



Tasmania

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Why Go?

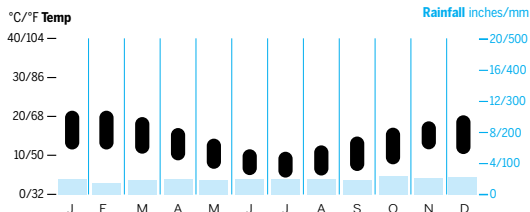
Dazzlin' Tassie is brilliant, beautiful and accessible. It's compact enough to 'do' in a few weeks and layered enough to keep bringing you back. Look forward to exquisite beaches, jagged mountain ranges, rarefied alpine plateaus, plentiful wildlife and vast tracts of virgin wilderness, much of it within a World Heritage area. Tasmania produces superb gourmet food and wine, and a flourishing arts scene and urban cool highlight its positive and vibrant future.

Tasmania's past incorporates an often tragic Aboriginal and convict history, much of it vital to understanding the story of Australia itself. Tasmania's pioneering heritage is showcased throughout the island, often against the backdrop of some of Australia's most impressive colonial architecture.

For the outdoors buff, Tassie's bushwalking, cycling, rafting and kayaking opportunities rank among the best on the planet. Tasmania is still Australia, but bewitchingly, just that little bit different.

When to Go

Hobart



Feb Swim, bushwalk and mountain bike; enjoy the most settled weather of the year.

Mar Fill up on fresh apples, fruit and berries from Tasmania's network of farmgate providers.

Dec–Jan Enjoy the best of Hobart's festival season with food, wine, music, art and culture.

History

There were perhaps 10,000 indigenous Australians living on Tasmania when Dutchman Abel Janszoon Tasman became the first European to sight the island. His ships first came upon the island's northwest coast on 24 November 1642 and then skirted around the southern and southeastern coastlines. He named the island Van Diemen's Land after the Dutch East Indies' governor. Since Tasman's voyages yielded nothing of value for the Dutch East India Company, European contact with the island ceased for more than another century until the British arrived at Sydney Cove in 1788 – Van Diemen's Land would become a convenient pit stop en route to New South Wales. In 1798 Matthew Flinders circumnavigated Van Diemen's Land, proving it was an island. In 1803 Risdon Cove, on the Derwent River, became the site of Australia's second British colony. The settlement moved a year later to the present site of Hobart, where fresh water ran plentifully off Mt Wellington.

Convicts accompanied the first settlers as labourers, but the grim penal settlements weren't built until later: on Sarah Island in Macquarie Harbour in 1822, on Maria Island in 1825 and at Port Arthur in 1830. In subsequent decades Van Diemen's Land became infamous for the most apocalyptic punishments and deprivations exacted on convicts anywhere in the British colonies – the most fearsome, terrible of destinations. By the 1850s every second islander was a convict and Van Diemen's Land had whole industries exploiting the misery of convict labour. Hobart Town and Launceston festered with disease, prostitution and drunken lawlessness.

In 1856 the 'social experiment' of convict transportation to Van Diemen's Land was abolished. In an effort to escape the stigma of its horrendous penal reputation, Van Diemen's Land renamed itself Tasmania, after the Dutchman. By this time, however, the island's Aboriginal peoples had been practically annihilated by a mixture of concerted ethnic cleansing, disease, forced labour, and ultimately doomed resettlement and assimilation schemes.

The 1870s and '80s saw prospectors arrive after gold was discovered, and the state's rugged and remote west was opened up by miners and timber workers seeking Huon pine, myrtle and sassafras. So began the exploitation of Tasmania's natural

resources. In the 1960s and '70s conservationists fought unsuccessfully to stop the hydroelectric flooding of Lake Pedder. In the 1980s the issue flared again; this time the fledgling pro-environment movement successfully campaigned against flooding the Franklin River for similar purposes. Leaders in these campaigns were instrumental in forming the United Tasmania Group in 1972, regarded as the world's first Green political party. The Australian Greens party has since become a force in Australian federal politics.

The long-running debate between pro-logging groups, pro-pulp mill corporations and conservationists keen to protect Tasmania's old-growth forests and wild heritage continues. In 2012, a 'peace deal' was ratified, the culmination of years of discussions between the forest industry, timber workers and conservation groups. The agreement includes a moratorium on the logging of high-conservation-value forests, but remains a contentious and sometimes divisive agreement steeped in compromise.

In early 2013 approval was granted by the Tasmanian state government for mining in the remote Tarkine wilderness area in the state's northwest. The decision has created Tasmania's latest battleground in the ongoing conflict between environmental and industrial concerns, and is more evidence of the delicate balancing act of generating jobs and preserving Tassie's wilderness heritage.

Indigenous Tasmania

The treatment of Tasmania's indigenous peoples by early European settlers is a tragic and shameful story. Isolated from the Australian mainland by rising sea levels 10,000 years ago, the island's Aboriginal peoples developed a distinct, sustainable, seasonal culture of hunting, fishing and gathering.

When European pastoralists arrived, they fenced off sections of fertile land for farming. Indigenous Australians lost more and more of their rightful hunting grounds, and battles erupted between blacks and whites – resulting in the so-called Black Wars. Lieutenant-Governor George Arthur declared martial law in 1828 and Aboriginal tribes were systematically murdered, incarcerated or forced at gunpoint from districts settled by whites. Many more succumbed to European diseases.

An attempt to resettle Tasmania's remaining Aboriginal peoples to Flinders Island – to 'civilise' and Christianise them – occurred