

****Current travel restrictions are in place and may affect your entry into Tassie. Check [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#) for updates.**

If you're looking to enjoy [Tasmania](#) and you've got some time up your sleeve, the best way to do it is *slowly*.

While a quick trip is possible it's so much better not to attempt to see everything in one visit. Tassie has a lot to offer, and it's guaranteed that you'll want to return. So, accept that early on in your planning and don't rush through your trip. Soak up the slower pace, greenery and breathe in the clean air!



The Spirit of Tasmania docked at Port Melbourne.

We recently spent three months road-tripping our way around the Apple Isle and deliberately planned a limited itinerary to ensure we got to appreciate the east coast and all it had to offer. Towns and sightseeing destinations are all in proximity to each other so it's easy to fill a day and travel less than a hundred kilometres.

For this trip, we opted to take our off-road camper on board the Spirit of Tasmania, but there are plenty of hotels or bed & breakfasts available. Whether you [camp](#), stay in [caravan](#) parks, hotels or B&Bs, they are all a wonderful way to see the place.



Before boarding the ferry, all vehicles must pass through a thorough biohazard inspection.

Spirit of Tasmania

For us, booking and making the commitment to travelling dates is where our adventure begins! The step by step [ferry](#) booking form is well designed and user friendly.

Making your booking

- **Dates and vehicle** - my first tip is to decide on your dates and book in early. You'll need to know the [dimensions](#) of your vehicle including any van, bike carrier or roof box. Anything that makes a difference to the length or height of the car must be detailed as part of the booking, so have it on hand.
- **Onboard accommodation** - the journey across Bass Strait takes approximately 9-11 hours so the next option is to decide your accommodation. There is a choice between sitting in an unreserved seat, a booked recliner, a shared bunk or a private cabin. Each option is well explained on the [website](#) and has a different price point.
- **The return leg** - booking this is particularly important if you are travelling with a vehicle as spots are limited and fill fast. There's no guarantee you'll get a spot to travel the day you prefer if you leave it to chance.



Onboard seating areas are scattered everywhere and range from pod chairs to large dining tables and booths.

This wasn't our first visit to Tasmania and for this trip, we booked a recliner and travelled during the daytime. For us, the recliner was well worth additional funds and, compared to

other trips, it was a relief to know I didn't need to ask someone to mind my seat or leave an unattended bag. With unreserved seating, if you nab a good spot it may be gone by the time you get back from getting lunch, a cup of coffee or taking a stroll to enjoy the sailing experience.

For our return leg, we chose to mix it up and travel home overnight. Being my first experience in sailing at night, we opted for an ensuite twin cabin with a porthole. It was comfortable and we slept well.

There is a fee to change any leg of the journey but having a confirmed booking for both legs, offers reassurance and peace of mind.



There are outdoor areas on the ferry where passengers can get fresh air and spot for land. There's great boarding and quarantine information already available online, so I won't cover it here. But it's worth knowing that customs at the Victorian wharf is very thorough so ready yourself to easily open your vehicle, caravan and/or trailer for inspection. Fresh produce is contraband and any fridges or eskies in your vehicle will be opened, along with other bags and food tubs so it's best to not travel with any perishables and stock up once you have arrived.

There are strict requirements for carrying fuel and hazardous goods. Gas cylinders must not exceed 9kg in size and need to have been inspected within 10-years. All dangerous goods must be declared and will be inspected by officials before either being confiscated or deemed safe for cartage and tagged accordingly. Likewise with other pressurised fuel canisters used for cooking and all jerry cans must be empty unless containing diesel. Spirit of Tasmania provides comprehensive details on their dangerous goods policy here.

It's a good idea to ensure your vehicle and tow are clean of mud and other debris. If not, you may be directed to wash them on arrival in Devonport. Dogs and all kinds of furry friends are permitted to travel on the ferry and kennelled accommodation is provided on two decks, but passengers are not allowed access to their pets whilst the boat is sailing. Again, the website provides thorough information.

The food aboard is reasonably priced, tasty, and efficiently served. There are charging outputs, but internet and phone service are limited. Knowing this we downloaded some films and podcasts to enjoy. As we were travelling under COVID restrictions there were fewer people on board. We were required to wear masks and complete a permit form declaring we hadn't been in any current red zones.

Spirit staff are as welcoming and helpful as the company's informative website and reminder text messages. We had a smooth sail and enjoyed the trip across, although I did forget to book the movie I was keen to see, and it was sold out! Don't make that mistake as a film is a good way to pass the time.



The World War 1 monument at Ulverstone was built in 1953 and includes a clock tower.

Tasmanian Itinerary

With our travel dates and onboard accommodation sorted, the next consideration was to decide on our destination for the first night. It's a long and tiring day on the ferry and with our camper to set up and sunset fast approaching, we didn't want to face a long drive. We

also needed somewhere to stock up on supplies for the trip now that we had cleared all the necessary quarantine checks. There's a choice of great supermarkets in Ulverstone with quality fresh produce and being only a 15-minute drive from Devonport, we chose to head there for our first night.

Tasmania holds a fascinating history with the first explorers arriving well before Captain Cook. Traditionally named Lutruwita, the dual place name in both English and the language of traditional owners, the Palawa people, has now been initiated. It's worth allowing the space in your itinerary to visit and tour some of the significant landmarks.



Jimmy Barnes performing his Red Hot Summer tour at the Hobart Botanic Gardens.

We prefer to keep our travel itinerary loose, with as few bookings as possible. Who wants to move on if you are having a good time?

However, no itinerary is complete without research into what's on, where and when. Festivals and major events will impact accommodation and availability in the relevant area so it's best to know what's on and plan ahead. Whether that's by booking your campsite or room, tickets to the performance, or avoiding the region altogether.

Like other states and territories of Australia, Tasmania has regular cultural, sporting and seasonal events, plus touring international acts. Imagine your disappointment if you were to find out the Penny Farthing Championships were 'yesterday' as you pull into Evandale, or Mole Creek Pub had a great set of bands in the beer garden over the weekend and your itinerary has you arriving on Monday afternoon? With a smaller population, there is a comfortable vibe at events and concerts. It's different and more relaxed than in mainland Australia.

I knew we wanted to be involved in some special events, and that we would be away over Easter so made bookings for those times to ensure a campsite. The rest was pretty much left to chance.

We had six weeks to get to Hobart for a concert in the botanic gardens. More than enough time to get to know the coast, so after returning to our vehicle to disembark, we made our way to Ulverstone for a few days to get our bearings before heading east.

And so, the adventure began. Stay tuned for Part 2.

Have you been to Tassie or is it still on your bucket list?