THIS IS **TASMANIA**

CULTURE

Battery Point, Hobart

CULTURE

From World Heritage-listed convict sites to state-of-the-art museums, Tasmania is the ultimate small, but perfectly formed cultural package. One morning you can be wandering Port Arthur's precious penal ruins, in the afternoon be admiring challenging works of the Museum of New and Modern Art, while by night immersing yourself in the music of the Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra. No wonder that culture-vultures from near and far are descending on the island state.

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Port Arthur Penitentiary

SITES TO **BEHOLD**

There are few nations, let alone an island, that can boast as auspicious a collection of coveted World Heritage listings in such a compact area as Tasmania. The most recent, and momentous, additions came in July 2010 when five penal sites – out of a total of 11 in Australia – from the island state's compelling 18th and 19th century convict history, were inscribed by UNESCO (whc.unesco.org). The World Heritage Tasmanian convict sites are **Port Arthur Historic Site** and the **Coal Mines Historic Site** (see below) on the Tasmanian Peninsula; the **Cascades Female Factory** in South Hobart; **Darlington Probation Station** on Maria Island; and **Woolmers** and **Brickendon Estate** near Longford. As UNESCO itself states, these five sites present "the best surviving examples of large-scale convict transportation and the colonial expansion of European powers through the presence and labour of convicts". All of these fascinating locations and many others, such as **Sarah Island** in the midst of Macquarie Island on the West Coast and the historic town of **Richmond** near Hobart, all of which are steeped in convict history can be easily accessed by visitors to Tasmania. At the centrepiece of Tasmania's harsh yet enthralling convict heritage, and Australia's World Heritage penal settlement listings are the spectacular, haunting sandstone remnants of the 19th century prison **Port Arthur** (www.portarthur.org.au). They're just a few hours south of Hobart. The well-preserved, stunningly-located site was begun in 1831 and reserved for, ultimately, a total of 12,000 of the "worst of the worst" convicts. Just a brief 20-kilometres drive from Port Arthur are yet more significant convict-era remains. The **Coal Mines Historic Sites** (www.portarthur.org.au), Tasmania's first operational mines, provided the fledgling colony of Van Diemen's Land with vital coal supplies as well as serving as a place to dispatch those considered the most egregious of convict offenders who toiled in harsh underground conditions. Aside from its fascinating penal legacy, the Tasman Peninsula area surrounding Port Arthur is also a haven for surfing, sea-kayaking, diving and bush-walking.

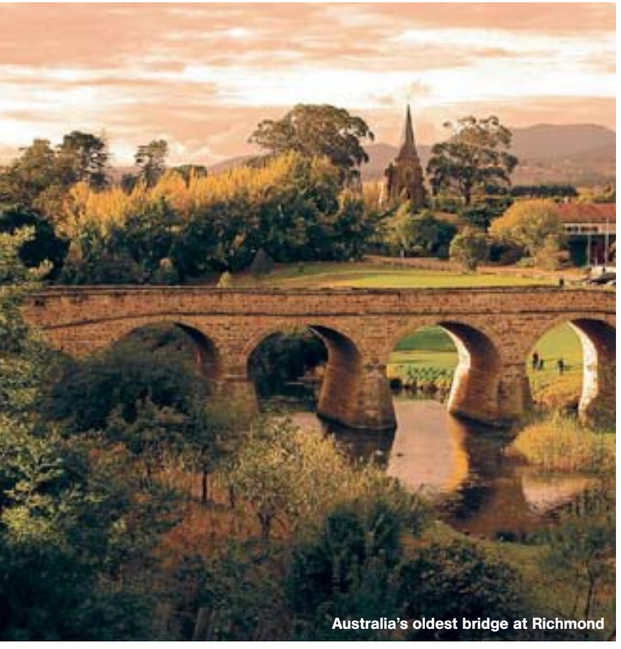
Coal Mines Historic Site

Brickendon

Port Arthur – indisputably the centrepiece of Tasmania's harsh yet enthralling convict heritage.

Port Arthur guard tower

STEPS BACK IN TIME



Australia's oldest bridge at Richmond

Cascades Female Factory

Victoria Dock, Hobart Waterfront

Hobart's Waterfront includes a guided walk around the gorgeous, heritage-rich suburb of Battery Point.

In Hobart and the nearby town of Richmond, well-preserved pockets of the nation's glorious, and sometimes inglorious, past survive. In the capital itself, South Hobart is the location for the 19th century **Cascades Female Factory** (www.femalefactory.com.au). It operated between 1828 and 1856 at the base of Mount Wellington as a means of accommodating the increasing number of female convicts. Ultimately, a total of 5,041 female convicts are known to have spent time at the factory. Gain a lively insight into the life of a 19th century female convict by participating in the innovative **Louisa's Walk** (www.livehistoryhobart.com.au), a 90-minute, guided, live theatre journey into the life of an Irish convict, Louisa Regan. The performance begins at the Cascade Brewery, moving on to the Cascades Gardens and then in around the remnants of the Cascades Female Factory, where Louisa was imprisoned. The walk tells the tale of her seven year sentence, in 1841, for stealing a loaf of bread. **Hobart's Waterfront** is a step back in time itself, with Hobart Historic Tours (www.hobarthistorictours.com.au) which features a guided walk around the gorgeous, heritage-rich suburb of **Battery Point**, including the landmark, early 19th century Arthur's Circus village-green surrounded by quaint cottages. And then there's an intoxicating insight into the city's former rollicking underbelly as glimpsed through a walking tour to Hobart's **old pubs and taverns**. An easy 24 kilometres drive from Hobart is picture-perfect Richmond (www.discovertasmania.com), a perfect place to discover Tasmania's rich colonial heritage. The town is home to Australia's oldest bridge (and one of the loveliest), built by convict labour between 1823 and 1825 as well as more than 50, 19th-century Georgian buildings, many offering quality accommodation. And then there's another, less comfortable form of lodgings, the Richmond Gaol, also Australia's oldest.

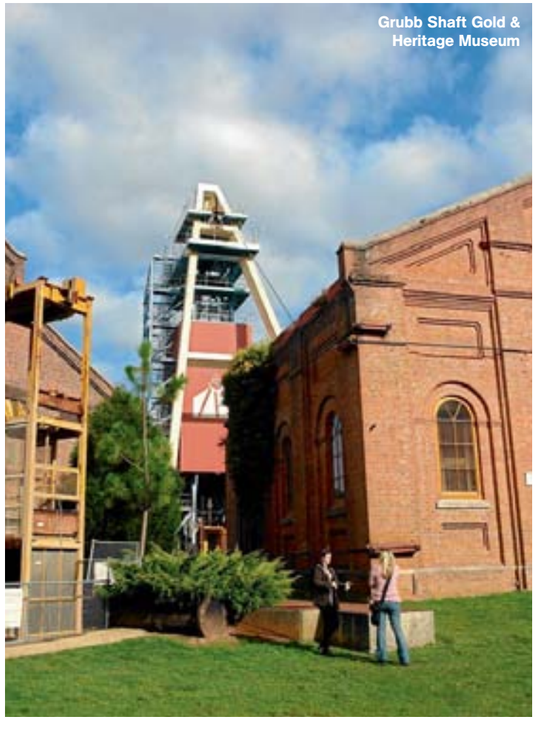
MILLS, MINES, **MIRACLES**

For a taste of Tasmania's more recent, though no less significant, history, head to **Beaconsfield**, the scene of Tasmania's most monumental, moving and, ultimately, triumphant mining rescue. On Anzac Day, 2006, a mine collapse took the life of miner Larry Knight and trapped his colleagues Brant Webb and Todd Russell for a nerve-shattering fortnight. Now the disaster is commemorated by the award-winning **Beaconsfield Mine and Heritage Centre** (www.beaconsfieldheritage.com.au). On a wholly different historical note, at **Longford**, under half an hour from Launceston and two from Hobart is **Woolmers Estate** (www.woolmers.com.au). It's not only home to the **National Rose Garden** but also convict-built settlers' cottages dating back to 1840 that now serve as accommodation. Also at Longford, **Brickendon** (www.brickendon.com.au) is a fascinating historical farming village that also features original early 19th century workers' cottage accommodation. The Brickendon property has been owned by the same family for more than 170 years. Further south, halfway or thereabouts between Launceston and Hobart the town of **Oatlands** oozes with colonial history. Its unique landmark is the delightful **Callington Flour Mill** (callingtonmill.com.au), Australia's only fully operational flour mill, built in 1837 and complete with a quartet of gently spinning sails.

For a taste of Tasmania's more recent, though no less significant, history, head to Beaconsfield.

Woolmers Estate Rose Garden

Callington Mill



Grubb Shaft Gold & Heritage Museum

INSPIRATIONAL **INNS**

EVERYTHING OLD IS NEW AGAIN AT THESE FINE HERITAGE STAYS

RED FEATHER INN

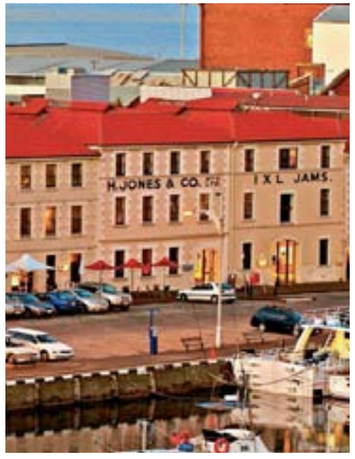
Hadspen

Outside Launceston, a handsome sandstone Georgian coach house built by convict labour in 1842 has been transformed into the elegant Red Feather Inn (www.redfeatherinn.com.au). Built by the colonial architect John Sprunt, the Red Feather Inn was first licensed in 1844. Now a luxury retreat, each beautifully-appointed suite overlooks a secluded garden, with the Red Feather Cooking School the inn's latest addition.

ISLINGTON HOTEL

Hobart

This historic Regency-style house, now perhaps Hobart's most luxurious accommodation, was built in 1847 in the city's residential dress-circle, replete with magnificent views of Mount Wellington from its informal garden. Decorated with fine art and antiques, the elegant, 11-room Islington (www.islingtonhotel.com) has won major luxury accommodation awards as well as attracted international media attention since its rebirth as a small luxury hotel.



HENRY JONES ART HOTEL

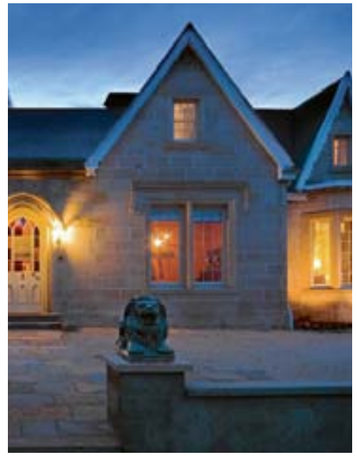
Hobart

A sensitive remodelling of waterfront Georgian warehouses, which notably once served as a former IXL jam factory, has seen news of the Henry Jones Art Hotel (www.thehenryjones.com) spread worldwide. It's now a chic 56-room hotel with an enviable location beside Hobart's charming Fisherman's Wharf at Sullivan Cove. Innovative touches include glass-enclosed bathrooms, corridors lined with artworks from the adjoining Tasmanian School of Art and the stylish port-front IXL Long Bar.

QUAMBY ESTATE

Launceston

Imposingly overlooking lush pastures reminiscent of England, Quamby Estate (www.quambyestate.com.au) is just 20 minutes from Launceston in northern Tasmania. Designed in the 1830s in an unusual Anglo-Indian style recalling the era of the Raj, the gracious, carefully-restored main homestead features boutique-hotel-style rooms with oversized timber-floored bathrooms, lavish pod-style white bathtubs and king-size beds.



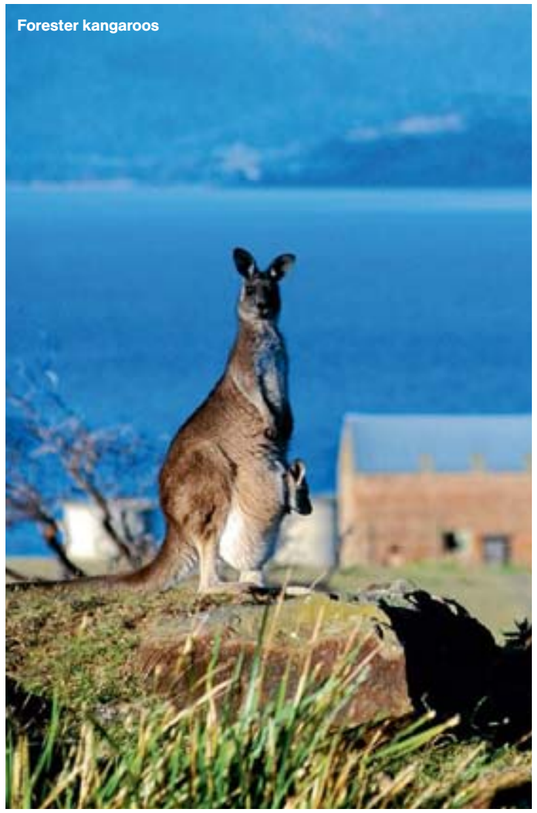
THE PRIORY COUNTRY LODGE

Bothwell

Built in 1848 in bonny Bothwell, the gateway to Tasmania's highlands, the town's Tudor-style priory has been transformed into The Priory Country Lodge (www.theprioryccountrylodge.com.au). The grand, luxurious lodge offers four elegant double rooms in its main building and two suites in a pavilion-like annexe jutting out from Adelaide Hill, complete with valley views. Guests, should they choose, can book the entire lodge or just one of the four bedrooms (complete with marble en-suites).

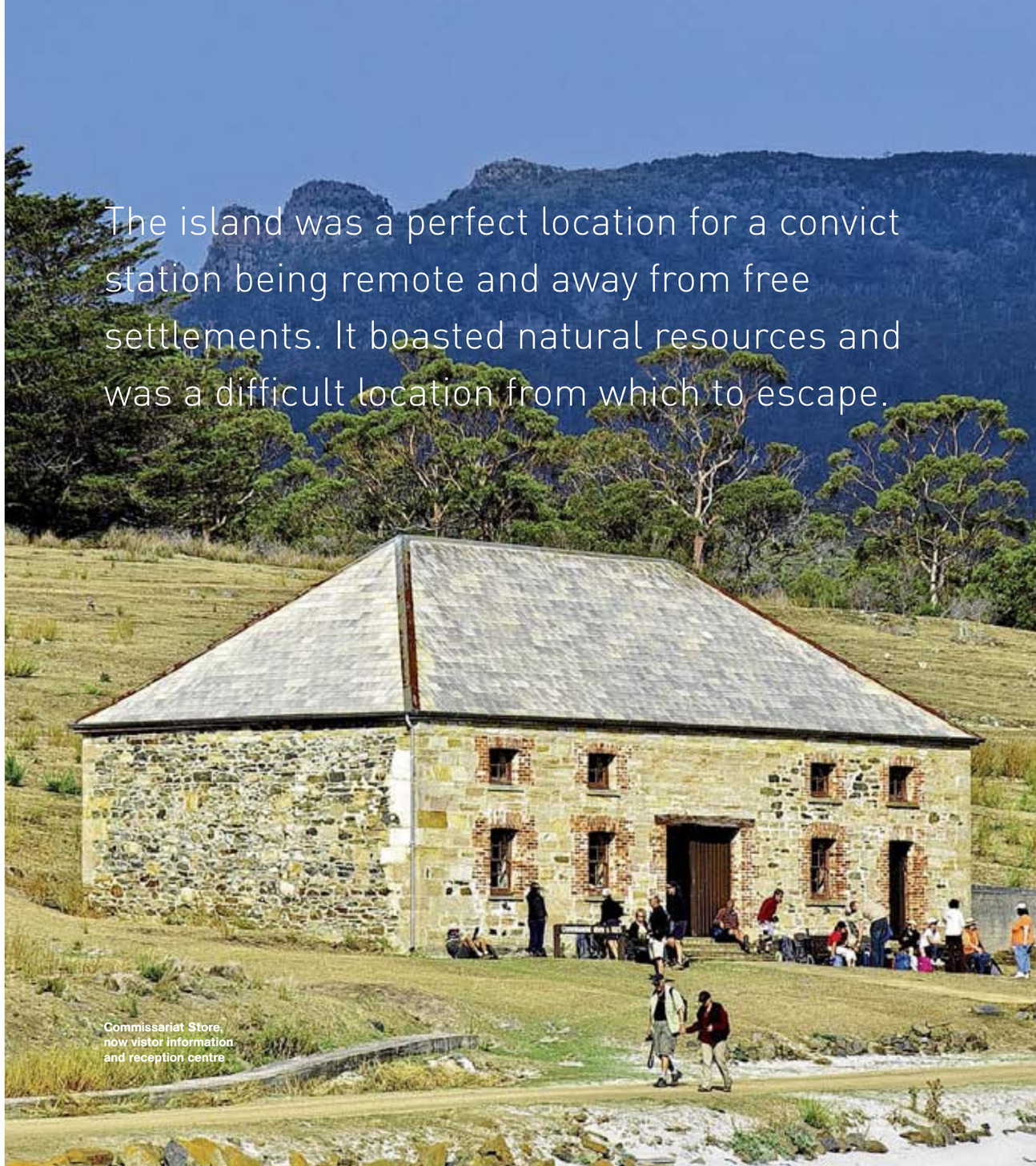
STATION **BREAK**

It's one of Australia's most awe-inspiring, historic yet relatively anonymous isles. A little less than 20-kilometres long and 13 kilometres at its widest point, **Maria Island** (pronounced mah-rye-ah), is located off Tasmania's east coast, After a scenic drive (and a quick ferry trip) up the idyllic East Coast from Hobart it's an easy boat ride from the village of Triabunna across the Mercury Passage from the East Coast, to Maria Island. It served as a penal colony between the 1820s and 1850s, and today is the site of the convict ruins of the **Darlington Probation Station**, consisting of over a dozen, well-preserved buildings and the beautifully-restored heritage home of Diego Bernacchi, a colourful Italian entrepreneur who moved to Maria Island in 1884. The location of the island was perfect for a convict station since it was remote from free settlements, boasted natural resources and was a difficult location from which to escape. For a taste of the penal life you can even stay in the original convict quarters, dating to 1825, at the value-minded **Penitentiary Accommodation Units** (www.parks.tas.gov.au). There are nine rooms, each with six bunk beds, table and wood-fired heater. The island is also notably home to the acclaimed **Maria Island Walk** (www.mariaislandwalk.com). It's an easy-going, four-day guided walk accompanied by two local expert guides. Best of all, you need only carry a light pack with the total walk covering 30 kilometres with gourmet dinners and comfortable wilderness camp and heritage home accommodation. Maria Island is essentially two smaller islands joined by a sandy isthmus with a steep and mountainous interior.



Forester kangaroos

Ringed by stretches of pure white sandy beaches and limestone cliffs, it's also home to its modern-day inmates: a staggering array of wildlife including birdlife, wombats, echidnas, kangaroos, wallabies and hordes of honking Cape Barren geese. While its stunningly unspoilt waters are the habitat for dolphins, seals and migrating whales.



The island was a perfect location for a convict station being remote and away from free settlements. It boasted natural resources and was a difficult location from which to escape.

Commissariat Store, now vistor information and reception centre

PLANES, TRAINS AND **PENAL SETTLEMENTS**

West Coast Wilderness Railway

Sarah Island Penitentiary

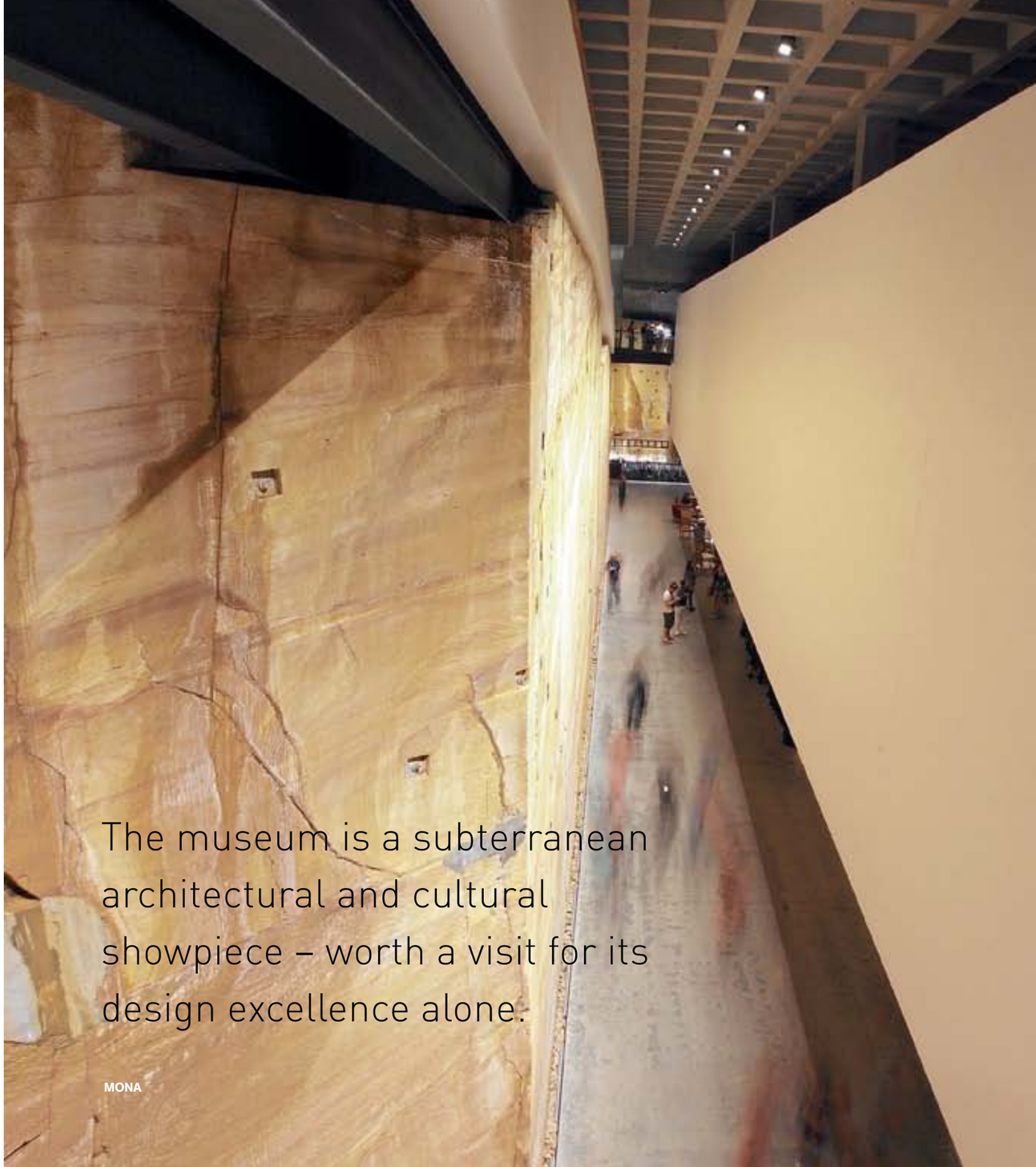
Sarah island was established in 1822, envisioned to be "a place of banishment and security for the worst description of convicts."

Not far from **Strahan**, the historic West Coast harbourtown, is atmospheric **Sarah Island**, Tasmania's oldest convict settlement. A stop on the regular **Gordon River Cruise** (www.gordonrivercruises.com.au) from Strahan, Sarah island was established in 1822, envisioned to be "a place of banishment and security for the worst description of convicts." Located in the middle of the vast Macquarie Harbour – an extraordinary six times the size of Sydney Harbour – Sarah Island today is a place where you can hear tales of the convicts who logged the Huon pine for shipbuilding. Elsewhere, from echoes of the penal age to echoes of the steam era, the **West Coast Wilderness Railway** (www.westcoastwildernessrailway.com.au) traverses the rugged rainforested country between the quaint, historic port of Strahan and the classic old mining town of Queenstown with its starkly bare hills. Of course, this wildly beautiful part of Tasmania is just as stunning from the air. **Strahan Seaplanes & Helicopters** (www.strahanseaplanesandhelicopters.com.au) operate scenic flights from Strahan including tours of the Gordon River which feature a magical seaplane landing on the waterway itself. Alternatively, take a scenic helicopter flight over the West Coast mountain peaks, flying over some of the densest rainforest in the world and with a landing on the summit of Mt Jukes where you can sit and savour views of the surrounding mountains, Macquarie Harbour and the Southern Ocean.

A STAR IS BORN

It's the most public, and provocative private art museum in the land – and it's just landed right on a commanding sandstone escarpment beside the River Derwent, a short trip by ferry or car from Hobart's CBD. The **Museum of Old and New Art** or **MONA** (www.mona.net.au) has already attracted international and national attention for not only its eclectic collection but its innovative and dynamic approach to displaying art. The museum is a subterranean architectural and cultural showpiece – worth a visit for its design excellence alone – set in a striking purpose-built building designed by Melbourne architect Nonda Katsalidis. It's also, of course, the venue for Tasmanian tycoon David Walsh's astonishing one-man collection, perhaps Australia's most extraordinary and certainly confronting. Its myriad pieces range from Egyptian antiquities to challenging contemporary artworks that aren't for the faint-hearted. Walsh's collection of more traditional "old art" features Greek, Egyptian, Roman and pre-Columbian antiquities, each exhibited with MONA's trademark clever, quirky touches. It includes the mummy and coffin of Pausiris, complete with CAT scans showing what lies beneath. MONA also breaks new ground with the labelling of the works in that there are none since visitors are issued an iPod-like gadget – to navigate their way around the spaces. The other attraction of this exceptional new Australian gallery is that it is loads of fun, and a most persuasive argument for a visit to Hobart. Back in the heart of the city, in fact right on the Hobart waterfront is the somewhat more restrained **Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery** or TMAG (www.tmag.tas.gov.au). It's renowned for its Tasmanian Colonial Decorative Arts collection with objects dating from 1803 to 1930, as well for its 19th century colonial art. Watch its spaces since the TMAG is set for an ambitious $200 million redevelopment that will provide Hobart with two of the most stunning cultural institutions in Australia.

MONA



The museum is a subterranean architectural and cultural showpiece – worth a visit for its design excellence alone.

MONA

Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra

English pianist and conductor Howard Shelley once remarked, “on this jewel of an island we have a jewel of an orchestra.”

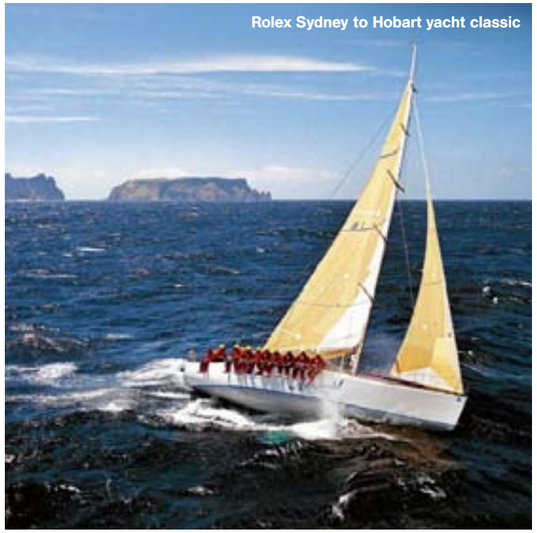
THE STAGE IS **SET**

MONA, Hobart’s groundbreaking new art museum, may have stolen some of the cultural limelight in Tasmania – and understandably so – but there’s plenty of culture to savour all year round in the vibrant Tasmanian capital including theatre, festivals and classical music. Indeed, as the English pianist and conductor Howard Shelley once remarked in reference to the **Tasmanian Symphony Orchestra** (www.tso.com.au) “on this jewel of an island we have a jewel of an orchestra.” Shelley is just one of the many international soloists to have forged a relationship with the TSO, which regularly performs at the purpose-built **Federation Concert Hall**, part of the Hobart waterfront’s premier 243-room **Hotel Grand Chancellor** (www.ghihotels.com). It’s been the orchestra’s home for over a decade with seasons featuring everything from the musical genius of Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart to the comedic mastery of Tim Minchin. Nearby to the Federation Concert Hall is one of the nation’s most exquisitely-preserved venues, **Theatre Royal Hobart** (www.theatreroyal.com.au), dating to 1854. It’s Australia’s oldest working theatre with tours conducted on Monday, Wednesday and Friday mornings but do check the Royal’s website for the latest productions. Of course, the night need not end after the show since both the Federation Concert Hall and the Theatre Royal are close to Hobart’s many and varied restaurant and bar options.

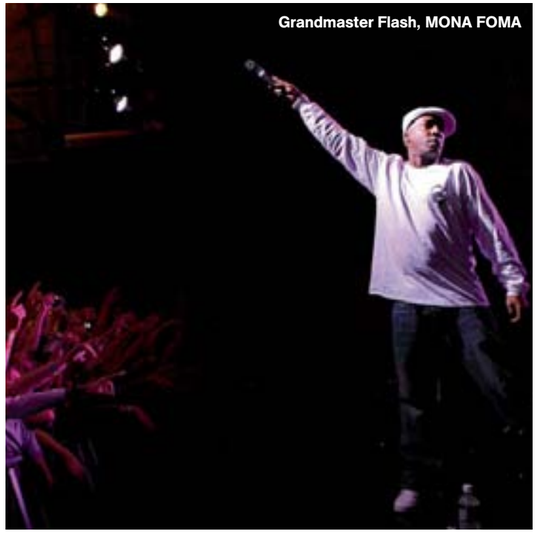
Theatre Royal Hobart

EVENT HORIZONS

A case could well be made that Tasmania these days is an event in its own right. But there's no shortage of specific major events designed to keep visitors transfixed all year round. Perhaps the most famous of all, the **Rolex Sydney to Hobart** yacht classic (rolexsydneyhobart.com) is a summertime sporting event of international standing that culminates spectacularly on the Tasmanian state capital's expansive River Derwent and waterfront. On a completely different tack, the best of Tasmanian food and wine is the focus of the annual, three-day **Tastings at the Top festival** held in the unique wilderness location of **Cradle Mountain Lodge** (www.cradlemountainlodge.com.au). **Hobart** is the focus of the annual **Festival of Voices** (www.festivalofvoices.com), an annual event held each winter. This amazing celebration centres on a chorus of choirs which descend on Tasmania for a four-day homage to the power of the human voice complete with uplifting performances in cathedrals, concert halls, theatres and outdoors, as well as short courses and workshops. **MONA FOMA** (mona.net.au) the annual Festival of Music and Art, held each January on the grounds of **Moorilla Estate** and near to the site of the cutting-edge new Museum of Old and New Art, brings headline acts from around the world. Then there's **Ten Days on the Island** (www.tendaysontheisland.org) which is Tasmania's signature biennial multi-arts event encompassing, as the name suggests, venues right across the island. Last but hardly least is the **Tasmanian Heritage Festival** (www.nationaltrusttas.org), an annual, state-wide event that highlights the immense pride Tasmanians have in their rich heritage with the program featuring walks, tours, open homes, fairs, displays, talks, family days and much more.



Rolex Sydney to Hobart yacht classic



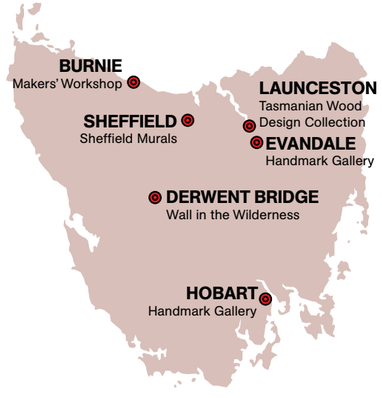
Grandmaster Flash, MONA FOMA

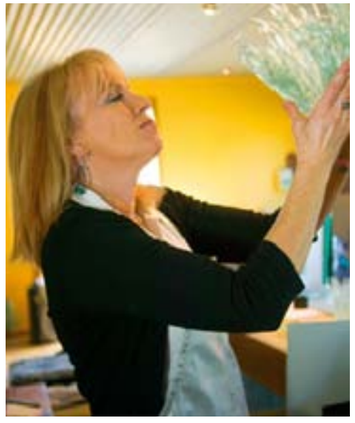
Festival of Voices

There's no shortage of specific major events designed to keep visitors transfixed all year round.

ART AND SOUL

TASMANIA HAS EMERGED AS A MAJOR CREATIVE HUB PRODUCING SOME OF THE NATION'S MOST DISTINCTIVE ARTS AND CRAFTS, WITH THE ARTISTS AND THEIR WORKS ACCESSIBLE AT OUTSTANDING GALLERIES AND STUDIOS ACROSS THE ISLAND.





MAKERS' WORKSHOP

Burnie

The industrial centre of Burnie is reinventing itself as an arts hub and the jewel of its rejuvenation is the Makers' Workshop (www.discoverburnie.net), set in a strikingly simple building on the site of a former paper mill. Twenty artists, including glass blowers, paper makers and even luthiers (musical instrument makers), work inside this informative and entertaining cultural centre.

WALL IN THE WILDERNESS

Derwent Bridge

One of the most ambitious art projects undertaken in Australia, The Wall In The Wilderness (www.thewalltasmania.com), just outside Derwent Bridge in Tasmania's Central Highlands, is designer Greg Duncan's extraordinary labour of love. Still a work in progress (due for completion in 2015), this relief-style sculpture encompasses the history of the Central Highlands carved in 100 metres of timber, mostly consisting of the island state's rare Huon Pine. The scenes in this chiselled tribute feature everything from thylacines to foresters.

HANDMARK GALLERY

Hobart and Evandale

This commercial gallery, begun in 1980, is located at historic Salamanca on Hobart's waterfront and features the cream of Tasmanian artistry from Les Blakebrough's ceramics to Toby Muir-Wilson's highly covetable furniture. There's a second Handmark Gallery at Evandale, south of Launceston, with works from Handmark's stellar artists exported around the world. (www.handmarkgallery.com)

SHEFFIELD MURALS

Sheffield

In the heart of the Kentish region and in the lee of the dramatic Western Tiers mountain range, Sheffield some time ago decided to spruce itself up by the creation of multiple murals. And when they'd finished they then painted a whole lot more. Now this plucky village attracts an impressive 120,000 visitors a year to its open-air art gallery with an annual mural festival held April 24-30. (www.muralfest.com.au)

TASMANIAN WOOD DESIGN COLLECTION

Launceston

Given the wealth of gorgeous, high-quality timbers that are endemic to Tasmania – Huon pine, king billy pine, celery top pine, sassafras and myrtle – it's hardly surprising to find a gallery devoted entirely to wood. Housed in a sleek shell designed by David Travalia and Richard Leplastrier, the Design Centre's sandstone and concrete galleries contain Tassie's superb carpentry and woodwork. (www.designcentre.com.au)

Penny farthing, Evandale

Holyrood House, Oatlands

STREETS AHEAD

Cities with perfectly uncrowded roads, thriving food scenes and friendly people, seaside towns that have, for the most part, escaped the burden of garish development, colonial-era villages near to World Heritage Areas...these are the captivating characters in the rich and rewarding Tasmanian urban/rural narrative. **Hobart** and **Launceston**, small in size but big in appeal, are the oldest Australian cities after Sydney. Georgian-era architecture, much of it convict-built, is a feature of Tasmanian cities, along with easy access to galleries and museums, locally crafted wines and beer, local produce and wilderness experiences. Nowhere in Tasmania is far from its wilds, after all. Colonial villages like **Evandale**, **Westbury** and **Sheffield** are all within easy driving distance from **Launceston** (with iconic Cradle Mountain just a few scenic hours away). **Oatlands**, near Hobart, was established in the 1820s with devotees believing the village contains Australia's most intact collection of Georgian sandstone buildings (138) in Australia. Uncorrupted east coast villages like **Swansea** and emerging food destinations such as **Cygnet**, south of Hobart, effortlessly reveal other treasures. Australian prime minister Joseph Lyons was born in **Stanley**, in the island's north-west. The cottage where he lived is, like much of Stanley, enthrallingly simple and arrestingly untarnished. Stanley, in fact, could be a metaphor for the story of Tasmania. For there, as elsewhere on the island, it is easy to be seduced by a cheery countenance and consider a stay that is far longer than planned.

Stanley

Georgian-era architecture, much of it convict-built, is a feature of Tasmanian cities, along with easy access to galleries and museums.

3 days – Hobart and Port Arthur

DAY 1 Hobart

- Wander around the new art complex of MONA at the Moorilla Wine Estate
- Visit the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery and the Maritime Museum
- In the evening join the Ghost Tour at the Penitentiary Chapel
- Overnight Hobart

DAY 2 Hobart to Port Arthur

- Explore the historic site of Port Arthur built in 1833
- Cruise to the Isle of the Dead
- Visit the Coal Mine Historic Site at Saltwater River which was the first coal mine in Tasmania
- Overnight Port Arthur

DAY 3 Port Arthur to Hobart

- Soak up the village atmosphere of historical Richmond and see the oldest bridge and church in Australia
- Take an historical tour with Louisa's Walk and visit the infamous Cascades Female Factory
- Depart Hobart

7 days – Hobart to the North West Coast

DAY 1 Hobart to Launceston via the Heritage Highway

- Depart for Launceston and travel along the Heritage Highway
- Visit many of the historic towns along the way including Pontville, Kempton, Oatlands, Ross and Campbell Town
- Before arriving at Launceston detour to Evandale the home of the Penny Farthing Championships.
- Overnight Launceston

DAY 2 Launceston via Longford and return

- Explore Longford and visit Woolmers Estate and the National Rose Garden
- Explore Brickendon, Australia's finest example of a pioneer farm of the early 1800's. Both properties are Heritage Listed.
- Overnight Launceston

DAY 3 Launceston to Devonport

- Visit the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, which has just been refurbished.
- Explore the city of Launceston which has the largest concentration of elegant 19th century buildings in Australia
- The Wood Design Centre of Tasmania is Australia's only museum collection of contemporary wood design
- Overnight Devonport

DAY 4 Devonport to Stanley

- Stop at the boutique chocolate factory, House of Anvers, for a hot chocolate
- Shape your own handmade paper at The Makers Workshop at Burnie
- Explore Water Wheel Creek showcasing Tasmania's only working timber tramway
- Overnight Stanley

DAY 5 Stanley and Surrounds

- Tour Woolnorth in the far North West which is Tasmania's largest property established in 1825.
- Breathe the cleanest air in the world at Cape Grim
- Stand at the Edge of the World and view the Great Southern Ocean
- Overnight Stanley

DAY 6 Stanley

- Visit the historic homestead of Highfield Historic Site
- Explore the quaint fishing village of Stanley and the Stanley Artworks
- Take the chair lift to the top of The Nut at Stanley
- Overnight Stanley

DAY 7 Stanley to Launceston

- Explore Latrobe and its antique shops
- Enjoy afternoon tea at Christmas Hill Raspberry Farm
- Depart Launceston

This Is Tasmania series

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