

WINTER 2020

# OUT & ABOUT

*with kids*

## STATES OF WONDER

Australia's best hidden gems revealed



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**MEG LAW** and her family board the Spirit of Tasmania ferry for a fun-filled road trip along the state's west coast

# ROAD TRIPPIN' IN TASSIE

Dad and the kids riding a tinny on the Arthur River



**WE DROVE UP THE RAMP  
AND BOARDED THE  
SHINY, BIG RED SHIP**

**Boarding  
the Spirit of  
Tasmania**

“Ahoy me hearties! Let’s sail the high seas!” screeched our excited seven-year-old with her imaginary sword held up against her younger brother in the back seat. We drove up the ramp and boarded the shiny, big red ship, Spirit of Tasmania, ready for our two-week road trip along Tasmania’s west coast.

Once parked on the lower deck, we scrambled out of the car and loaded ourselves up like packhorses with day bags, snacks, pram and nappies. We had been forewarned by friends that when you do the day sailing with kids in tow, it’s best to head straight to the indoor playground area on the upper deck and bunker down by the café for the nine hour trip. Sage advice!

Soon after, the horn sounded and we were off. We headed out onto the outer deck and waved goodbye to Melbourne as we sailed on our first family voyage to Tasmania.

### **FIRST STOP: HAPPY FEET**

A short drive from the Devonport ferry terminal, we rested our weary heads in the quaint seaside town of Penguin. Sitting on the edge of the mighty Bass Strait, Penguin takes its name from a nearby penguin rookery. This town loves its little feathered friends, and even has a large penguin statue. The real thing can be seen each night at Penguin Point from September to March as hundreds of little penguins waddle up along the shoreline to nest.

We begin our driving holiday on the coastal road between Ulverstone and Wynyard – a beautiful scenic drive with sweeping ocean views, great picnic spots and clean beaches for seaside walks and fun. ▶

**A couple of pirates on  
the deck**



Meg and Daisy in Stanley



### GOING NUTS FOR STANLEY

The next stop on our itinerary was Stanley, where we stayed in a cabin on the beach at Stanley Cabin & Tourist Park for five days, spoiled by magnificent sunsets each evening. Stanley is famous for The Nut, an immense flat-topped volcanic rock rising 150m straight up from the water's edge. The old colonial town is lined with stone cottages dating back to the early 1800s. You can climb the winding path to the top of The Nut to soak up the view (and get an aerobic workout), or follow our lead and take the kids on the open chairlift ride to the top and walk back down.

Dad and Jasper at The Edge of the World



Our days were spent swimming, kayaking, walking along the beach and 4WDing on the long stretches of sand. Each night after an early dinner, we would rug up and head down to the beach and wait for the little penguins to arrive and waddle ashore to their burrows. It was the most enchanting natural experience, with minimal crowds or fanfare, and the kids loved it.

### THE EDGE OF THE WORLD

A two-hour drive from the town of Burnie you will find Arthur River and Gardiner Point, dubbed 'The Edge of the World' due to it being the most western point of Tasmania. Head west and you'll encounter nothing but ocean until you reach the coast of Argentina.

Wild and rugged is an understatement here, with Mother Nature showing no mercy by brewing a tempest as the Southern Ocean meets the island state's western river, the Arthur. On our visit, it was a battle of the forces between the relentless wind and pounding waves, and I didn't dare let go of the arms of our intrepid three-year-old, out of fear that he would get thrown off the boardwalk into the treacherous whitewash waves crashing below. We made our way down feeling bold, adventurous and weather-beaten. We were greeted with fallen trees and log debris on the shoreline as nearby shrubs and grasses held their roots firm and clung to life against the extremity that is Gardiner Point. It was exhilarating.

Feeling adventurous, we decided to be



The kids waiting for penguins to come ashore at Stanley

spontaneous and ditch the car for a short tinny ride along the Arthur River. Minutes later, we were climbing into a small, rusty boat all rugged up and wearing life jackets when a wave of nerves washed over me as I saw the bearded, toothless boat owner chuckling at us from the shore as he swiftly untied the ropes and bellowed: “Good luck folks!”

It wasn't long before my husband was revving the motor and we were speeding along the river on our own, with the spray of water on our cheeks and squeals of laughter from the kids echoing across the water. They took turns to steer the boat, and we wended our way along the beautiful, remote waterway with nothing but the quiet dense rainforest either side. Kingfishers and white-bellied sea eagles soared above, and no doubt there were a few cheeky Tassie devils peering at us from the sidelines.

An hour later, the weather turned, ▶

Strahan



and the wind started lashing fiercely against our cheeks, the water began to churn beneath us and it started raining... hard. This caused great excitement from the kids, who thought it was all a fabulous adventure, but with one quick, cautionary glance at my husband, I knew it was time to turn around before we were blown over The Edge of the World.

### REMOTE TARKINE

The next leg of the journey was the stretch of the coast exploring the Tarkine, Australia's largest patch of temperate rainforest. The three-hour drive to the small settlement of Corinna feels as though you are cut off from the rest of the world – no Wi-Fi, no civilisation, just natural treasures including mountain ranges, wild river and cave systems, buttongrass moorlands and a rugged coastline.

We passed blackened eucalypt trees that were burnt in the 2019 bushfires that swept through the area. Our two children were

unusually calm on this leg of the journey, quietly staring out the window, as if sedated by Mother Nature.

### PICTURE-PERFECT STRAHAN

To get to Strahan from Corinna, you need to catch the barge over the Pieman River. The drive is simply enchanting, with lush, green fern gullies and waterholes, and the kids entertaining each other in the back seat trying to spot Tinkerbell and fairies.

Strahan is one of Tasmania's most popular tourist destinations, and it's easy to see why. It reminds me of a postcard, with old sailing boats lining the harbour, street lanterns lighting up historic cottages and fisherman unloading crayfish onto the docks.

There are long stretches of wild ocean beach to explore, towering sand dunes to conquer, and forest adventures to be had. We packed our itinerary with a visit to Ocean Beach, Hogarth Falls, Huon Pine

MY HUSBAND WAS REVVING THE MOTOR AND WE WERE SPEEDING ALONG THE RIVER ON OUR OWN

Daisy in her tinny on the Arthur River



Travelling besties  
and backseat  
bandits

Sawmill and of course, the whiskey distillery, as well as countless hours trying to spot platypus in Botanical Creek.

### BOAT HARBOUR BEACH

Next stop was Boat Harbour Beach, which was voted by National Geographic as one of Australia's top 10 beaches. The criteria included having natural appealing features, the ability to engage with the aquatic environment, and a sense of rawness and uniqueness. Tick, Tick, tick!

Located between rocky headlands, this quiet bay was a big hit with our little family thanks to its kid-friendly waves, rock pools, sea creatures and dolphins and seals, which we spotted from the clean, white sand. It even had a playground right near the beach to run the rascals ragged.

Nearby Rocky Cape National Park is also worth exploring, with a lighthouse, wildflowers, and some family-friendly bushwalks to caves tucked away in the rugged cliffs.

### HOMeward BOUND

As we sailed back, there was a noticeable difference in us all. I glanced over at my husband and noticed the newfound sense of playfulness in his eyes, as though his inner adventurous spirit had been awakened. As the children slept soundly on our laps, we were a couple of weary travellers with memories of dirt beneath our feet, sand in our hair and the fierce Tassie winds hitting our cheeks. **CA**

#### GETTING THERE:

Spirit of Tasmania operates overnight car ferry services between Melbourne and Devonport, in Tasmania's north, with day sailings available between April and September. On days of single sailings, the voyage takes 11 hours. On days of double sailings, the voyage takes 9 hours.

[spiritoftasmania.com.au](http://spiritoftasmania.com.au)

#### MORE INFO:

[discovertasmania.com.au](http://discovertasmania.com.au)

Wide open spaces  
in Stanley