

# Tasmania

GAY AND LESBIAN VISITOR'S GUIDE™



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# Welcome

Tasmania is the heart-shaped island at the bottom of the world, a place you have to stoop to see on a desk globe. It is one of Australia's six states, but thanks to its beauty, fertility and history it is another country.

In the words of Oxford Professor Peter Conrad, writing of the land of his childhood, *"Tasmania is Janus-faced. On the sunlit east coast you can feel you're the first man on earth, greeting it in wonder; on the west's storm-swept beaches, you're the last of your race."*

The truth here is that Tasmania is a land of incongruous contrasts: sleepy towns with world-renowned cultural festivals, hedge-rowed English farmlands enclosed by the ethereal rainforests dinosaurs trod, stately Georgian mansions amidst barbarous nineteenth-century penal camps, winter drought and snow storms in summer.

People come from around the world to enjoy these many different faces of Tasmania.

Lovers of wilderness, adventure, culture, and food and wine flock to the island in search of the unspoilt places, beautiful views, exciting challenges and exquisite tastes. But they also find, emerging from between Tasmania's contrasts and contradictions, something much more.

They find an island whose natural beauty and ecological diversity stands witness to the depth of humanity's interconnectedness with all living things. They find a society whose past is a tangle of stories which are in equal measure brutal and tragic, uplifting and inspiring, and which expose the hidden springs of modern Australian and global history.

They find a people to whom sincerity and a real connection to others is dear and precious. In short, they find themselves. My hope is that you will too.

– Rodney Croome, TASMANIAN GAY WRITER AND HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCATE

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Tasmania's gay and lesbian history is rich and dramatic. Historic extremes of repression and freedom have culminated in recent world-class social reforms.

Despite significant contact between Aborigines and Europeans before and after first settlement in 1803 we know nothing about the place of same-sex relationships in traditional indigenous Tasmanian culture.

### Early explorers

Tasmania's "gay history" began when Europeans first encountered the island. Matthew Flinders, together with George Bass, proved Tasmania an island by circumnavigating it in 1798-99.

Flinders wrote of Bass, *"there was a time when I was so completely wrapped up in you, that no conversation but yours could give me pleasure; your footsteps upon the quarterdeck over my head took me from my book and brought me upon the deck to walk with you"*.



Partly thanks to Bass and Flinders' discovery colonial outposts were soon established in Tasmania as dumping grounds for England's overflowing gaols.

In the 50 years to 1853 70,000 convicts were transported to Tasmania, many for sexual offences including sodomy.

### Convict love

In the island's gaols coercive and power-based homosexuality was common. But so were love bonds between men and between women, as shown by this letter written in the mid 1840s by a convict sentenced to hang for mutiny: *"I hope you wont forget me when I am far away and all my bones is moldered away I have not closed an eye since I lost sight of you your precious sight was always a welcome and*

*loving charming spectacle. Dear Jack I value Death nothing but it is in leaving you my dear behind and no one to look after you... The only thing that grieves me love is when I think of the pleasant nights we have had together. I hope you wont fall in love with no other man when I am dead and I remain your True and loving affectionate Lover."*

### "Pseudo-males"

Women discovered in same-sex relationships in places like the Hobart and Ross **Female Factories** were labelled "pseudo-males" and assigned as servants to farmers in distant corners of the island. Some misbehaved so they would be returned to gaol and their lover's arms.

Separation was also used to punish men. As concern about male homosexuality rose, prisons dorms were re-designed to keep inmates separate and under constant surveillance. Eventually the hated Separate Prison was built at **Port Arthur** as the final solution to convict homosexuality

(see p26–29 for more on convict homosexuality).

### Reformation

Reformers like Rev John West thought a better solution was the end of convict transportation altogether. In 1846, West published this poem as a part of his campaign to discredit the convict system by associating it with sodomy:

*"Shall Tasman's Isle so famed, so lovely and so fair, from other nations be estranged, the Name of Sodom bear?"*

It worked. The transportation of convicts ceased soon after. The new Australian national identity that the anti-transportation movement gave birth to, was tainted by profound homophobia well into the twentieth century.

### Imprisoned

Repression of homosexuality remained a feature of Tasmanian life. The last hanging for sodomy in the British Empire was in Tasmania in 1867 at the **Penitentiary Chapel**



historic site. In the subsequent 100 years Tasmania had the highest rate of imprisonment for private consenting male sex anywhere in Australia. One of the men imprisoned was Bert, quoted here in a 1976 article titled "Why Noel Shot Himself and Bert Went to Gaol":

*"If there had been reform in 1958 I would have been saved from the worst period of my life. I was 21 and living in Launceston with another man of the same age. The police came to the house and asked who lived there. When we said we did, they asked where we slept and we pointed to the only bed in the house. We were taken to the police station, interviewed and charged with gross indecency. In the Supreme Court I pleaded guilty. I had no legal representation. The case was over in 10 minutes. I got three years."*

#### Unexpected freedom

Ironically, there was also greater freedom in Tasmania than elsewhere. The first photos of

same-sex couples in Australia were taken of young loving male couples in the secluded mountain-side Hobart suburb of Ferntree in the 1890s. Painter Isobel Oldham and writer Marie Bjelke-Petersen lived openly with their same-sex companions. By the 1960s Hobart's cruising areas had become social spaces with car bonnets spread for picnic lunches. Men were spotted across the city wearing black armbands the day a popular beat was closed.

With this legacy full of contradictions and extremes it's no surprise that the history of Tasmania's modern gay and lesbian movement is also dramatic.

#### Civil disobedience

Inspired by the globally significant Tasmanian environmental campaigns of the 1980s, including the successful campaign to save the Franklin River, the Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group formed in 1988. Within months the

Group's stall at **Salamanca Market** was closed down by the Hobart City Council and its supporters arrested by police.

After two months of protests the stall was allowed but not before 130 people had been arrested in Australia's largest ever act of gay rights civil disobedience.

#### Times of change

The Salamanca arrests sparked a nine year debate over the decriminalisation of homosexuality, which saw the issue become the defining social reform of the 1990s and Tasmania dubbed "Bigot's Island" by the world's press. The campaign for and against change mobilised thousands of people across the state.

Reform proponents enlisted the support of Amnesty International, the UN Human Rights Committee and the Federal Government.

Incessant public discussion saw support

for gay and lesbian rights rise from 15% below the national average in 1988 to 15% above when reform finally occurred in 1997.

#### Public support

Tasmania was the last Australian state to decriminalise homosexuality.

A few short years later it has the best school anti-homophobia programs, Anti-discrimination Act and same-sex relationship laws in the country, all with public support.

In 2004 Tasmania became the first Australian state to allow same-sex couples to register their relationships.

Tasmanian history reminds us that the potential for great repression and great freedom can exist in the one society.

It also shows that which prevails depends in large part on the courage and determination of ordinary people.





Tasmania's half a million people have a distinct outlook and character which charms visitors if acknowledged and respected. Sincerity is the key.

In equal measure reserved and friendly, Tasmanians are hospitable to outsiders but also sensitive to how they are seen by others. Don't be deceived by the politeness with which Tasmanian jokes will be received. It masks the kind of resentment that erects social barriers. Attempts to impress also fall flat. Sincerity is the key to making friends.

## Story-telling

Tasmanians sometimes mumble, and speak so quickly whole words can disappear. It is fine to ask for repetition. It's not fine to show impatience during story-telling. Long stories with frequent elaborate digressions and reflective silences characterise conversations in rural Tasmania. The compelling images and



messages in these stories are worth waiting for.

It's also impolite to disregard distinctions between Tasmania's regions. What the island lacks in ethnic diversity it makes up for in geographic diversity.

Acknowledging this diversity will help you make friends, particularly outside Hobart.

## Real connections

Opinion polls show that Tasmanians are more accepting of gay and lesbian people than other Australians. But the type and depth of acceptance varies considerably across the island. It is not unusual to see same-sex couples holding hands in central Hobart. Hobart and Launceston's gay venues are considered friendly and welcoming to

outsiders. Don't be afraid to start a conversation with a gay Tasmanian. The close-knit nature of Tasmania means you will very quickly find yourself introduced to a very large number of people.

Thanks to anti cross-dressing laws, only recently repealed, drag is less common in Tasmania than elsewhere in Australia. Although Tasmanians have a reputation in some quarters for physical beauty there are no commercial sex venues.

One of the joys of Tasmania is that it is so easy and rewarding to make a real and lasting connection with other people. When you travel to Tasmania take the opportunity to do just that.

## Pink eyes rule

Tasmanian English is dotted with unusual words. They come from Aboriginal languages (*"Palawa"*: people, *"quoib"*: wombat), convict argot (*"rummin"*: a fool, *"chain-gang"*: a hard task), old English dialects (*"yaffler"*:

a garrulous person, *"nointer"*: a naughty child), whaling (*"greasy luck"*: good luck), geography (*"the other side"*: the mainland), and local brand names (*"Jimmy"*: a glass of beer).

Watch out for jack-jumpers and inchmen (biting ants), triantulas (huntspiders), and Tasmanian champagne (a potent mix of brandy and cider).

Potatoes have traditionally been important to the Tasmanian economy and there is fierce local loyalty to different varieties.

Pink eyes are so highly valued in the north west that some parents refer to their children as *"little pink eyes"* and sweethearts are labelled *"my favourite pink eye"*.

## Geeveston Fanny

What sounds sexual is probably not. A Geeveston Fanny is an apple, and to be called *"cock"* is simply a casual, friendly form of address. Amongst older and rural Tasmanians the phrase *"I'm feeling a bit queer"* means the speaker has a cold.



Francois Peron

Marie Bjelke Petersen

From the earliest days of white exploration, same-sex attracted people have reflected on Tasmania's natural and often melancholic beauty, using it as a vehicle to express their hopes and fears.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, two French explorers and possibly lovers Francois Peron and Charles Lesueur saw in Tasmania a paradise untouched by the superstitions and affectations of modern life. It confirmed their Enlightenment belief that nature is benign, and man, in his natural state, rational and happy.

A generation later, the first white man to climb Cradle Mountain, surveyor Henry Hellyer, described and drew the mighty wilderness of North West Tasmania with a nod to the new fashion of Romanticism. His bosses at the Van Dieman's Land company were not impressed by aesthetic appreciation of lands they saw only as future sheep runs. Soon after, Hellyer took his own life, as gossip spread about his alleged relationship with a male convict.

#### Life-long companions

At the end of a literary era whose first rush had affected Hellyer, early twentieth century Tasmanian novelist Marie Bjelke-Petersen (aunt of former Queensland Premier Sir Joh) set many of her romantic classics in the island's West.

*"How appropriate that they should have met in this romantic island", she wrote in The Captive Singer, "with its great wild beauty of dense tangled bush, lofty mountains lifting bold undaunted crags, its immense solitude, its deep melancholy, its riotous, exuberant sunshine: Tasmania with its flaming sunsets and pearly dawns, some days tender, exquisitely yielding; on others convulsed with passion, impetuous, ungoverned."*

Bjelke-Petersen believed that, compared to the artificiality of Sydney or Melbourne, beautiful, unaffected Tasmania was the obvious place to discover true, passionate love, something which she found with her life long companion, Sylvia Mills.

#### Sexual ambiguity

An extra in the 1926 film version of Bjelke-Petersen's sexually ambiguous novel *Jewelled Nights* was Marelle Flynn, mother of film legend Errol.

"Stop acting like a goddam faggot, you no-good Tasmanian, bum, son-of-a-bitch." In this on-set outburst, Michael Curtiz, director of Flynn's first Hollywood hit, *Captain Blood*, summed up two major themes of Errol's life: his Tasmanian origins and his reputed bisexuality.

In his autobiography Flynn reflected happily on trips into the wilderness with his biologist father, Theodore, trapping native animals like the now extinct Tasmanian tiger.

Key Hobart sites associated with Flynn include the Theatre Royal where he learnt to dance, and the Palace Theatre (32 Elizabeth St, opposite the GPO), where he watched the latest Hollywood films.

#### Deathly beauty

In the 1960s, young gay men like influential academic Dennis Altman experienced Tasmania very differentially.

In Altman's, *The Comfort of Men*, "the dark



Errol Flynn

*mass" of Mt Wellington is "everywhere, looming above the city like a threatening step-mother".*

*It's "an omnipresent granite-purple shadow behind every view...so beautiful, but it's the beauty of death".*

#### Green advocate

Not long after Altman left Tasmania, the world's appreciation of its natural beauty was to change again, thanks to another gay Tasmanian, prominent environmentalist Dr Bob Brown.

The movement Brown has led for almost 30 years has not only helped save much of Tasmania's beauty from destruction but it

has also given us a greater appreciation than ever before of the value of Tasmania's wild places.



Dr Bob Brown



*"If we can accept the view that man and nature are inseparable parts of the unified whole, then Tasmania can be a shining beacon in a dull, uniform and largely artificial world."*

These words from one of Tasmania's greatest wilderness photographers, Olegas Truchanas, sum up the importance of Tasmania's wild places. Not only is natural Tasmania breathtaking in its beauty and diversity but it's also unique, accessible, soul-enriching, considered of global significance, and, far the most part, protected.

### Many Tasmanias

What strikes visitors first is the range of different natural environments.

The creamy sands of the east coast's Friendly Beaches are a world away from the endless north eastern forests, southern sea-cliffs battered by Antarctic gales and alpine lakes wrapped in the swirling mists that roll in from Argentina.

The greatest contrast is between the dry forests and

open grasslands of the east, filled with birdsong and the rhythmic hollow thump of bounding kangaroos, and the mountain ranges, temperate rain-forest and buttongrass plains of Tasmania's west.

### Silent and serene

Tasmania's alpine and rain-forest areas are delicate and fragile. The silence and serenity is of another world. But the weather can be unpredictable and harsh. Be prepared for rain, snow and burning sun any time of the year and sometimes all on the same day.

Visitors also enjoy the seasonal variation in Tasmania's wilderness. Spring wildflowers dot alpine tundra. Deciduous beech gilds the rainforest in autumn. Winter snow transforms a forest into a fairytale. If Tasmania is divided

by its scenery it is united by an abundance of wildlife.

Thanks to its isolation, the island is blessed by many unique species of plants and animals. Examples include the wedge-tailed eagle, Cape Barren goose, orange bellied parrot, moss froglet, snow skink, rainforest species like myrtle and sassafras, the swamp gum which at up to 110 metres is the world's tallest flowering plant, and one of the world's longest-living organisms, the Huon pine, which can flourish for 3000 years.

Tasmania is also refuge for many mammals and birds that have been harassed to near extinction elsewhere – bandicoots, bettongs, pademelons, potoroos, quolls, white goshawks, hooded plovers and fairy penguins.

### Ark Tasmania

Animals commonly found in other parts of Australia, like platypus, echidnas, wombats,

possums, wallabies, whales and fur seals can be easier to see in Tasmania.

The best places to see Tasmania's animals are at the "marsupial Serengetis" of **Narawntapu, Mt William and Maria Island National Parks.**

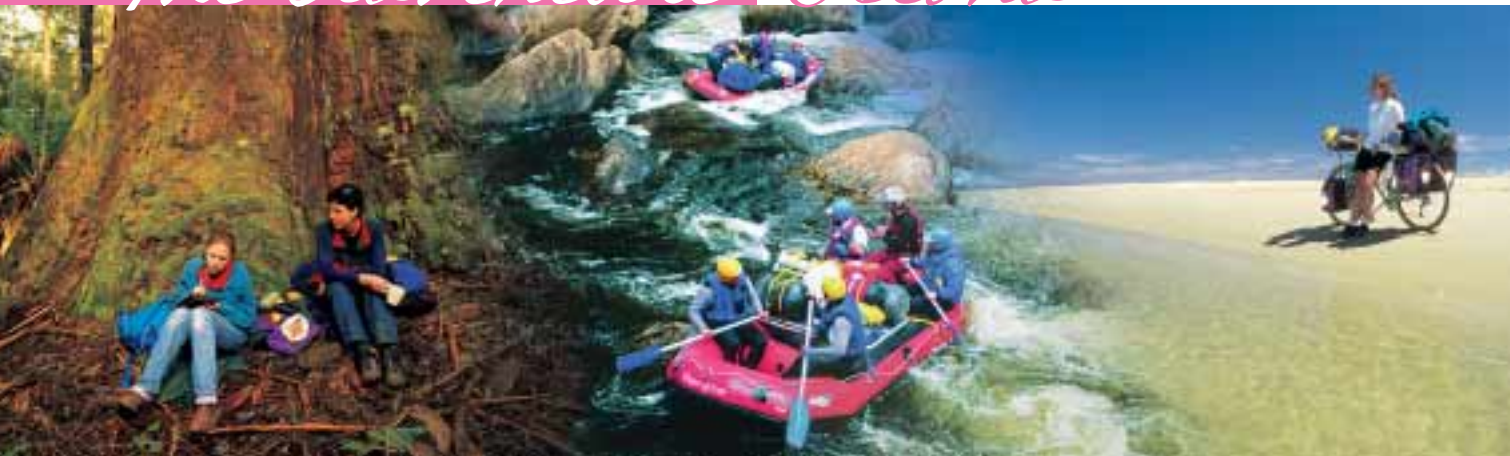
You can be hopeful of a platypus sighting on the Henty River near Zeehan, the Mersey River near Latrobe, Hastings Caves and at Lake St Clair and Mt Field National Parks.

The mascot of Ark Tasmania is the Tasmanian devil. Smaller but just as noisy as their cartoon namesake, devils can be seen at most wildlife parks.

### As bright as coral

Tasmania's marine parks draw many visitors. Southern and western kelp forests hide some of the most outlandish sea horses in the world. The sponges that grow in groves along the east coast attract attention with colours as bright and varied as coral.





Lonely Planet wasn't exaggerating when it dubbed Tasmania "Adventure Island". There are walking, surfing, kayaking and diving experiences to suit every taste.

The island is rightly famous as the world's best bushwalking destination. As well as long walks like the five day Overland Track, there's a wide range of short walks that take in mountains, beaches, waterfalls and historic sites.

#### Guided walks

Guided walks are increasingly popular with visitors looking for the personal touch of guides who know the land and its stories. The companies which run guided walks in Cradle Mountain, Freycinet and Maria Island National Parks are all gay-friendly.

#### World's biggest waves

Expert surfers can be found riding the world's largest breakers off Tasmania's rugged south coast. For the less intrepid, Clifton Beach east of Hobart and Marrawah in the far north west are renowned for consistently

great waves. Wet or dry suits are recommended all year round.

Enchanting limestone and dolomite karst systems make Tasmania a caver's delight.

A good place to start, for beginners and hard-core cavers alike, is Hastings Caves south of Hobart. Follow this up with a visit to the renowned Mole Creek Karst National Park west of Launceston.

#### Divers paradise

Divers come from around the world to enjoy Tasmania's clear water and diverse marine habitats. The kelp forests of the Forestier and Tasman Peninsula are the most accessible. King Island is a diver's paradise with over 200 ships wrecked off its dangerous shores.

The dolerite columns that give Tasmania's mountains and southern sea coasts the look of ancient ruined fortresses are a

magnet for climbers, while numerous bays and off-shore islands, particularly in the south east, make Tasmania a yachting and sea kayaking mecca. It's not uncommon to spot families of southern right whales and pods of dolphins when you're out on the water.

#### White water

Rivers abound in Tasmania, so rafters and jet boaters do too. Australia's last wild river, the Franklin, is famous with rafters. But there is also exciting white water on the Picton, the Mersey and the North Esk. Jet boat companies run tours on the lower stretches of the Derwent, Huon and King Rivers.

For some more relaxed recreation try angling, golfing or cycling, or visit an historic garden.

#### Scenic routes

In the silence of a misty alpine dawn anglers can sometimes be seen beneath the gnarled limbs

of an ancient pencil pine hauling in rainbow-flecked trout. Sea and game fishing is also popular, particularly on the east coast.

Golfers have a choice of over 75 courses, while cyclists enjoy scenic routes like the Fingal and Upper Derwent Valleys.

Tasmania's beaches are good for strolling and sunbathing. If you're keen for a swim follow locals to the most sheltered beaches with the warmest water (water temperature can vary remarkably between beaches).

#### Historic gardens

Tasmania has many historic gardens including the **National Rose Garden** at Woolmers and the **Tasmanian Botanical Gardens**, complete with an early nineteenth century "tropical wall" riddled with heat ducts.

When touring, take it easy on the island's many narrow, winding roads, and travel slower at night to avoid hitting animals. For more on adventure see p30-31.







Lovers of Tasmania's wine and food have two simple explanations for why the island's produce is highly prized as some of the freshest and tastiest in the world.

The first is Tasmania's fertility. It provides the nation with most of its vegetables and much of the gourmet dairy goods and seafood found on tables in Singapore and Tokyo.

The second is a cool, temperate climate in which it takes fruit longer to ripen, making it sweeter and juicier.

#### Tasting Tasmania

There are several ways to taste Tasmania.

Tasmanian food and wine is featured in restaurants and cafes in major centres and many smaller towns as well.

Restaurants such as **Lebrina** in Hobart, and **Stillwater** in Launceston, are setting new standards, while coffee culture thrives at cafes like **Choux Shop**, **Retro** and **Criterion** in Hobart. **Franklin Manor** in

Strahan has one of the tastiest dégustation menus in Australia.

#### Wine trails

A short drive out of Hobart and Launceston into the Huon, Coal, Derwent and Tamar River Valleys, visitors can find numerous wineries, many with top-end restaurants that also feature Tasmanian fare.

Derwent Valley merlots go well with a bite of Tasmanian chocolate fudge. Huon Valley pinot gris is best accompanied by a stunning view of the Wellington Range.

#### Straight to the source

In Tasmania there is ample opportunity for gourmets to go straight to the source of their favourite food.

Chocoholics can sample their childhood favourites at **Cadbury's** in Hobart or go up-market at Latrobe's



#### D'Anvers, South Hobart's Island

**Produce** or the Bruny Island Fudge Company. Cheese-makers like Ashgrove and jam-makers like Dorans bring all their produce together in single farm outlets, while most of Tasmania's river valleys are dotted with road-side fruit, flower, jam and native honey stalls. Ichigo strawberries and leatherwood honey are Tasmanian specialties you must try.

Prized Tasmanian fish varieties like Blue eye trevalla, and the island's larger-than-average mussels, oysters, abalone and crayfish, are available from both specialist sea-food restaurants like **Fish Frenzy** and **Mures**, and dockside fish punts.

#### Food fests

It all comes together at Tasmania's popular **food festivals**, the Taste of Tasmania in Hobart, Launceston's Festival, the Taste of the Huon and Devonport's Taste of the Harvest.

At festivals like these, Tasmania's food-makers, wine-growers and chefs gather to share their gourmet achievements.

#### Swansea delights

Swansea is a traveller and gourmet's delight.

The seaside village is the perfect base from which to explore Freycinet National Park. Gay-owned accommodation choices include colonial **Meredith House** or cliff-top **Kabuki-by-the-Sea**.

At the Paris end of town is the gay owned and operated **Left Bank Café**, voted Australia's best café by the Gay Australia Guide and the only eatery outside Hobart or Launceston to be listed in the *Gourmet Traveller's* restaurant guide. Its lemon tart, carefully constructed in twelve delicate stages and baked fresh every day, has a national following.

Swansea also boasts **Kate's Berry Farm**, where the sweetest berries are magically transformed into everything from ice cream and jam to wine.



Poet Gwen Harwood and painter Lloyd Rees both declared Tasmania's light unique in the world, and an inspiration for their greatest achievements.

For Tasmania's world-class furniture makers, wooden boat builders and art-jewellers, it is something more solid, the island's many unique timbers and rare metals. In Tasmania's unique Aboriginal artefacts like shell necklaces, and in its tradition of wilderness photography, light and earth are blended into a translucent whole.

Artists, designers, writers and their admirers are drawn to Tasmania by the way its precious beauty is reflected in a rich and vibrant culture.

Just as it was a magnet for colonial artists, so Tasmania continues to produce compelling contemporary art informed by place. Colonial art is a feature of the **Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery**, while the best contemporary art is on display at the **Plimsoll** and **Carnegie Galleries**, at galleries and studios in Salamanca Place and at the

**Henry Jones Art Hotel**, all in Hobart.

#### Wooden boats

Having produced more than its fair share of writers, Tasmania is now also producing a distinctive literature that is celebrated at events like the Salamanca Writers Festival. The largest range of Tasmanian books is to be found at **Hobart, Astrolabe** and York Town bookshops.

The latest in furniture design can be found at the **Tasmanian Wood Design Centre** in Launceston. Wooden boat building is a thriving industry in Franklin. Art-jewellery, ceramics and sculpture are on show in Hobart's Salamanca Place studios, Launceston's Inveresk Cultural Precinct and smaller centres like Deloraine.

#### Wilderness art

Launceston's **Queen Victoria Museum** houses Tasmania's

largest collection of traditional Aboriginal artefacts, while contemporary indigenous art is on display at **Art Mob** in Hobart and **Tiagarra** in Devonport.

Wilderness photography is available from many outlets, including Wilderness Shops. But the best place to see how this genre has evolved in response to both artistic and political influences is at **Cradle Mountain's Wilderness Gallery**.

#### Stone phalluses

Tasmania is renowned for its historic homes and specialist museums. Homes like **Clarendon** and **Entally** near Launceston are windows into life on Tasmania's semi-feudal nineteenth century estates. The Port Arthur museum is Australia's best for convict history. On the west coast, the quirky, old-style jumble of Zeehan and Queenstown's museums makes them

a must-see, while the Strahan Visitor Centre has won numerous awards for its compelling perspectives on west coast history. The museum at Hobart's **Moorilla** winery has the largest collections of Roman mosaics, meso-American art and ancient stone phalluses in Australia.

For antique hunters Tasmania is a treasure trove. Serious collectors snap up bargains from small-town dealers as well as their city counterparts.

#### Culture fests

All Tasmania's cultural achievements are brought together in festivals like the Tasmanian Craft Fair (the largest in Australia) and the world-class Ten Days on the Island.

Established several years ago as a celebration of the diversity of island cultures, Ten Days features cutting edge art, writing, drama, opera and dance from around the world.





*“Hobart is the only place someone without a lot of money can live a civilised life.”* Writer and broadcaster Robert Dessaix is only one of the many gay and lesbian people who have been seduced by the beauty, friendliness and sophistication of Hobart.

Hobart combines many big city amenities and attractions with the charm and friendliness of a large country town. Bracketing this attractive mix are the grandeur and ever-shifting moods of Mt Wellington and the Derwent estuary.

#### City life

Features of Hobart include **Salamanca Market** every Saturday morning, Australia’s largest Georgian precinct, Battery Point, the restaurant strips of Sullivans Cove and North Hobart, tours of historic sites like the convict women’s prison in South Hobart and the city penitentiary, and views from the top of Mt Wellington.

Enjoy coffee at gay-friendly **Machine** and **KAOS Cafes**, or something more substantial at gay-owned **Rockerfellers** or **Lickerish**.

Hobart’s gay clubs are small but fun. Check the Listings for more information.

#### Huon Valley

Several touring routes start in Hobart.

The Huon Trail runs south through the rolling farmland of the Huon Valley, the great southern forests and spectacular Bruny Island to Australia’s southern-most town, Cockle Creek (population 4).

Features include wineries near Huonville, craft studios in Franklin, Cygnet’s groovy **Red Velvet Lounge**, the landing sites of many early explorers, **Hastings Caves** and hot springs,

the **Tahune Airwalk** and the superb scenery of the Hartz Mountains and Recherche Bay. Less well known beauty spots include Snug and Pelverata Falls west of Snug, and Fluted Cape and Cloudy Bay on Bruny Island.

You’ll enjoy a stay at **Hiba**, **Huon Bush Retreats** or **Riseley Cottage**, all gay owned and operated.

#### Convict Trail

The Convict Trail runs east through the Georgian village of Richmond, home to Australia’s oldest bridge and catholic church, and on to the Tasman Peninsula, a former open air prison camp centred on the convict town of Port Arthur.

No tour of Port Arthur is complete without a visit to the Isle of the Dead and the Boy’s Prison at Point Puer. If you have time, visit some of Port Arthur’s out-stations like Koonya, Saltwater River and the Coal Mines, or test your nerves on one of Port Arthur’s famed ghost tours.

Visitors to the Tasman Peninsula should make time for the area’s geological wonders including the Tessellated Pavement, Tasman’s Arch, Remarkable Cave and the Devil’s Kitchen.

#### Rivers Run

Running north west from Hobart is the Rivers Run Trail, a drive past hop fields and oast houses through to the magnificent Styx Valley and Mt Field National Park.

This route follows the picturesque Derwent River up to Lake St Clair, Australia’s deepest lake. Encircled by mountains and rainforest, and lined by alpine beaches, Lake St Clair is one of Tasmania’s best kept secrets.

#### Heritage Highway

Finally, there is the Heritage Highway, winding its way through Georgian villages like Oatlands and Ross (see p26–29 for more on Ross). This route takes you past some of Tasmania’s grandest colonial houses, and some of its best antique shops. Be sure to visit the **Bonorong Wildlife Park**.



The Heritage Highway links Hobart with Launceston, Tasmania's second-largest city and its northern capital. Where Hobart's style is late Georgian, Launceston's is mid-Victorian, reflecting its close links to Melbourne, established by explorers and settlers from Launceston.

Although founded only a year after Hobart, in 1804, Launceston was rebuilt in the mid-nineteenth century with money its merchants made from provisioning Victoria's gold rush.

Like Melbourne, Launceston is built around carefully laid out and ornately adorned parks typical of the Victorian period.

#### Summer strolls

A must-see in Launceston is Cataract Gorge. After winding its way slowly through many of the convict-era villages that surround Launceston, the South Esk River tumbles dramatically into town through several steep gorges and deep basins that are the perfect back-drop to a romantic summer evening stroll.

#### Tamar Valley

Launceston is the start of several scenic touring routes.

The Tamar Valley touring route follows the Tamar River north through some of Tasmania's best wine country. On your way take some time out from wine tasting to visit the gold mining town of Beaconsfield and **Sea Horse World** at Beauty Point. Greens Beach at the Tamar's mouth is Launceston's favourite place to fish, swim and relax.

The Great Western Tiers route takes travellers west through picturesque villages like Carrick and Westbury to magnificent forests, waterfalls and caves. After you've visited Liffey Falls and enjoyed the glow worms in Marakoopa Cave sample the delights of the **Christmas Hill Raspberry Farm**.

#### North East Trail

The North East Trail is a relaxing blend of history and natural

beauty. The former tin mining town of Derby, the site of Australia's first national lesbian conference in 1975, features gay-friendly cafes and the remnants of a once-thriving Chinese community. St Columba and Ralphs Falls are worth a visit, as are the long, deserted beaches of Mt William National Park, but don't tarry because the matchless beauty of the Bay of Fires beckons.

The holiday resort of St Helens is where the North East Trail ends and the East Coast Escape begins.

#### Wineglass Bay

Follow the "Tasmanian Riviera" south along some of Australia's most beautiful coastline to Freycinet National Park where a visit to Wineglass Bay, voted one of the world's top 10 beaches, is a must, as is a dip in the limpид pools of the Apsley River. Next stop, Swansea for lunch (see p12–13 for more).

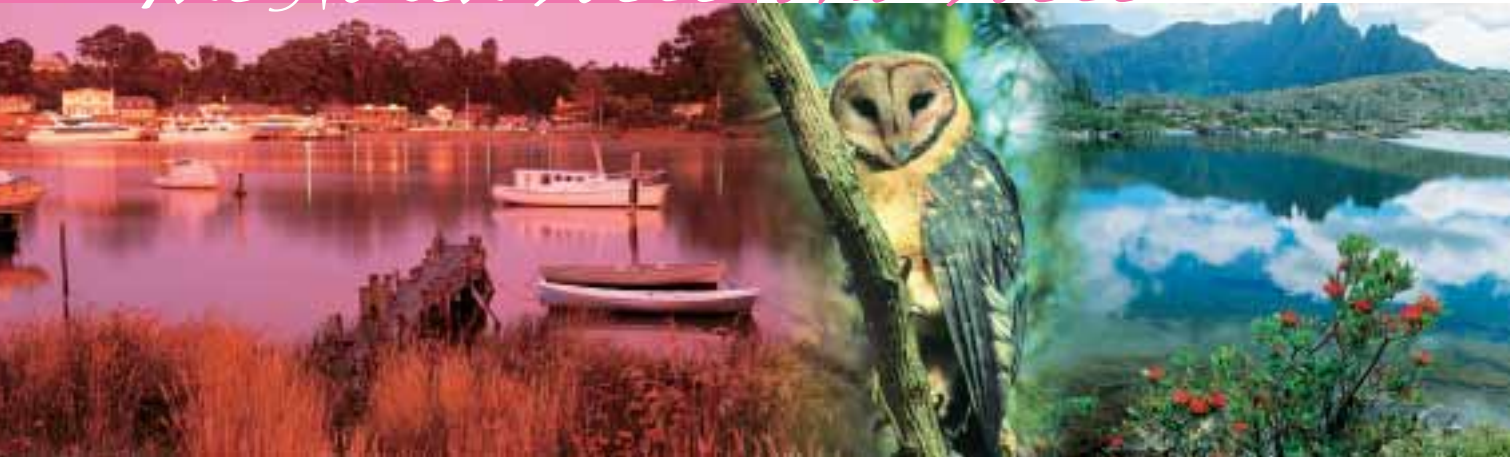
#### Maria Island

Then it's on to another of Tasmania's well-kept secrets, Maria Island. Originally set aside as a refuge for endangered species, Maria is free of private cars and homes, and almost supernaturally serene. It is a camper's delight.

Not even Britain's early nineteenth century prison guards could darken Maria in the eyes of the convicts transported there. The Irish political prisoner William Smith O'Brien wondered how he could fulfil his destiny as a martyr in "*one of the loveliest spots formed by the hand of nature*".

Modern visitors respond to Maria Island in much the same way. Its beaches, forests and cloud-wrapped peaks suggest the sublime abode of old and gentle gods.





When colonial Governor George Arthur gave permission for the first white settlement in North West Tasmania in the mid 1820s his phrase “*beyond the ramparts of the unknown*” summed up the mystery, promise and threat with which many colonial Tasmanians invested the western districts.

The south west was an even more impenetrable mystery for many early white Tasmanians, at one time being officially tagged “Transylvania”.

#### Old-time stories

The beauty, strangeness and severity of Tasmania’s west has inspired many artists and writers, including, most recently, Richard Flanagan. His novels draw on the tales of old-timers whose stories hold Tasmania’s west together like the ancient, tangled roots which bind its sodden soil.

#### Surfing platypus

In western Tasmania you’ll hear of families of platypus riding the waves at river mouths, bills agape catching whitebait, of locals discovering

the skulls of runaway convicts half way up the trees that have grown through them, of off-roaders swallowed whole and lost forever in the quick sands of endless western beaches.

Skulls up trees, body surfing platypus: the west may seem a world apart, but it is where many of the rips of our history and identity meet in one magnificent swell.

#### Volcanic core

The Great Nature Trail follows Bass Strait past Devonport and Burnie and on to Tasmania’s

rugged north west tip.

The simultaneous views of mountain and ocean are matchless. So are the views from “the Nut”,

a volcanic core overlooking historic Stanley. While in Stanley visit the birthplace of Australia’s only Tasmanian-born Prime Minister, Joseph Lyons, and Highfield House, designed by early explorer Henry Hellyer.

Further west is the surfing mecca of Marrawah, and **Woolnorth**, where special hides allow visitors to view Tasmanian devils in the wild.

#### Wilderness Way

The Cradle Country touring route winds south from Devonport through the rolling green hills beneath Mt Roland to stunning Cradle Mountain. Pay a visit to **Trowunna Wildlife Park** at Mole Creek or take in the murals depicting Sheffield’s history and personalities.

When you reach Cradle Mountain make sure you have at least enough time to walk the Dove Lake Circuit and take in the beauty that inspired conservation pioneer Gustav Weindorfer to devote himself to Cradle Mountain’s preservation.

From Cradle the West Coast Wilderness Way takes you through the thick western forests to the mining towns of Rosebery and Zeehan.

#### Compelling perspective

Your destination, Strahan, is an excellent base for exploring Macquarie Harbour, wild rivers like the Gordon, and the west coast’s beaches.

While in Strahan take in the award winning Strahan Visitor Centre. It provides a compelling perspective on Aboriginal history, Huon piners and the modern environment and gay rights movements.

#### Tragic reminder

The reconstructed West Coast Wilderness Railway is a must for fans of steam and allows travellers a chance to explore the mining town of Queenstown. Queenstown: a reminder of the impact of former mining practices on the environment and of the incongruities which make Tasmania so fascinating.





Tasmania is an inexhaustible source of delight and wonder. Here are some more special things to see and do while visiting the island. They are uniquely Tasmanian.

### Moonbirds

An experience enjoyed by many Tasmanian wildlife enthusiasts is a visit to a muttonbird rookery.

Tasmania is a haven for muttonbirds, or shearwaters. They spend the summer breeding season here (Nov – Apr) before migrating to the shores of Alaska and Siberia.

Muttonbirds gather food far out at sea during the day. The best time to see them is when they return at dusk to giant rookeries to feed their chicks.

It is awe-inspiring to watch thousands of these agile birds wheel and dive as the moon rises behind them. Aboriginal people call them “moonbirds”.

Muttonbirds are protected, but traditional harvesting by Aborigines is allowed. Their dark, greasy meat is an acquired taste.

The best places to see muttonbirds are special viewing platforms at Cape Deslacs near Clifton Beach and the neck on Bruny Island. Moonlit nights are best.

### Possessed by the devils

Tasmanian devils are the island’s most recognisable emblem, thanks to their cartoon equivalent, known across the world.

The world’s largest marsupial carnivore acquired its name from early colonists frightened by its characteristic snarling and wailing. Apocryphal stories of devils downing and devouring cattle are still told today to scare young children.

In reality devils are intelligent animals with a highly structured social life and a playful streak.

There is still much to be learnt about devil behaviour, reproduction and biology.



Normally shy of humans, devils can be seen close up at Tasmania’s wildlife parks and at special purpose-built hides at different locations around the island.

### Flash Mob

All Tasmania’s convict historic sites have a homosexual history, but few provide any insight into it.

The Strahan Visitor Centre is unique in examining convict homosexuality at early punishment stations like Sarah Island near Strahan, Maria Island and the convict Coal Mines south of Hobart, as well as drawing links between homophobia in nineteenth and twentieth century Tasmania.

Closed in 1848, partly because of official concern about uncontrollable sodomy in the mine’s depths, the Coal Mines is now an evocative site well worth visiting. So are the lonely convict ruins on Maria Island. When Maria’s convict Superintendent wrote that he

had walked in on eight men who had pushed their beds together and lay sleeping in each other’s embrace his words echoed all the way to London.

Not long after, at Tasmania’s largest convict station, Port Arthur, penitentiary dorms were re-designed to keep inmates separate and under constant surveillance.

Separation and surveillance were even more strictly enforced in the Separate Prison, which was built at Port Arthur partly to allow men convicted of sodomy to reflect on their “unnatural vice” and repent. This prison remained in use to punish non-convict homosexuals well after the penology behind it had been discredited elsewhere. The story of Leonard Hand, a young man convicted of sodomy who was driven mad by its rigour, is told in the prison.

Hobart’s convict women’s prison was the site of “much unnatural intercourse” according to its superintendents. An inquiry into the infamous group of



incorrigibles known as the “Flash Mob” heard of *“prisoners dancing perfectly naked and making obscene attitudes towards each other”*. Worse still the investigators were told that *“two women had recently been detected in the very act of exciting each other’s passions – on the Lord’s Day in the House of God – and at the very time divine service was performing”*.

### Bridges

In an island society familiar with contrasts, contradictions and sometimes deep division, bridges have a special symbolic importance.

At Richmond, east of Hobart, Australia’s oldest bridge is still in use. So is the bridge at Ross, half way between Hobart and Launceston.

Ross Bridge features the faces of colonial Tasmanians and figures from Celtic mythology carved by convict masons into its 170 year old stones. One of the faces belongs to Jorgen

Jorgensen, who, in between serving two sentences as a convict in Tasmania, was briefly King of Iceland. As the carvings wear with age they speak of how the Tasmanian past blurs mythology and history in larger-than-life figures like Jorgensen.

Another remarkable convict-built bridge is the Spiky Bridge south of Swansea. Built without mortar and with a spiked parapet, supposedly to stop cows falling off, Spiky Bridge is a source of great bafflement to many visitors.

Rare wooden industrial-age bridges like the Bird River Bridge, and the reconstructed bridges on the West Coast Wilderness Railway, both near Strahan, testify to engineering genius and a desire to tame Tasmania’s wilderness. Hobart’s nineteenth century aquaducts show the same historical period in a gentler mood.

Architectural merit can also be found in modern bridges like the Batman north of Launceston and Hobart’s Tasman Bridge. When



the latter was ripped in half by an off-course freighter in 1975 12 people died. A march for Aboriginal reconciliation across the re-built bridge in 2000 was proportionally the largest of its kind in Australia.

### Sacred places

Tasmania’s indigenous people have a rich, vibrant culture stretching back 40,000 years.

Pre-historic sites are common, although most are remote or invisible to the untrained eye. This is a blessing given their immense significance and fragility.

Aboriginal middens (refuse piles) can be found in most coastal areas. There are also many stone tool quarries, ochre quarries, fish traps and hut trenches.

Tasmanian Aboriginal hand stencils found in caves in the south west are some of the oldest human art.

The most accessible and well-interpreted pre-historic

sites include the caves at Bedlam Walls near Hobart, and the rock carvings on Mersey Bluff in Devonport.

Historic places of profound significance to Aboriginal people include the original site of Hobart, at Risdon Cove, Wybelena on Flinders Island and Oyster Cove south of Hobart.

The latter two were camps to which many Aboriginal people were exiled after their guerrilla war to stop white encroachment ended in Australia’s only European/ Aboriginal treaty in the 1830s. That treaty remains unhonoured.

### Larmairremener Tabelti

Insight into the continuity of Aboriginal culture and its link to the land can be found at the Aboriginal culture walk, or “Larmairremener Tabelti”, at Lake St Clair National Park.

When visiting Aboriginal sites please recognise that they are part of a living culture and pay them the respect they deserve.

# Listings

## Community Groups

**Gay Info Line**  
(for up-to-date info on commercial venues and community events)  
Ph: (03) 6234 8179

**Working It Out**  
(for counselling and personal support)  
Hobart  
Ph: (03) 6222 7688  
Burnie  
Ph: (03) 6434 6474

**Tasmanian Council on AIDS & Related Diseases**  
Ph: (03) 6234 1242

**Hobart Women's Health Centre**  
(for lesbian health needs)  
Ph: (03) 6231 3212

**Tasmanian Gay & Lesbian Rights Group**  
Ph: (03) 6224 3556

## General

**Touring Itineraries**  
www.tastravel.com.au

**National Parks**  
www.parks.tas.gov.au

**Diving Information**  
www.divetasmania.com

**Adventure Information**  
www.discovertasmania.com

**Fishing Information**  
www.troutguides.tasmania.com.au

**Events and Festival Information**  
www.discovertasmania.com/events

 The *i* signs indicate a staffed visitors information centre.

## Attractions

**Female Factory South Hobart**  
Tel: (03) 6223 1559  
**Ross**  
Ph: (03) 6381 5466

**Penitentiary Chapel Historic Site**  
Hobart  
Ph: (03) 6231 0911

**Salamanca Market, Hobart**  
Every Saturday from 8.30am–3.00pm (except Christmas Day and Anzac Day)

**Woolmers Estate & National Rose Garden**  
www.woolmers.com.au  
Longford

**Royal Tasmanian Botanical Gardens**  
www.rtbg.tas.gov.au  
Hobart

**Clarendon Homestead**  
Evandale  
Ph: (03) 6398 6220



### TOURING ROUTES

- Great Nature Trail
- Cradle Country Touring Route
- The West Coast Wilderness Way
- The Rivers Run
- Huon Trail
- The Heritage Highway
- Great Western Tiers Tourist Route
- Tamar Valley Touring Route
- North East Trail
- East Coast Escape

### TRAVELLING DISTANCES (km) AND TIMES

Launceston-St Helens (via Scottsdale)	163	2hrs20
Launceston-Bicheno (via Scottsdale)	236	3hrs30
Launceston-Hobart (via Midlands Hwy)	198	2hrs20
Bicheno-Hobart (via Sorell)	178	2hrs25
Hobart-Port Arthur	93	1hr30
Hobart-Queenstown	260	3hrs40
Queenstown-Burnie	176	2hrs25
Burnie-Devonport	49	40min
Burnie-Smithton	85	1hr
Devonport-Launceston	99	1hr15
Devonport-Hobart (via Midlands Hwy)	277	3hrs
Hobart-St Helens	265	3hrs40
Queenstown-Launceston (via Sheffield)	251	3hrs30

**THE SIGN TO HELP YOU**  
Tasmania has a network of information centres in all areas of the state to help you get the most value out of your holiday. Our staff are local experts and will be delighted to point out those extra special places and experiences that you might otherwise miss. Look out for signs and call to take advantage of our free information service.

For more detail on roads, visitor attractions and services, refer to Visitors Map of Tasmania available at Service Tasmania outlets, Visitor Information centres and selected retail outlets statewide.  
www.dpiwe.tas.gov.au



Tourism Tasmania: www.discovertasmania.com



**Entally House**

Hadspen

Ph: (03) 6393 6201

**Port Arthur  
Historic Site**www.portarthur.  
org.au

Port Arthur

**Coal Mines**

Road C341

Saltwater River

**Hastings Caves**www.parks.tas.gov.au  
/reserves/hastings  
nr Southport**Tahune Airwalk**

Geeveston

Ph: (03) 6297 0068

**Bonorong****Wildlife Park**

Brighton

Ph: (03) 6268 1184

**Seahorse World**www.seahorseworld.  
com.au

Beauty Point

**Devil Viewing –  
Woolnorth Tours**www.woolnorthtours.  
com.au  
nr Stanley**Trowunna****Wildlife Park**www.trowunna.  
com.au

Mole Creek

**Wine & Food****Wine Routes**Visit: www.discover  
tasmania.com**Choux Shop Café**

Hobart

Ph: (03) 6231 0601

**Retro Bar &  
Restaurant**

Hobart

Ph: (03) 6223 2073

**Criterion Café**

Hobart

Ph: (03) 6234 5858

**Franklin Manor**

Strahan

Ph: (03) 6471 7311

**Cadburys Chocolate  
Factory**www.cadbury.com.au  
Hobart**D'Anvers Chocolate**www.anvers-  
chocolate.com.au  
Latrobe**Island Produce**

South Hobart

Ph: (03) 6223 3233

**Fish Frenzy**www.fishfrenzy.  
com.au

Hobart

**Mures Seafood  
Restaurant**www.mures.com.au  
Hobart**Left Bank Café**

Swansea

Ph: (03) 6257 8896

**Kate's Berry Farm**

Swansea

Ph: (03) 6257 8928

**Machine Café**

Hobart

Ph: (03) 6224 9922

**KAOS Café**

Hobart

Ph: (03) 6231 5699

**Rockerfellers**www.rockerfellers.  
com.au  
Hobart**Lickerish**

North Hobart

Ph: (03) 6231 9186

**Red Velvet Lounge**

Cygnet

Ph: (03) 6295 0466

**Moorilla Estate**

Berriedale

Ph: (03) 6277 9900

**Christmas Hill  
Raspberry Farm**

Elizabeth Town

Ph: (03) 6362 2186



## Arts & Crafts

### Tasmanian Museum & Art Gallery

[www.tmag.tas.gov.au](http://www.tmag.tas.gov.au)  
Hobart

### Queen Victoria Museum

[www.qvmag.tas.gov.au](http://www.qvmag.tas.gov.au)  
Launceston

### Plimsoll Gallery

Hobart  
Ph: (03) 6226 4309

### Carnegie Gallery

Hobart  
Ph: (03) 6238 2100

### Wood Design Centre

Launceston  
Ph: (03) 6331 5506

### Art Mob

[www.artmob.com.au](http://www.artmob.com.au)  
Hobart

### Tiagarra Aboriginal Cultural Centre

Devonport  
Ph: (03) 6424 8250

### Cradle Mountain Wilderness Gallery

Cradle Mountain  
Ph: (03) 6492 1404

## Bookshops

### Hobart Bookshop

Hobart  
Ph: (03) 6223 1803

### Astrolabe Bookshop

[www.astrolabebooks.com.au](http://www.astrolabebooks.com.au)  
Hobart

## Tours

### Vino Ventures

[www.vinoventures.net](http://www.vinoventures.net)  
Hobart

### Shake a leg guided Eco walking tours

Bicheno  
Ph: (03) 6375 1478

## Accommodation

### Meredith House

Swansea  
Ph: (03) 6257 8119

### Kabuki-by-the-Sea

[www.kabukibythesea.com.au](http://www.kabukibythesea.com.au)  
nr Swansea

### Henry Jones Art Hotel

[www.thehenryjones.com](http://www.thehenryjones.com)  
Hobart

## Hiba

[www.hiba.com.au](http://www.hiba.com.au)  
Bruny Island

## Huon Bush Retreats

[www.huonbushretreats.com](http://www.huonbushretreats.com)  
Huonville

## Corinda's Cottages

[www.corindascottages.com.au](http://www.corindascottages.com.au)  
Hobart

## Riseley Cottage

Dover  
Ph: (03) 6298 1630

## Mt Paul on Freycinet

[www.mtpaul.com](http://www.mtpaul.com)  
Coles Bay

## Rainbow Retreat

St Marys  
Ph: (03) 6372 2168



*For more information on gay friendly accommodation look for this symbol on [www.discovertasmania.com](http://www.discovertasmania.com)*





Tasmania

Discover Australia's natural state