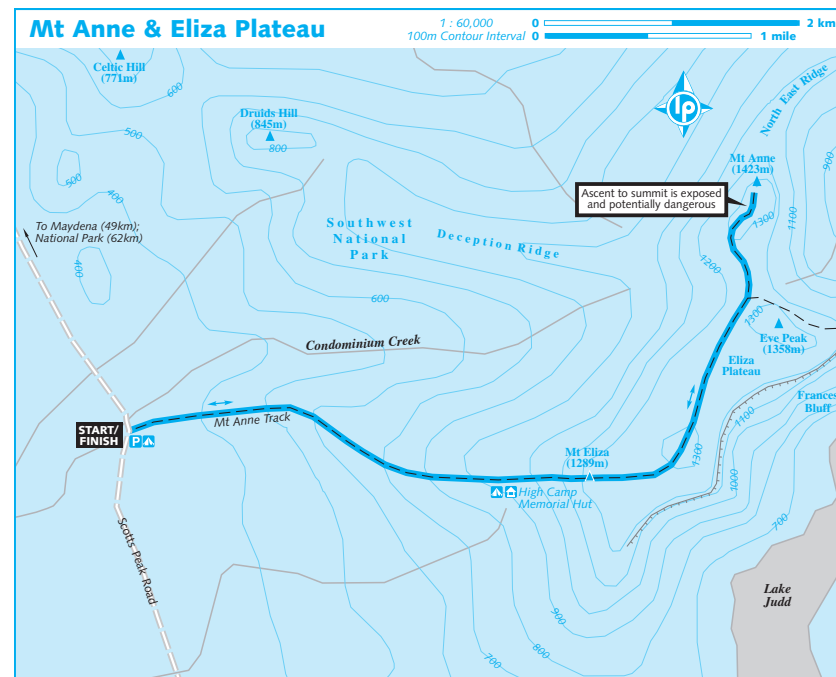
Tassielink (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au; 64 Brisbane St, Hobart) runs a summer-only service from Hobart to Scotts Peak, passing the start of the walk, three days per week. The bus departs the Hobart bus terminal (at the address listed here) at 8am Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday, passing the Mt Anne track at around 12.45pm, and returns the same day. The one-way fare is \$68 and booking is recommended.

For those with their own transport, simply follow the B61 Hwy (Gordon River Rd) towards Strathgordon and turn left onto the unsealed C607 (Scotts Peak Rd), signposted for Mt Anne and Scotts Peak. The trailhead at Condominium Creek is signposted on the left about 20km to the south.

THE WALK

A well-constructed track leaves the car park at Condominium Creek and crosses a but-tongrass plain for a few hundred metres to reach the foot of Mt Eliza's long west ridge. The track climbs steep steps onto the ridge, and magnificent views begin to open out behind. The steps can seem very strenuous with a heavy pack, but some relief is gained after 30 minutes. A level section of track, muddy in places, leads into a dip from where the track climbs steeply again for 10 minutes to gain the crest of Mt Eliza's west ridge. From here a steady ascent leads to **High Camp Memorial Hut** (1½ to two hours from the car park), tucked among stunted gum trees below the bouldery slopes of Mt Eliza. The small hut has a water tank at the back and a toilet just below. There are a few small tent sites below the hut.

Beyond High Camp Memorial Hut the track becomes much rougher and is marked with cairns. It swings to the northeast and climbs steeply over boulders and rock steps, then trends back to the east following a ridge to the summit of **Mt Eliza** (1289m). The strenuous climb from High Camp Hut takes 45 minutes to one hour and is rewarded (in clear weather) by spectacular views of the Frankland Range across Lake Pedder. This vantage point is a worthwhile destination itself and many walkers venture no further.



Descend slightly and then rise gently to a broad rounded crest. The precipitous drop to **Lake Judd** is now before you and it is well worth detouring 100m or so to the east to view the lake. Another gentle descent and ascent leads northwards to a broad col dotted with an assortment of tarns. Cushion-plant communities abound on this col and are complemented by clusters of stunted pandani. From the col, a short climb leads round the western shoulder of **Eve Peak** (1358m). Descend awkwardly across large boulders to reach a broad col beneath Mt Anne (one to 1½ hours from Mt Eliza). The route leading right (east) here is the difficult, three-day Anne Circuit. The route to the summit of Mt Anne (1423m) is the marked route continuing straight ahead (north).

Follow the marked track across the col and climb around to the left of an outcrop. The track drops down to an extensive boulder field beneath the cliffed south face of Mt Anne. The most difficult section on the final summit tower above requires confidence on steep ground so you may wish to reassess the situation now, remembering

that the descent will likely be more awkward than the ascent.

The route is cairned diagonally left across the boulder slope to a square-cut corner close to the eastern extent of the cliffs. Once at the foot of the corner you'll need to use your hands and exercise great care, and if the rock is wet or icy you are advised not to attempt this section. Climb directly up for a few metres to reach a ramp, which can be followed to the left (as you face the cliff) and upwards to a sloping platform on a blunt and very exposed ridge. Make a slightly awkward move off this to another ledge (you may need a short rope here; if you feel nervous at this point, don't proceed further) and then walk carefully back to the right on a wide and sloping ledge. Now climb through a small notch on the eastern side of the mountain and walk along a wide ledge to where cairns show the way up the last scramble to the **summit** (45 to 60 minutes from the col). The views and sense of achievement are considerable. Follow your route of ascent to return to the Eliza Plateau and back down to the car park.

MT RUFUS & SHADOW LAKE

Duration	6–8 hours
Distance	18.5km
Difficulty	moderate
Start/Finish	Cynthia Bay (Lake St Clair; p219)
Nearest Town	Derwent Bridge (p219)
Transport	bus

Summary Traverse a wide variety of vegetation to and from a grand mountain viewpoint, relaxing beside a tranquil lake on your return.

Mt Rufus is a readily accessible summit at the southern end of Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park, with excellent views in all directions, especially of the high peaks in the park itself. The mountain's slopes feature a variety of vegetation types, including eucalypt forest and woodland, rainforest and alpine moorland, and several tranquil lakes.

Tracks on the mountain and in the Hugel Valley provide for a range of in-out and circuit walks, depending on mood and weather.

The full-day clockwise circuit described here involves a 680m ascent to Mt Rufus, followed by a more leisurely return descent via Shadow Lake and the Hugel Valley (although the walk could readily be completed in the reverse direction).

PLANNING

When to Walk

The summer months (November to April) are generally the best time for walking in Tasmania's western mountains. See also the Warning boxed text on p210.

If the weather or mountain visibility is poor, consider the alternative Shadow Lake Circuit (see opposite).

Maps

Tasmap's 1:25,000 topographic map *Rufus* and 1:50,000 *Lake St Clair Day Walk Map & Notes* both show the walk. However, the Tasmap 1:100,000 *Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair Map & Notes* also shows the route, and walkers completing the Overland Track may already have this. This map is also the only publication showing the new Shadow Lake Link Track, albeit at a less useful scale.

Information Sources

The walk starts at the Parks & Wildlife Service's **visitor information centre** at Lake St Clair (☎ 6289 1172; fax 6289 1227) and this is the best source of local information.

NEAREST TOWN

See Derwent Bridge (p219).

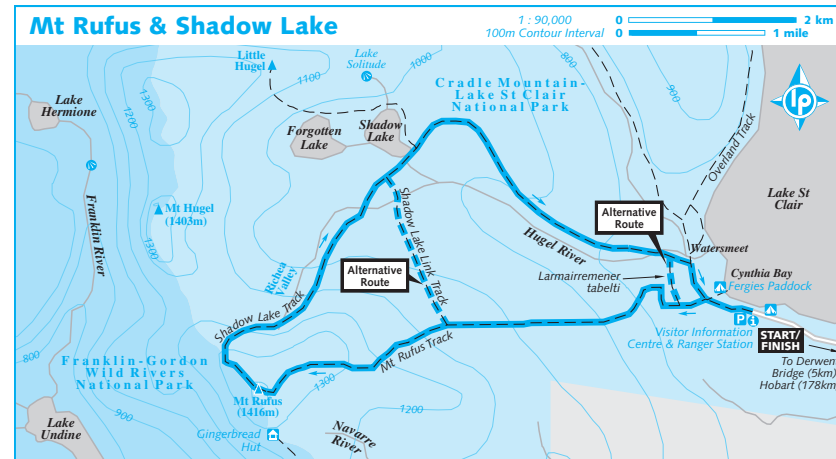
THE WALK

Pass through the Lake St Clair visitor information centre complex and turn left, at the sign. All walking tracks'. Follow the wide gravel path for 10 minutes to the signed turn-off to the 'Mt Rufus Circuit'; turn left (west) here. A buttongrass plain, then a tea-tree swamp, give way to eucalypt forest and a good track undulating over low stony moraine ridges for 15 to 20 minutes before commencing a steady climb. Passing the upturned bases of several large fallen eucalypts, it is apparent just how shallow-rooted these tall trees are. The tall eucalypts become increasingly sparse and the track enters highland rainforest for a period, the myrtle trunks festooned with lichen. Emerging from the rainforest, the track traverses an extended level section through subalpine forest, spindly eucalypts above wiry shrubs.

Towards the end of this section is a signed track junction, 1½ to two hours from the visitor information centre. The summit ridge of **Mt Rufus** should be visible ahead; if it's shrouded in cloud it may be best to turn right (north) here and complete the Shadow Lake Circuit (see opposite). Otherwise, follow the rocky track straight ahead (west).

The track climbs steeply onto a stony moraine crest and follows this up to an open alpine basin; there are now good views back down to Lake St Clair. The profusion of emergent dead eucalypts on the slopes below resulted from bushfire several decades ago.

The track now heads south, skirting the lip of the basin, then ascends steeply to Mt Rufus' east ridge, a broad crest with alpine grass and shrubs dotted with rocks. Recline on the grass and take in the expansive view. Follow the ridge crest, first northwest and then southwest to the large **summit** cairn (around 2½ to 3½ hours from the visitor information centre; the route is



marked by snow poles). From here there is a wonderful view: the Franklin headwaters and Frenchmans Cap to the west, the serried peaks of the Du Cane Range beyond Mt Hugel to the north, and the Shadow and Forgotten Lakes in a basin to the northeast.

Head northwest from the summit, descending a broad open ridge towards the saddle between Mts Rufus and Hugel, and pass a group of sandstone outcrops sculpted by aeons of wind and rain. The track swings east and an extended boardwalk section leads to **Richea Valley**, named for the botanical genus of the pandani and scoparia growing there. These heaths are Tasmanian endemics with a Gondwanan heritage (p206), and can produce a spectacular floral display in early summer. There is a beautiful grove of snow gums and pandania at the valley's lower end.

Entering rainforest as the slope steepens, the track winds down to emerge onto an open plain, covered with more Richea shrubs. Soon after re-entering forest on the far side of the plain, the track reaches the junction with the Shadow Lake Link Track (right). Bear left and follow the track over a stony rise. **Shadow Lake** appears through the trees ahead. The track skirts the eastern shore to another track junction, 1½ to two hours from Mt Rufus. A few pencil pines fringe the lake and platypus are occasionally seen. You could try your luck fishing for introduced trout here, if you have a

fishing licence. Continue straight ahead at the Shadow Lake Track junction. The track traverses buttongrass openings and subalpine woodland, before commencing a steady descent. Eucalypt forest and rainforest alternate, and the rushing Hugel River is heard, but not seen, for a while. After paralleling the river for some time, the track descends into rainforest again and crosses to the south bank on a massive bridge.

There are two options here. Turn left and follow the river bank downstream to Watersmeet, there joining the broad gravel path leading right (south) back to the visitor information centre (1½ to two hours from Shadow Lake). Or turn right off the bridge and follow the Larmairremener tabelti Aboriginal cultural walk; this loop is slightly longer and joins the Mt Rufus Track which is then followed, left, to the path back to the visitor information centre.

ALTERNATIVE ROUTE: SHADOW LAKE CIRCUIT

The main route in the previous section is known as the Mt Rufus Circuit. The Shadow Lake Circuit is a shorter (four to five hours, 13km), lower-altitude option utilising the well-constructed Shadow Lake Link Track. The junctions with this track are noted in the previous description. This circuit is a good alternative if the mountain weather is poor, or if you're feeling less energetic.

(Continued on page 229)

*(Continued from page 213)***FRENCHMANS CAP**

Duration	4 days
Distance	47km
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start/Finish	Lyell Hwy
Nearest Town	Derwent Bridge (p219)
Transport	bus
Summary	Trek across muddy plains and through tangled rainforest to a convoluted quartzite massif cradling dark lakes and dominated by the most distinctive mountain in the west.

Along with Federation Peak and Cradle Mountain, Frenchmans Cap (1446m) must be one of the most inspiring mountains in Australia. It's certainly the most prominent peak in the Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park. The peak's south and east faces have been carved into vertical cliffs up to 400m high, giving it a tremendous profile when viewed from the Lyell Hwy, and it is surrounded by jagged ridges cradling a series of glacial lakes. The walk is rather more arduous than the nearby Overland Track. The track is rough in places, there are a number of steep climbs, including the long ascent to Barron Pass and the side trip to the summit of Frenchmans Cap itself, and the Loddon Plains (the 'sodden Loddons') have a justifiable reputation for deep mud.

ENVIRONMENT

At least 700 million years separate the two events primarily responsible for the landscape you see today. The quartzite bedrock began life as layers of sand and silt on the floor of an ancient sea. After deep burial, multiple episodes of recrystallisation and folding, and aeons of erosion the quartzite was exposed at the surface. Today's awesome topography is largely the result of glacial sculpting over two million years.

Avoidable, human-caused fires have caused considerable damage to the area. In 1966 an extensive bushfire burnt the area around Lake Tahune and Artichoke Valley. Decades later there are still no King Billy pine seedlings in places where all the parent trees were killed. In 1980, an escaped walker's campfire at Lake Vera incinerated 6000 hectares of forest and buttongrass plains.

PLANNING

Frenchmans Cap can be attempted as either a three or four-day walk. Many walkers choose the former option, visiting the peak as a long return daytrip from Lake Vera, and thereby humping only a day pack up Barron Pass.

The alternative is to spend a night at Lake Tahune, which is arguably the most stunningly located hut in all of Tasmania. This allows more time in the Frenchmans Cap area for taking in the surroundings and a leisurely ascent, and is the option described here.

When to Walk

The warmer temperatures of the summer months (December to March) is generally the best time for walking in Tasmania's western mountains. See also the Warning boxed text on p210.

What to Bring

As with all of the WHA, campfires are not permitted in the Frenchmans Cap area, and the hut stoves are not suitable for cooking, so you'll need a fuel stove. Despite the huts, carrying a tent or some form of shelter is strongly advised for safety reasons.

Tahune Hut is fitted with a small methylated spirit-burning stove for heating; if planning on using this you're encouraged to carry your own fuel (one litre will burn for six or seven hours).

Maps

Tasmap's 1:50,000 *Frenchmans Cap Walk Map & Notes* is the best map for this walk and its notes provide a good outline of the area's history and environment.

Permits & Regulations

As a WHA national park, the usual park fees apply and no campfires are permitted (p192).

Phytophthora (p47) is not present in much of the area traversed by the track; however, to maintain this situation and to help prevent the spread of this fungus, clean the mud from your boots and gaiters at the washdown station at the base of Mt Mullens.

NEAREST TOWN AND FACILITIES

See Derwent Bridge (p219).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

Tassielink operates Lyell Hwy bus services between Hobart and the west coast towns of Queenstown and Strahan, passing the start of the track (daily except Monday and Wednesday, \$43).

If travelling by car, note that the roadside car park is quite remote; you could consider parking your car at Lake St Clair and catching the bus to the start of the track.

THE WALK

Day 1: Lyell Hwy to Lake Vera

4¼–6¼ hours, 16km, 450m ascent, 280m descent

A few minutes' descent into forest leads to the Franklin River suspension bridge. Beyond the river the track traverses heathland and rainforest, then climbs steeply before it takes a short side to the crest of Mt Mullens (662m; one to 1½ hours from Lyell Hwy). In clear weather, the distinctive profile of Frenchmans Cap rises dramatically to the west.

A good gravel track descends steadily southwest from Mt Mullens, then two short muddy plains (mostly boardwalked) are

crossed to enter the band of forest around the Loddon River (1¼ to 2½ hours from Lyell Hwy). A suspension bridge spans the river, and there is good riverbank camping just downstream on the far (west) bank.

Turn left off the bridge and soon the track heads out onto the **Loddon Plains**. The track across the 'sodden Loddons' is wide, braided and very muddy in many places. Getting muddy to your knees is almost inevitable. Try to avoid walking on the track margins and promoting further widening. A section of boardwalk, then a gravelly rise, provide some respite from the mud midway across the plains.

One to 1½ hours from the Loddon River the track enters a wide band of scrub and forest, and crosses two wooden bridges in quick succession –branches of Philps Creek. There are camp sites here, the best just beyond the second bridge.

Swinging southwest up Philps Lead, the track heads directly for the crags of **Philps Peak**; both features are named for JE Philp, who cut the original track in 1910. Very muddy at first, the track becomes merely

THE FRANKLIN ADVENTURE

The Franklin River provides another type of wilderness journey – sensational but hazardous rafting. Experienced rafters can tackle it if they're fully equipped and prepared. For the inexperienced (who make up about 90% of all Franklin rafters), there are tour companies offering complete rafting packages.

Either way, if you're thinking about it, check out the Franklin rafting notes on the PWS website (www.parks.tas.gov.au/recreation/boating/frankl.html). Several companies offer complete rafting packages: **Rafting Tasmania** (☎ 03-6239 1080; raftingtas@ozemail.com.au), **Tasmanian Expeditions** (☎ 03-6334 3477, 1800 030 230; www.tas-ex.com) and **Water By Nature** (☎ 1800 111 142; www.franklinrivertasmania.com).

To get the feel of the place pick up a copy of Richard Flanagan's award-winning novel *Death of a River Guide* (1995), which weaves together Tasmanian history and myths in a story set on the Franklin River. Or Johnson Dean's exciting narrative, *Shooting the Franklin* (2002), describing early Tasmanian canoeing and the first descent of the Franklin in 1959.

wet and eroded later. After following the lead for 45 to 60 minutes, you re-enter scrub and re-cross Philps Creek on a log. Climbing steeply northwest into beautiful myrtle and sassafras rainforest, you might ease the effort of this climb by reflecting that there are no more extended muddy sections before Frenchmans Cap. A short descent, crossing the Rumney Creek plain, another short, steep descent and then a scrubby plain bring you to Lake Vera hut, beside Vera Creek (45 minutes to 1¼ hours from upper Philps Creek). Enclosed in a steep-sided glacial basin cloaked in rainforest, Lake Vera is hidden by scrub from the hut.

The light and airy Lake Vera hut accommodates about 20 people on large platform bunks. To camp, continue for a few minutes across the bridge over Vera Creek to several trackside openings in scrub above the northeast end of the lake.

Day 2: Lake Vera to Lake Tahune

2½–4½ hours, 6km, 560m ascent, 160m descent

Cross Vera Creek and continue into dense tea-tree scrub past the camp site openings. Innovative track log ladders make relatively light work of the 20 minute traverse of Lake Vera's steep western shore. Huon pine grows here (see the boxed text, p232) and, just after leaving the lake shore, the track passes between the sawn halves of a large long-fallen Huon pine log. Note the pale yellow colour of the wood, the distinctive smell (take a sniff close to the wood) and the apparent lack of rot.

The 400m climb to **Barron Pass** takes one to two hours, but there's plenty to look at

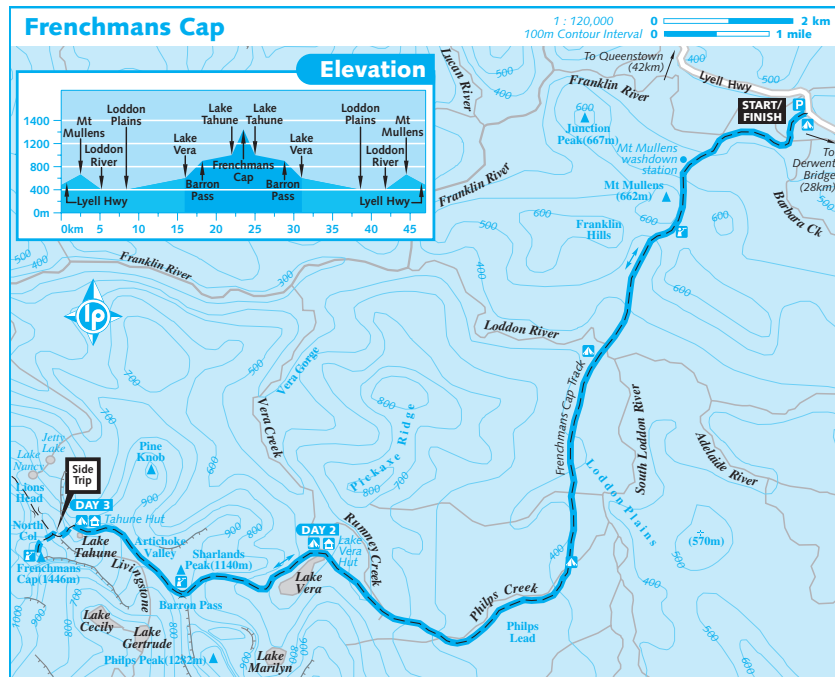
on the way; tangled rainforest, cascading streams and soaring white cliffs. The crest appears suddenly and the panoramic view is dominated by Frenchmans Cap, its stupendous southeast face rising beyond a forested spur. Imagine the valley below filled by glacial ice 20,000 years ago.

The track briefly descends back into rainforest west of Barron Pass, then sidles below the ramparts of Sharlands Peak, before rising to traverse a rocky skyline ridge. A short, steep descent leads to green Artichoke Valley. After climbing a series of steep steps beneath twin rock knobs, the surfaced track rises slightly further and crosses the slope westwards towards the gleaming Frenchman. It then descends steep flights of steps before contouring around to **Lake Tahune** hut (one to 1¼ hours from Barron Pass), the lake basin remaining hidden until the last minute. Myrtle regrowth surrounds the hut and screens it from the lake, cupped beneath Frenchmans' east face.

The hut has sleeping space for 16, on bunks with mattresses! There is a small camp site overlooking the lake, 30m from the hut, but the best camping is on or near the helipad, 100m north of the hut, down a track past the toilet. Note that the helipad may need to be used without warning so tents can't be left erected here during the day.

SIDE TRIP: FRENCHMANS CAP SUMMIT

1½–2 hours, 3km return, 480m ascent/descent
Continue past Lake Tahune hut, cross the dry lake outlet, then climb steeply west towards North Col. Before reaching the col



the track swings south, rising across a shelf on Frenchmans' east face, then switchbacks north along a higher shelf. Approaching North Col, a sign indicates the route to the summit, left and up a short rock wall. (The route straight ahead leads to Irenabys, on the Franklin River, a long and demanding side trip.) As the track winds its way towards the summit there are several short rock walls to scramble up, and climb down again on your return, requiring a head for heights. Keep an eye out for rock cairns marking the route in some sections. The final plod up a stony slope brings you abruptly to the edge of Frenchmans' precipitous southeast face and, as befitting a high and isolated peak, all-encompassing views. Cradle Mountain is prominent to the northeast, Macquarie Harbour and the Southern Ocean gleam westward, Hobart's Mt Wellington lies among the folds of mountains to the southeast, and directly below a string of dark lakes is cradled by dense forest.

Days 3 & 4: Lake Tahune to Lyell Hwy

6–9½ hours, 22km, 440m ascent, 1000m descent
Retrace your inward route back to the Lyell Hwy from Lake Tahune. Fit walkers might consider walking back all the way to the highway in a day, for others there are a number of camp-site options en route, noted in the previous description of the inward route.

HUON PINE

Huon pine grows only in Tasmania, mostly in wet areas along the western rivers, its light-green foliage often dangling from branches overhanging the water. It is one of the longest-living organisms on earth; trees dated at over 3000 years old have been found.

Huon pine has been sought and cut since the 1820s, by convicts from the short-lived penal colony on Sarah Island and subsequently the tough 'piners' who explored the western rivers. Its resistance to rot made it a fine boat-building timber, and its fine grain and easy working properties were desirable for crafting fine furniture. Many areas of Huon pine are now protected in national parks, and harvesting elsewhere is carefully managed.

WALLS OF JERUSALEM

Duration	3 days
Distance	23km
Difficulty	easy–moderate
Start/Finish	Walls of Jerusalem car park
Nearest Town	Deloraine (opposite)
Transport	bus (charter)

Summary Visit a compact alpine area littered with biblical names, walking beneath extensive cliffs, past glacial tarns and through quiet pencil pine forests.

Bordered to the west by the mountains of Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park, and to the east by the moors and lakes of the Central Plateau Conservation Area, the Walls of Jerusalem National Park brings combines these features in a compact and intimate area. The 'Walls' are a group of cliff-ringed summits sheltering several small and very beautiful valleys linked by low cols and dotted with lakes and groves of pencil pines. The circuit route described here can be done in two days, but the area is worth a leisurely exploration over three days.

HISTORY

The surveyor James Scott applied the name 'Walls of Jerusalem' to the area in 1848 and the biblical theme has been maintained in subsequent nomenclature. He noted some good grazing for stock and it was used for this purpose to some degree well into the 20th century, both before and since, and for fur trapping into the 1960s. The Walls area became a national park in 1981 and was incorporated into the enlarged WHA in 1989 (see p205).

ENVIRONMENT

Even during the Last Glacial, when glaciers were the least extensive of any recent ice age, an icecap nevertheless lay astride the western Central Plateau. The landscape of the Walls of Jerusalem has thus been heavily influenced by glaciation. Most of the walls were glacially carved, with gouging by the ice along fault lines creating the valleys. Depressions in the valleys, either scoured by ice or dammed by moraines, have filled with water, resulting in a scattering of lakes and tarns of all sizes throughout the area.

One of the most significant features of the Walls area are the pencil pines, especially

the large swathe growing south of the Temple. These trees grow at altitudes in excess of 800m and can live for more than 1200 years. Elsewhere on the Central Plateau such extensive forests have been largely destroyed by human-caused bushfires. The pines are complemented by stunted snow gums growing on the exposed hillsides, and large bolster plants and sphagnum mounds on the valley floors. These latter plants are very sensitive to trampling, taking years to recover from the impact of an ill-placed boot; watch where you plant your feet if wandering off the hardened tracks.

Bennett's wallabies are very common in the area, and you may well see an eastern quoll scampering around your camp site at dusk. And if you don't glimpse a grazing wombat, you'll certainly notice their large burrows and cube-shaped droppings.

HIGHLAND FILM SET

Snaring (trapping) of local wildlife in winter, when their fur coats are thickest, was undertaken by high-country shepherds and by manual workers attempting to supplement their meagre income. Dramatising this life and filmed in the Walls area, Roger Scholes' 1987 film *Highland Winter* tells the story of a woman brought up in harsh isolation who has to come to terms with her marriage to a reclusive trapper. Dixon's Kingdom hut was refurbished for the filming, and another temporary hut was constructed below the West Wall.

PLANNING

To undertake the complete circuit described here walkers should have some navigation competency, as tracks become less distinct beyond Dixon's Kingdom hut and Mt Jerusalem. An alternative option, both more leisurely and staying to formal tracks, is to camp two nights at Wild Dog Creek and explore the Walls on the second day with just a day pack, returning to the car park directly on Day 3.

When to Walk

The summer months (November to April) are generally the best time for walking in Tasmania's western mountains. See also the Warning boxed text on p210.

The Walls can be very beautiful under winter snow, but this is a time for well-prepared and very experienced walkers when route finding can be arduous and difficult.

What to Bring

While there are huts in the Walls of Jerusalem area, these are maintained as a reminder of the trapping heritage of the park and are really only suitable as emergency shelters. As with elsewhere in the Tasmanian highlands, a good tent is essential. And you'll need a fuel stove as campfires are not permitted.

Maps & Books

The Tasmap 1:25,000 *Walls of Jerusalem Walk Map & Notes* is very useful, and there are notes on the back of the map on the area's history and environment. *Cradle Mountain Lake St Clair and Walls of Jerusalem National Parks* by John Chapman and John Siseman is worth a look if you'd like to explore more remote routes in the park.

Permits & Regulations

As a WHA national park, the usual park fees apply and no campfires are permitted (p192).

Camping is forbidden within 200m of the Pool of Siloam to allow plant regeneration. Apart from this there are no restrictions on camping in the Walls area. However, the PWS has constructed a hardened camping ground, with a toilet, at Wild Dog Creek. Walkers are encouraged to camp here, rather than within the nearby central Walls area, to limit the impact on this popular and sensitive area.

The PWS generally discourages walking off the hardened tracks within the Walls area, and has explicitly closed the steep and unstable gullies cutting the West Wall; if you must climb King Davids Peak, do so from Herods Gate.

NEAREST TOWN Deloraine

☎ 03 / pop 2170

This regional centre is on the main highway and also provides a good base if planning other walks in the region (eg Great Western Tiers). The **visitor information centre** (☎ 6362 3471; www.greatwesterntiers.org.au; 98 Emu Bay Rd) has information on regional attractions.

SLEEPING & EATING

Deloraine Apex Caravan Park (☎ 6362 2345; West Pde; unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$16/19) has a picturesque location beside the Meander River.

Highview Lodge Youth Hostel (☎ 6362 2996; 8 Blake St; dm/d from \$22/45) has warm, timber-floored confines, friendly staff and great views of the Great Western Tiers, even from the toilets!

Originally a coaching inn, **Bonney's Inn** (☎ 6362 2974; www.bonneys-inn.com; 19 West Pde; s/d \$130/175) has comfortably upgraded colonial-style en suite rooms with full breakfasts.

Deloraine Delicatessen & Gourmet Foods (☎ 6362 2127; 36 Emu Bay Rd; mains \$5-10; ☺ breakfast & lunch Mon-Sat) is a fine place for late-morning baguettes, bagels and focaccias with a variety of tasty fillings.

Empire Brasserie (☎ 6362 2075; 19 Emu Bay Rd; mains \$10-20; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner), has a selection of à la carte dishes.

Scoters (☎ 6362 3882; 53-55 Emu Bay Rd; mains \$15-18; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) is a licensed restaurant with contemporary cuisine and excellent seasonal dishes.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Both **Redline** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) and **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) travel past Deloraine on their bus services between Launceston and Devonport (p195) and beyond, but bookings are required for stops.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

There is no regular public transport to the Walls of Jerusalem track and many walkers opt to access the walk direct from Devonport or Launceston, rather than Deloraine. **Tiger Wilderness Day Tours** (☎ 03-6394 3212; www.tigerwilderness.com.au/bush) will take you to the Walls track from Devonport or Launceston (from \$180 return for two people), and can also organise fuel and gear hire. **Deloraine Radio Cabs** (☎ 03-6362 3432; 3/15 East Westbury Pl) will drop or collect walkers for up to \$110 per person from Deloraine. Both operators will also quote for drop-offs at other walking tracks.

If driving from Deloraine, take the B12 through Mole Creek, then the C138 and finally the C171 (Mersey Forest Rd) to Lake Rowallan; remain on this road, following 'Walls of Jerusalem' signs to the car park at the trailhead.

THE WALK**Day 1: Walls of Jerusalem Car Park to Wild Dog Creek**

2½–3 hours, 6km, 600m ascent, 60m descent

A good track climbs from the car park, past a registration booth, then continues more steeply, emerging after 10 to 15 minutes onto flatter ground amid towering gum trees. The rest of the climb to **Trappers Hut**, a restored 1940s fur trapper's hut, is in stages; steep sections interspersed by flat sections, which allow you to grab a breather. The final haul to the hut is steep and bouldery and most walkers will need about an hour to reach the hut from the car park.

Beyond the hut the track continues to climb, soon reaching a fork junction; bear left (southeast) here. The right-hand fork leads to Lake Adelaide, your return route. The trees become thinner and stunted and, 20 to 30 minutes beyond Trappers Hut, the track descends to cross a creek above a small lake. The track then undulates across a wonderful landscape of rocky outcrops and small lakes, known as Solomons Jewels, surrounded by stunted snow gum and pencil pine. In the distance King Davids Peak is visible, its precipitous eastern face dropping abruptly to **Herods Gate**. After descending gently to cross the marshy valley of Wild Dog Creek on boardwalks, a short climb leads to the camping ground, a series of wooden tent platforms and associated toilet and water supply.

Day 2: Wild Dog Creek to Lake Adelaide

3–4 hours, 9km, 120m ascent, 290m descent

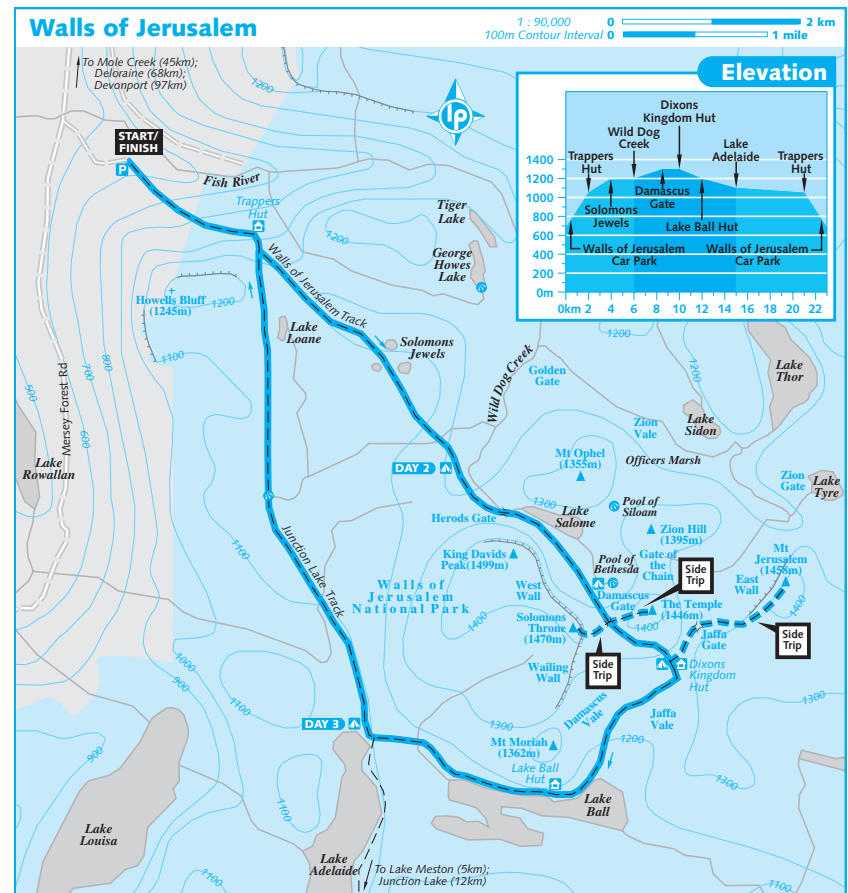
A short climb from the camping ground brings you to Herods Gate and the entrance to the Walls of Jerusalem. The high peaks that line the Overland Track (p214) form the western skyline. Continuing southeast past a small lake, the track then contours along slopes to the southwest of Lake Salome. On your right, high cliffs and boulder slopes come down from the summit of King Davids Peak. The track rises across a low ridge from where you can survey the cliffs of the West Wall and King Davids Peak. Continuing from the ridge the track passes some pencil pines on the left and reaches a junction. The left-hand track leads to a flat camping area just 100m away, set above the **Pool of Bethesda**. Meanwhile, the main track climbs on parallel

planks towards the prominent pass known as **Damascus Gate**, from where side trips are possible (see p236). Beyond Damascus Gate the track descends for 15 minutes through a wonderful grove of pencil pines that extends all the way to **Dixon's Kingdom hut** (one hour from Herods Gate; emergency shelter only). Reg Dixon began to visit the Walls in the 1930s and built this hut as a base for fur trapping. Mt Jerusalem can be climbed as a side trip (see p236).

There is no formed track between Dixon's Kingdom Hut and the eastern end of Lake Ball. However, navigating your own course down through Jaffa Vale is easy and provides wonderful walking, albeit a little wet underfoot. It is probably best to bear

off towards Mt Moriah and then drop down to meet the Lake Ball track directly, rather than crossing the swampy flat ground at the east end of Lake Ball. A pole set on a prominent hummock indicates the beginning of the track west around **Lake Ball**.

For the first 30 minutes the track winds through beautiful myrtle forest and then crosses an awkward boulder slope before reaching Lake Ball hut (emergency shelter only), an old trappers' hut. Towards the western end of the lake, views across the water open out and stunted snow gums are dominant. A small creek is crossed just before you drop down to the water's edge at the very western end of the lake (1½ to two hours from Dixon's Kingdom Hut).



The route then crosses low-lying flat ground and fords a sizable creek (which is difficult to cross in flood) to reach a small saddle. The track then descends steeply through eucalyptus forest to meet the Junction Lake Track on the shore of **Lake Adelaide**. There are some good flat camping areas at this junction. Turn right (north) to find good camping around the northern end of the lake.

SIDE TRIPS: THE TEMPLE & SOLOMONS THRONE

30–40 minutes each, 1km return each, 110–130m ascent/descent

From Damascus Gate, constructed rock tracks ascend east to the Temple (1446m) and southwest, up a steep gully through the cliffs, to Solomons Throne (1470m). Both places offer excellent views over the Walls area.

SIDE TRIP: MT JERUSALEM

1½–2 hours, 4km return, 200m ascent/descent

The route heads north from Dixon's Kingdom Hut, rising beside grassy pencil pine forest to Jaffa Gate. It then swings east and climbs onto the southern shoulder of Mt Jerusalem, from where a rocky track ascends northeast to the summit (1459m). The extent and character of the Central Plateau can be appreciated from here, as can the damage bushfires have caused (fire wiped out a vast area of fire-sensitive vegetation on the Central Plateau during the 1960s), emphasising just how special forests like Dixon's Kingdom are.

Day 3: Lake Adelaide to Walls of Jerusalem Car Park

2½–3½ hours, 8km, 60m ascent, 420m descent

Follow the rough track north from Lake Adelaide for the next 5km as it follows a series of broad treeless valleys. The going is muddy in places and the track can be a little bit difficult to follow around Lake Loane. Direction markers are pretty much absent on this track, so in snow conditions you'll be hard pushed to stay on the track and may need to navigate a general line. Two to 2½ hours of walking should see you at the track junction just above the Trappers Hut. Descend past the hut and back to the car park. The descent from the hut takes 30 to 45 minutes.

SOUTH COAST TRACK

Duration	6–7 days
Distance	86km
Difficulty	moderate–demanding
Start	Melaleuca (p238)
Finish	Cockle Creek
Nearest Town	Dover (p238)
Transport	plane, bus (summer only)
Summary	Traverse remote beaches, buttongrass plains and rainforest in the remote southwest wilderness, with spectacular scenery and views of the inland mountains.

The South Coast Track is, after the Overland Track, the most popular long-distance walk in the WHA. However, it has quite a different character to that of the Overland Track in terms of both landscape and a lesser level of development.

The walk traverses the remote southern fringe of the WHA, with access usually by light aircraft. The coast is deeply embayed with long, sandy beaches alternating with steep and rocky headlands. Hills, their slopes sometimes thickly forested, rise steeply from broad buttongrass plains. Scrub-fringed creeks meander across the plains. Offshore, the many islands are the last land before Antarctica.

The South Coast Track is a wilderness walk, lacking any huts, and is much less extensively hardened than walks such as the Overland Track. A number of extensive rough or muddy sections remain. Depending on your level of fitness and the weather, the walk can be quite arduous with significant ascents and descents. The track does, however, have a range of sheltered camp sites at beaches, so that if sufficient food is carried, pleasant rest days can be planned.

HISTORY

Shell middens in several places attest to the occupation of the south coast by Tasmanian Aboriginal people for several thousand years before the arrival of European settlers.

The first European to walk the south coast was GA Robinson, who reached the Port Davey Aboriginal people in 1830 as part of his five-year Friendly Mission, a scheme that ultimately resulted in the incarceration of most of Tasmania's Aboriginal population on Flinders Island.

Tin was discovered at Cox Bight in 1891, and Charles King commenced tin mining at Melaleuca in the 1930s. His son Deny and his family lived there after WWII, becoming the sole residents of southwest Tasmania. Deny built the first walkers' hut at Melaleuca in 1955.

Light aircraft, engaged in aerial survey work, commonly landed on Cox Bight beach during the 1940s. A rough airstrip was cleared at Melaleuca in 1947. Deny King constructed the present airstrip in 1956, facilitating today's frequent scenic and walker flights into the area.

ENVIRONMENT

The many rocky headlands and shore platforms on the South Coast provide an opportunity to walk through some major parts of Tasmania's billion-year geological history, with generally progressively younger rocks exposed as you walk east. They include ancient folded metamorphic rocks at Cox Bight, 500-million-year-old sandstone and siltstone on the Ironbound Range, colourful conglomerate at Osmiridium Beach, sharply eroded limestone strata at Surprise Bay, once-molten columnar dolerite at Granite Beach, and sandstone deposited on an ancient floodplain at South Cape Rivulet.

The soils of the buttongrass plains are peats, composed of decayed plant remains, and can be two or more metres thick. The small yabbie (freshwater crayfish) is common on the plains and lives in burrows visible at the surface as small round holes or mud chimneys.

The rare orange-bellied parrot can be seen around Melaleuca (below), and you may flush the secretive ground parrot as

you walk through buttongrass areas. Seabirds likely to be seen along the coast include terns, fairy prions (whalebirds) and short-tailed shearwaters (mutton birds). Offshore, you may sight the shy albatross or Australasian gannet.

Much of the fauna is nocturnal, but you will certainly come across the wombat's characteristic square droppings.

PLANNING

The South Coast Track can be walked in either direction. However, access to Melaleuca, the western end of the track, is generally by light plane and so subject to weather conditions. To avoid the possibility of being stranded at Melaleuca by poor weather, it is recommended that the track be walked west to east (from Melaleuca to Cockle Creek).

While seven days is the recommended duration of the walk, it is worthwhile allowing more time to explore the beaches and as a precaution against flood delays.

It is possible to have a food cache stored at Melaleuca (which you must arrange to have flown in prior to your walk). This may be useful if you wish to extend the walk by also walking the four-day, 70km Port Davey Track and start or finish at Scotts Peak Rd, or undertake other walks in the area.

When to Walk

The South Coast Track can be walked at any time of the year, although the weather is likely to be better and flooded streams less of a potential problem in summer (December to March). Also, regular public transport from the walk's finish and more frequent flights to the start are only available from December to March.

THE RAREST PARROT

The orange-bellied parrot (*Neophema chrysogaster*) is among the rarest and most endangered of the world's wildlife. It is a colourful bird, slightly larger than a budgerigar, with a bright-green back and distinctive orange patch between its legs. There are no more than 200 individuals in the wild and most of these breed at Melaleuca in summer.

The bird migrates to spend winter in coastal southeast mainland Australia, where habitat reduction since European settlement has been blamed for the bird's declining numbers. A captive breeding program, with periodic release of young birds, aims to improve the outlook of the species.

In summer, the parrots can be observed from a hide, named in memory of Deny King, 100m east of the Melaleuca airstrip.

Maps & Books

The Tasmap 1:100,000 *South Coast Walk Map & Notes* covers the walk and includes environmental information and brief track notes.

The South Coast Track and other regional walks are described in John Chapman's *South West Tasmania* and Ken Collins' *South-west Tasmania – A Natural History and Visitors Guide*. The latter includes much information on flora, fauna and geology.

Christobel Mattingley's *King of the Wilderness: The Life of Deny King* (2001) provides plenty of insights into the area in describing the life of a man who lived most of his life at Melaleuca (see p236).

Permits & Regulations

The usual park fees and fuel-stove-only regulations apply (p192). However, campfires are allowed at two camp sites – Surprise Bay and Deadmans Bay – but only within the designated fire sites.

There are no restrictions on camping on the South Coast Track, but to avoid the continually increasing impact on the track from walkers, you are encouraged to use the major established camp sites at the various beaches and rivers along the route.

STOVE FUEL

Stove fuels (gas, methylated spirits or Shellite) are classified as dangerous goods and so cannot be carried on the light planes that fly to Melaleuca. However, the two flight operators (Tasair and Par Avion) both maintain a fuel store at Melaleuca, so if flying in to start your walk at Melaleuca, you can arrange to buy fuel on arrival.

NEAREST TOWN & FACILITIES

☎ 03 / pop 570

Dover is a picturesque fishing port overlooked by the conical Adamsons Peak. If starting the South Coast Track from Cockle Creek, Dover (21km south of Geeveston on the Huon Hwy) has a supermarket and is the last chance to buy any food items you haven't brought from Hobart (p193).

If passing through Dover at the end of your walk, the excellent **Gingerbread House bakery** (☎ 6298 1502; 🍷 lunch), on the corner of Main and Station Rds, is well worth a visit.

WARNING

Few of the rivers and streams crossed by the South Coast Track are bridged and most must be forded. Heavy rain can cause rivers to rise quickly and some can become difficult or impossible to cross safely, particularly Louisa River.

High tides combined with storm swells can render coastal traverses at the bases of cliffs at Cox Bight, Granite Beach and near Lion Rock hazardous; there is a real risk of being washed away by a misjudged wave.

Melaleuca

If you fly in late in the day, or choose to spend time at Melaleuca (the start of the walk), a short track heads north from the airstrip to two walkers' huts, or you can camp in the open tea-tree forest nearby, on the shore of Melaleuca Lagoon. Drinking water is only available from tanks, so use it frugally. When wandering around Melaleuca, be aware that an area (denoted with signs) around the home and garden of the late Deny King remains under private leasehold to his family. Please respect it as such.

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

There is no road access to the start of the South Coast Track at Melaleuca – the only options are to fly or walk in. Small (two- to five-passenger) single-engine planes fly on demand from Hobart to Melaleuca, subject to weather conditions, and are run by **Tasair** (☎ 03-6248 5288; www.tasair.com.au) and **Par Avion** (☎ 03-6248 5390; www.paravion.com.au), both based at Cambridge airport. The fare is \$140 per person. A minimum of two is required, but the carriers generally try to fill planes by combining groups where possible. Bookings are essential. In the peak summer months there are generally several flights per day, so even solo walkers can usually make it to Melaleuca on their preferred day.

Melaleuca can also be reached by a four-day walk along the Port Davey Track from Huon River camping ground at the end of Scotts Peak Rd. **TassieLink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au; 64 Brisbane St, Hobart) has a minibus service along this track during summer.

Cockle Creek is serviced by a summer-only (December to March) TassieLink minibus three days per week. The bus departs

its Hobart bus terminal, 64 Brisbane St, at 8.30am Monday, Wednesday and Friday, and returns from Cockle Creek at 1.45pm on the same day. The one-way fare is \$65 and booking is recommended.

THE WALK

Day 1: Melaleuca to Cox Bight

3–4 hours, 13km, 110m ascent/descent

The Track starts on the western side of the Melaleuca airstrip and passes through old mine workings before crossing Moth Creek on a log bridge. Cox Bight is a 10km level walk on a well-defined track south down the broad valley from the Melaleuca airstrip.

Walk eastwards along the first of Cox Bight's broad beaches. There is a sheltered camp site at the outlet stream of freshwater **Freyne Lagoon** (1km along the beach). Beyond the end of the beach, another 2km along, Point Eric is crossed on a marked inland track. There is sheltered camping on the eastern side of **Point Eric**, with water from Goring Creek, just a few hundred metres east along the beach.

Light aircraft can actually land on the flat white sand at the western end of Cox Bight beach (subject to tides and weather) and this is an alternative access point for the start of the walk.

Day 2: Cox Bight to Louisa River

5–7 hours, 18km, 280m ascent, 250m descent

Despite its name, the South Coast Track partly traverses country some distance in-

land. The most lengthy inland section commences at Buoy Creek, at the eastern end of Cox Bight. From here, a level section precedes the very sharp ascent of the **Red Point Hills**, the first of a number of high points on the track providing extensive views. A gradual descent to Faraway Creek follows, and the sheltered camp site at Louisa Creek is only a short distance further east (2½ to 3½ hours from Cox Bight).

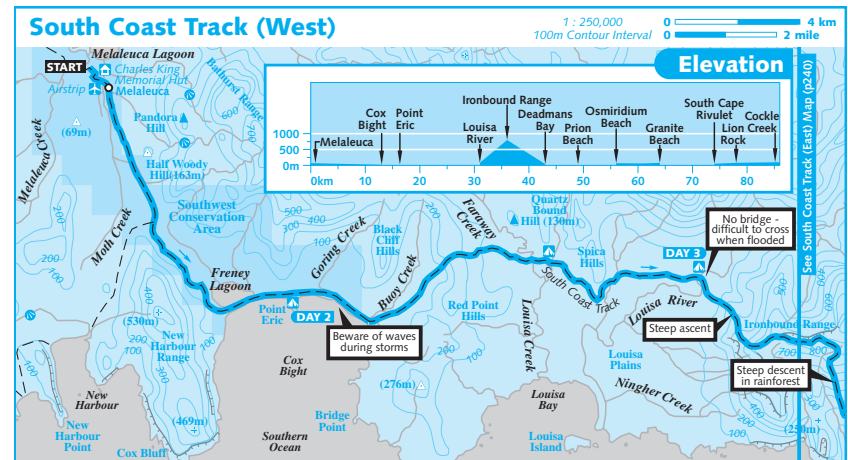
The track then sidles round the Spica Hills before crossing the extensive buttongrass **Louisa Plains** on a lengthy section of planking. The easy mud-free walking afforded by the planking allows you to take your eyes off your feet and take in the surrounding landscape, including the broad expanse of the plains and the ominously steep slopes of the Ironbound Range ahead.

The Louisa Plains are bounded to the east by forest along the meandering **Louisa River**. The river is the largest crossed by the track and must be forded – there is a rope in situ to assist your balance. There are camp sites in the forest on both banks of Louisa River. If it is raining and the river appears crossable when you arrive, it may be prudent to camp on the far bank to avoid being held up by any overnight flooding.

Day 3: Louisa River to Deadmans Bay

6–10 hours, 12km, 900m ascent, 920m descent

Most walkers consider the crossing of the Ironbound Range the most physically demanding part of the South Coast Track,



and with good reason. The 900m climb up the western slope of the range is steep and largely without respite. Given the open nature of the country, if it looks like being a hot day an early start on the climb is recommended. This open terrain does allow you to stop almost anywhere to take in the extensive views while you catch your breath. On a more cautionary note, the range is also very exposed, and freezing wind-driven rain is possible at any time of the year. If the weather is poor and the range shrouded in cloud, it may be more pleasant passing a rest day exploring the rainforest along the banks of Louisa River.

The track traverses the only alpine country of the walk on the top of the **Ironbound Range** (2½ to five hours from Louisa River) with, in clear weather, views along the entire south coast and out to various offshore islands. Water can be obtained from the small creek crossed several hundred metres east of the crest (about 950m) of the range.

After this creek, the track enters forest for the long descent of the southeastern side of the range. Some sections are thick with tree roots and require care with foot placement, and you may have rather rubbery knees by the time you complete the long descent. After winding through coastal forest and scrub, with glimpses of the sea, the track reaches Deadmans Bay. There is good camping here beside the large creek where the track reaches the coast.

Day 4: Deadmans Bay to Osmiridium Beach

4½–6 hours, 13km, 150m ascent/descent

Walk 100m east along the rocky foreshore to where the track again heads inland through buttongrass and then forest before emerging on **Turua Beach**. Walk east along the sand and round the small headland to the second beach. From the eastern end of Turua Beach the track follows the coast around Menzies Bluff towards Prion Beach with some fine views through openings in the coastal forest and scrub. Note that the small stream crossed at the far western end of Prion Beach may be the last good water before Osmiridium Beach.

The route now traverses **Prion Beach**, probably the most spectacular beach on the south coast, a long stretch of sand receding into the sea-spray haze with the distinctive form of Precipitous Bluff rising inland beyond the dunes. Remove your boots and give your feet the pleasure of unconstrained walking along the 4km of sand, with the roar and foam of the Southern Ocean your constant companion.

The outlet of **New River Lagoon**, deep and wide, must be crossed from Prion Beach and two dinghies are provided for you to row across it. Please ensure one boat (with its oars) is left upside down and tied up well out of reach of tides and floods on each bank for subsequent walkers, after you have completed your crossing (follow the instructions posted at the boat crossing).

MOBILE SANDS

The Prion Beach area provides a dramatic example of the dynamic nature of coastal environments. The long spit that impounds New River Lagoon, of which Prion Beach is the seaward side, has grown westwards and stabilised since the sea reached its present level 6000 years ago.

Rafts of slumped vegetation and root mats can be seen on the dune faces behind Prion Beach. These attest to periodic erosion during large storms, with the sand mined from the dunes probably distributed eastwards.

The position of the mouth of New River Lagoon moves periodically, sometimes quite rapidly. Storms during February 1999, and the resultant backing up of the lagoon waters, resulted in the break-out of the lagoon outlet near the boat crossing, 2km west of its previous position against the rocks of Point Cecil. It has subsequently migrated eastwards again.

If your party is large, several crossings will be required, as the boats will safely hold no more than three people and gear.

There is a sheltered camp site on the northern side of the Prion Beach boat crossing (2½ to 3½ hours from Deadmans Bay camp site). Water can be taken from a small creek five to 10 minutes' walk northwest of the camp site, but it can often be brackish.

From the camp site, the track traverses the crest of vegetated dunes east to **Milford Creek**. The waters of this creek are particularly dark, stained by buttongrass, and the ford of the creek can appear much deeper than it actually is. From Milford Creek cross the expanse of sand to the eastern end of Prion Beach, where steps climb the steep scrub-covered dune face.

The track heads cross-country through low forest behind Point Cecil to the open **Rocky Plains**. Tylers Creek is reached after crossing a low hill. A spacious and sheltered camp site lies on its banks a short distance downstream, accessed by a side route branching left from the main track a short distance before the creek. Osmiridium Beach is a short distance further downstream.

Day 5: Osmiridium Beach to Granite Beach

3–4 hours, 8km, 320m ascent, 300m descent

Return to the main track from the Tylers Creek camp site. The track leaves Rocky Plains soon afterwards and climbs into forest. From here eastwards the landscape through which the trail passes changes character from the open plains and beaches of the west to lengthy forest sections inland. However, the track does return to the coast at several large bays, the first being **Surprise Bay** (1½ to two hours from Tylers Creek).

The spacious camp site here lies in coastal forest above the dark limestone strata at the eastern end of the beach. Surprise Rivulet must be forded to reach it, requiring care if it is in flood or the tide is high.

Soon after leaving Surprise Bay camp site, the track ascends steeply before descending rather more gently to Granite Beach. Traverse the dark sand and rounded dolerite boulders, with views of the spectacular Fluted Cliffs, to the waterfall at the eastern end of the beach. Scramble up beside the waterfall and follow the track 100m east to another spacious and sheltered camp site.

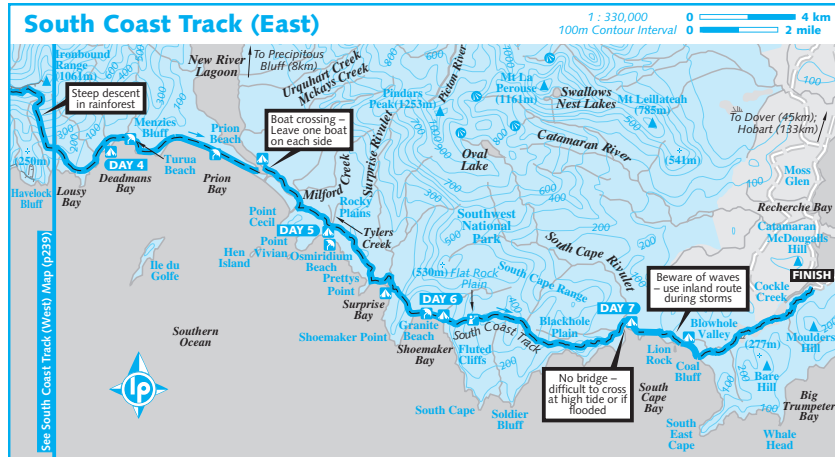
During storms with high tides, waves can break against the cliffs at the eastern end of Granite Beach, making access to the ascent next to the waterfall potentially hazardous. In these conditions spend time watching the waves to decide if it is safe to proceed, and then time your sprint with care.

Day 6: Granite Beach to South Cape Rivulet

5½–7 hours, 10km, 580m ascent, 600m descent

You can take some of the sting out of the steep climb of the South Cape Range from Granite Beach camp site by telling yourself it is the last major ascent of the walk. **Flat Rock Plain**, an opening near the summit, is a great place to recline and take in the final view back along the coast and across the various islands.

There are some rather muddy areas to be traversed across the forested top of the South Cape Range before descending to a small creek, which is the only reliable water on the range (2½ to 3½ hours from Granite Beach). The track then climbs again, briefly, before beginning the long forested descent to the buttongrass opening of Blackhole



Plain. The forest on this section is magnificent, with many of the trunks sheathed in climbing heath.

Beyond Blackhole Plain, another short climb and forested descent and you will suddenly emerge into the open on the bank of South Cape Rivulet. The rivulet must be crossed, which can be difficult at high tide or after heavy rain. The best camp site is on the east bank adjacent to the lagoon, but there is also a site on the west bank that can be used if the rivulet cannot be crossed.

ALTERNATIVE CAMP SITE

If you still feel energetic you might walk still further to the camp site near Lion Rock (another one to 1½ hours east). The sheltered camp site is atop the dune above the second creek east of Lion Rock, accessed by the obvious steps constructed to prevent erosion of the dune face. Water is obtained from the creek flowing out onto the beach.

Day 7: South Cape Rivulet to Cackle Creek

3–4½ hours, 12km, 150m ascent/descent

Continue eastwards along the beach, over a small headland and then along another beach. Here there are two options. A signposted track climbs high over Coal Bluff, with good views in places. Alternatively, you can scramble over the boulders strewn below the coastal cliffs to **Lion Rock**, a vaguely sphinx-like rocky island just offshore. If the tide is high or a storm swell is running, the inland route is definitely the better option to choose.

Just past Lion Rock the track reaches the last beach on the South Coast Track. This beach is a popular day-trip or overnight destination from Cackle Creek and the track from here on is well constructed and obvious. From the eastern end of the beach, climb the steps up and round the rocky headland, with its expansive view across South Cape Bay, then traverse the coastal scrub and heath of Blowhole Valley to the road head at Cackle Creek.

EAST COAST

Tasmania's scenic east coast is known as the 'sun coast' because of its mild climate and above-average exposure (by Tasmanian

standards) to the great yellow orb. So when you've had enough of western deluges, or just wish to avoid them, the east coast is a good spot for drying out your pack and soaking up some sunshine. And the drier climate and harder terrain means that the walking is generally easier than in the west. Freycinet National Park is one of the most scenic areas and its beaches and granite peaks are the prime walking destination on the east coast, but there are a number of other options (p247).

FREYCINET PENINSULA CIRCUIT

Duration	2 days
Distance	31km
Difficulty	easy–moderate
Start/Finish	Walking tracks car park
Nearest Town	Coles Bay (opposite)
Transport	bus

Summary Experience beautiful coastal walking featuring sandy beaches and granite peaks, then lounge on one of the most scenic beaches in Australia.

The dramatic granite peaks of the Hazards and the turquoise waters and pristine white sand of Wineglass Bay are the postcard images of Freycinet National Park. But there is much more to the park, which encompasses the entire Freycinet Peninsula, and a network of walking tracks provides access to the best bays, beaches and peaks. About four hours is ample time to take in Wineglass Bay and return via Hazards Beach. The overnight walk described here makes a circuit of the whole peninsula, but if you're in a leisurely mood you might consider taking three days, with more opportunities for exploration and swimming, camping at Wineglass Bay on the second night.

HISTORY

The scenic and other values of the Freycinet Peninsula were recognised early on and a national park was declared in 1916, among the first in Australia. French names are prominent on Tasmania's east coast, especially around Freycinet Peninsula. They result from the 1802 survey and scientific expedition led by Nicolas Baudin. Freycinet is named in honour of a sub-lieutenant on the *Géographe*, one of Baudin's ships.

ENVIRONMENT

The Freycinet Peninsula's distinctive red-dish-pink granite was injected into the crust during the Devonian period, approximately 400 million years ago, and is related to the granites of Flinders Island and Victoria's Wilsons Promontory.

Due to the drier climate and well-drained soils, Freycinet's vegetation is dominated by eucalypt woodland, heathland and groves of she-oaks, often carpeted with their needle-like leaves. Springtime boasts the attraction of wildflowers, especially in the heathland areas.

Local fauna includes the superb white-bellied sea-eagles, black cockatoos, yellow wattlebirds, yellow-throated honeyeaters, brush-tailed possums, echidnas, Bennett's wallabies and all three of Tasmania's snake species. The latter may curl up on tracks during summer, but usually slither away if disturbed.

PLANNING

There are a number of streams along the route, details of which are given in the walk notes, but these should not be relied upon. Towards the end of summer, or after a long dry spell, there may be little fresh water at all. Contact the **national park visitor information centre** (☎ 03-6256 7000) for the current drinking water situation or consider a day walk via Wineglass Bay and Hazards Beach.

There is a hut at Cooks Beach with bunks to sleep about eight people, although it is fairly run-down and most walkers will find a tent more comfortable.

Some camp sites are located among mature old she-oak and eucalyptus trees. Cast your eyes upwards when selecting a tent site; old trees can readily shed limbs or even fall over.

When to Walk

Any time of year can be good for walking at Freycinet, but there may be more water around in spring, with the added bonus of wildflowers.

What to Bring

You will need a fuel stove (see p243) and, while the Coles Bay stores have a reasonable selection of groceries, you should aim to bring stove fuel with you from Hobart or Launceston.

Given the sporadic availability of water (see Planning, left) you should plan to carry one litre or more with you each day. If the water tanks at Cooks Beach hut are empty, you will need to carry several litres of water for the night also.

Maps & Books

The best map to use is Tasmap's 1:50,000 *Freycinet National Park Map & Notes*. For a virtual introduction or souvenir of the park, look for Rob Blakers' photographic book, *Freycinet*. Both are available at the park visitor information centre.

Information Sources

Park and walking information is available from the helpful **national park visitor information centre** (☎ 03-6256 7000; freycinet@parks.tas.gov.au) at the park entrance, just to the south of Coles Bay.

Permits & Regulations

You'll need a national parks pass for this walk (p192), available locally at the park visitor centre and at Iluka supermarket (p244). Campfires are not permitted in the national park; you'll need a fuel stove.

Much of the area's vegetation is sensitive to Phytophthora (p47). The PWS asks that walkers help prevent the spread of this fungus by cleaning mud and soil from boots and other gear at camp sites before moving on to the next section of the walk.

There are no formal restrictions on camping but the PWS encourages walkers to use the major established camping grounds, all equipped with toilets.

NEAREST TOWN Coles Bay

☎ 03 / pop 120

This small coastal town is both dominated and sheltered by the spectacular 300m-high pink granite range known as the Hazards.

SLEEPING & EATING

Accommodation is at a premium at Christmas, January and Easter; book well ahead for these periods.

Richardsons Beach at the national park entrance is the main **camping ground** (☎ 6256 7000; fax 6256 7090; freycinet@parks.tas.gov.au; unpowered/power site \$11/14). Camping here is basic, but extremely popular, and sites for

the busy period are determined by a ballot drawn on 1 October. However, during the peak period there is very limited, first-come-first-served tent space available in a small designated backpacker camping area, for those without cars who are unable to drive elsewhere.

Iluka Holiday Centre (☎ 6257 0115, 1800 786 512; www.ilukaholidaycentre.com.au; Coles Bay Esplanade; unpowered/power site for 2 \$20/25, on-site van for 2 \$50-65, cabins & units for 2 \$80-130) is a large, busy and well-maintained park with good amenities, plus a shop (with an ATM), tavern and bakery next door. Also here is the popular **Iluka Backpackers** (dm/d \$24/55), a YHA hostel that's light on character but very clean, with a large kitchen.

Coles Bay Youth Hostel (dm \$10, r \$45-50) is another YHA facility, at the Fisheries, in the national park just beyond the walking tracks car park. It comprises two very basic five-person cabins. Book through Tasmania's **YHA head office** (☎ 03-6234 9617; www.yha.com.au; 1st fl, 28 Criterion St, Hobart); a ballot system operates for the busy summer and Easter periods.

Freycinet Rentals (☎ 6257 0320; www.freycinetrentals.com; 5 Garnet Ave, Coles Bay) has 14 houses/units on its books, of varying sizes (sleeping up to six). Summer prices range from \$130 to \$180.

For self-catering, there is the small Iluka Supermarket or the Coles Bay Trading Company store, in Garnet St. The latter also does takeaway food and has a small snack and sandwich bar overlooking Richardsons Bay and the Hazards.

Madge Molloy's (☎ 6257 0102; ☎ dinner Tue-Sun), next door, is a licensed, smoke-free, café-restaurant specialising in fresh seafood.

The Iluka Tavern has counter meals and dinners daily.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Coles Bay is 31km down the sealed C302 side road from the Tasman Hwy and neither Redline nor TassieLink buses service this route. You must rely on **Bicheno Coach Service** (☎ 03-6257 0293), which runs from Bicheno to Coles Bay (\$10), connecting with both Redline and TassieLink services at the Coles Bay turn-off. Bookings are advised; Redline and TassieLink drivers will call ahead if you book through these companies to ensure there will be a seat on the smaller bus to Coles Bay.

Redline (☎ 03-6336 1446, 1300 360 000; www.tasredline.com.au) operates weekday services passing the Coles Bay turn-off from Launceston (\$32) and Hobart (\$28), via the Midland Hwy and the inland B34 linking road. **TassieLink** (☎ 03-6271 7320, 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) has services passing the Coles Bay turn-off three times per week to/from Hobart via the Tasman Hwy (\$27) and twice per week to/from Launceston (\$29).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

It is 5km along a fairly uninteresting sealed road from Coles Bay to the walking tracks car park, but you can follow the shoreline on foot via Honeymoon Bay (1½ hours). Alternatively, Bicheno Coach Services runs shuttle services to/from the car park up to two or three times daily Monday to Saturday, depending on demand. A single fare costs \$5.

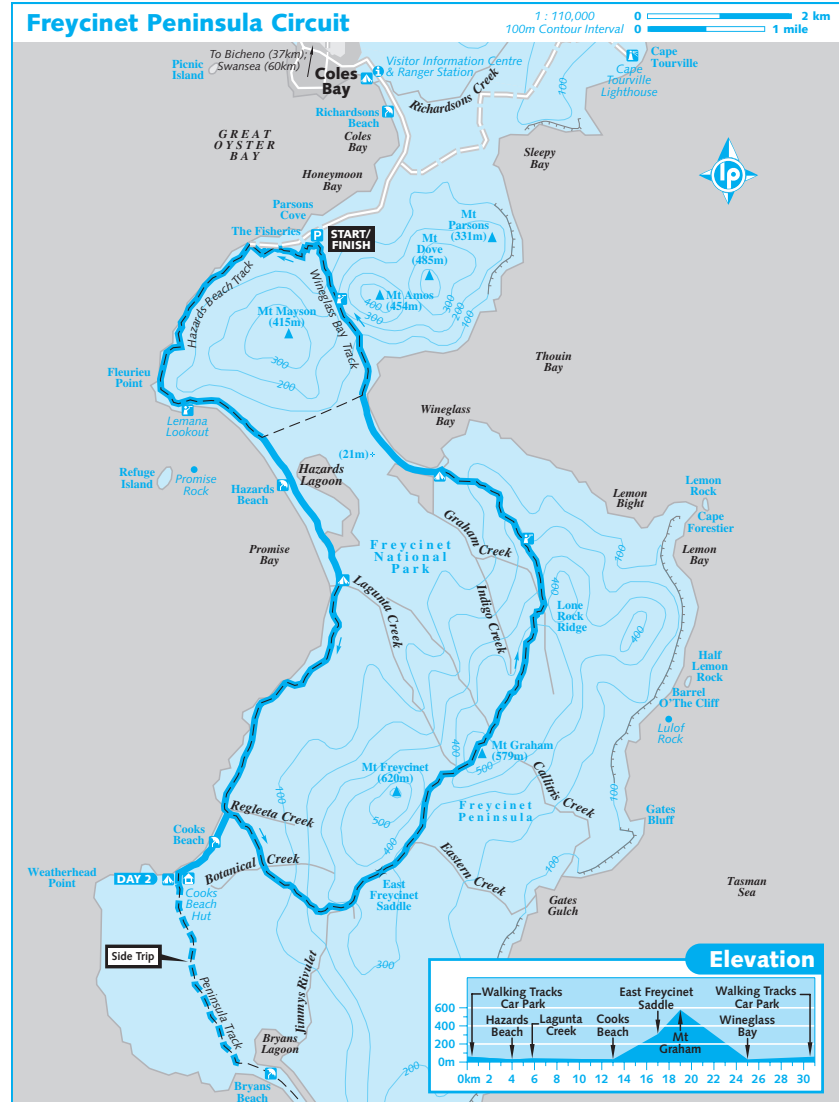
THE WALK

Day 1: Walking Tracks Car Park to Cooks Beach via Hazards Beach

4-5 hours, 13km, 80m ascent, 120m descent

The track begins just beyond the walker registration booth in the car park. Follow the signposts for Wineglass Bay for a few minutes to reach a junction. The track to the left, which you'll return along, leads to Wineglass Bay. The good track continuing straight ahead is signposted for Hazards Beach. Follow this as it contours round the base of Mt Mayson (415m). The first 30 minutes are flat and easy with occasional views out of the scrubby bush across Great Oyster Bay. The track then climbs across rock slabs to negotiate a spur. After crossing several more small spurs and dry creeks you enter a dense thicket of she-oaks, and another few minutes of flat walking brings you out onto **Hazards Beach**, a 3km sweep of sand backed by **Mt Freycinet** (620m).

Walk south along the beach. After 15 minutes a sand ladder climbs the dune. This track leads inland across the narrow isthmus that separates Hazards Beach from Wineglass Bay and 30 minutes of walking will take you there if you are doing a one-day circuit. On the peninsula circuit, continue along the length of the beach (45 minutes to one hour) to Lagunta Creek and a large camping area with toilet (about two hours from the car park). The creek is brackish



beside the camping area, but a small trail leads upstream 100m or so to where better water is available.

A signpost directs you out of the camping area and south through open eucalyptus forest towards **Cooks Beach**. Don't expect to find water in the creeks here. About two hours of mainly flat walking brings you to

the north end of Cooks Beach. The track swings inland here, headed for Mt Graham, tomorrow's route. To reach the camping area at Cooks Beach walk to the south end of the beach (20 to 30 minutes) where there are good sites set in the shelter of she-oaks behind the beach. The toilet, hut and water tanks are a little further back inland.

SIDE TRIP: BRYANS BEACH

2 hours, 6km, 70m ascent, 70m descent

For views of Schouten Island, just off the tip of Freycinet Peninsula, a trip to Bryans Beach is worthwhile. Follow the relatively level track from Cooks Beach hut through heathy forest to the west end of the long arcuate beach.

Day 2: Cooks Beach to Walking Tracks Car Park via Wineglass Bay

5½–7 hours, 18km, 760m ascent, 720m descent

Leave the camping area and retrace your steps of the previous day back along Cooks Beach. At the northern end of the beach, at Regleeta Creek, take the track inland signposted for Wineglass Bay. It climbs gently to the southeast for a little more than 1km through light blue gum forest to reach Botanical Creek. At most times of the year you can find water here. The track continues in a southeasterly direction and steepens considerably for the next 500m to cross a ridge. Swinging to the northeast the track rises gently and the ground becomes increasingly boulder-strewn towards East Freycinet Saddle (just over 300m). Continue from the saddle for 20 minutes to reach a broad gully just below the col between Mt Freycinet and Mt Graham. The creek here is not permanent. The track steepens and becomes rougher during the steep ascent to the summit of **Mt Graham** (579m; 30 minutes from the creek; three to four hours from Cooks Beach). The weather can be surprisingly bleak up here at times, and even snow has been recorded. Dump packs at the track's high point and walk across rock slabs to get excellent views of the peninsula, including the northern reaches of Wineglass Bay and the rock walls of Mt Dove dropping almost sheer into the startling blue water. You should also be able to make out the onward track below, running northeast across a scrubby plateau before disappearing into a woody gully. Buttongrass, more familiar in Tasmania's western peatlands, occurs on the wetter parts of this plateau.

The far edge of this plateau is reached in about 30 minutes from the summit of Mt Graham and the track becomes rough and steep as it descends into the gully containing Graham Creek (another ephemeral creek). The track climbs onto the east wall

of the gully and in one very short section skirts a vertical drop, which might give vertigo sufferers a hard time. Shortly after this point the track swings out of the gully and follows the lower extension of Lone Rock Ridge down to **Wineglass Bay** (45 to 60 minutes from Graham Creek; four to 5½ hours from Cooks Beach), a crescentic white beach in a beautiful setting.

At the southern end of Wineglass Bay is a large well-shaded camping area. Any water found here is often of poor quality, but may be better a little upstream. Despite this, you could choose to spend a second night here and lounge away the afternoon on this beautiful beach.

Wineglass Bay beach takes 30 minutes to skirt, and above the northern end there is a track junction. To the left, a track leads across the isthmus to Hazards Beach, while to the right a well-constructed track begins the steady climb to the saddle between Mt Mayson and Mt Amos. A viewing platform 100m to the right of the saddle gives a final panorama of Wineglass Bay before the track descends steadily back to the car park (one hour from Wineglass Bay).

MORE WALKS

HOBART REGION & THE SOUTHEAST Labillardiere Peninsula

Quiet and rural Bruny Island is just one hour's drive and 20 minutes by ferry from Hobart. As well as having some beautiful white-sand beaches, penguin colonies and bush-clad hills, the southern coastline of the island has been incorporated into South Bruny National Park. The best walking in the park follows good tracks round the Labillardiere Peninsula, giving fine coastal views. This easy-to-medium circuit starts at the Jetty Beach camping ground and takes around six hours. Tasmapp's 1:75,000 *Bruny Island Walks Map & Notes* shows this and other walks on the island.

Hartz Peak

Only 84km southwest of Hobart, Hartz Mountains National Park is within the boundaries of the WHA. Following signposts from Geeveston, an access road climbs high up on Hartz Mountain, leaving a five-hour moderate return walk across

alpine terrain to reach Hartz Peak (1255m). In clear weather there are good views of the southwest mountains, including Federation Peak, but also the scars of industrial forestry in the Picton valley below. Due to its proximity to Hobart the walk can be popular on weekends, although it is not served by public transport. Tasmapp's 1:50,000 *Hartz Mountains Day Walk Map & Notes* covers this and other walks in the area.

WEST & WORLD HERITAGE AREA Western Arthurs Traverse

For many serious walkers, the traverse of the Western Arthurs is the finest walk in Tasmania, but it should not be underestimated. While the start/finish point is accessible by public transport in summer, the walk is remote, strenuous and potentially dangerous and normally takes more than seven days. From near Scotts Peak Dam, the route traverses the Western Arthur Range before returning along the adjacent Arthur Plains. The range has a rugged crest of steep quartzite ridges exposed to the full brunt of westerly weather. A high level of fitness, self-reliance and good route-finding skills are basic requirements for this walk, which repels many walkers who attempt it. For more details on the route see *South West Tasmania* by John Chapman and consult Tasmapp's 1:100,000 topographic map *Old River*.

Federation Peak & Eastern Arthurs

The distinctive fang-like summit of Federation Peak (1224m) is an icon of the Tasmanian wilderness. This is another very demanding eight- to 10-day walk. The return trip is along the crest of the Eastern Arthur Range, which like the Western Arthur Range features spectacular, although very difficult, terrain. The most difficult section of the entire walk is reaching the summit of Federation Peak itself, and two walkers have been killed attempting the steep, exposed scramble.

Only well-prepared, experienced and fit walkers should consider this route. As for the Western Arthurs Traverse (above), the route starts and finishes near Scotts Peak Dam. John Chapman's *South West Tasmania* has more details and Tasmapp's 1:100,000 *Old River* topographic map shows the route.

EAST COAST Leeaberra Track

This two- to three-day easy-moderate walk traverses the fine eucalypt forest of the Douglas-Apsley National Park. This is the largest dry forest in Tasmania, a significant remnant of the forests that once covered all of eastern Tasmania. From the start at Thompsons Marshes, dry and reasonably easy walking leads for 25km south to the Apsley Waterhole, passing below the dolerite spire of Nicholls Cap en route. The walk is designed to be done in this direction so as to prevent the spread of phytophthora (p47). Bus services run within 7km of the start and finish. The walk is covered by Tasmapp's 1:50,000 *Douglas-Apsley National Park Map & Notes*.

Maria Island

Located 10km off the east coast of Tasmania, and accessible by bus from Hobart then ferry from Triabunna, Maria Island has a significant place in the history of the European settlement of Tasmania. The 19km-long island is a national park and is dominated by the summits of Mts Maria (709m), Bishop and Clerk. The last two summits are good moderate out-and-back day-walk destinations with expansive views, but Mt Maria is somewhat longer. Or you can ramble around the old settlement of Darlington, or visit the aptly-named Fossil Cliffs or Painted Cliffs. Tasmapp's 1:50,000 *Maria Island National Park Map & Notes* details all these options.

THE NORTH Meander Falls & the Great Western Tiers

The dramatic escarpment of the Great Western Tiers rises beyond Deloraine (p233) and a number of tracks provide day-walk opportunities on the forested slopes, as well as access to the sometimes-bleak Central Plateau beyond. One option within the Meander Falls Forest Reserve, 28km from Deloraine (no public transport) is an easy-moderate out-and-back walk through rainforest along the Meander River to the base of the falls, which descend the escarpment in two tiers and are at their best after rain. Another option is a more demanding return circuit via Split Rock. You'll need four of Tasmapp's 1:25,000 maps (*Quamby Bluff, Pillans, Lake Mackenzie, Breona*) or both

the 1:100,000 *Meander* and *Mersey* sheets to cover the area, but neither show the complete track network. John and Monica Chapman's *Day Walks in Tasmania* describes the walk.

Mt Roland

Rising boldly beyond rolling farmland near Sheffield, the imposing face of Mt Roland is as much a local icon as the more famous Cradle Mountain. A track from O'Neils Rd, near Gowrie Park, provides easy-moderate

access to the alpine plateau and summit of Mt Roland, or there is a more demanding circuit via Mt Vandyke. Both day walks are shown on Tasmap's 1:50,000 *Mt Roland Day Walk Map*; if this is unavailable the 1:25,000 topographic map *Cethana* covers the area, but doesn't show all tracks. Tassielink's West Coast bus service from Launceston via Devonport passes through Gowrie Park three days per week, returning later the same day. John and Monica Chapman's *Day Walks in Tasmania* describes the walk.

Overland Track

Duration	6–7 days
Distance	80km
Difficulty	moderate
Start	Cradle Valley (p218)
Finish	Lake St Clair
Nearest Towns	Cradle Valley (p218) and Derwent Bridge (p219)
Transport	bus
Summary	Traverse the highest ground in Tasmania, taking in wild alpine moors, craggy peaks and swathes of luxuriant rainforest on the most famous multi-day walk in Australia.

The Overland Track traverses some of the highest and most spectacular terrain in Tasmania. Monolithic ranges of shattered peaks rise above rolling alpine moorland. Towards its southern end at Lake St Clair, Australia's deepest lake, the track descends into valleys cloaked in wet eucalyptus and haunting myrtle rainforest. Beyond the already diverse main route, side tracks visit roaring waterfalls, tannin-stained lakes and craggy summits.

The track is arguably the best multi-day walk in Australia and justifiably popular, so much so that a booking system has been introduced in recent years, aiming to limit crowding and environmental damage. The volume of walkers traversing the sensitive alpine terrain has created a problem with track erosion similar to the difficulties on other popular tracks in the World Heritage Area (WHA). Over recent years a good deal of the track has been 'hardened', with boardwalks, parallel planks and log paths replacing the once infamous mires of knee-deep mud. In addition, and unusually for Tasmanian walks, there are basic but comfortable bushwalkers' huts at overnight stops along the track (although carrying a tent is still strongly recommended). Despite these improvements, the environment remains wild and the weather often unpredictable, so the walk remains the challenging experience it has always been.

HISTORY

Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair were first visited by European explorers in the 1820s, and prospectors and hunters searched the region well into the 20th century. But it was Austrian immigrant Gustav Weindorfer and his wife Kate who were instrumental in the process of recognition that led to the Cradle Mountain area becoming a national park (opposite). In 1931 fur trapper Bert Nichols blazed the Overland Track and by 1935 it was consolidated and being used by independent walking parties.

ENVIRONMENT

Many of the attributes of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area (p205) are contained within Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park. Of particular prominence to walkers is the rainforest and alpine vegetation. The endemic conifers (King Billy pine, pencil pine) and southern beeches (myrtle, deciduous beech) all have relatives in other southern continents – links to the ancient supercontinent Gondwana (p25).

A distinctive feature of the park is the columnar dolerite that forms most of the peaks, and this also has a Gondwana connection. This rock

intruded into the crust in a molten state 175 million years ago and is solidified evidence of magma from the initial break-up of Gondwana (p200).

The park's present topography is largely the result of the cumulative effect of at least four ice ages during the last two million years. Even during the most recent, which ended just 10,000 years ago, only the high peaks protruded above an ice cap and glaciers flowed down valleys like the Forth and filled the trough now occupied by Lake St Clair. Glacial erosion smoothed the landscape and gouged out pre-existing river valleys, depositing moraine debris where the ice melted, while the higher peaks exposed above the ice were shattered by frost action.

You stand a good chance of seeing several of Tasmania's native marsupials along the track. Bennett's wallabies are common around Waterfall Valley and New Pelion Hut, while the smaller pademelon is happier in the thick bush around Windy Ridge Hut. Dusk strolls by torchlight (flashlight) should reveal sightings of ringtail or brushtail possums and possibly a wombat, quoll or Tasmanian devil. The call of the currawong is ubiquitous the length of the track and these cheeky raven-like birds have even learnt how to open pack zips and clips to seek tasty treats – beware!

PLANNING

During summer, the track must be walked from north to south (see Park Fees & Regulations, p217), but can be traversed in the other direction outside this period.

THE WEINDORFERS' LEGACY

In 1910 Gustav Weindorfer climbed to the top of Cradle Mountain, looked across the rugged terrain and announced, 'This must be a national park for all the people for all time. This is magnificent, and people must know about it and enjoy it'.

Born in Austria in 1874, Gustav Weindorfer is most famous for building the alpine chalet, Waldheim (German for 'Forest Home') at Cradle Valley in 1912. He came to Australia in 1900 where he met Kate Cowle (b 1864). They were married in 1906 and spent their honeymoon on Mt Roland (p38).

What has captured the imagination of generations is the fact that Gustav had the foresight to identify the area's natural significance a century ago, and together with the help of friends began to lobby successive governments to have the area preserved. What is less well known is that his wife, Kate, also played a key role in the preservation of this area. Her passion extended to botany and by becoming a member of a field naturalists club she learned about the uniqueness of the mountain's bushland, encouraging Gustav's appreciation of the landscape. The Weindorfers shared their time between Cradle Mountain and their farm at Kindred (near Devonport). Their spirit was tenacious – in those days a horse and cart could only get within 15km of Cradle Mountain, and from there it was a choice between pack horse or walking in order to carry in supplies. It was Kate who purchased some 60 acres of land in 1912, covering the present entrance to the park, where Gustav was able to build his alpine chalet Waldheim. Gustav and Kate encouraged visitors to come to their remote home to share in the marvels of Cradle Mountain. In 1916 Kate died after a long illness, and Gustav lived at Waldheim permanently, devoting his life to preserving the mountain he loved. A reserve at Cradle Mountain was declared in 1922 but Gustav, who died in 1932, didn't live to see the proclamation of a much larger national park in 1940. Half a century after Weindorfer's death Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park formed part of the area recognised and listed as World Heritage by Unesco (see p209).

The original Waldheim chalet burnt down in 1974, but it was rebuilt using traditional bush carpentry techniques and stands proudly as a humble legacy to potent insight. Just inside the doorway Gustav inscribed 'This is Waldheim/Where there is no time/And nothing matters'.

There are basic, usually unstaffed, huts the length of the Overland Track but, despite the summer season booking system (opposite), sleeping spaces in huts are not allocated and hut space for everyone is not guaranteed, so periods of poor weather can still result in crowded huts.

Depending on how much time and energy you have, how fit you are and how much you want to see, the Overland Track can be walked in as little as four days, or you can spend eight or even 10 days. A straight-through walk skipping side trips will take five days for an average group. Taking in most of the side trips will require about eight days, including ascents of Cradle Mountain, Mt Ossa, and perhaps the chance to wander through the tarns and snow gums of the Labyrinth. But it's best to take an opportunistic approach to the side trip options, avoiding rigid plans and being mindful of the weather on the day.

Most walkers walk from Cradle Mountain to Narcissus Hut (65km) then utilise the Lake St Clair ferry to complete their journey. But the full Overland Track includes the additional 17km section along the western shore of Lake St Clair. The walk could also be extended at the northern end; if staying in the Cradle Mountain area the night before starting your walk, you might consider starting your walk at the Visitor Centre and following the scenic 5.5km Cradle Valley Boardwalk to Ronny Creek.

When to Walk

December to March has generally better weather and more daylight than other periods. Late summer can have some of the most settled weather of the year, and autumn (late April) features the colours of the deciduous beech ('fagus'), popular with local walkers. But despite these general conditions, rapid weather changes are possible at any time, including the onset of high winds, rain, snow, sleet and poor visibility. Such poor weather is much more likely during the winter months, and the track can become snowbound; only very experienced and well-prepared walkers tackle the Overland Track in winter conditions. Spring (September to November) weather can be very unsettled and, while calm days occur, winter conditions still blast the area regularly.

Flowers of the *Richea scoparia* heath are abundant along the Overland Track during summer
GRANT DIXON



What to Bring

Given this is a highland walk, it's essential to be properly prepared (see *Gearing up for the Mountains*, p39).

As with all of the WHA, campfires are not permitted in the national park, and the hut stoves are not suitable for cooking, so you'll need a fuel stove. Stove fuel can be bought at the Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre if you haven't brought it with you.

The walkers' huts are basic; they are not equipped with mattresses, for example. Hut space for everyone cannot be guaranteed, so even if you're planning on using the huts for sleeping, you should nevertheless consider the walk a tent-based outing. Walkers are strongly advised to carry some form of shelter, at any time of the year, for both safety and comfort.

Only limited supplies are available locally; you should plan to bring everything for the walk with you from a major town like Devonport or Launceston.

Maps & Books

The Tasmap 1:100,000 *Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair Map & Notes* is published specifically for the Overland Track, and has notes on history, the environment and the walk itself. *The Overland Track – One Walk, Many Journeys*, published by the Parks & Wildlife Service (PWS), is a compact reference that can be carried on the walk. It has lots more detail than the Tasmap map notes and is a particularly good one on flora and fauna. Both these publications form part of an Overland Track information kit that can be posted to you (\$25) when booking a walk on the track.

Walkers contemplating shorter excursions at either end of the Overland Track will find Tasmap's 1:20,000 *Cradle Mountain Day Walk Map & Notes* and 1:50,000 *Lake St Clair Day Walk Map & Notes* useful.

Chris Bell's book *Beyond the Reach* contains stunning photographic imagery of the national park. *A View to Cradle* by Nic Haygarth details the European history of the region now partly encompassed by the national park.

Information Sources

The excellent Overland Track **website** (www.overlandtrack.com.au) covers all aspects of walking the track. The **Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre** (☎ 03-6492 1133; cradle@parks.tas.gov.au) at the park entrance about 3km from the junction with the main highway, is open all year. Here you can discuss your walking plans with the staff and this is where you must collect your Overland Track Pass. There is also the small **Cradle Information Centre** (☎ 03-6492 1110) at the shuttle bus terminal, 2km outside the park.

At the southern end of the walk, the **Lake St Clair visitor information centre** (☎ 03-6289 1172; fax 03-6289 1227), at Cynthia Bay, has good interpretive displays.

Park Fees & Regulations

A booking system and fees for Overland Track walkers were introduced in 2005, part of a package of management changes aiming to both limit environmental impacts and to maintain the quality of the walker experience. Bookings can be made and availability checked via the website (www.overlandtrack.com), by phone (☎ 03-6233 6047) or in person at Tasmania's major national park visitor information centres; book early if planning to visit during the popular Christmas–New Year period. The booking system only operates during the main walking season (1 November to 30 April), and only applies to those walking the entire Overland

Track in a single journey. A booking gives a fixed departure date, but after departure walkers can spend as many days as they like on the track and choose their own itinerary. During the booking period all Overland Track walkers are required to travel north to south (Cradle Mountain to Lake St Clair) and pay a fee of \$100 per walker, regardless of whether the walkers' huts or camping areas are utilised. This fee is in addition to the entry fee (Park Pass) required for all Tasmanian national parks. Refer to the website for further details on the booking system and lots of other information for Overland Track walkers.

All of the national parks within the WHA are fuel-stove-only areas; campfires are prohibited.

Camping is forbidden in the Cradle Mountain day walk area, between Cradle Valley and Waterfall Valley. Elsewhere, camping is permitted throughout, except where signs indicate otherwise. However, walkers are generally encouraged to limit their environmental footprint and utilise the worn or hardened camping grounds, with associated toilets, in the hut precincts.

Guided Walks

Several companies offer guided walks on the Overland Track, including **Tasmanian Expeditions** (☎ 03-6339 3999, 1300 666 856; www.tas-ex.com) and **Craclair Tours** (☎ 03-6339 4488; www.craclair.com.au). The trips are six to eight days in duration, cost up to \$1500 and include supply of equipment and protective clothing in many cases. The most luxurious guided trip is operated by **Cradle Mountain Huts** (☎ 03-6391 9339; www.cradlehuts.com.au). The six-day walk costs \$2200, but you travel with a light pack staying in unobtrusive private huts stocked with food and wine.

NEAREST TOWNS & FACILITIES

Cradle Valley

☎ 03

Cradle Valley, near the north end of the track, isn't so much a town or village as a collection of tourist facilities strung along the length of the Cradle Mountain access road.

SLEEPING & EATING

Waldheim Cabins (☎ 6492 1110; cabins from \$70) are a bunch of basic four-, six- and eight-bunk huts in Cradle Valley, fantastically located for walking in the area. Bookings are handled by Cradle Mountain Visitor Centre.

All other accommodation and eating options at Cradle Mountain lie adjacent to Cradle Mountain Rd, outside the national park but within 3km of the park boundary.

Cradle Mountain Tourist Park (☎ 6492 1395, 1800 068 574; www.cosycabins.com/cradle; unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$30/35, dm \$30, cabins for 2 \$125-165) is a bushland complex with a camping ground, bunkhouse and self-contained cabins situated 2.5km outside the national park. The camping ground includes large camp kitchens and shelters for drying out wet gear.

Cradle Mountain Highlanders Cottages (☎ 6492 1116; www.cradlehighlander.com.au; cabins for 2 \$110-180) is a genuinely hospitable place with a rustic collection of self-contained timber cottages.

Cradle Mountain Lodge (☎ 6492 1303, 1800 737 678; www.cradlemountainlodge.com; d from \$230) should by all rights be designated a township, as there are around 100 well-appointed cabins surrounding the main lodge. In the lodge proper, you can eat in the informal **Tavern Bar** (mains \$12-19; ☺ lunch & dinner) or more formal **Highland Restaurant** (mains \$19-26; ☺ dinner).

'Walkers are generally encouraged to limit their environmental footprint and utilise the worn or hardened camping grounds'

Cradle Mountain Chateau (☎ 6492 1404, 1800 282 020; www.federalresorts.com.au; standard r from \$240) is comfortable, and some of the more standard rooms have terrific views of the car park. There's a fine-dining restaurant and bistro, and the impressive **Wilderness Gallery** (☎ 6492 1404; www.wildernessgallery.com.au; admission \$5) showcasing incredible environmental photography.

There is a very limited general store near Cradle Mountain Lodge; it's best to bring all supplies with you from a major town.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tassielink (☎ 03-6271 7320, 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) operates scheduled bus services between Launceston, Devonport and the west-coast towns of Strahan and Queenstown via Cradle Mountain on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday. From November to March there are additional services between Launceston and Cradle Mountain on all other days, but the bus only travels via Devonport on the return journey from Queenstown to Launceston. The one-way fare from Devonport is \$33 and from Launceston it's \$47. Tassielink also offers a range of package fares for Overland Track walkers; for example, Devonport-Cradle Mountain/Lake St Clair-Hobart for \$65, or Hobart-Cradle Mountain/Lake St Clair-Hobart for \$105.

There are a number of operators who can provide charter services direct to the track start or finish. **Tiger Wilderness Day Tours** (☎ 03-6394 3212; www.tigerwilderness.com.au/bush) and **Maxwells** (☎ /fax 03-6492 1431) run services on demand to both ends of the Overland Track, while in Devonport, **Backpackers Barn & Wilderness Centre** (☎ 03-6424 3628; www.backpackersbarn.com.au; 10-12 Edward St) can also arrange charters.

Cynthia Bay

☎ 03

Occupying the eastern wing of the visitor information centre building, **Lake St Clair Wilderness Park** (☎ 6289 1137; www.lakestclairwildernessholidays.com.au; unpowered/powerd sites for 2 \$12/15, dm \$25; cabins \$195; mains \$5-10; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) manages most of the options at Cynthia Bay, at the southern end of Lake St Clair. This includes campsites, bunks in a budget lodge, self-contained alpine cabins and a café/bistro.

If you wish to camp free of charge, Fergy's Paddock, about 10 minutes north along the Overland Track, has tent sites and toilets.

Maxwells (☎ 6289 1141, 0428-308 813) runs an on-demand shuttle between Cynthia Bay and Derwent Bridge. The one-way fare is \$10 per person.

Derwent Bridge

☎ 03

Derwent Bridge is a small settlement on the Lyell Hwy, 5km south of Lake St Clair.

SLEEPING & EATING

Derwent Bridge Wilderness Hotel (☎ 6289 1144; dm \$25, d without/with bathroom \$95/115; mains \$13-25; ☺ breakfast, lunch & dinner) is a chalet-style pub with an impressive high-beamed roof in the warm bar. The hostel and hotel accommodation is plain but comfortable and there's reasonable food at its restaurant.

Derwent Bridge Chalets and **Travellers Rest Cabins** (☎ 6289 1000; www.derwent-bridge.com; d \$120-210) offer a range of comfortable self-contained cabins and chalets run by the same people.

Hungry Wombat Café (☎ 6289 1125; mains \$8; ☺ breakfast & lunch), part of the Caltex service station, is a well-managed, friendly and clean café well placed to feed the famished.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Tassielink (☎ 03-6271 7320, 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) operates scheduled bus services between Hobart and the west coast towns of Strahan and Queenstown via Derwent Bridge and Lake St Clair (Cynthia Bay), daily except Monday and Wednesday (\$41). From November to March there are additional services between Hobart and Lake St Clair on Monday and Wednesday.

If you need to return to Cradle Mountain from Lake St Clair after walking the Overland Track, to pick up your car perhaps, this is possible utilising Tassielink services via Queenstown on Tuesday, Thursday and Saturday (\$49).

For details of charter services see Getting There & Away under Cradle Valley (p219).

GETTING TO/FROM THE WALK

A free shuttle bus runs between the Visitor Centre, visitor information centre and start of the Overland Track at Ronny Creek, 5km into the park, continuing to Lake Dove. During the busy season the shuttle runs as often as every 20 minutes. If walking during the booking season (November to April), remember to check in and collect your Overland Track Pass from the Visitor Centre before heading to the start of the walk.

Most Overland Track walkers finish their trek at the northern end of Lake St Clair, rather than continuing along the Lakeside Track. **Lake St Clair Wilderness Park** (☎ 03-6289 1137; www.lakestclairwildernessholidays.com.au) operates a ferry service the length of Lake St Clair, between Narcissus Hut and the visitor information centre at Cynthia Bay (\$22 one way). During summer the ferry leaves Cynthia Bay at 9am, 12.30pm and 3pm, arriving at the Narcissus Hut 30 minutes later, and booking is generally necessary. There may be additional services at busy times. There is a radio in Narcissus Hut for contacting the ferry operator to confirm your arrival.

THE WALK

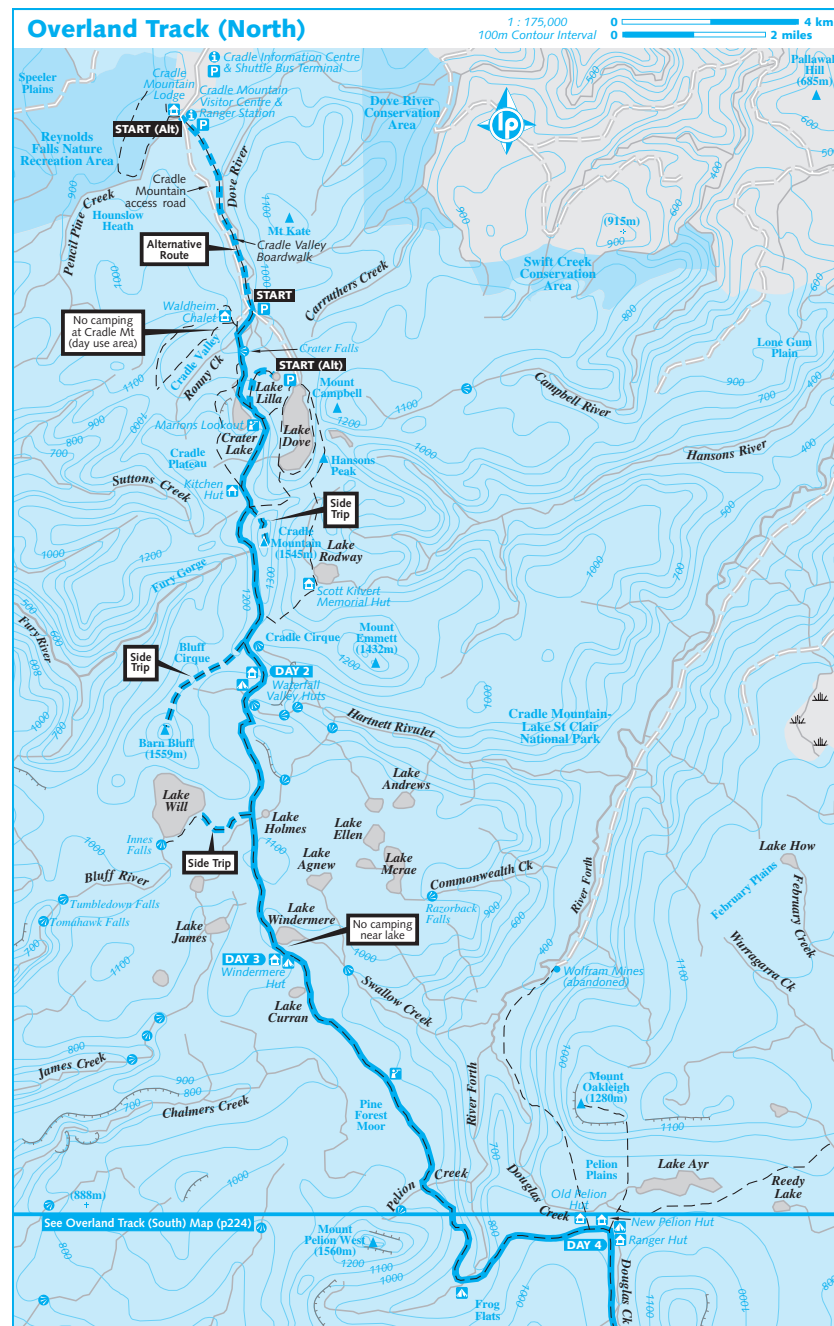
Day 1: Ronny Creek to Waterfall Valley

3¼–5 hours, 10km, 380m ascent, 250m descent

The Overland Track starts as a boardwalk heading southwest up a grassy valley from opposite the Ronny Creek car park. Bear right after crossing the creek and follow the Overland Track signs, ascending through lush rainforest past Crater Falls, up onto an exposed ridge above Crater Lake, then more steeply to **Marions Lookout** (1¼–1¾ hours from Ronny Creek). The ascent to Marions Lookout is the largest single height gain on the Overland Track (excluding side tracks), so you can easily justify taking a breather to appreciate the jagged form of Cradle Mountain ahead, and the view back down into the cirque of Crater Lake.

The track climbs gently south onto Cradle Plateau; covered in cushion plants and prostrate vegetation this is one of the most exposed sections of the entire walk and it can be pretty bleak up here in poor weather. After crossing Plateau Creek, the imposing summit of **Barn Bluff** (1559m) comes into view ahead, and 30 to 40 minutes' walk from Marions Lookout brings you to the small, shingle-clad Kitchen Hut, an emergency shelter set at a track junction.

From this junction the Overland Track continues south, initially ascending to the Cradle Mountain summit track turn-off (see Side Trip: Cradle Mountain, p222), then descending and traversing the western side of Cradle Mountain, below a slope that becomes a golden swathe



of deciduous beech in autumn. Almost immediately after entering an area of snow gums above Fury Gorge the going becomes more arduous. Small sections of duckboard and mud are interspersed with sections across large angular boulders, beyond which you'll reach a junction with a track coming up from the east, from Lake Rodway and the Scott Kilvert Memorial Hut (45 minutes to 1¼ hours from Kitchen Hut).

The Overland Track continues southwest from this junction across a broad, exposed shoulder forming the western bounds of **Cradle Cirque**. The going across planks is easy and on a clear day you should have excellent views of the Pelion peaks to the south. Continue round Cradle Cirque to another junction where a side track heads southwest to Barn Bluff (see Side Trip: Barn Bluff, below). Shortly after this junction the track enters forest and descends steeply into **Waterfall Valley**. Beyond the imposing composting toilet (a necessary feature at all the huts) is the new 20-bunk hut. A little beyond, at the edge of the trees, is the small old hut (built in the 1950s) with good camping on the adjacent open grassy area.

ALTERNATIVE START: DOVE LAKE TO MARIONS LOOKOUT

1–1¼ hours, 2km, 280m ascent

This option takes in the classic view of Cradle Mountain across Lake Dove as you start your walk. Follow the path rising southwest from Dove Lake, bearing right at a junction and passing through forest above Lake Lilla. Beyond Wombat Pool, the track climbs steeply to join the Overland Track on a broad shoulder above Crater Lake. Climb steeply south now to reach Marions Lookout, as described above (one hour from Dove Lake).

ALTERNATIVE START: CRADLE MOUNTAIN VISITOR CENTRE TO RONNY CREEK

1½–2 hours, 5.5km, 100m ascent, 40m descent

Follow the wide boardwalk from the Visitor Centre through a patch of rainforest then up the open valley of the Dove River to the car park at Ronny Creek. There are glimpses of Cradle Mountain ahead and the walk is surprisingly peaceful, despite the proximity of the access road.

SIDE TRIP: CRADLE MOUNTAIN

2–3 hours, 2.5km return, 340m ascent/descent

Branching just south of Kitchen Hut, the track to the Cradle Mountain summit (1545m) climbs relatively gently at first but soon steepens and cuts across the boulder-strewn slopes to the right. The track climbs more directly for the final section to the top, zigzagging up a steep bouldery gully to reach the shattered crest of Cradle Mountain. Return via the route of ascent.

SIDE TRIP: BARN BLUFF

2–3 hours, 5km return, 360m ascent/descent

In good weather Barn Bluff (1559m) offers great views of the moorlands and glacial valleys in the north of the park. The route to the summit branches from the Overland Track part way along the exposed traverse of Cradle Cirque, 30 minutes before Waterfall Valley to the south. A well-marked track leads around Bluff Cirque to the base of the mountain. The final scramble to the summit ascends steep boulders and scree. Return via the route of ascent. Given Day 2 is relatively short, you might consider returning from Waterfall Valley to attempt this side trip then, heading south to Windermere Hut later in the day.

Day 2: Waterfall Valley to Windermere

2–3 hours, 8km, 80m ascent, 100m descent

Returning to the main track from Waterfall Valley Huts, a short descent brings you to a bridge over Hartnett Rivulet. After climbing gently away from the rivulet, the track follows the edge of a sandstone scarp above a couple of the waterfalls for which the valley is named, then rises and rounds a wooded spur coming down from Barn Bluff. A section of gentle climbing, much on duckboards, leads to an open alpine moor looking down on **Lake Holmes** (one hour from Waterfall Valley Huts). From here you can see the track descending past the western shore of Lake Holmes before climbing again to another treeless crest. Near Lake Holmes, a side track heads west to Lake Will (see Side Trip: Lake Will, below).

Beyond Lake Holmes, the Overland Track traverses a very exposed plateau with views across the myriad lakes and tarns to the west. At a rocky crest, Lake Windermere comes into view nestled among patches of eucalyptus. Beyond, to the south, the bulk of Mt Pelion West rises starkly above Pine Forest Moor. Descend steeply on a rocky track for 20 to 30 minutes to reach the shores of Lake Windermere. Camping is not permitted here, but another 10 minutes of walking will bring you to the 16-bunk Windermere Hut set in the shelter of some myrtle. There are a number of wooden tent platforms in openings near and beyond the hut, constructed to limit the environmental impact of camping in the area.

SIDE TRIP: LAKE WILL

1½ hours, 3km return, 50m ascent/descent

A boardwalked track leads to the shores of Lake Will from the signposted turn-off on the Overland Track near Lake Holmes. The pencil pine-fringed lake is quite beautiful and the views to Barn Bluff dramatic.

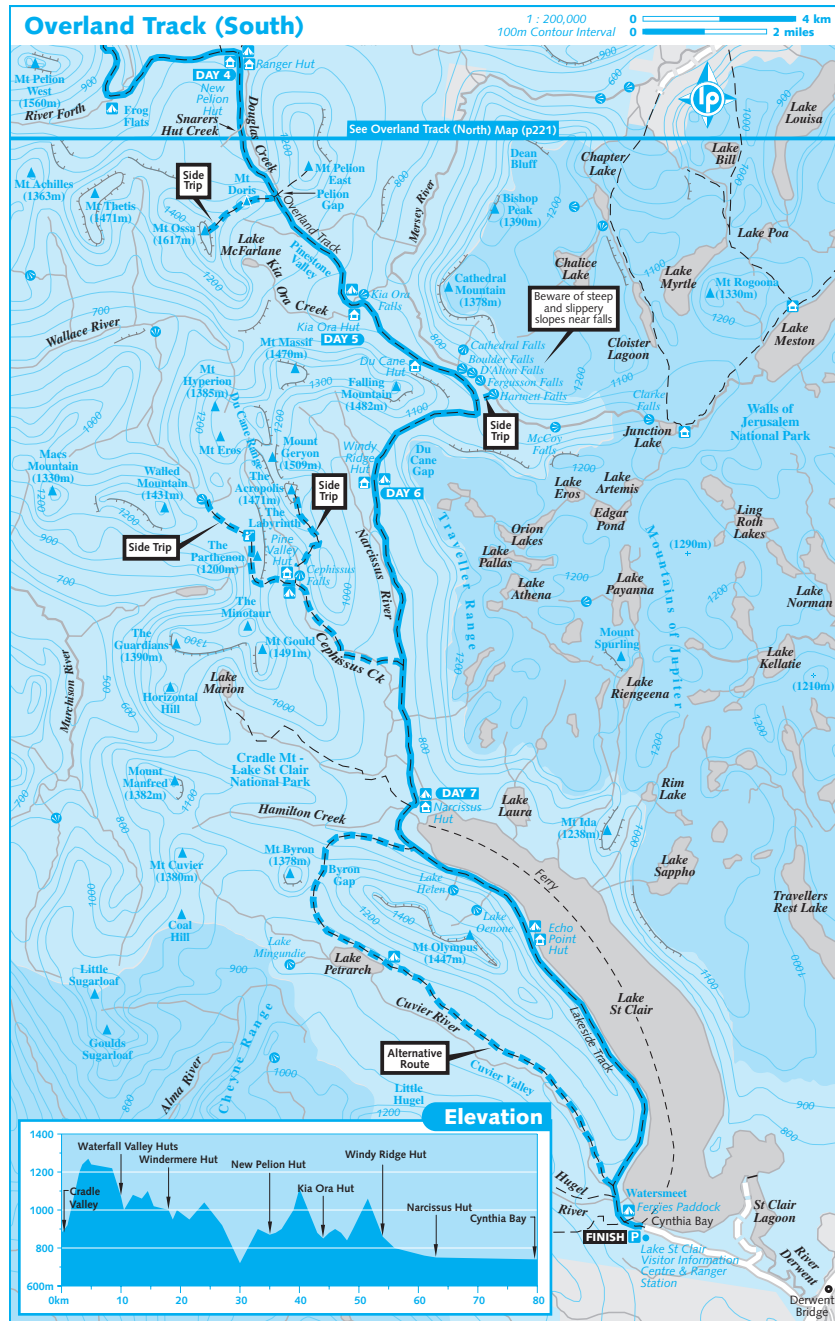
Day 3: Windermere to Pelion Plains

5–7 hours, 17km, 150m ascent, 240m descent

The longest day on the Overland Track starts with a pleasant 15 to 20 minute walk through scattered eucalyptus forest to a buttongrass plain at the eastern end of Lake Curran. There is a short, steep ascent onto an open top and then two more small rises are crossed to reach the northern edge of **Pine Forest Moor**. This waterlogged terrain is crossed dry-shod and fairly effortlessly on duckboard and parallel planks to a track junction just before a forested hill. Here a stretch of duckboard nips off to the left (east)

Mt Oakleigh overlooks the gentle gradients of the Pelion Plains, traversed on Day 3
GRANT DIXON





to a **lookout** (one minute return). Pelion Plains, Day 3's destination, are perched across the valley, below the crags of Mt Oakleigh, itself towering above the U-shaped glacial valley of the River Forth.

The Overland Track enters thick low tea-tree and myrtle forest and climbs steadily on a boulder-strewn path. Descending the southern slopes of the hill, the towering pandani make a fairy tale scene. After emerging from the trees, the track crosses a small creek lined with copses of pencil pines, the bulk of Mt Pelion West now looming close ahead. Thirty minutes of relatively level walking through broken forest brings you to **Pelion Creek**, a good spot for a break (2½ to 3½ hours from Windermere).

Beyond Pelion Creek the track traverses thick dark myrtle forest and becomes quite rough in places, with tree roots prevalent, as it sidles then steadily descends around the eastern slopes of Mt Pelion West. Emerging into the open again at **Frog Flats**, the track descends a little further to cross the River Forth on a wooden bridge; at 720m above sea level it's the lowest point on the Overland Track (one to 1½ hours from Pelion Creek). There are poor campsites here, and leeches and mosquitoes are often prevalent; continuing on to camp near the New Pelion Hut area is a better option.

After traversing another opening, the track re-enters the forest. Parts of this section have the roughest terrain on the entire walk, but planned works may address this. The track climbs through rainforest before entering woodland on the fringe of Pelion Plains. A side track leads north across wet buttongrass to Old Pelion Hut (five to 10 minutes), which was built back in 1895 following the discovery of copper nearby. On a warm day there is a good swimming hole in **Douglas Creek** below the hut.

The spacious New Pelion Hut is situated another 10 minutes' walk beyond the Old Pelion turn-off. This new hut is the largest in the park, with bunks for 36, and its all-round veranda has great views over Pelion Plains to Mt Oakleigh (1280m). There is good camping beside the Overland Track just above the hut.

Day 4: Pelion Plains to Kia Ora Creek

3 hours, 9km, 280m ascent/descent

The track climbs gently away from New Pelion Hut, heading south towards Pelion Gap through mixed forest. After 20 minutes the track crosses Snarers Hut Creek and in another 20 minutes climbs past a small waterfall on Douglas Creek. The track begins to climb in small, steep sections, interspersed by flatter stretches through dense myrtle forest. Finally the gradient steepens consistently and the trees begin to thin as you reach **Pelion Gap** (1126m) and a world of new views (1½ to two hours from New Pelion Hut). To the west a side track leads towards Mt Ossa (1617m), the highest summit in Tasmania (see Side Trip: Mt Ossa, p226). Prickly scoparia carpets Pelion Gap and can produce a colourful wildflower display in early summer.

South of Pelion Gap the slopes are scattered with small snow gums among the bleached, dead trunks of pencil pines, burnt in a past bushfire (see the boxed text, p227). The Overland Track heads southeast, here hardened with wooden cord and duckboard, descending gently into the mixed light forest and open moor of **Pinestone Valley**. The imposing wall of Cathedral Mountain lies across the Mersey valley ahead. Steeper descents follow, leading to the mixture of forest and open buttongrass that surround Kia Ora Hut (one hour from Pelion Gap). The hut has bunk space for 20 and many wooden camping platforms secreted in the trees nearby. If you look around the hut you may well see the nests of

welcome swallows under the eaves. These small blue-and-orange birds flit tirelessly around the hut in spring and summer. Look out also for the yellow wattlebird with its curious neck flaps. This bird is the largest of Australia's honeyeaters.

SIDE TRIP: MT OSSA

2½–3½ hours, 5km return, 500m ascent/descent

Heading west from Pelion Gap, the track to Mt Ossa (1617m) ascends towards then contours around the southern slopes of Mt Doris to reveal the tremendously steep northeast ridge of Mt Ossa rising beyond a col. A rough trail leads up into a gully, from where a steep rock scramble leads up to the summit plateau, carpeted with cushion plants, and a short walk to the summit itself. Views are extensive, covering half of Tasmania on a clear day, and the Du Cane Range to the south is particularly impressive. Return to Pelion Gap via the route of ascent. Mt Ossa is best avoided if the weather looks threatening or if the summit is in cloud.

Day 5: Kia Ora Creek to Windy Ridge

3–4 hours, 10km, 240m ascent, 200m descent

The track crosses Kia Ora Creek on a wooden bridge and large boulder and continues southeast through thick eucalyptus and myrtle scrub. It climbs gently for 30 minutes and then descends very slightly before making a final short ascent to historic **Du Cane Hut**, set in a small clearing. Now an emergency shelter only, the earliest part of the hut was built in about 1910 by snarer, prospector and guide Paddy Harnett. With his wife and young child, he lived here for several winters, trapping local wildlife for its thick winter fur. The surrounding forest can be a mass of white leatherwood flowers in December and January.

Beyond Du Cane Hut are some of the most beautiful swathes of rainforest on the Overland Track. Some 30 to 40 minutes of gentle undulations through dark myrtle forest brings you to a junction with a track to the left (east) to Fergusson and D'Alton Falls. Beyond this junction, the Overland Track climbs steadily to the Hartnett Falls turn-off and the myrtle gives way to fairly open eucalyptus forest. At their best after heavy rain, at least one of these Mersey River waterfalls should be visited (see opposite).

Spectacular views of Du Cane Range are the payoff for scaling 1617m high Mt Ossa

GRANT DIXON



DEAD STAGS

Native conifers are badly affected by fire. Unlike eucalyptus they do not regenerate quickly and you'll see large stands of dead 'stags' in several upland areas (eg Pelion Gap on the Overland Track). Over a third of Tasmania's King Billy pines have been lost to bushfires in just 100 years, and many areas of other conifers and deciduous beech have also been lost. Many of these fires have been human-caused and it is largely because of this that the WHA is a fuel-stove-only area.

Glimpses of Falling Mountain (1482m) to the west and the Traveller Range to the south can be had through the trees as you climb the stony trail to Du Cane Gap (45 minutes from the Hartnett Falls turn-off). From Du Cane Gap the track descends steeply into a beautiful stand of Tasmanian alpine yellow gums, spread among moss-cloaked myrtle. In rain the mustard colour of the gum bark has to be seen to be believed, contrasting wonderfully with the deep greens of the myrtle and the luminous greens of mosses.

Leaving the yellow gums behind, the trail descends steeply again, reaching Windy Ridge Hut in 30 to 45 minutes from Du Cane Gap. The hut has bunk space for 16 people and is set into a thickly wooded hillside, with views to the precipitous eastern aspect of the Du Cane Range. Secluded camping platforms are scattered beside the track to the north and south of the hut.

SIDE TRIP: D'ALTON & FERGUSSON FALLS

1½ hours, 2km return each, 120m ascent/descent

A steep, roughly-marked track descends northeast through open myrtle forest from the signposted turn-off on the Overland Track, leading to another signed junction. Branch left (northwest) to D'Alton Falls; branch right (northeast) to the upstream Fergusson Falls. There is an impressive narrow gorge just below Fergusson Falls. The riverbank near the falls is steep and very greasy when wet; take care, there have been serious accidents here.

SIDE TRIP: HARTNETT FALLS

1 hour, 2km return, 80m ascent/descent

The track leading down to Hartnett Falls branches from the Overland Track about 10 minutes towards Windy Ridge Hut from the D'Alton and Fergusson Falls turn-off. Descending through mixed forest, the track leads through an open buttongrass area to the top of the falls.

Day 6: Windy Ridge to Narcissus River

3 hours, 9km, 150m descent

The track descends very gently for the first 30 minutes from Windy Ridge Hut. Dense thickets of myrtle give way to open eucalyptus forest (mostly whitetop stringybark) as the track flattens out. Here and there the track skirts the fringes of buttongrass plains. Beyond the Pine Valley turn-off (1½ to two hours from Windy Ridge; see Side Trip: Pine Valley, the Labyrinth & Acropolis, p228), the Overland Track continues along the flat bottom of the valley, the gums gradually thinning out to be replaced by stretches of buttongrass spanned by boardwalks. The view of the valley holding Lake St Clair opens out and within another few minutes you arrive at Narcissus Hut (one hour from the Pine Valley junction). The lake is visible just a little way to the southeast and a track leads down to the jetty where the ferry docks.

SIDE TRIP: PINE VALLEY, THE LABYRINTH & ACROPOLIS

The signposted turn-off to **Pine Valley** is about 1½ to two hours (5km) south of Windy Ridge Hut. A good track crosses bridges over Narcissus River and Cephissus Creek (twice), traversing short plains and rainforest to Pine Valley Hut (one to 1½ hours and 4km from the Overland Track). If planning onward side trips to either the Acropolis or the Labyrinth, it is best to overnight at Pine Valley.

The walk to the summit of the **Acropolis** (1471m) involves a 630m ascent and is a return trip of four to five hours from Pine Valley Hut. Continue beyond the hut, through rainforest north past Cephissus Falls. After crossing the creek, the track climbs steeply to a broad, open shoulder. The Acropolis' southern bluff rears ahead. A clear track heads towards it, but the final scramble through the upper bluffs can be difficult in places, and is best avoided under snow or ice. There are up-close views of the slender dolerite spires comprising the Acropolis' distinctive skyline, and a spectacular vista of Mt Geryon's east face, from the summit. Return via the route of ascent.

The **Labyrinth** is a lake-studded plateau surrounded by high peaks. The access track branches west just beyond Pine Valley Hut, climbing steeply 300m through forest to a saddle. It then sidles west of the Parthenon (1200m) to a good lookout over the Labyrinth and towards the precipitous Mt Geryon (1509m), 1½ hours from the hut. Beyond here the track descends somewhat, then ascends again to another good lookout, or you can continue around Lake Ophion and on to the shores of Lake Elysia (two to 2½ hours from Pine Valley). Return to the hut via your outward route.

Day 7: Narcissus River to Cynthia Bay

5 hours, 17km, 60m ascent/descent

Lake St Clair was known as Leeawuleena ('sleeping water') by the local Aboriginal people, and is Australia's deepest lake at 167m. The traverse of the Lakeside Track, around the western shores of the 14km-long lake, has a reputation for being a little dull in comparison to the rest of the walk, and many walkers drop it in favour of taking the ferry, especially if they're tired or the weather is poor. But in reality the track just offers a different perspective to the expansive views of the northern Overland Track; enclosed rainforest, glimpsed water views and several small beaches.

Perusal of the map may suggest a longer alternative route crossing Byron Gap and traversing the Cuvier Valley. However, this rough and poorly marked route is not maintained to the same standard as the Lakeside Track and should be attempted by experienced walkers only.

From Narcissus Hut the track heads southwest and crosses a swamp on an elevated boardwalk. Once across the plains the track enters the forest, reaching the small Echo Point Hut in two hours. The camping area around it is poor. Continue through forest for another three hours, mostly near the lake shore, with plenty of tree roots and an interesting mix of trees and ferns. After crossing the Cuvier River bridge at Watersmeet, a broad path leads to the visitor information centre at Cynthia Bay.