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Forget Hobart, see the best of Northern Tassie in 10 days

[Marian McGuinness](#) May 11, 2019



Bridestowe Lavender Estate is one of Tassie's most spectacular vistas during flowering in December and January. Picture: Brian Dullaghan

There are many temptations when it comes to touring Tasmania. There's the geographically exotic east coast's Bay of Fires, St Helens and Freycinet; the heritage trail through Tasmania's core settlements of Campbell Town, Ross and Richmond and then there are the riches of Hobart and its peripheries: the Huon Valley, Port Arthur and Bruny Island.

The other option is to be a Launceston FIFO. Fly In Fly Out of Tasmania's northern city and experience the food, history and culture of the northwest and wilderness coasts in a loop.

Here's how to do it.

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DAYS 1-3

LAUNCESTON AND SURROUNDS

Launceston, Tasmania's second largest city, is at the head of the tidal Tamar River. With its juxtaposition of modern marina and Victorian streetscapes, Launceston makes a great three-day base camp.

While wandering this compact and endearing city, take a sweep of the [Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery](#), peek into the historic Old Umbrella Shop and check out Tassie's finest woollen products at the Waverley Woollen Mills.

Cataract Gorge is a short stroll away. With its dolerite cliffs and primal feel, there are several ways to explore. Walk the Cataract Trail, take the world's longest single-span chairlift across the gorge or cross it at the suspension bridge. Alternatively, relax on a 50-minute cruise into the gorge beneath the impressive span of the 19th-century Kings Bridge.

Afterwards, have a session at the James Boag Brewery or wander the marine boardwalk for many of Tassie's most awarded restaurants.

Still using Launceston as your base, do a day's loop of the Tamar Valley. While travelling along its western flank along the acclaimed wine route, stop at one, or more, of the more than 32 cool-climate wineries. Alternatively, stroll along the boardwalk of the Tamar Valley Wetlands, then visit the rainforests of Notley Fern Gorge and its 40-minute loop walk.



Launceston Cataract Gorge & First Basin — Launceston's own piece of wilderness just 15 minutes walk from the city centre.
Picture: Tourism Tasmania and Rob Burnett

For an evocative display of mining history, visit the 1800s Beaconsfield Mine & Heritage Centre.

Access the Tamar's eastern arm via the Batman Bridge and then sweep northwards for 20km, to George Town. Check out the Watch House with its replica 19th-century village, and explore the intriguing [Bass and Flinders Centre](#) where you can board a replica of the *Norfolk*, sailed by surgeon George Bass and cartographer Matthew Flinders when they circumnavigated Van Diemen's Land. Other artefacts include logs, charts and atlases, a replica of the *Tom Thumb* and a boat shed for restoring old wooden boats. It's then only 50km back to Launceston.

Spend your third day on another scenic day drive from Launceston heading northeast through countryside rich in dairy and agriculture. Stop off at the Lilydale Larder for a homemade morning tea, or to try their local whisky and cider.

Only 25km away is the spectacular [Bridestowe Lavender Estate](#) at Nabowla. The largest lavender farm in the Southern Hemisphere, it grows the true French lavender used in perfumes and cooking. Awash in December and January with a purple haze of fragrant, bee-buzzing bushes, it's fascinating any time of the year.

There's a distillery and a paddock-to-plate cafe offering lavender scones, lavender jam and even lavender ice cream. Then it's a 50-minute drive back to Launceston.



Pretty in...mauve. Deliciousness in a cone at Bridestowe Lavender Farm in Nabowla.

DAYS 4-5

PENGUIN

Leaving Launceston, drive northwest along the Bass Highway to your next base, 90 minutes away in the seaside town of Penguin, with its little penguin rookery and giant penguin installed on its beachfront. Along the way stop in at Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm and Cafe; Ashgrove Cheese and, for ultimate chocolate, the House of Anvers. Stop for another homegrown tippie at Spreyton Cider Co for a cellar door tasting treat.

While staying at Penguin, explore the coastal towns of Burnie, Wynyard and Stanley. If single malt whisky is your thing, visit Burnie's Hellyers Road Distillery. Sheltered by the imposing Table Cape, Wynyard's quilted fields and tulip farms celebrate its rural heritage. At low tide Fossil Bluff exposes the rare remains of Australia's oldest marsupials. In Stanley, ride the chair lift to the top of the volcanic plug called the Nut.



Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm was established in 1984 when the Dornauf family planted twelve acres of raspberry canes on a north facing hill on their property. Picture: Phil Kuruvita

DAYS 6-8

STRAHAN

Changing direction and landscape, the 1.38 million hectares of Tasmanian wilderness awaits. Your next port-of-call is Strahan, just over two hours' drive away. Take the turn-off at Burnie towards the west coast with nothing between you and the Roaring Forties and Southern Ocean.

While winding through the wild gorse hills and moorlands, stop off at Zeehan. First glimpsed by Abel Tasman in 1642, it was later known as Silver City. Now it's more Wild West with its rambling streets, historic Gaiety Theatre, geology shops and Pioneer's Memorial Museum.

Thirty minutes south of Zeehan is the forest-meets-sea fishing village of Strahan where you can cruise on Gordon River, glide past rainforests and alight at notorious convict prison settlement, Sarah Island. Next day take the return-journey *Queenstown Explorer* steam train. Chug the length of West Coast Wilderness Railway line via rainforests and over historic bridges to Queenstown.



Cruise the Gordon River with World Heritage Cruises.

DAY 9

DELORAINIE VIA CRADLE MOUNTAIN

After leaving Strahan, it's less than two hours' drive to [Cradle Mountain](#) through spectacular scenery.

This karst landscape with its sinkholes and caves provided the last credible sighting of the Tasmanian tiger. Seeing the jagged crucible of Cradle Mountain feels akin to seeing Uluru for the first time as it rises from the landscape.

The popular Dove Lake Circuit is a 6km trek and takes about two hours. Mostly boardwalk, it follows the rim of the lake and disappears into the temperate Ballroom Forest nestled against the mountain. There's a shuttle bus that returns trekkers from the end of the circuit to the cafe and car park at the Visitors Centre.

The Georgian town of Deloraine, a 90-minute drive away, is a good place to spend the night before heading back to Launceston. Situated on the Meander River and in the foothills of the Great Western Tiers, it not only has a National Trust streetscape, but is a major arts and crafts centre graced with award-winning cafes, galleries and artisan shops.



The ever-stunning Cradle Mountain. Picture: Emilie Ristevski

DAY 10

LAUNCESTON and FLY HOME

With a 40-minute leg back to Launceston, there's time to stock up at Deloraine's boutiques and gourmet shops before heading to the airport for your flight home. Launceston Loop completed.

GETTING THERE

Virgin [Australia](#), Jetstar and Qantas all have regular flights into and out of Launceston Airport.

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