

Tasmania

A Traveline Supplement



Saffire

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Hobart will host professional conference organisers (PCOs) at a major conference later this year

Hail Hobart

Hobart's profile will be given a boost when business event planners from around New Zealand and Australia converge on the city for the Professional Conference Organisers' (PCO) Conference from December 5 to 7. The event will give the city a fresh opportunity to showcase both new and existing product suitable for corporate meetings, incentives and high end luxury travel.

Henry Jones

Blending the past with the present is such an important part of the Henry Jones Art Hotel experience that the property has its own historian, Warren Glover, on site. It's little wonder, since part of the hotel actually pre-dates the states of Victoria, Queensland and Western Australia.

The original site was used to service the whaling industry but in 1861 a new era was heralded when George Peacock began business in Hobart as a jam manufacturer. The industry took another step forward when he transferred his jam making interests to Henry Jones, one of his former employees.

Historian Glover says that Jones had started working 60 hours a week at the factory when he was 12 and was head foreman by the time he was in his 20s. He was also in the right place at the right time – the Peacocks were heading towards bankruptcy because of a poisoning scandal, tariff wars and a family split.

What became H Jones and Co went from strength to strength under Jones' guiding hand, with the motto of IXL (I Excel). When Jones died in 1926, some 1500 residents lined the road as the hearse travelled by and 5000 crammed into the cemetery to see him off. The company continued but spluttered in the 1960s and 70s (IXL jam is now owned by Coca Cola Amatil).

The Henry Jones Art Hotel opened in 2004, and has since received huge acclaim, including two Australian Tourism Awards. A Federal Group property for the last couple of years, the hotel has 56 suites and facilities such as the Jones & Co function room, the IXL Atrium, Henry's Restaurant and IXL Long Bar.

Islington

Opened in 1847 as a manor house and operating until 1980 as a bed and breakfast, Islington is now one of Hobart's most highly regarded boutique hotels.

The heart of the hotel is its conservatory – an ideal place to enjoy a glass of Tasmanian Pinot Noir or beer and read the newspaper or a magazine. It is also where breakfast is served from 7.30am.

On Thursday, Friday and Saturday, dinner is served at Islington – other nights guests take advantage of Hobart's wide range of eateries a short drive or taxi ride away (about 15 – 20 minutes brisk walk).

Manager Thomas Barker says dinner at Islington is a five course

degustation meal matched with Tasmanian wines.

From a corporate point of view, the hotel is ideal for small corporate groups and private functions.

'We can use the library for meetings and have drinks in the conservatory and we also do a lot of culinary things like cooking classes and 'iron chef cook offs'.

While meetings are part of the hotel's mix, Barker says most of Islington's guests are independent travellers who tend to stay longer than guests do at other places around town. 'Our average stay is about four and a half days.'

The Priory

Islington's sister property The Priory Country Lodge in Bothwell, is a stunningly refurbished



Henry Jones Art Hotel

1848 Tudor house, an hour north of Hobart. Town and Country four night (usually two at each property) combination packages are priced at around A\$2200 per couple and include three dinners and four breakfasts.

Guests can grab a bike and cycle through the wide streets of Bothwell which has more than 50 stone cottages, houses and official buildings.

From The Priory it's five minutes to Nant Estate whiskey distillery for a spot of whiskey tasting, or, across the road is Australia's oldest golf course, Ratho. Fishing in nearby lakes can be arranged, or, forty minutes drive away is Coal Valley Wines specialising in cold climate varieties such as pinot noir.

Accommodation is in the main house (four bedrooms) - good for exclusive use for corporates – or in two new pavilions overlooking a man made lake.

The Lair

Just opened in January this year is luxury self-contained retreat, The Lair. Accommodating four adults in a pair of identical suites at each end of the building, the A\$1100 tariff (minimum two night stay) includes oysters and champagne on arrival, breakfast provisions and a filled dry pantry.

Perched on the coastline near Swansea, The Lair has a four person spa, indoor and outdoor cooking and a library with classic films. The Lair is available for private functions of up to 12 people.

MONA

One of the most anticipated openings in Hobart is that of MONA – the Museum of Old and New Art – which promises to add a new dimension to the way people view art (and

MONA has a number of existing facilities available for conference and incentive groups, the new museum will be opened early next year



Salamanca Street – a popular dining and social precinct in Hobart

museums). The displays will not include labels or explanations, visitors will be left to make their own interpretations of what they see before listening to a description on an ipod.

MONA, owned by David Walsh, opens in January 2011 and looks set to challenge the senses in a variety of ways (it's not a secret that some people will find a number of exhibits offensive). The PCO Conference is likely to have a sneak preview, at least of some of the function space that will be available in the museum.

MONA is on the site of Moorilla Wines, which also encompasses the fascinating MONA Pavilions (eight different accommodation choices overlooking the Derwent River featuring artwork from the MONA collection), the Source Restaurant, Ether Function Centre, the Cellar Door, Whiner Bar and Moo Brew micro-brewery.

Andrew Stack, manager of operations at Moorilla, says the company endeavours to take its restaurant experience through to functions. 'This is even to the point of doing 200

espressos for a group of 200.'

The site is popular for weddings and The Pavilions do steady trade with honeymooners, but it's an ideal place for small corporate meetings as well as larger events. Even now the MONA – Moorilla experience can stimulate the creative senses. This aspect of the place can only be enhanced when the museum opens.

New centre

Work has begun at Princes Wharf Shed No.1 in Hobart's Sullivans Cove waterfront precinct and the redevelopment will include multi-purpose event space capable of seating 1500 for an offsite dinner. It can also be adapted to suit trade shows, seminars and other corporate events. The space will be available from 2011.

Clean air

Want to breathe the world's cleanest air? Then head to Tasmania. The Cape Grim Baseline Air Pollution Station, located in the far north west of Tasmania, regularly monitors the state as having the globe's cleanest air.

The lack of pollution is due to the island's southerly latitude, its position in the Southern Ocean, low-key development, distance from other land masses, and the cleansing effect of the Roaring Forties.



The entrance to Saffire

Freycinet's fine fare: Saffire adds new dimension

The area, known also as Coles Bay, has a permanent population of '250ish' which swells to about 6000 in the peak summer season. Even in the winter, despite not being particularly alluring as a swimming destination, the area attracts a steady flow of trekkers or people who just want to chill out in peaceful surroundings. The well established Freycinet Lodge has long catered for corporate guests in the winter, with conference groups of 100 – 120 fitting comfortably in its facilities.

premium room category) and a number of other inclusions. Saffire has a self service bar and a restaurant, Palate, which services a 10 course degustation dinner with wines to match for those with the dinner plan, or a la carte for those without.

Matt Lacoste, guest service manager at Saffire accepts that the terms 'tailor made' and 'customised' can be thrown around flippantly in the hospitality industry but at Saffire they do retain their meaning.

Saffire

The recently opened Saffire, like Freycinet Lodge a Federal Group (Pure Tasmania) property, adds a new high end dimension to the region – not just with its design and facilities but also its 'all inclusive and its one size does not fit all' approach to hospitality.

Saffire dispenses with concierge and reception, instead employing guest services personnel to meet and greet guests and introduce them to the property. Guests sign a card in their suite to register.

An all inclusive room rate includes breakfast, lunch, dinner (optional), activities, mini bar in room, at least 60 minutes of complimentary spa treatment (two hours for guests in the

Freycinet National Park, with its deep blue seas flanked by red granite mountains, is ranked as Tasmania's most visited park (just a sniff ahead of Cradle Mountain).

'For example we find out what type of music our guests enjoy and we programme the iPod in their suite to meet their liking.'

Saffire is in a secluded location with views across Great Oyster Bay, to the Hazards Ranges beyond. Nearby, Wineglass Bay has been internationally recognised as one of the world's top 10 beaches, while Freycinet National Park is at Saffire's doorstep.

A key to Saffire is the selection of experiences and activities, researched and developed by the



Freycinet Lodge from the air

property's five guides, so they can't be bought 'off the shelf' at any other location.

A signature experience at Saffire Freycinet is a visit to Schouten Island aboard the 11.9 metre Saffire. The journey can include a visit to a secluded bay for a lunch of Tasmanian produce.

Freycinet Lodge

With four different styles of cabin, Freycinet Lodge is adept at catering for the corporate and conference sector, but also has a strong reputation in the leisure market – for families, honeymooners and other couples wanting a relaxing break.

Freycinet Lodge offers three main function rooms, the Dove, Parsons and Amos Rooms.

There are, befitting the destination, plenty of outdoor activities and experiences literally on Freycinet Lodge's doorstep. However, it is just as easy to sit on the deck of a cabin and enjoy a glass of Tasmania Pinot Noir. On that note, another highlight is enjoying the seafood and other fresh produce at the Bay Restaurant – with a panoramic view of Great Oyster Bay.

Vern Richardson, operations manager at the lodge, says the environment is all about relaxing. The cabins don't have televisions or telephones (though a lounge area does have a TV screen and wireless internet for those needing to keep in

touch with the outside world).

Probably the most popular excursion – especially if guests are on a limited time frame – is the Wineglass Bay Lookout Walk. It takes about two hours and is suitable for children, though it does involve an energetic climb with rewarding views. Interpretive walks can be arranged from the lodge, as can trips such as an Oysters on the Bay Cruise, a four wheel drive tour at Bluestone Bay, or a five to six hour circuit hike around Wineglass Bay. Also popular at Freycinet Lodge is a one hour presentation entitled Flavours of the East Coast, where guests can sample seven Tasmanian wines and accompaniments from the local region.

Nature's Cradle By Stu Freeman

Not everything always goes to plan on industry site visits. So when I was told by front office attendant Kobe Blizzard that people often see wallabies or wombats from their room at Cradle Mountain Chateau I took it with a grain of salt.

My cynicism was proven wrong when I looked out the window of a garden view room and saw two bennet wallabies foraging for food in the garden. A few minutes later the other type of wallaby commonly seen around Cradle Mountain – the rufus – hopped by.

It is not uncommon in the region to see common wombats, bushy tail possums, Tasmanian devils and quoll.

Cradle Mountain, especially on a crisp (soon to snow) winter's day is nature at its most dramatic. Yet, the well maintained boardwalks – some of which literally pass by the most popular accommodation providers – mean that visitors will always be able to take at least a short walk and experience the terrain. The easiest stroll from the chateau is a 20 minute rainforest board walk.

The most famous attraction in the Cradle Mountain – Lake St Clair National Park is Dove Lake and this requires a short drive. Once there, it's easy to take the Dove Lake Walk (rated as one of Tasmania's greatest short walks), which follows the shoreline and passes through the ancient rainforest of the Ballroom Forest. Cradle Mountain itself serves as a backdrop.



Dove Lake and Cradle Mountain

Groups

The Cradle Mountain Chateau's conference centre can cater for up to 120 delegates and consists of three pillar-less function rooms with natural light.

The chateau's Wilderness Gallery is a stand alone complex with 10 exhibition rooms and a collection of stunning photography, which can be used for theatre style presentations, cocktail functions, lunches and other corporate events.

There are two relaxing library areas in the chateau, plus the signature Grey Gum Restaurant, more casual Quoll's Restaurant and the Brushtail's Bar, Lounge and Billiard Room. Wireless internet is available in the property.

Lodge

The Cradle Mountain Lodge, operated by Accor, is on the edge of the park and (like the chateau) offers guided walks, wine tastings and other activities.

The Tavern Bar and Bistro in the lodge has a lively Australian pub atmosphere – a great place to catch up after a business session or a hike in the National Park. The Highland Restaurant provides a more intimate dining experience and has a large open fire as a centre piece.

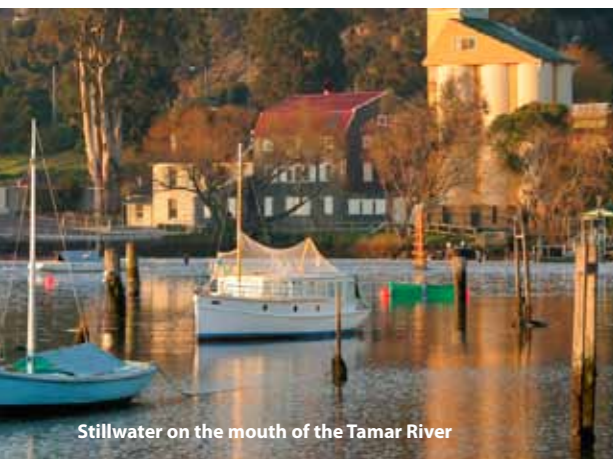
The lodge's facilities include the Waldheim Alpine Spa, where guests can choose from a menu for treatments which include hand, foot and body scrubs, facials or deep tissue massages.



Walking distance

Central Launceston has plenty to offer those who take the time to stroll its streets

Whether on business or pleasure, visitors to Launceston will find everything at their fingertips – or at least at the soles of their feet. With a population of about 80,000 Launceston's main attractions, restaurants, venues and bars are all within walking distance of city hotels.



Stillwater on the mouth of the Tamar River

Stillwater River Café, Restaurant and Wine Bar, as the name suggests, is on the calm mouth of the Tamar River. Along with the peaceful views come fine dining in the evening and more casual fare for breakfast and lunch.

Stillwater has a high reputation in town (anyone I mentioned I was eating there to said things like 'you're in for a treat') and its well deserved. Evening diners can eat a la carte or choose the six course tasting menu.

The selection for both changes with the seasons – over winter the fare included tartlet of braised Harris farm rabbit, comfit of duck leg and roasted duck breast, and Japanese style seared

Angus beef.

Stillwater has two private dining areas, a downstairs room for up to 18 – which is separate from the restaurant and bar but close enough to share in its lively atmosphere, and a more secluded upstairs room which would be ideal for a board meeting or high level corporate function of up to 14 people.

Also in the building, a converted 1830s flour mill, is The Mill Providore + Galley. Under the guiding hand of Becky Shrimpton the delicatessen has increased its range of Tasmanian fare (all the wine on sale is from the island state,

but some of the cheese and other food items are from further afield).

'Tourists want Tasmanian product so we're increasing that all the time, but we also cater for the locals who may want French cheese or other imported food items.'

Also on offer are arts and crafts and jewellery items, again mainly from local sources.

Shrimpton is also promoting her gallery space to corporate groups. The area is ideal for up to 150 people and has an historic feel with views over the river. The exhibitions change regularly, so it's 'pot luck' in terms of what will be able to catch the eye of function guests.

Boag's

Walking is always a good way to reach anything to do with alcohol, and Boag's Brewery is just a few minutes by foot from Launceston's main city hotels. The true appeal of this kind of tour, of course, is in the tasting, and at Boag's this means trying three lagers and an ale with matched Tasmanian cheeses.

However, Boag's is also part of Tasmania's history and the guides mix various stories in with the explanations of brewing processes.

James Boag and his family immigrated to Tasmania in 1853, initially to work for an uncle in his brewery. In 1878 he took up the licence of a Launceston hotel until he and his son (James II) could purchase the existing Esk Brewery.

Driven mainly by James the younger, the brewery initially made cordials and beer – about 1700 litres of the latter per week. This increased to 121,500 litres per week just 20 years later and these days the brewery produces something like 100 million litres per year.

Anyone taking part in the tour should turn up a little early and explore the museum at Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers, which is also where the tours can be booked and merchandise bought.

When I visited on Friday afternoon the work on site had come to an end and the employees were enjoying a few drinks, 'as they do every other Friday' according to guide Matt Hyde. This, Hyde explained, would not have gone down well with the brewery workers of old. Up until the 80s, they could just grab a drink whenever they wanted throughout the working day. For some

reason, that doesn't quite cut it with the health and safety regulations these days.

On the H & S note, visitors on the brewery tour are expected to watch a safety video before taking part. The advice is basic (don't touch the machinery, put on your safety goggles when you are asked to etc) but necessary when a group of 15 or 20 is walking through a working site.

Peppers

Right on the banks of the Tamar River, Peppers Seaport Hotel, is in its own enclave of restaurants and cafés, while being 10 minutes walk from Stillwater and even closer to the Boag's Brewery. Visitor attractions such as Cataract Gorge and City Park are also close.

The 60 room hotel opened on the site of an

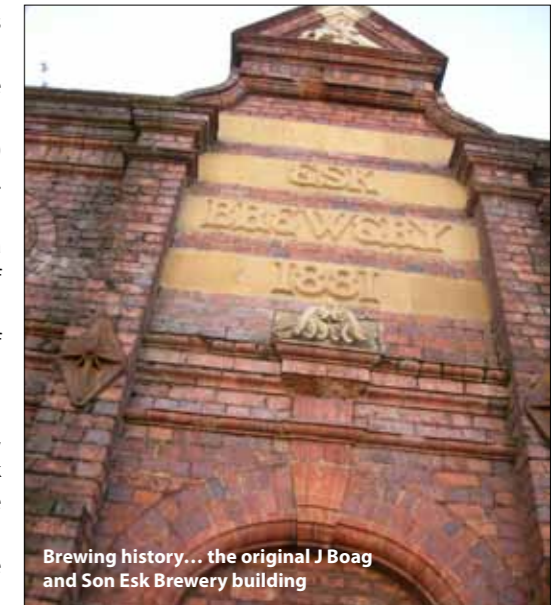
old dry dock about six years ago and is designed in the shape of a ship.

Overlooking the Tamar River, the complex includes a restaurant called Mud (there is a spa facility of the same name) reflecting the state of the river at low tide. There is another called Silt.

Adjacent to reception is Cube Café, a pleasant place for breakfast (al fresco if the temperature is right). The café can also deliver a room service breakfast if required.

Peppers Seaport has a small meeting room, catering for up to 50 theatre style, but is across the river from the North Esk Rowing Club if larger function facilities are required.

Free wireless internet is available throughout the hotel.



Brewing history... the original J Boag and Son Esk Brewery building

Won it on the horses

Quamby Estate, about 20 minutes drive from Launceston, is reminiscent of an English mansion and these days has 10 guest rooms and function spaces. It also serves as 'base camp' for the Bay of Fires Walk and Cradle Mountain Huts (like the estate the trekking products are owned by the company Anthology).

Set with a nine hole golf course on one side and farmland on the other, Quamby is as peaceful a place as anyone could imagine. However, like much of Tasmania's history it has a link with the state's convict past.

It was built in the early 1830s by Richard Dry, a political prisoner from Ireland who found himself first in Sydney and then in Hobart before being made a free man.

His fortunes must have improved fairly rapidly because he and his wife somehow (as the story goes) found themselves at dinner with the Governor. Possibly as a jest or a bet, the Governor offered to grant the couple as much land as the attractive Mrs Dry could ride around in a day.

He probably regretted it – the lady stationed various horses at points along her intended route and without exhausting any one animal managed to secure some 30,000 acres for her husband.

'It's folk lore and some locals will tell you it isn't true,' says Dylan Hunt, homestead manager at Quamby estate. 'But I've read it in a book, so...'

Dry's son (continuing the family's fortune) went on to become the first Tasmanian born Premier of the state and helped abolish the convict labour system.

Quamby was a family home (owned by various families) until the mid-1990s, though there is

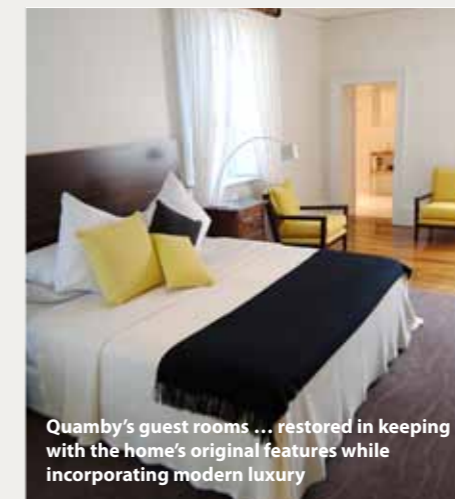
little known of what has become of the Drys. Anthology is the eighth owner.

Not surprisingly, the homestead is popular with English guests, who are immediately reminded of home. It is also gaining ground with wedding groups, incentives and corporate groups seeking an offsite dinner or private get-away.

Guest rooms have been restored in keeping with the home's original features while incorporating modern luxury, and each room is different.

The larger, deluxe rooms have modern bathrooms with spa baths, luxury bedding, flat screen televisions and DVD players (superior rooms have shower only in the bathrooms). An eclectic collection of original art and restored furniture mixes the old and the new, giving each room its own personality.

The homestead has a number of options for group 'get-togethers', such as the billiard room.



Quamby's guest rooms ... restored in keeping with the home's original features while incorporating modern luxury

'The billiard table plus a bottle of red wine makes a very good night,' says Hunt.

Various activities are available from the homestead, such as fly fishing, 'cliffs and cave' tours, walking at Liffey Falls State Reserve and exploring the vineyards of the Tamar Valley Wine Route.

Wine

Tasmania's wine industry has a growing reputation and is coming up with tastes distinctive from South Australian and New Zealand wines. Groups meeting anywhere in the state are unlikely to have trouble finding a nearby vineyard for an offsite dinner and/or tasting, but one highly recommended spot near Launceston is Rosevears Vineyard.

The property features 20 'eco chalets' with a combination of one bedroom, studio and two bedroom apartments. However, it is also ideal as an offsite function venue, with a tasting room, lounge area and restaurant all adjoining and a deck area with views over the Tamar River.

The cellar door is a great place to sample some of the wines produced by Dr Andrew Pirie – a wine industry legend in Tasmania.

Cellar door operator Richard Murtough says Rosevears specialises in the wines suitable to climate and conditions.

'We're similar to Marlborough in terms of latitude, climate and soil. Over the last two or three years we have started to gain recognition for Sauvignon Blancs.'

Other aromatic whites, such as riesling, pinot gris, gewürztraminer and 'even' chardonnay are also popular purchases at the cellar door. However, what Rosevears is really known for is its 'world class' Pinot Noir and its sparkling wines.



Photo: Graeme Kemlo

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