

Tasmania - The Wilderness Isle

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

Day 1	Depart London	Day 9	Cradle Mountain - Lake St. Clair National Park
Day 2	In flight	Day 10	Launceston
Day 3	Arrive Hobart	Day 11/12	Freycinet National Park
Day 4/5	Bruny Island	Day 13	Maria Island
Day 6	Mount Field National Park	Day 14	Depart Hobart
Day 7	Strahan	Day 15	Arrive London
Day 8	Strahan to Cradle Mountain		

Departs

November or December

Focus

The unique fauna, flora and wilderness regions of Tasmania

Grading

A/B. Wildlife walks, some moderate but optional, and cruises

Dates & Prices

See website (tour code AUS03)

Highlights:

- Rugged & spectacular scenery in Tasmania's wilderness areas
- Pristine ancient temperate rainforests
- Exciting & colourful birdlife including many Tasmanian endemics
- One of the best places for Australian mammals, including Kangaroos, Wallabies, Wombats, Echidnas, Quolls & Tasmanian Devil



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Introduction

Tasmania, which separated from mainland Australia during the last Ice Age, has developed a character all of its own. It is a beautiful, dramatic island, whose rugged terrain nurtures an often exclusive anthology of Australian mammals: the archetypal Tasmanian Devil, wombats, kangaroos, wallabies, quolls, pademelons and even the bizarre platypus all inhabit the island. It is also an ornithologist's paradise, home to 12



Green Rosella

endemic bird species which inhabit a wet temperate forest, a substantially diminishing habitat in today's world. These species include the Tasmanian Thornbill, Scubtit and Black Currawong. Of special interest elsewhere in Tasmania are the Tasmanian Native-hen (a flightless rail), Green Rosella and Forty-spotted Pardalote. Two other species which breed only in Tasmania are the Swift Parrot and Orange-bellied Parrot. The latter, a summer visitor to the south-western coastal region of

Tasmania, is one of the world's rarest and most endangered species of wildlife, with a population of just 15 or so pairs left.

Tasmania, rather like a rugged version of New Zealand, is also blessed with exceptional habitat diversity. Surrounded by rich oceans favoured by many sub-Antarctic breeding birds and marine mammals, the island is also endowed with spectacular mountain landscapes and forested wilderness (both eucalyptus and rainforest), as well as rivers, lagoons and lakes, coastal heaths, wet sedgelands and buttongrass plains.

Our tour around and through Tasmania celebrates the island's landscape in all its diversity: Mount Field National Park, with its striking mountain scenery and wondrous alpine plant communities; Lake St Clair, where forests of Black Peppermint grow against a spectacular backdrop of quartz mountains; the mighty and stunningly picturesque Macquarie Harbour; the beautiful bays and granite outcrops of Freycinet National Park and Mount Wellington, which towers above the attractive state capital city of Hobart.

Intertwined with this abundance of natural beauty, Tasmania has a rich, but tragic, social history associated with the penal colony at Port Arthur, the largest in Australia. In addition there have been battles between those that believe the need to protect the superb wilderness areas



Forester (Eastern Grey) Kangaroo

from flooding for dams and logging was far greater than the need to exploit and destroy so rich a natural heritage. When the south-western region of Tasmania was nominated for World Heritage listing it was

described as “the last great temperate wilderness remaining in Australia and one of the last in the world”. The great attraction of Tasmania for the naturalist is the ability to view many of its wildlife inhabitants at such close quarters, without feeling in any way that you are impinging on their natural behaviour.

Itinerary

NB. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather & other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Days 1 & 2

In flight

You will depart London Heathrow on a scheduled flight to Melbourne. Flights may also be available from regional airport. Please enquire with the Naturetrek office if you would be interested in these options.

Day 3

Hobart

On your arrival at the international airport in Melbourne you must transfer to the domestic terminal for the short onward flight to Hobart. There you will be met by your locally-based tour leader and taken to your city hotel. Hobart is a very attractive city set against a backdrop of the imposing Mount Wellington and straddling the clear aquamarine waters of the Derwent River.

Hobart is Tasmania's state capital and the second oldest city in Australia after Sydney. It is the largest city in the state, with the population of the Greater Hobart area approaching 200,000. First settled in 1804, the early population consisted mainly of convicts and the city's first buildings were established around the waterfront, frequented by whalers, sealers and colonial traders. It still retains a quiet colonial character, epitomised by the many historic buildings which have been sympathetically restored and maintained.

During the afternoon we will take a drive up nearby Mount Wellington. This will offer us wonderful panoramic views over the city, the Derwent Estuary and the surrounding countryside, as well as an opportunity to begin to familiarise ourselves with some of the birds of this fascinating island. In particular, we will look for our first Tasmanian endemic birds; such species as the Black-headed Honeyeaters in the forest canopy, the Strong-billed Honeyeaters that busily search for insects and spiders, and the Green Rosellas that flash past us or overhead. Dusky Robins and small flocks of Scrubtits, White-browed Scrubwrens and both Brown and Tasmanian Thornbills are amongst other species that we shall hope to see, whilst, higher up the slopes, we will search for Yellow-throated Honeyeater and Black Currawong. We



Forty-spotted Pardalote

will also look for other interesting species which, although more widely distributed across Australia, occur more commonly in Tasmania. Amongst these species are the uncommon Olive Whistler, the handsome Pink Robin and the smartly plumaged Beautiful Firetail. Near the summit of Mount Wellington, we will look amongst the boulder-strewn slopes and stunted shrubs for one of Australia's most beautiful birds, the Flame Robin. We return to our city hotel for dinner and an overnight stay.

Day 4

Bruny Island

Hopefully with a good night's sleep behind you, you will be met after breakfast by your tour leader and



Strong-billed Honeyeater

embark on the short road journey to Kettering. From there, a short ferry ride will transport our group onto Bruny Island, home to many of Tasmania's 12 endemic birds, amongst them, most notably, the Forty-spotted Pardalote. Today will provide our best opportunity to see this species, one of Australia's most endangered and localised birds, for Bruny Island holds several small colonies of this Tasmanian endemic. Amongst other endemics found on Bruny Island that we shall look for today will be both Black-headed and Strong-billed Honeyeater, Green Rosella, Yellow Wattlebird, Black Currawong, Tasmanian Thornbill and Tasmanian

Scrubwren. Dusky Robins are also likely to be seen, since they make themselves quite evident by perching on wayside fence posts.

During our time on Bruny Island we will focus our attention particularly on the variety of birdlife to be found in its most densely forested areas. It is here that we may also hope to see Swift Parrot, the scarce Olive Whistler and Beautiful Firetail, three endemics of south-eastern Australia.

After lunch, we will continue to enjoy the rugged landscape of Bruny Island, searching for a variety of native birds and mammals. The island is home to two species of macropod, each represented by an endemic subspecies: the Tasmanian Pademelon and Bennett's (Red-necked) Wallaby. Intriguingly, a genetic mutation affecting Bennett's Wallabies here disrupts their normal melanin production, giving rise to a rare albino form – affectionately known as the 'White Wallaby'. In most other parts of the world, such a condition would make these charming creatures highly vulnerable to predators and health issues such as poor vision and cancers. However, the relative scarcity of natural predators on Bruny Island, along with local residents who take a particular delight in these unique animals, helps ensure their survival. We may also encounter a Tasmanian Echidna, a subspecies distinguished by noticeably thicker fur that better equips it for the island's cooler conditions compared to those on the mainland.



Tasmanian Pademelon

We'll be staying at Hotel Bruny Lodge, which features beautifully designed rooms with private decking and offers stunning views of the D'Entrecasteaux Channel and Satellite Island. Nestled on a hill just behind the famous Hotel Bruny, the rooms also include a thoughtfully arranged daybed set in a bay window - perfect for relaxing and taking in some of the most breathtaking sunsets. After checking into our superb accommodation, we will savour a delicious dinner before spending some time spotlighting for more mammals, particularly Eastern Quoll and Common Brushtail Possum.

Day 5

Bruny Island

After breakfast, we will drive to Adventure Bay to join the morning boat trip, the Bruny Island Cruise, which



Shy Albatross

spends three hours on the water in search of such seabirds as Wandering, Shy, Black-browed and Yellow-nosed Albatrosses, White-faced and Great-winged Petrels, Fluttering and Short-tailed Shearwaters and Australasian Gannets, amongst other pelagic species. Being so far south, this is one of the best places anywhere in Australia to search for seabirds, and we may also encounter dolphins, seals, and perhaps even a whale.

We return in the early afternoon to Adventure Bay, where we will have a warming lunch. We will then have the rest of the day to resume our exploration of the island in search of its birds and land mammals. With a chance of Tasmanian Nativehen and/or the rare Hooded Plover along the way, we will keep a watchful eye-out on our return to our accommodation this evening.

Day 6

Mount Field National Park

After breakfast we will return to the ferry in order to cross back over to the mainland and travel back to Hobart and then on to the Lyell Highway for our journey towards New Norfolk. We will enjoy a packed lunch en route, to provide the flexibility needed for any birding stops.

Mount Field is one of Tasmania's oldest and most diverse national parks. Established in 1917, it is best known for the magnificent Russell Falls, accessed by a path that leads through a forest of towering tree ferns. The park's environment also offers the visitor an array of natural wonders, from the tall forests that lie at the base of Mount Field, to the Tasmanian high country with its Snow Gums, alpine moorlands and glacial lakes. The winding road that leads to the higher slopes of the mountain passes through an ever-changing succession of plant communities.



Mount Field National Park

Interestingly, Mount Field is unusual in that plant diversity increases with altitude. On walks around some of the alpine lakes, we will discover some of the park's bizarre alpine plant species. We will also take a stroll along 'the Tall Trees Walk' which winds through stands of giant Swamp Gum, one of the largest hardwood tree species in the world, towering to 100 metres in height. This forest contains giant 250-year-old gum trees, sassafras, huge tree ferns, the unique 'horizontal scrub' and a variety of mosses, ferns, lichens and fungi. Amongst this myriad and density of vegetation we will look out for Pink Robin and Scrub-tit.



Pink Robin © Mark Vincent

Birds have taken advantage of the range of altitudes and habitats available here and, consequently, many species are found within the park and surrounding reserves. They include 11 of the 12 Tasmanian endemic species, amongst them the Tasmanian Nativehen, and the ecologically important, but not endemic, Black Currawong which is a key disperser of fleshy-fruited plants. Other species will include the noisy Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo and Yellow Wattlebird.

It is the diversity of habitats within the park's relatively small area that is the reason why so many of Tasmania's native terrestrial and arboreal mammals occur within the park. Species that are either extinct or endangered on the mainland are found here, including the Eastern Quoll and the Eastern Barred Bandicoot.



Eastern Quoll © Mark Vincent

The last known Tasmanian Tiger, which sadly saw out its days in Hobart Zoo, was trapped in the nearby Florentine Valley in 1933.

We will complete our day in the high alpine meadows of Mount Field National Park, searching for species such as Striated Fieldwren and Flame Robin. As we ascend, the scenery changes from the soft greens of the rainforest to the harsh, glaciated

landscape of the mountains, producing some spectacular scenic highlights.

Day 7

Strahan

Following breakfast, and our departure from New Norfolk, we continue our way along the Lyell Highway to Strahan, a journey which will take most of the day though we shall make plenty of delightful birding stops along the way to break up the journey and savour the fantastic scenery.

Strahan, with a population of just 700, lies at the edge of the unspoiled waters of Macquarie Harbour, the second largest natural harbour in the southern hemisphere after Sydney. This is the last outpost of civilisation on the island, and the only safe anchorage on its west coast; indeed, it is surely one of the loneliest places on earth.

Strahan's history encapsulates that of Tasmania. Its penal colony on Sarah Island perhaps the most brutal in the state, a place to which the most unruly convicts from Port Arthur were transported; a place from which escape was all but impossible. The town also served as the port during the west coast's mining boom and was also used for the export of Huon Pine from the surrounding forest. These days, the harbour provides an anchorage for crayfish, abalone and shark fishing fleets and has become a hub for the ever-growing number of tourists keen to explore its wild, rugged surroundings.

Today, the whole area is known as the Franklin Lower Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and the ecologically significant rainforest combined with the stunning scenery attracts tourists from around the world.

Day 8

Strahan to Cradle Mountain

After an early breakfast, we will check out of our rooms and board the relatively new vessel, Spirit of the



Wind, for the award-winning Gordon River Cruise. As we navigate the calm waters of one of the last truly unspoiled areas of wilderness on Earth, we will feel as though we're perched at the edge of the world. Our expert naturalist guides will share their knowledge of the region's unique features as we cruise across Tasmania's majestic Macquarie Harbour - the only safe harbour early settlers discovered on the west coast of Tasmania.

On our return to Strahan, we will drive up the Zeehan Highway to Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park, where we will be based for the next two nights. Part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area, this national park is a haven of dramatic, untouched landscapes, encompassing rugged mountain peaks, glacial lakes, deep gorges, rainforest, wet sclerophyll forest, scrub, heathland, sedgeland, bog communities and high moorland. The park also boasts a rich flora, including some endemic species and others with a restricted range, such as Huon Pine, King Billy Pine, Pandani, Whitey Wood, Myrtle Beech, Sassafras, Celery Top and Pencil Pine.

Day 9

Cradle Mountain – Lake St. Clair National Park

Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park is one of Australia's finest destinations in which to spot mammals. Of the eighteen indigenous mammal species recorded in the park, we hope to see Short-beaked Echidna, Eastern Quoll, Common Wombat, Common Brushtail and Common Ringtail Possums, Long-nosed Potoroo, Bennett's Wallaby and Tasmanian Pademelon. The park's birdlife is equally impressive, with species such as the Yellow



Wattlebird, the world's largest honeyeater, Yellow-throated Honeyeater, Yellow-tailed Black-Cockatoo, Southern Emu-wren and Tasmanian Thornbill all possible.

We will spend as much of the day as we can in the field, fully immersing ourselves in the varied habitats and rich wildlife of this stunning national park. A visit to the 'Devils at Cradle' wildlife sanctuary is also on the agenda, offering a rare opportunity to enjoy a close-up view of the elusive Tasmanian Devil.

After dinner at the Lodge, we may venture back into the field to spend the late evening spotlighting, with a particular focus on nocturnal species including the elusive Spotted-tailed and Eastern Quolls.



Tasmanian Devil

Day 10

Launceston

After breakfast, we will depart Cradle Mountain and journey along country roads and through charming, small towns to Deloraine, with a stop en route for our picnic lunch.

Our day will include a visit to Narawntapu National Park, a peaceful coastal refuge with inlets, small islands, wetlands, sand dunes and lagoons that support a diverse range of flora and fauna. Located on Tasmania's central north coast, Narawntapu stretches from Greens Beach on the mouth of the Tamar River to Bakers Beach in the west and is renowned for its easily observed, free-ranging wildlife.



Common Wombat

As evening falls, we may spot animals grazing on the grasslands, including Forester (Eastern Grey) Kangaroo, Bennett's Wallaby and Common Wombat.

Water birds flourish on the shores and lagoons at Springlawn and can be easily observed from a bird hide. The park also serves as a feeding ground for the endangered Tasmanian Wedge-tailed Eagle, while the White-bellied Sea Eagle is often seen gliding overhead. We will then continue on to Launceston, Tasmania's second-largest city, where we will settle into our accommodation.

Day 11

Freycinet National Park

Today we will drive a long distance to the south to Freycinet Peninsula, one of the State's most scenic coastal areas and renowned worldwide for the stunning Wineglass Bay. Among the park's highlights are

the imposing Devonian granite peaks – known as the Hazards – and the many white sandy beaches that fringe the peninsula.



Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo

The combination of the mild, maritime climate, breathtaking scenery and the abundance of birds and mammals to see on the walks around the park make Freycinet a fascinating place to explore. The vegetation of the park is noticeably different what we will have encountered so far. The area is predominantly heathland region, with a low overstorey of Wattle (*Acacia* species), Banksias, Paperbarks (*Melaleuca* species), Casuarinas (Sheoaks) and various species of Eucalyptus.

A wide variety of birds inhabit or visit Freycinet and its surroundings. We may be fortunate enough to see a White-bellied Sea-Eagle gliding overhead or an Australasian Gannet diving for fish in the ocean. In the bushy, forested areas, we should be able to hear and perhaps spot small, nectar-feeding species such as the Eastern Spinebill and the Yellow-throated,

Crescent and New Holland Honeyeaters, while the raucous calls of the large Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos often echo as they drift by in their groups.

Mammals known to occur in the park include Short-beaked Echidna, Tasmanian Devil, Eastern Quoll, Common Wombat, Common Brushtail Possum and Common Ringtail Possum, Long-nosed Potoroo, Bennett's Wallaby and Tasmanian Pademelon.

We will be staying at the delightful Freycinet Lodge, the only accommodation within Freycinet National Park, and with a balcony that offers spectacular views.

Day 12

Freycinet National Park

We will spend the first part of the morning birding in the local area before boarding the Schouten Passage II for an unforgettable four-hour cruise of Wineglass Bay. The experienced and friendly crew will guide us through the sights and history of the Freycinet Peninsula - from the gentle shores of Coles Bay to one of the world's most beautiful beaches.

During the cruise, we will stop for lunch in Wineglass Bay, where we can savour some of Tasmania's finest fresh produce. Today, we hope to see Humpback and Southern Right Whales and their calves as they begin their southward migration. Orca might also be spotted as they follow the whales in search of a weak or unprotected calf. In spring, Australian Fur Seal pups can be observed both in the water and on the rock formations, and we may even be treated to the sight of Bottlenose and



Common Dolphin calves.

Birding highlights of the day may include Short-tailed Shearwaters - otherwise known as Mutton Birds - which arrive in impressive numbers from Siberia to breed along the Tasmanian coastline. White-bellied Sea Eagles are often seen pairing up and attending to their nests, and there will be an exciting opportunity to visit a nesting site.

Following the cruise, we will continue to explore more of this spectacular area with our guide.

Day 13

Maria Island

We will depart early this morning for the small village of Triabunna. With our picnic lunch packs and water bottles in hand (as there are no shops on Maria Island), we will then take the 30-minute ferry ride to Maria Island - a place rich in indigenous and European history, abundant in wildlife, and offering spectacular views alongside remarkable geological features.



From Darlington, we will embark on the Reservoir Circuit. This easy walk is sheltered from the coastal winds and offers a glimpse into Maria Island's wildlife and history. The route takes us through open woodlands into a tall eucalypt forest, before returning via the ruins of the old cement works. The area near the reservoir provides an ideal spot for a picnic.

During our walk, we will pass by some historic ruins and then enter a woodland dominated by Blue Gum (*Eucalyptus Globulus*), Tasmania's floral emblem, where we may hear the endangered Swift Parrot. Continuing on into the open forest, we will look for Strong-billed and Black-headed Honeyeaters, eventually arriving at the Reservoir - constructed by convicts during the first convict period (1825–32). Near the Reservoir, we will keep an eye out for the endangered Forty-spotted Pardalote, as well as Spotted and Striated Pardalotes. Along the track, we might also encounter wallabies and pademelons as we pass by ruins dating back to 1889, including the Cement Works, Manager's House and Workman's Cottage.

After taking some time to explore other parts around Darlington, we will board the ferry for the return trip to Triabunna and from there travel south through Orford and on to Hobart for our final overnight stay.

Day 14

Hobart/In flight

This morning, we transfer to the airport for our flight to Melbourne and onward international flight to London Heathrow.

Day 15

Arrive London

We are generally scheduled to arrive at London's Heathrow airport in the early afternoon.

Images courtesy of Shutterstock

Tour grading & Focus

This is a birdwatching and wildlife tour that covers the very best of Tasmania's fine selection of habitats; indeed, some of the very best that Australia has to offer. There will be some long drives during the tour, but we will be travelling on good, metalled roads and generally enjoying short wildlife walks at a gentle pace. The relaxed pace and itinerary of this tour make it suitable for most ages and levels of fitness, although it is recommended that you should be able to walk several miles over the course of the day.

Weather

The month of November is early summer in Tasmania, similar to May/June in the United Kingdom, with similarly unpredictable weather! Daytime temperatures are likely to range from 15 to 23°C, whilst at night it will be cooler, especially at sites such as Cradle Mountain-Lake St. Clair National Park. Occasionally it can feel very cold in some places.

Food & accommodation

The accommodation we use consists of a variety of comfortable hotels/motels, lodges and chalets, all rooms with private facilities except on Bruny Island where rooms have shared facilities. All meals are included in the cost of the holiday, with the exception of lunches on Days 3, 11 and 14 and dinners on Days 7 and 9. Drinks and additional snacks are generally not included.

Optional extensions

For those of you wishing to see more of Tasmania, or Australia, we would be happy to arrange some additional nights or a tour extension for you. Please call us for more details.

How to book your place

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or

request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example, extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

If you would like to extend your stay in Victoria, we can highly recommend a visit to Gypsy Point Lakeside, or taking a guided tour along the Great Ocean Road, a visit to the Fairy Penguin colony at Phillip Island or enjoying an extended stay at the Little Desert National Park.

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