



# SUCCUMB TO TAS-MANIA!

BY BRETT KAPPLER, SEAN SIMMONS TRAVEL'S JUNIOR CONSULTANT

**RECENTLY, I GOT MY FIRST REAL TASTE OF TASSIE – AND IT WAS DELICIOUS. I WAS LUCKY ENOUGH TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY AS A GUEST OF TOURISM TASMANIA, AND IT COMPLETELY OPENED MY EYES TO THE UNIQUE WORLD OF OUR ISLAND BRETHREN.**

## DAY 1 – MEETING MONA

Despite our flight being delayed for longer than the actual time we were in the air, I was pretty excited about the days ahead. It's not often you get the opportunity to embark on these experiences, and I was intent on making the most of it.

My first impression of Hobart was of warmth, as it was warmer in Hobart than it was when I left Melbourne. It bode well. We caught our coach and reached our hotel within half an hour. I was staying at the Old Woolstore Hotel. Preferred by our corporate clients with offices in Hobart, I know some of you will be familiar with the hotel. For those of you who don't know it, it is an apartment-style hotel

only a hop, skip and a jump from the waterfront. Conveniently located, you have easy access to nearby restaurants, bars, cafes and, of course, the MONA ferry.



The ferry was an experience itself, with fantastic views and serving local food and beverages, including MONA's signature craft beer – Moo Brew. If you have a group, I'd recommend booking the ferry's VIP area called 'the Posh Pit'. For a little bit more you get food and

beverages included – great for holding a mixer before arriving at your destination. Upon arrival, get ready to enter what is arguably the cornerstone of the entire Tassie 'brand' – the Museum of Old and New Art, more affectionately known as MONA.

Getting treated with private access to the museum and all the weird and wonderful treasures within was fantastic. This place is spectacular! It is certainly not a museum in the classical sense of the word but more an esoteric art collection. The owner made his money as a professional gambler and has truly given something unique back to his community. The often wacky exhibits are truly something that have to be seen to be believed - from

the waterfall that sprays words pulled straight from internet headlines, to the wall of monks and the fat Porsche. It can be wondrous, surreal and somewhat confronting.



Without giving too much away, even going to the restroom was, in a word, bizarre.

Once our tour concluded, we had our official welcome reception in one of MONA's 14 on-site function spaces – the Organ Room. Local produce, wine and beer were served as we mingled

with the folks from Tourism Tasmania. After the event, we were ready for some serious revelling, so we hit the town with some live music and football at the Telegraph (or the Tele as the locals call it), followed by dancing at the Observatory.



## DAY 2 – TOURISM SPEED DATING

One of the main reasons I flew down was to attend the Tassie Specialist Conference, meeting with local tourism providers and

get valuable updates on the fantastic array of hotels and tourism providers from all over the state, but there was one stop to make first – Salamanca Market.

Salamanca Market is unique in that it actively regulates the amount of cheap, imported goods that often overwhelm other markets. Like everywhere else in Tasmania, at Salamanca's 300+ stalls you can expect to meet lots of friendly people who make or grow what they sell. My breakfast that morning consisted mainly of samples!

We had a packed morning at the Grand Chancellor Hotel (just around the corner from the Old Woolstore), with presentations by guest speakers from various



sectors of the industry. One of the biggest things I discovered was that Tasmania has only nine days of the year on which there are no events. Apparently they are working hard to close that gap! So no matter when you visit – there is bound to be something happening somewhere.

After a scrumptious buffet lunch (the pork belly was to die for), it was time to meet the suppliers. With over thirty operators and only time for twenty dates at six minutes apiece, it was a



hectic afternoon bouncing from table to table to get the breakdown of what was on offer, and I wrapped up still feeling like I had barely scratched the surface.

Following the conference, we quickly ducked back to our rooms to prepare for a “fancy-dress” gala dinner at the stunning Henry Jones Art Hotel, housed in an old jam factory. If you find yourself staying here – be sure to check out the building’s 3D photo history up on the first level.

Again, the food was sensational – fresh oysters and succulent lamb and delicious local wines abounded.

One remarkable thing I am learning about Tasmania is that nearly everything is locally sourced – and

everyone knows each other. Tasmania is one huge community, and they embody that ‘it takes a village’ mentality when it comes to how they present themselves and their products.

### DAY 3 – OUR NOURISHING NORTHWEST ADVENTURE BEGINS

Our time in Hobart concluded, it was time to head to Tassie’s north-west to experience first-hand some of the amazing attractions in the region. While it’s about a 3-hour drive direct from Hobart to Devonport, we were making a few stops along the way.

Firstly, I just want to say that the late night followed by an early morning was

never going to be a good combination. It’s even worse when you sleep through your opportunity for breakfast and have to settle for nothing more than a strong coffee!



Secondly, I wasn’t looking forward to a long day of driving in a coach – and then I met Di, our guide. Di is pushing seventy and is one of the most vibrant people I have ever met. She is so passionate about Tassie that you can’t help but fall in love with her. She is everyone’s grandmother and quite a pocket rocket!

Our first stop – Curringa Farm. Run by sixth-generation farmers, Tim and Jane Parsons, Curringa is a working 750-acre sheep and cropping farm located only one hour out of Hobart. They also have four gorgeous cottages for those that fancy a country getaway. I would recommend Curringa for families or groups of friends. Good for anyone who just needs a

quiet place to switch off, maybe do a little kayaking in the lake on the property, or just read while watching the dogs round up the sheep.

From Curringa, we headed off to Ratho Farm in Tassie’s Derwent Valley. Ratho is Australia’s oldest golf course and a spectacular historical site. Immerse yourself in the rich history of the house that dates back to the 1800s, and stay in the beautifully outfitted convicts residences. Aside from having an award-winning golf course, Ratho offers world-class trout fishing, genealogy workshops, or if whisky is your thing you can take a tour of the nearby Nant Distillery, which the guys at the farm are more than

happy to arrange for you.

Just watch out for snakes during summer. We had a bit of an ‘encounter’ with one of the local population during our visit, inciting a rush for higher ground

Lunch that day was a long time coming, so we were starving by the time we arrived at Deloraine, almost two hours north of Ratho. We ate at Cruising in the 50s Diner. This place epitomises everything that was fantastic about the 50s. The collection of petrol bowsers, records, licence plates and memorabilia from almost every 50s icon is the personal collection of the owners. Rather than selling it, they decided to share it with their local community by turning the former museum into a diner to



keep it going. Serving American-style fare, it is an okay pitstop for those needing to stretch their legs, and is sure to hit a nostalgic nerve or two with the older baby boomers!

The rest of the afternoon was all about drinks tasting. Seven Sheds Brewery in Railton gave us a tour and a sample of the prize-winning craft beers they brew in their garage at home. The interesting thing about Seven Sheds is that they use fruits and other ingredients not traditionally associated with beer, like

raspberry, blackberry, star anise, quinoa and cacao beans. After Seven Sheds, we trekked up to the much larger commercial operation of Spreyton Cider Co for a tour and tasting of their awesome ciders. I love cider, so this was a great stop. Did you know that cider is closer to wine than beer in terms of its making? Neither did I until now!

We reached Devonport in the early evening and checked in at the Quality Hotel Gateway, where some of us got a view of the Spirit of Tasmania coming into port. A very nice hotel, and another that is favoured by our corporate clients.

They saved the best to last for our first day. Dinner at Mrs Jones in Devonport



## DAY 4 – WHISKY & HISTORY

Given that I missed breakfast the previous day, I was thrilled that this was hard coded into the itinerary today. Within walking distance of the Gateway, the Laneway Café had everything a good café needs – strong coffee and a wonderful breakfast selection. The waffle stack with poached eggs, bacon and maple syrup, was just what the doctor ordered.

First stop today was Hellyer's Road Distillery. I wasn't sure about drinking whisky at 9.30 in the morning, but a single nip was enough to last the whole tour. I love scotch, and they do make a delightful drop, guaranteed to put hair on your chest.

I loved the smell of fermented barley in the air, and our guide was brilliant. Apparently before working at Hellyer's he didn't like whisky – you couldn't tell by how passionately he spoke about it.

During the tasting, you also have the opportunity to pour yourself a bottle straight from the cask, sealed with wax (this is, of course, extra). Hellyer's Road also



makes an award-winning vodka and a range of other whisky-related products including Irish cream and ice-cream, so there is something for everyone in the on-site gift shop and café.

Hitting the road again, we wound our way to Burnie and the Makers Workshop,



where we stopped to craft some paper, check out the local artists' stalls and wolf down an indulgent lunch platters stacked with an assortment of

local cheeses, meats and washed down with more wine.

After Burnie, it was time to head to Stanley, the last town we would visit today. Before checking into our lodgings for the evening, we stopped at Highfield House, designed by Henry Hellyer. Walking through the rooms and grounds of this place, you can feel the history sizzle in the air around you. It's eerie to say the least but presents opportunities for professional and amateur photographers alike to capture amazing images, especially since Highfield has views of the entire township and the Nut.

We had a brief tour of the town, including a quick look through Abbey's



Cottage (holiday houses for those who would like the facilities and comfort of a home instead of a hotel) and the Cow & Calf Art Gallery, run by local photographer David

Murphy. If you find yourself in Stanley, check out the gallery – his work is stunning!



Our accommodation tonight is the Stanley Seaview Inn. Comfortable, but nothing flashy. If you want to spend a bit more, they offer luxury self-contained accommodation called Horizon Deluxe Apartments a little further up the road. These apartments have modern

appointments including a spa and have fantastic views. According to the owners, they are very popular with honeymooners.

Dinner tonight was at the Stanley Hotel Bistro in town. Probably some of the best pub grub I've had and filling portions as well. While the half lobster was tempting, I eventually settled on the scallops and pavlova – very, very tasty. While Stanley Hotel is bound to satisfy, there are a couple of other places around town, such as Xanders. Another night of good food and wine before heading back to the hotel and watching a movie before bed.



**DAY 5 – NATURE, THE NUT AND A TASTE OF THE POD LIFE**

At some point during the previous evening, some of us (myself included) agreed that getting up at 5.30 am and heading back to Highfield House to photograph the sunrise over the Nut was a good idea. Turns out it was a, even though it was freezing! Wendy, our esteemed driver, went the extra mile (quite literally) to drive us up there. Unfortunately, while I had plugged the cable into the back of the camera before bed, I had failed to switch the charger on at the wall. As luck would have it, one minute to sunrise my camera died, so I had to rely on my phone.

We took a detour to the local cemetery on our way back to the hotel to soak up a little more local history, and after a long hot shower to warm ourselves up, we sat down to a hearty buffet breakfast. The Stanley Seaview does a continental breakfast normally, but for groups they can organise a hot breakfast on a catered basis, so they'll require notice if this is what you're after.

Leaving Stanley for a while, we travelled the Bass Highway all the way to Tarkine Forest Adventures at the Dismal Swamp. Despite its name, it is a lovely area if, like myself,



you like getting into nature. After taking the slide (yes, a slide) from the visitors centre to the forest floor, we immersed ourselves

in the lush rainforest and watched the Paddymelons feed. For those who are fans of cycling, there is a mountain bike trail is you're feeling adventurous.

We did lunch and a quick tour of Tall Timbers Hotel, popular with families and business travellers alike. We then headed back to Stanley. After taking photos of the Nut from Highfield House, it was time now to see with a view from the top. For this, you can either take the walking trail, or there's the shortcut, which we took - The Nut Chairlift. After snapping a few photos, it was time to say au revoir to Stanley.

Our last night's accommodation was at The Waterfront Wynyard. Seriously, I can't

recommend this place highly enough. Our hosts Justin and Cyndia were incredible, and everything they do makes you feel like you are coming home instead of staying away from it.



Some of us, myself included, were lucky enough to win the chance to stay in one of their premium suites. Separate from the main hotel, these units are self-contained coastal 'pods', built from converted shipping containers. These pods are designed, built and decorated by our hosts, and are luxurious and wonderfully modern with so much personality.



After settling in, we walked up to Purple Sage for

dinner. Hosted by the Cradle Coast Authority, the restaurant was opened especially for us and again the food blew us away. Given that it was our last night in Tasmania, we celebrated quite a bit. I was also lucky enough to catch up with my friend Kylie from the West Coast Wilderness Railway. While we didn't get to enjoy the rail during this trip, the experience is worth a mention and is highly recommended for anyone visiting the area!

We were surprised on our return to the hotel that our hosts had left marshmallows out for us to roast in the fire pit. With the pods being set slightly



away from the main rooms, we were able to enjoy a late evening outdoors without disturbing other guests. It was a magical way to spend our last night.



## DAY 6 – THE MAD RUSH BEFORE HOME

Our Tassie adventure is almost over, but we still have a packed morning before the flight back to Melbourne at 1 pm. After our final breakfast, we took a few more photos and were waved off by our extraordinary hosts.

Shortly, we arrived at House of Anvers in Latrobe. Igor, the owner, gave us the tour of his little piece of chocolate heaven. Over a tonne of handmade chocolate gets made onsite every year – and he uses one of the finest chocolates in the world, Fortunato No. 4. You can also enjoy an Anvers hot chocolate and other sweet treats in the onsite café. I highly recommend the chai latte fudge, but you can't

go wrong whatever you try. I bought a large tray to take home, and it didn't last five minutes. You'll never eat Cadbury again.

Next was a quick shopping stop at Ashgrove Cheese, where I stocked up on gourmet cheeses for home and another pit stop to grab some chocolate covered raspberries from Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm. From there it was time for a quick lunch before final goodbyes at Launceston Airport.

Lunch was at Phoenix & the Wolf in Perth, just outside of Launceston. It was the perfect way to end our trip, and I'd highly recommend it to anyone in the area with some time to kill before a flight. The building is a former chapel, and the food is

organic, fresh and either grown on site or sourced from local growers. They even bake their bread on the premises in a wood-fired oven out the back. The flavours are natural, earthy and delicious.



Those three words just about sum up the entire Tasmanian experience.



Natural, earthy and delicious. The land is lush; the food is world class, and the people we've met along the way are phenomenally friendly. Especially Di and Wendy (our guide and driver) and Nicki, our group's representative from Tourism Tasmania – together they held such a wealth of knowledge that enriched everything we saw.

Even though I think I put on about five kilos during my trip, Tasmania is truly a dish that has left me hungry for more, and I can't wait to go back for seconds.

Hi guys,

Do you want more information about any of the places, hotels or tours listed in this article? Give me a call, I'll be happy to answer any of your questions. And heads up, if you are looking for a unique venue for a conference or event with a difference, let's talk about MONA. It is guaranteed to impress!

I've learned that Tasmania is deceptively small, so when planning a tour, you need to look at drive times. You don't want to be rushing between stops, so make sure you budget enough time for enjoying yourself! It's worth taking an extra day or two to do everything you want than trying to cram too much into one day.

Tasmania has something for everyone, so whether you're an adventurer, a nature lover, history buff, art connoisseur, foodie or any combination thereof – there is going to be something that will set your heart afire. Plus, you could travel Tassie for a month and still have stuff left over for another trip!

If you're looking at touring Tasmania make sure you give me a call first. I'd love to put something special together for you. As a certified 'Tassie Specialist', I'll be able to craft a unique journey based not only on my personal experience but through the wealth of contacts I have built throughout our spectacular and often overlooked island state.

I look forward to hearing from you soon!

Best regards,  
Brett