



Devonport & the Northwest

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Why Go?

If you designed a pirate's treasure map of a remote island's remotest corner, it might look something like this: a deep-forested, jagged-peaked interior where devils roam and eagles soar; a farmland patchwork scored through by gorges; mountain rivers; glow-worm-bejewelled caves. There'd be azure seas in white-sand coves; roaring beaches, islands, shipwrecks. And in the deep surrounding oceans you might write 'here be dragons'...except you'd make those dragons giant waves.

Imagine this, and you've conjured up some of the magic of Tasmania's northwest. There's much to captivate in this edge-of-the-world domain: from the epicurean to the creative to the wildest of natural. Come here to get arty or go bush – and meet the people who drink Cloud Juice, farm the wind, and breathe the cleanest air on earth.

When to Go

In spring and summer the northwest blooms: fields of purple poppies, multicoloured tulips, fragrant rainforest leatherwood. There's fresh crayfish, penguin-watching and festivals of music and craft, and you can camp beachside, ready for the perfect surf break.

Want to experience the full power of the Roaring Forties? Then consider visiting in winter. Locals batten down the hatches for the longest, darkest nights, when it's 999exhilaratingly wild and wind-lashed. You'll get a warm welcome, but call ahead: some things close completely – or open less frequently – in winter.

Devonport

POP 25,122

Devonport is best known to visitors to Tasmania as the port of the *Spirit of Tasmania* I and II, the red-and-white ferries that connect the island-state with the mainland. They're quite an evocative sight when, after three deep burps of the horn, they cruise past the end of the main street to begin their voyage north. Devonport is a water-side city: it straddles the Mersey River and seascapes stretch out from it to either side. One of the landmarks in town is the Mersey Bluff Lighthouse, built in 1889 to warn ships off the rocky coastline and guide them safely into port, and the protected Mersey River mouth is still an important harbour for exporting agricultural produce from surrounding fertile lands.

Many visitors get off the ferry in Devonport, jump in their cars and scoot. This quiet port town is possibly not the most glamorous spot in the state, but take your time to ground your feet on Tasmanian soil here: walk along the Mersey and up to the lighthouse for unmissable views over the coastline and Bass Strait. The new Mersey Bluff development (under way at the time of writing), with its smart surf club, restaurants, swimming beach, free hot showers and playground, will also be worth visiting.

Sights & Activities

Tiagarra

MUSEUM

(Bluff Rd; adult/child \$10/5; ☉9am-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-4pm Sat) The absorbing displays here tell the story of Aboriginal culture in Tasmania from the time humans first crossed over the land bridge that's now under Bass Strait. There's a soberingly frank assessment of the decimation of Aboriginal society and culture at the time of European arrival. Outside, you can follow a trail around the headland to see Aboriginal rock carvings (petroglyphs), some more than 10,000 years old.

Devonport Maritime Museum

MUSEUM

(6 Gloucester Ave; adult/child/family \$5/2/10; ☉10am-4.30pm Tue-Sun Oct-Mar, to 4pm Apr-Sep) This museum is in the former harbourmaster's residence (c 1920) and pilot station near the foreshore. It has an extensive collection of flags and other maritime paraphernalia, including a superb set of models from the ages of sail and steam to the present seagoing passenger ferries.

Don River Railway

MUSEUM

(www.donriver railway.com.au; Forth Main Rd; adult/child/family \$17/12/38; ☉9am-5pm) You don't have to be a trainspotter to love this collection of locomotives. Trainheads will go crazy over the brightly painted rolling stock. The entry price includes a half-hour ride in a diesel train (between 10am and 4pm), and you can hop on the puffing steam train on Sunday and public holidays. The railway is 4km west of town. Drive west out of Devonport on the Bass Hwy, then take the B19 exit towards Don, Devonport and Spreyton. Follow signs to the railway, which is 4.5km from the centre of Devonport.

Pandemonium

AMUSEMENT PARK

(62-64 North Fenton St; admission from \$8; ☉10am-5.30pm Tue-Sun) This is the place in Devonport where kids can let off steam. It's an indoor play centre with a giant jungle gym, jumping castles and slides (for up to 11-year-olds), laser skirmish (eight-year-olds and up), rock climbing (six and up) and the hands-on scientific displays of the Imaginarium Science Centre. There's a cafe to collapse in when you're done. The park is also open on public- and school-holiday Mondays.

Devonport Regional Gallery

ART GALLERY

(www.devonportgallery.com; 45-47 Stewart St; ☉10am-5pm Mon-Fri, noon-5pm Sat, 1-5pm Sun) This excellent gallery houses predominantly 20th-century Tasmanian paintings, contemporary art by local and mainland artists, plus ceramics and glasswork.

Home Hill

NOTABLE BUILDING

(77 Middle Rd; adult/under 18 yr \$10/free; ☉1.30-4pm Tue-Thu Sat & Sun Sep-Jun, by appointment Jul & Aug) This was the residence of Joseph Lyons (Tasmania's only prime minister of Australia; 1932-39) and his wife, Dame Enid Lyons, and their 12 children.

Penguin-watching season runs from August to March. At Lillico Beach, off the Bass Hwy on the western edge of town, you can watch little penguins emerge from the sea and return to their burrows at dusk.

Tours

Murray's Day Out

SIGHTSEEING

(☎6424 5250; www.murraysdayout.com.au; day trips per person from \$110) To be shown some of Tasmania by an entirely passionate and charming Tasmanian, consider taking one of these tours. Murray offers 'service with humour' in his comfortable van (seating up