

# Tasman Peninsula & Port Arthur



Just an hour from Hobart are the staggering coastal landscapes, sandy surf beaches and potent historic sites of the Tasman Peninsula. The *numero uno* ticket on the Tassie tourist trail is here – the Port Arthur Historic Site. There are boundless other attractions (natural and otherwise) down this way – enough to warrant a stay of at least a couple of days. If you're feeling active, bushwalking, surfing, sea-kayaking, scuba diving and rock climbing opportunities abound.

On the wild side of proceedings, don't miss a visit to the peninsula's legendary 300m-high sea cliffs, which will dose you up on natural awe. Most of the cliffs are protected by Tasman National Park, a coastal enclave that also embraces chunky offshore islands, magical underwater kelp forests, and heaths containing rare plants. The cliffs are a safe haven for innumerable seabirds, including wedge-tailed eagles, while the fertile waters below throng with seals, dolphins and whales. Waiting portentously at the end of Arthur Hwy is Port Arthur, the infamous and allegedly escape-proof penal colony of the mid-19th century. The crowds mill around the ruins – kids laugh and kick footballs while dads poke sausages on BBQs – but it's impossible to forget that this is a tragic place, both historically and more recently. Figures show that the downturn in regional tourism following the 1996 massacre has been reversed in recent years, and a number of tourism developments (new resort-style hotels and expansions of old ones) are leaping from architects' drawing boards into reality.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- Paying your respects to the past, both distant and recent, at the **Port Arthur Historic Site** (p128)
- **Sea-kayaking** (p122) around the Tasman Peninsula's broken coastline
- Getting your hands dirty picking fresh raspberries, apricots and silvanberries at the **Sorell Fruit Farm** (p123)
- Spotting seals, dolphins and maybe even a whale on a cruise around **Tasman Island** (p129) from Port Arthur
- Battling vertigo atop the southern hemisphere's highest sea cliffs at Cape Pillar on the **Tasman Coastal Trail** (p124)
- Carving up the southern surf (or learning how to) at **Eaglehawk Neck** (p125)
- Chowing down on a canal-side burger at the **Waterfront Café** (p123) in Dunalley
- Pitching your tent at remote **Fortescue Bay** (p127) and falling asleep to the lull of the waves





## Getting There & Around

Take care driving down the peninsula to Port Arthur if you're behind the wheel, as plenty of gnarly accidents have occurred on the Arthur Hwy. It's a wiggly, narrow road in places, with exits hidden behind hills and around corners, and the usual idiots with lead feet.

Regional public-transport connections are surprisingly poor. **Tassielink** (☎ 1300 300 520; www.tassielink.com.au) runs a weekday evening bus from Hobart to Port Arthur (\$25, 2½ hours) during school terms, reducing to Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings during school holidays. Buses stop at the main towns en route.

**Redline Coaches** (☎ 1300 360 000; www.redlinecoaches.com.au) also operates some weekday services between Hobart, Sorell and Dunalley, but no further south.

## TOURS

If you don't have wheels, you can take a coach or ferry tour to the Tasman Peninsula from Hobart. Many operators run trips to Port Arthur. Some options:

**Bottom Bits Bus** (☎ 1800 777 103, 6229 3540; www.bottombitsbus.com.au; full-day tours \$110) Small-group backpacker-focused day trips (every day except Tuesday and Thursday) including Port Arthur entry, evening ghost tour (Saturday only; additional cost) and visits to the peninsula's natural attractions (Tessellated Pavement, Tasman Arch, Devil's Kitchen).

**Gray Line** (☎ 6234 3336, 1300 858 687; www.grayline.com.au; full-day tour adult/child \$90/45) Coach tours ex-Hobart, including a harbour cruise around the Isle of the Dead, Port Arthur admission and guided tour, and pit stops at Tasman Arch and the Devils' Kitchen.

**Navigators** (☎ 6223 1914; www.navigators.net.au; Brooke St Pier, Hobart; full-day tour adult/child \$149/110) Cruises from Hobart to Port Arthur, returning on a coach, departing Wednesday, Friday and Sunday. Includes entrance to the historic site, guided tour and morning tea. Also running is a cruise around Tasman Island from Port Arthur (see p93).

**Port Arthur Bus Service** (☎ 6250 2200; www.tasmancruises.com.au; full-day trip adult/child \$90/55) Meet Port Arthur on your own terms, with a ride there and back (including admission) from Tasman Island Cruises. Departs Hobart visitors centre at 8am; bookings required.

**Roaring 40s Ocean Kayaking** (☎ 6265 5000; www.roaring40stours.com.au; 1-/3-day tour \$255/1150) Based in Kettering (p136), Roaring 40s also conducts epic sea-kayaking tours around the Tasman Peninsula, paddling past the monumental coastline. Prices include equipment, meals, accommodation and transfers from Hobart.

**Tasman Island Cruises** (☎ 6250 2200; www.tasmancruises.com.au; full-day tour adult/child \$220/150) Take a bus to Port Arthur for a three-hour ecocruise around Tasman Island, then explore the Port Arthur Historic Site and bus it back to town. Includes morning tea, lunch and Port Arthur admission. Departs Hobart visitors centre at 8am; bookings required. You can also take just the cruise from Port Arthur (see p129).

## SORELL

☎ 03 / pop 1730

Sorell is one of Tasmania's oldest towns, settled in 1808 primarily to supply locally processed wheat and flour to the rest of the colony, but its historic aura has tarnished over time. These days it's a T-junction service town with more petrol stations and fast-food joints than anything else, but it's still the gateway to the Tasman Peninsula. For maps and peninsula info, swing into the **Sorell visitors centre** (☎ 6265 6438; www.tasmanregion.com.au; 16 Main Rd; ☎ 9am-4pm May, 10am-4pm Jun-Sep, 9am-5pm Oct-Apr). Pick up the *Tasman – The Essence of Tasmania* and the *Convict Trail* booklets, which cover the peninsula's key historic sites.