

FACT FILE

# FLY FISHING IN TASMANIA

UNORDINARY ADVENTURES



Lake Leake  
© Samuel Shelley

## TASMANIA

COME DOWN FOR AIR

Mist rises. The fly line kisses a glassy bend.  
A few heartbeats pass, then there's the thrill of a strike.



Fly fishing at  
Penstock Lagoon  
© Samuel Shelley

— On 4 May 1864, a batch of eggs that had survived the voyage from England in a protective cocoon of moss were hatched in the cold waters of the Plenty River in southern Tasmania.

It was the third attempt by English settlers to transport brown trout eggs to the island, and the first successful acclimatisation in the southern hemisphere.

## What's out there

Tasmania's international reputation as a fly fishing destination is founded on its thriving population of wild brown trout. The isolation and pristine environmental conditions of Tasmania contribute to its status as arguably the purest strain in the world. Industry experts regard it as a challenging fish, with behaviour that's more instinctive than in reared fish.

Other introduced salmonid species in wild waterways and private fisheries include rainbow trout, brook trout and Atlantic salmon. The private fishery at 28 Gates farmstay in the Derwent Valley stocks tiger trout, a hybrid of brown and brook trout, with distinctive patterning.

## What makes fly fishing in Tasmania special

### DIVERSE AND PRISTINE ENVIRONMENT

The abundance and diversity of landscapes and waterways in which trout can be fished and the pristine condition of the environment create a dazzling array of fishing experiences. Tasmania has thousands of tarns and lakes – highland and lowland – as well as rivers, creeks, estuaries and a handful of private fisheries to fish.

### ACCESSIBLE WILDERNESS

Key factors that define the Tasmanian fly fishing experience are the location of many waterways within wilderness areas and their close proximity to the main gateways of Hobart, Launceston and Devonport.

### HIGH QUALITY WILD FISH

Tasmania's pristine environment and a combination of fresh water, wilderness and ecological diversity contribute to the excellent condition of wild trout. Tasmania's wild fish are typically smaller than trophy fish found at rival fly fishing destinations such as New Zealand.

### SIGHT FISHING

Industry experts regard Tasmania's sight fishing as among the best in the world, and it's a big drawcard for enthusiasts. Sight fishing involves seeing a trout rather than guessing where it might be, presenting a fly and securing a catch. The remarkable clarity of the water in Tasmania enables exceptional "polaroiding", the term for sight fishing using polarised sunglasses to cut glare from the water's surface. The shallow margins of lakes and lagoons offer exciting chances to catch tailing fish, which have their fins exposed above the water.

## Where to fish

With thousands of lakes and scores of rivers, no two fly fishing experiences are the same in Tasmania.

### WILD LAKES

Tasmania's shallow glacial lakes offer excellent fly fishing for wild brown trout. Many of these lakes are located in the Central Plateau Conservation Area, a UNESCO Wilderness World Heritage Area. Three central highlands lakes – Woods Lake, Penstock Lagoon and Little Pine Lagoon – were competition locations for the World Fly Fishing Championship in late 2019, the second time the event was held in Tasmania.

### RIVERS

Among the many rivers across the island, the Mersey and Meander rivers featured in competition at the 2019 world championship. Macquarie River and Brumbys Creek are well regarded for drift boating.

### PRIVATE FISHERIES

Currawong Lakes, in the east coast highlands, and 28 Gates farmstay, in the Derwent Valley, are among the island's private lake fishing destinations. Recreational fishing licences are not required to fish in registered private fisheries.

## Fishing, Tassie style

### SIGHT FISHING

A key attraction for enthusiasts is the thrill of the hunt during sight fishing, the chance to see a target trout, present a carefully chosen fly, and wait for a strike.

### DRY FLY

Fishers present an artificial fly on the surface of the water to a target fish via smooth casting motions. The success of this method in myriad waterways across Tasmania is a significant draw for enthusiasts.

### SHORE-BASED OR WADING

Fly fishing from the shore – on the banks of a river or lake, or partially immersed while wearing waders – is the easiest way to fish.

### LOCH-STYLE FISHING AND DRIFT BOATING

Most Tasmanian operators offer fly fishing from a boat as an option. Loch-style fishing is practised aboard a boat on a river. Drift boat fishing uses specially designed boats or rafts that are rowed constantly in the currents of a river, a common practice in the US on large, fast-flowing rivers.

## Travelling to fish

### SEASON

Brown trout can be caught with a licence in season from August until April; rainbow trout from October to May. Some public and private fisheries can be fished year-round.

### GUIDES

An accredited guided experience provides anglers of all skill levels with an authentic and intimate experience. Guides tell great stories and offer invaluable insight and expertise on local conditions, weather, fly selection and, of course, the location of special spots. Fly fishing enthusiasts who opt for guides often select bespoke and all-inclusive packages including fishing gear and transfers from Hobart or Launceston to accommodation at the doorstep of wilderness fishing locations.

Trout Guides and Lodges Tasmania ([TGALT](#)) is the peak tourism industry body that connects fishers with experienced guides and accommodation providers who uphold industry standards of safety and professionalism. Its members include guides, private fisheries and specialist accommodation ventures.

### LODGES AND HOSTED ACCOMMODATION

Venues catering for fly fishers include [RiverFly 1864](#) (Skullbone Plains), [Thousand Lakes Lodge](#) (Central Highlands), [Central Highlands Lodge](#) (Miena), [Currawong Lakes](#) (private stocked fishery, Lake Leake), [28 Gates farmstay](#) (private stocked fishery, Derwent Valley), [Pumphouse Point](#) (Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park), and [Hayes on Brumbys Fly Fishing Lodge](#) (Cressy).

## Competitive landscape

Key international fly fishing destinations include New Zealand, Canada, the US states of Montana and Oregon, Patagonia and Chile. Tasmania's key competitor is New Zealand, with direct comparisons in its cool climate, wilderness and alpine fly fishing. New Zealand's key features are its clear fast-flowing rivers, scenery, large fish, and direct international flights from the US and UK. The New Zealand fly fishing market is strongly focused on trophy fishing. Tasmania's wild trout, however, can provide a challenge equal to that found anywhere in the world.

## Licences and logistics

- All recreational anglers over the age of 14 undertaking any form of fishing in Tasmania, including fly fishing, must have a current fishing licence for inland waters. The Tasmanian Government's [Inland Fisheries Service](#) (IFS) manages all fish and fisheries in inland waters, and issues licences for 48 hours, seven days, 28 days, full season and multiple seasons. Anglers can order licences electronically before their trip, or fly fishing guides can arrange licences for clients to minimise fuss. Some 24,802 recreational fishing licences were issued in 2018-19; 19,522 of these were requested by Tasmanian residents. The remainder were interstate fishers, and about 310 were international fishers.
- Information about fishing conditions at more than 150 Tassie waterways is available on the IFS's [Infish](#) app.
- Australia and Tasmania have strict quarantine laws. Anglers must check, clean and dry their fishing gear before coming to Tasmania, and declare any used fishing equipment on arrival from overseas.
- Some inland waterways in Tasmania are located on private or restricted lands. [The Anglers Access Program](#) – a collaboration between the IFS, Anglers Alliance Tasmania and landowners – enhances fishing access to these regions, providing maps and resources for fishers to negotiate with landowners.

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