



Cradle Country & the West

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Why Go?

If you imagined Tasmania as a land of soaring alpine peaks and dreamy, untouched wilderness, then you've imagined this part of Tasmania. Think endless ocean beaches, ancient mossy rainforests, whisky-tinted rivers, glacier-sculpted mountains and boundless horizons where you feel like the only soul on earth. This is Tasmania's vast outdoor playground, where your options for adventure are varied and plentiful. Come here for the toughest multi-day hikes (or gentle rainforest wanders); come to shoot rapids on untamed rivers (or cruise mirror-calm waters); kayak into some of the last untouched temperate wilderness on earth, (or fly over it all by light plane). Get out into the wilds independently, or come here with a guided group, but whatever you do, *get out there*. For more see www.tasmaniaswest-coast.com.au.

When to Go

This whole region buzzes in the warmest months. It may be busy, but the long days give you more time in the outdoors, and visitor services operate at full tilt. Tasmania's alpine heart can be gorgeously ice-encrusted in winter. Fewer souls get out for bushwalking now, and even the most-trodden tracks are hushed. If you're equipped and keen for a frosty – even snowy – highland adventure, it's a great time to visit. The southwest returns to remotest isolation in the cold months: this is when ferocious western gales arrive...and few visitors dare.

Tullah

POP 270

A quiet place offering visitors accommodation, excellent trout fishing, and some challenging mountain walks, the little town of Tullah has been long isolated in the dreamy rainforests of the West Coast Range, and is wrapped by deep, tannin-brown rivers. It was established when mineral riches were discovered here in 1887. The lead-zinc-copper-silver-ore bearing body in nearby Mt Farrell sustained the town until the mine closed in the 1970s.

The name Tullah comes from an Aboriginal word meaning 'meeting of two rivers', and indeed, Tullah is almost an island: there are bridge crossings to enter and leave town, and seven dams in the vicinity. The town shelters in the nape of majestic Mts Farrell and Murchison, and the waters of Lake Rosebery lap close.

For most of its history, Tullah was only accessible to the outside world by horse or on foot. Later came a narrow-gauge train and only in 1962, a road. In the 1970s and 1980s, Tullah was a 'hydro-town' accommodating workers building hydroelectric dams. It was a rollicking time: with 800 hardworking men in town the pub served 38 18-gallon beer kegs in one week.

Though post-hydro Tullah has been a somnolent backwater, like much of the west coast it also experiences the boom-and-bust mining cycle. When old mines reopen for a time, there's a real air of optimism about.

👁 Sights & Activities

To commemorate the days of steam when Tullah's only link to the outside world was by train, local residents have restored **Wee Georgie Wood Steam Railway** (☎0417 142 724; Murchison Hwy; adult/child/family \$7/3/14), one of the narrow-gauge steam locomotives which operated on the town's original railway. From late September to May, on the first Sunday and the last Saturday and Sunday of the month, between 10am and 4pm, passengers can take 20-minute rides through the hills and rainforest, on part of the original track.

There are several **scenic drives** from Tullah alongside hydroelectric dams and lakes:

Reece Dam Three kilometres north of town you can follow remote (but sealed) Pieman Rd (which, after it swings south around the Reece Dam, becomes Heem-

skirk Rd, C249) west for about 45 minutes to the 120m high rock fill dam wall of the Reece Dam on Lake Pieman. The road continues over the dam wall another 29kms to Zeehan.

Anthony Rd Just south of Tullah, turn left into Anthony Main Rd (B28) which heads over the flanks of Mt Murchison and close to the sometimes mirror-calm waters of Lake Plimsoll. It's a scenic shortcut to Queenstown.

Mackintosh Dam Rd You can also take a side trip to Lakes Mackintosh and Murchison. Turn right onto Mackintosh Dam Rd if you're heading north to Lake Mackintosh, and then follow the road for an out-and-back-trip across the Mackintosh Dam to Lake Murchison.

The area's **best walks** include **Mt Farrell** (712m, three to four hours return) and the tallest mountain in the West Coast range, **Mt Murchison** (1275m, six hours return). The folks at Tullah Lakeside Chalet can provide walking information and may be able to guide you. There are also beautiful, short lakeside walks starting near the jetty and boat ramp. You might see local platypuses at play.

🛏 Sleeping & Eating

Tullah Lakeside Chalet HOTEL, CABINS \$\$ (☎6473 4121; www.tullahchalet.com; Farrell St; dm with shared en suite \$35, d \$90-220, extra person \$20) Set in ex-hydro workers' accommodation, this lake-edge hotel is being renovated bit by bit and has comfortable rooms – some with lake views and spas – as well as backpackers' accommodation. The chalet has kayaks you can take out on the lake (half/full day \$30/50) and you can borrow fishing gear to catch Atlantic salmon and brown or rainbow trout in the lake. It also arranges guided hikes to Mt Farrell and Lake Herbert. The restaurant here (mains \$18 to 28) has glorious lake views. Last dinner orders at 7.30pm.

Tullah Wilderness Gallery CAFE, APARTMENTS \$\$ (☎6473 4141; Murchison Hwy; d \$75-100; mains \$7.50-18; ☀8am-9pm, reduced hours in winter; 🍷) The friendly cafe here serves all-day breakfasts and hearty mountain fare, such as lasagne and schnitzel, as well as burgers and sandwiches to eat in or take away. You can browse in the attached gallery for art created from local wood. There are also two cosy self-contained apartments; book well