THIS IS **TASMANIA**

NATURE

Dove Lake, Cradle Mountain

NATURE

It makes natural sense. After all, this is a treasure island of World Heritage Area sites with national parks encompassing an astounding one fifth of Tasmania's total area. To top that there's more than 1,000 mountains to explore, including one right in the backyard of the biggest city. What better environment, then, for a range of mild to wild adventures from wilderness walks to wildlife-spotting, dam abseiling to river cruising.

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INTERNATIONAL **TREASURES**

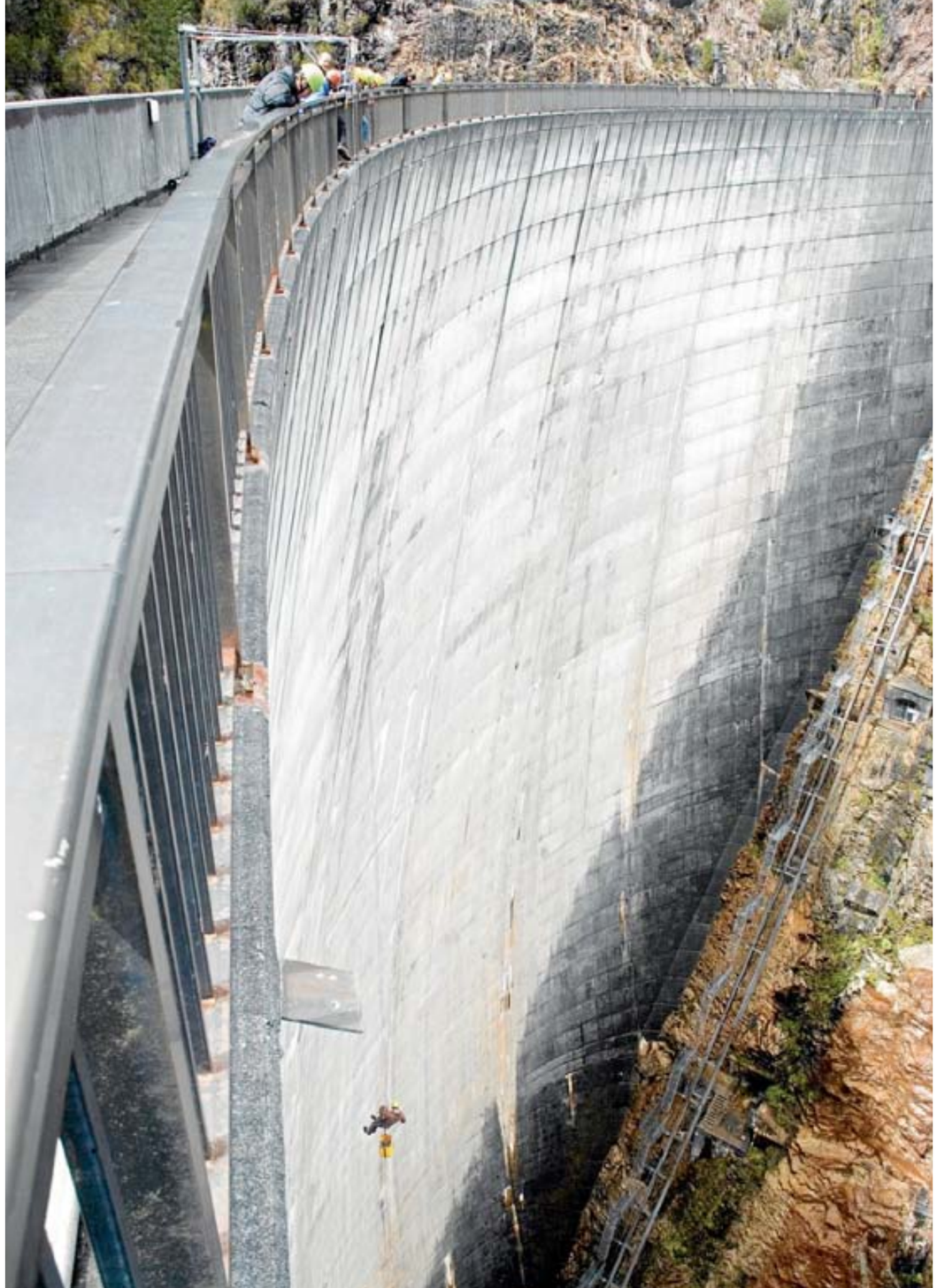
World Heritage Area (WHA) sites around the world tend to meet only a few of the 10 criteria required for their prestigious UNESCO listing. But only two locations meet seven of them – one is in China and the other is in, yes, Tasmania. Alpine landscapes, beaches, forests, natural vaults of Aboriginal treasures and a confection of extraordinary indigenous plants and animals help to make the **Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area** (www.parks.tas.gov.au) one of Earth's true natural treasures. The island's WHA is made up of four contiguous national parks that encompass 1.38 million hectares, or a staggering 20 per cent of the island. While much of this is superbly wild and tantalisingly remote, parts of it are easy to discover. Effortless access points include **Cradle Mountain and Lake St Clair**, boasting Australia's highest altitude ferry and helpful park rangers. From Strahan, boats glide up river to ancient rainforests within the WHA. Tasmania's 19 national parks, including **Ben Lomond**, **Rocky Cape**, **Savage River**, **Walls of Jerusalem** and **Wild Rivers**, are generously spread around the island and encompass a diversity of habitats and ecosystems for plants and animals that are found nowhere else on earth. The **Douglas-Apsley National Park**, near Bicheno on Tasmania's east coast, features the Lookout Track Circuit, which takes just 15-minutes to complete with a viewing platform overlooking a waterhole that's often a bewitching mix of emerald and turquoise hues. Elsewhere, at **Narawntapu National Park**, on the north-central coast, kangaroos, wallabies and wombats graze on its plain of cropped grass while occasionally Tasmanian devils can be spotted. The **Mount Field National Park**, close to Hobart is one of the island's most popular parks and a dreamworld of waterfalls and mountain scenery. The **South Bruny National Park** boasts a striking beach which runs to an elevated cape presided over by a scene-stealing lighthouse designed by renowned colonial architect John Lee Archer. A great time to visit Tasmania's national parks and reserves is during the peak of summer when **Discovery Rangers** from the **Park & Wildlife Service Tasmania** conduct a range of free activities for all visitors.

ADVENTURE ISLAND

Cradle Mountain Canyons

Freycinet Paddle Experience – Freycinet Adventures

For many a holiday in Tasmania can be an adventure in its own right. But if you'd prefer thrills and spills over just chilling out there are a wealth of adventures in which visitors can take part, spread within Tasmania's extraordinarily varied landscapes. Some adventures require little more than a desire for a holiday plot with a memorable twist. **The Dove Canyon Expedition** (www.cradlemountaincanyons.com.au) consists of jumps, slides and abseils within a 50-metre-high quartzite canyon near Cradle Mountain. You'll wear a wetsuit and safety gear for this five-hour expedition. The three-hour trip through **Lost World Canyon** may seem a little softer (adventure-wise) given you'll be floating on inflatable tubes. Elsewhere, **Aardvark Adventures** (www.aardvarkadventures.com.au) offer a 140 metre abseil of the Gordon Dam wall that's considered the world's highest commercial abseil. On Tasmania's extraordinary east coast, seals and dolphins are fond of the waters by the Freycinet National Park. It's there, on Great Oyster Bay, that courtesy of **Freycinet Adventures** (www.freycinetadventures.com.au) you can obtain a perspective similar to theirs on a sea kayak during a coastal three-hour exploration. On the **Franklin River**, a part of the world that tends to impart a new perspective on life for all those who experience it, authors and politicians have had life changing experiences. Rafting expeditions last from five to 10 days (www.peregrineadventures.com). If two wheels rather than two-man rafts turn you on then head for the top of **Mount Wellington** (www.mtwellingtondescent.com.au) or **Ben Lomond** (www.tasmanianexpeditions.com.au) for a guided, free-wheeling ride down two of Tasmania's highest and most famous peaks.



The 140-metre abseil of the Gordon Dam wall is considered the world's highest commercial abseil.

DEVILS OF A TIME

On an island that is one giant animal sanctuary, it's unsurprising the remarkable, and sadly threatened, Tasmanian devil remains the one creature that everyone wants to see. For the best chance of seeing devils in the wild, head to Tasmania's north-west region, according to wildlife biologist Rodrigo Hamede. "All around the north-west, devil densities are quite high," he says. "There is no particular place you are more likely to see a devil than the other. You have to go out in the evening or just after dusk in semi-open bushland where you can see a lot of wallabies. Stay quiet, stay still and be patient, and you may see a devil wandering around." **The Rocky Cape National Park**, south of Stanley and Woolnorth are ideal places for seeing devils according to Hamede. Elsewhere, Geoff King runs the Devil Restaurant (www.kingsrun.com.au) at Marrawah on the north-west coast where vsitors can watch wild devils feeding from his fisherman's shack. Craig Williams from **Pepperbush Adventures** (www.pepperbush.com.au), in contrast, focuses on off-the-beaten-track experiences, including the viewing of native animals on guided experiences such as on the "Quoll Patrol Tour" that takes place in remote and lesser-known areas of Tasmania. Other regulars in Tasmania never or rarely seen on mainland Australia are quolls, barred bandicoots and paddymelons. Off Tasmania's east coast, **Maria Island** (www.parks.tas.gov.au) with neither private vehicles nor predators is a genuine haven for wildlife, including Forester kangaroos – Tasmania's version of the eastern roo – and for birds such Cape Barren Geese, sea eagles and endangered forty-spotted pardalotes.

Eastern Quoll

Bruny Island Cruises

Cruises in various Tasmanian locations give visitors the opportunity to get close (but not too close) to marine life such as whales, dolphins and seals.

Tasmanian devil

The remarkable, and sadly threatened, Tasmanian devil remains the one creature everyone wants to see.

ABOVE AND **BEYOND**

Some of the tallest trees in the world are found in Tasmania's renowned forests.

Southwest National Park

It can take dedicated bushwalkers seven days along some of the wildest coast in Australia to tackle even a section of the **Southwest National Park** (www.parks.tas.gov.au), part of Tasmania's treasured World Heritage-listed wilderness. But there is an alternative and exhilarating way to gain a sense of this vast and stunning landscape. A short light-plane flight with **Par Avion** (www.paravion.com.au) from Hobart lands at **Melaleuca** where the airstrip is fashioned from a button-grass plain that runs to a distant hedge of mountains. Nearby is colossal **Bathurst Harbour**, a sprinkling of islands that are ancient remnants of Gondwana. Pondering how it's possible to be so quickly transported to this other world will beguile you. Another option is a sea-plane trip with **Adventure Flights** (www.adventureflights.com.au) from **Strahan** on Tasmania's West Coast which weaves passengers through a verdant valley while tracking the **Gordon River**. The plane puts down on the river at St John Falls near the site of the **Franklin River** dam blockade site in the 1980s. The falls are ringed by rainforest and the waterhole under the falls is staggeringly beautiful. Eagles Eyrie is built on a peak above the **Tyenna Valley**. There are views of distant mountains from this rooftop of Tasmania. The sub-alpine scrub surrounding the stylish building appears not to have been disturbed and is a credit to its design and construction. Some of the tallest trees in the world are found in Tasmania's renowned forests. You can also fly above a forest near **Launceston** at **Hollybank Treetops Adventure** (www.treetopsadventure.com.au),

Hollybank Treetops Adventure

an experience that was inspired by scientists working on "zip-lines" in rainforests. "Flyers" wear a harness and travel between platforms on trees. Incredibly, one section is 400 metres long. And, just south of Hobart, you can walk to the tips of towering trees, at the enormously-popular **Tahune AirWalk** (www.adventureforests.com.au). Here the majestic trees of the Southern Forests are up to three-storeys high.

WATERWAYS, WILDERNESS, **WILDLIFE**

The Tarkine, a magnificent 447,000 hectare wilderness in the north-west, is one of the world's most significant tracts of temperate rainforest. At the area's northern border is the wildly mighty Arthur River where Rob Hutton is a skipper for **Arthur River Cruises** (www.arthurrivercruises.com). He'll tell you much about the Tarkine, its forests and wildlife, as well as reveal his knowledge of sea eagles, spotted-tail quolls, (or "mini thylacines" as he calls them), dogwoods, myrtles and the wild river. The cruise includes a barbecue lunch – good simple hearty nosh – at a site etched in the forest. On the southern boundary of the Tarkine is another waterway, the **Pieman** with a former mining town, **Corinna** (www.corinna.com.au) on its bank. It features the Tannin Restaurant in a perfectly re-created rough-sawn timber building, restored miner's cottage and solar-powered cabins as accommodation, with parts of the Tarkine rainforest almost within touching distance. Forest walks and kayaking adventures help unwind wound up visitors while the **Arcadia II**, a regal 75-year-old Huon pine boat, chugs along the Pieman from Corinna to near the river's mouth at the Southern Ocean. Nearby **Waratah** has a waterfall in the heart of it with platypuses regular residents of the town's waterways. Most of the road linking Arthur River to Corinna may be gravel but it's not necessarily the reason why the 100 kilometres or so trip can take two-and-a-half hours. The stunning landscape, after all, must accept some of the responsibility since, in spectacular fashion, it can't seem to decide whether it is rainforest or plains or giant eucalyptus forest. Then there's **Dismal Creek**, both the site of the largest sinkhole in the Southern Hemisphere, and a location for **Tarkine Forest Adventures** (www.adventureforests.com.au). At **Mawbanna**, near Stanley, the **Water Wheel Creek Timber Heritage Experience** (www.waterwheelcreek.com.au), is a living tribute to Tassie's early pioneering settlers.

Tarkine Forest Adventures, Dismal Swamp

Pieman River

Water Wheel Creek Timber Heritage Experience

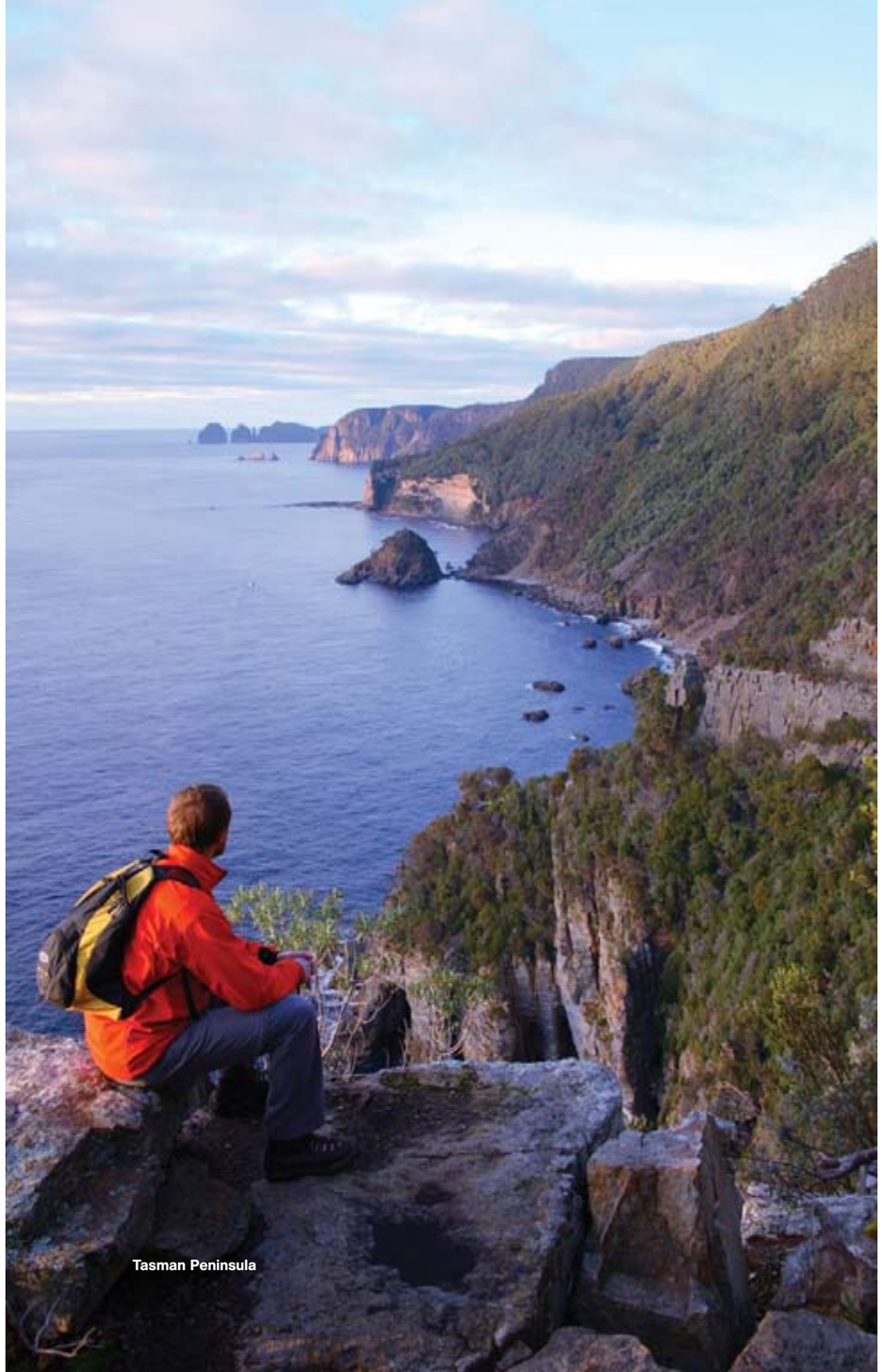
Arcadia II

WALKS ON THE **WILD SIDE**

It's an island of more than 1,000 peaks, an island of vast, seemingly impenetrable wildernesses, an island where national parks and reserves cover nearly half of its land-mass. Yet, as wild and rugged as Tasmania is, its untamed natural beauty is also wildly walkable even for the less fit of us. The 60 Great Short Walks offer the best of Tasmania's walking (hiking) opportunities, ranging from a few minutes to all day. The **Overland Track** is perhaps Australia's most outstanding multiple-day wilderness walk. But you don't need to embark on such an epic walk to experience the wonders of Cradle Mountain since it's so easy to do so, heavy back-pack free, in as little as a few hours. Walks are either self-guided or guided and are just a pristine lake pebble's throw from luxury lodgings such as the famed **Cradle Mountain Lodge** (www.cradlemountainlodge.com.au). From there you can wander through, and wonder at, the magnificent scenery without too much effort along eco-friendly, easy-on-the-feet boardwalks. From the serene to the strenuous, Tassie's wild heart is wildly accessible with **The Great Walks of Tasmania** (www.greatwalkstasmania.com) offering seven sensational guided walks over multiple days. They are: the **Bay of Fires Walk** in north-east Tasmania; the **Freycinet Experience Walk** on the east coast; the **Tarkine Rainforest Track** in the north-west; **Wall of Jerusalem Experience** and **Cradle Huts Walks** in central Tasmania; the **South-West Walk**; and the **Maria Island Walk**. Each of these acclaimed, fully-guided walks are accompanied by welcome creature comforts for those with a sense of adventure but who'd prefer not to rough it too much. Towering above Hobart is the 1,270 metres high **Mount Wellington** (www.mtwellingtonwalks.com.au), the city's equivalent of Cape Town's Table Mountain. It's the location of sensational walks from easy to adventurous atop its slopes.

Maria Island Walk

Mt Wellington


Tasman Peninsula

As wild and rugged as Tasmania is, its untamed natural beauty is also wildly walkable.

Sir John Falls Walk

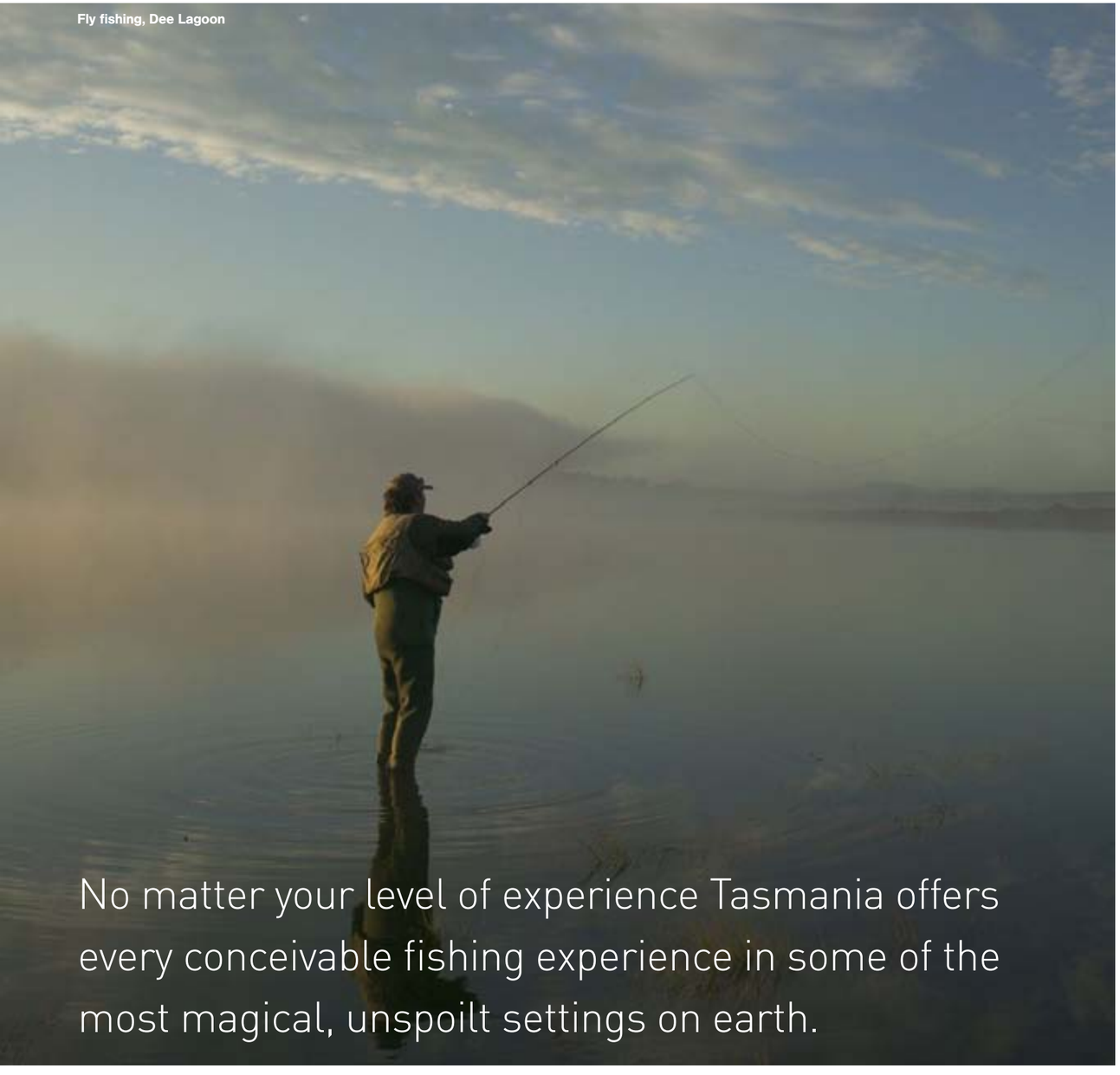
Sarah Island

GO WITH THE **FLOW**

Take a cruise along the tranquil **Gordon River** on the west coast and you can't help but marvel at the spellbinding scenery around every bend. The river, which winds its way from Macquarie Harbour near Strahan to deep in the south-west wilderness, was the scene of the landmark, though divisive, 1982 protests against the construction of a power scheme. The project, had it not been stopped, would have flooded the middle reaches of the Gordon River and the Franklin River Valley. Today, cruises, such as those operated by **World Heritage Cruises** (www.worldheritagecruises.com.au) and **Gordon River Cruises** (www.gordonrivercruises.com.au) leave Strahan and head out to the churning Hell's Gates at the entrance to Macquarie Harbour, where many ships have come to grief, to the Southern Ocean. Today the harbour is home to Atlantic salmon and ocean trout pens full of fish destined for the tables of restaurants both domestically and internationally. On either bank of the Gordon River there are deep forests of ancient Huon pines, leatherwoods, myrtle-beech and blackwood.
For 35,000 years Aborigines lived and cared for this environment that was the home of the Mimegin people of the south-west nation. They were followed by explorers, sailors, fishermen, piners and prisoners. On **Sarah Island**, Tasmania's first convict settlement, men worked in gangs from sunrise to sunset, often in waist-deep water, feeling and hauling Huon log pines. Over time the settlement became a thriving shipyard exploiting the rot-resistant Huon pine for the construction of vessels.

Gordon River Cruises - Lady Jane Franklin II

For 35,000 years Aborigines lived and cared for this environment that was the home of the Mimegin people of the south-west nation.



Fly fishing, Dee Lagoon

No matter your level of experience Tasmania offers every conceivable fishing experience in some of the most magical, unspoilt settings on earth.

THE PERFECT **CAST**

Whether it's fishing tuna on the east coast, tagging a wild brown trout in a highland-lake, or dangling a line along a remote beach, the lure of the island state, one of the last great fisheries of the world, is irresistible. Game-fishing waters in Tasmania - which hold a number of world-records for southern blue-fin tuna including one fish weighing in at 120 kilograms - stretch from Flinders Island in the north-east, past St Helens, where marlin proliferate, and all the way down the east coast. (Tag and release is encouraged by most charter boat operators). On a somewhat more subdued, though no less enthralling front, Tasmania with more than 3,000 lakes and rivers, is an internationally-recognised trout fly-fishing destination. Take advantage of knowledgeable guides, such as **Trout Guides & Lodges Tasmania** (www.troutguidestasmania.com.au). TGALT'S accredited guides and lodges are driven by a passion for the island's trout and environment, as well, of course, as boasting an unrivalled knowledge of angling. Wherever you fish in Tasmania you'll likely do so in solitude amid pure air and clean skies surrounded by remarkable flora and fauna. If all that doesn't hook you in completely, then Tasmania is also ideal for saltwater fishing with the island's estuaries and coastal lagoons brimming with species such as bream and flathead. No matter your level of experience Tasmania offers every conceivable fishing experience in some of the most magical, unspoilt settings on earth.

Red Tag Trout Tours

Flathead

3 days – Hobart and the South West

DAY 1 Hobart via Huon Valley and return

- Visit Tahune AirWalk and walk 48 metres high in the tree tops
- For the more adventurous hang gliding from the AirWalk is an option
- Take in the thrill of a ride on the Huon Jet Boat
- Overnight Hobart

DAY 2 Hobart via Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area and return

- Take a scenic flight with Par Avion to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area
- Cruise the Bathurst Harbour at Port Davey and view some of the most amazing landscapes and waterways in Australia
- Overnight Hobart

DAY 3 Hobart

- Enjoy the thrill of a Mount Wellington Downhill Descent Cycle Tour
- Depart Hobart

7 days – Launceston to Hobart via Strahan

DAY 1 Launceston

- Fly through the trees at Hollybank Treetops Adventure
- Enjoy an after-dark encounter with some of Tasmania's unique wildlife with Pepperbush Adventure
- Overnight Launceston

DAY 2 Launceston to Cradle Mountain

- Explore the Marakoopa Caves at Mole Creek
- Horse ride through the wilderness with Cradle Country Adventure Tours
- Overnight Cradle Mountain

DAY 3 Cradle Mountain

- Try the thrill of canyoning on a half day tour with the Dove Canyon Expedition.
- Hike the circuit walk around Dove Lake
- See the wildlife on a night spotlight animal tour
- Overnight Cradle Mountain

DAY 4 Cradle Mountain to Strahan

- Bound over the Henty Sand Dunes with 4 Wheelers Guided Four Wheel Motor Bike Tour
- Cruise on the Gordon River and view the amazing reflections
- Overnight Strahan

DAY 5 Strahan

- Take a spin on the Wild Rivers Jet boat
- At the end of the day take a walk to Hogarth Falls – you may see a platypus on the way
- Overnight Strahan

DAY 6 Strahan to Hobart

- Take a ride across the lake on Australia's highest altitude ferry at Lake St Clair
- On the way back to Hobart visit Russell Falls at Mount Field National Park
- Overnight Hobart

DAY 7 Hobart

- Enjoy the thrill of a Mount Wellington Downhill Descent Cycle Tour
- Visit Bonorong Wildlife Sanctuary which specialises in the conservation and rehabilitation of Tasmania's threatened wildlife
- Depart Hobart

This Is Tasmania series

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