



# THE CONVICT TRAIL

From the historic town of Richmond to Eaglehawk Neck, where savage dogs once guarded the narrow isthmus against escaping convicts, and on to Port Arthur, this journey is steeped in convict history and also rich in natural beauty. The past and present intermingle at Australia's premier historic site, Port Arthur, shedding light on the lives of the 33,000 convicts who passed through this prison system between 1830 and 1877.

Take a walk on the wild side to soaring cliffs, breathtaking seascapes, spectacular rock formations, sandy beaches, dense forests, and brilliant wildflowers in this incredibly rugged and beautiful region.

## SUGGESTED ITINERARY

### DAY 1

The journey to Richmond en route to Port Arthur could take anything from half a day to two days, depending on your passion for wines and/or fascination with authentic Georgian villages.

Tasmania's fastest growing wine region is the Coal River Valley, whose wines are winning international acclaim. Growers and producers in the region are expanding the acreage under grapes at a rapid rate in this fertile valley.

*Richmond Bridge*



*Richmond Art Gallery*

Get your copy of the Wine South Tasmania brochure to discover details of opening times and specialties in this region. As well as great pinots, rieslings and chardonnays, you will find cabernets and sparkling wine. Many of the wineries and vineyards in the valley are small and it's a fascinating exercise discovering the personal styles of the winemakers or vigneron behind the labels. The larger wineries such as – Meadowbank Estate Vineyard and Restaurant and Coal Valley Vineyard – enjoys stunning vine-topped vistas of the nearby water



and surrounding hills. It's a great place to browse the work of local artists as well as sampling some award-winning wines.

Twenty-five kilometres of country road and 100 years from Hobart city is the town of Richmond, which once served as a key convict outpost. With its historic bridge, gaol, cemetery and churches and relaxed lifestyle, this charming intact colonial village is a pleasure to explore on foot.

For a chilling insight into the experiences of Van Diemens Land's imprisoned convicts, bushrangers and aborigines, stand in one of the cold, damp cells of Richmond Gaol (1825) and close the rough-hewn wooden door. A short stroll away along the banks of the pretty Coal River is Australia's oldest bridge, built by convict labour between 1823 and 1825 to facilitate the movement of the military, police and convicts between Hobart and Port Arthur. Walk across it to the eastern bank of the river to visit St Johns Church, the oldest remaining Catholic church in the country.

Richmond abounds in lovely B&Bs in settings ranging from romantic cottages to grand country houses and is an

*Port Arthur Historic Site*

ideal location as an overnight base for a more extensive wine tour combined with an in-depth exploration of Richmond's charms. Period antique and craft shops, art galleries and tearooms of the village are of the highest quality, attracting Tasmanians as well as interstate and international visitors.

## DAY 2

En route to Port Arthur, stop at Sorell, an early settlement, where bloody bushranger battles were fought in the colony's formative years. Tales of the violent deeds once committed here are difficult to imagine behind the busy facade of today's friendly commercial township. A walk around the town reveals interesting heritage buildings plus several antique and collectible outlets.

Just out of Sorell, savour the sweet flavour of berries you can pick for yourself at the Sorell Fruit Farm, which is open daily from November to May. Cherries, raspberries, apricots and 10 other varieties of fruits, plus the farm's own wines and liqueurs can be enjoyed in the delightful garden setting.

In the heart of the countryside at Nugent past Sorell, Redbanks Fish and Field country property offers a great



*Sorell Fruit Farm*





*Tasman Peninsula*

day's outing for the fishing enthusiast (and family). Redbanks is a private catch and release fishery stocked with salmon, and trout – both brown and rainbow. As well as excellent fishing, there are plenty of other activities – four wheel driving and bushwalking, plus the challenge of clay target shooting.

En route to the Tasman Peninsula, be 'stopped by the cop' at the Copping Colonial and Convict Exhibition of memorabilia, relics and antiques from the convict era.

At Dunalley be sure to visit the Fish Market for the freshest seafood. From the tank, choose a crayfish caught by local fishermen and enjoy it cooked on the spot or alternatively select some local fish and chips to take away.

Take the scenic road to Eaglehawk Neck, pausing to admire the spectacular vista at the Tasman National Park Lookout overlooking the narrow neck of land, Eaglehawk Neck, Pirates Bay, the Lanterns and Hippolyte Rocks and Cape Hauy – simply breathtaking. At sea level, jump out of the car and walk on the Tessellated Pavement, a natural floor of volcanic rock tiles tempered by the ocean over the ages. Don't miss the sculptures of the mastiff hounds representing the infamous Dog Line, which prevented convicts escaping from the narrow isthmus at Eaglehawk Neck. You'll be awed by the power of the sea where spectacular geological rock formations carved by

the wind and tempestuous seas are easily accessed. The Devils Kitchen, the Blowhole and Tasman Arch are just a short drive from Eaglehawk Neck, while Remarkable Cave is near Port Arthur.

Tasmanian devils feed in their usual frenzied manner, and birds of prey perform amazing feats at the Tasmanian Devil Park at Taranna, where night-time tours are a special experience.

### **DAY 3**

Spend at least a day exploring the Port Arthur Historic Site, one of Australia's most significant historic sites. Included in the admission price is the interpretation gallery and the 'Lottery of Life' game, a harbour cruise, a guided walking tour, the convict museum, and access to the many restored buildings, ruins and beautiful gardens.

And don't miss the lantern-lit Ghost Tour of Port Arthur at night – a remarkably authentic experience sure to move even the greatest sceptic!

Allow time to drive to the convict ruins at Probation Station, the Convict Saltmines at Saltwater River, and the other convict sites marked by the yellow arrow signifying the Convict Trail. The Saltmines site is a powerful experience revealing the conditions of life for the unfortunate human beings who lived and toiled in this memorable setting.

### **DAY 4**

Cruising the waterways of the Tasman Peninsula gives a whole new perspective on the natural beauty of this part of Tasmania. Choose from a leisurely cruise aboard the state-of-the-art MV Marana to the Point Puer Boys Prison or the Isle of the Dead Convict Cemetery, or take the Tasman Island Wilderness cruise around the spectacular coastline of an island renowned as a highlight of the Sydney to Hobart Yacht Race. An unforgettable sea journey is available from one of the small, high-speed



*Sea Kayaking at Port Arthur*

vessels that depart from Eaglehawk Neck and hug the dramatic coastal cliffs and rock formations of the open Eastern side of the peninsula. Experience Tasmania's exuberant marine mammals – fur seals and dolphins – up close and personal. Take the opportunity to indulge in some serious fishing – either game fishing (tuna, shark and marlin), deep sea and reef (striped trumpeter, morwong and coral perch) or bay fishing (flathead, squid and salmon).

Vistas of some of the most magnificent rugged coastal scenery in Australia reward those who choose to walk in the Tasman National Park. Walks of varying length are available, but the glorious short walk from the Devils Kitchen to Waterfall Bay (1.5 – 2 hours return) gives a view of some of the area's most impressive coastline. Those who love heights will be exhilarated by this walk along the cliff tops, with views of the cliffs plummeting straight into the sea.

The cliffs of the Tasman Peninsula are among the tallest in the Southern Hemisphere, and the Tasman Coastal Track offers some of the most majestic coastal walking to be found anywhere in Australia, with walks to Cape

Hauy (four to five hours return), Cape Raoul (five hours return) and Mt Brown and Crescent Bay – (four to six hours return) being some of the most popular.

Active individuals will find the region a paradise – choose from sea kayaking, world-class cave and wreck diving – (swim with the graceful seahorses among the huge kelp forests) – game fishing, horseriding, and seaplane flying – just some of the exciting options available.

Return to Hobart by looping around the peninsula and exploring some of the smaller townships of Nubeena, Premaydena and Koonya before rejoining the main road at Eaglehawk Neck heading back to Hobart.

*Giant Sea Kelp*

