



## Let's Go Exploring

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Photo: Sam Shelley



"It would be vain of me to attempt to describe my feelings when I beheld this lonely harbour lying at the world's end, separated as it were from the rest of the universe – 'twas nature and nature in her wildest mood...."  
Admiral Bruni D'Entrecasteaux.

# Bruny Island Long Weekend

Words: Alice Hansen

Images: Sam Shelley

As we make our way down the D'Entrecasteaux Channel, we too have a sense of heading toward the edge of the world. Wild, raw, and ruggedly beautiful – only our voyage is aboard a high-speed catamaran with latte in hand.

Our Bruny Island Long Weekend has begun.

Just 45 minutes from the bustle of early morning Hobart commuters, we set foot on Bruny Island. The morning sun is dancing through eucalypts and the sky is a rich, cloudless blue. Bags are whisked from our hands by guides Alex and Rob and bundled into the van. We learn quickly these two take care of everything with effortless charm.

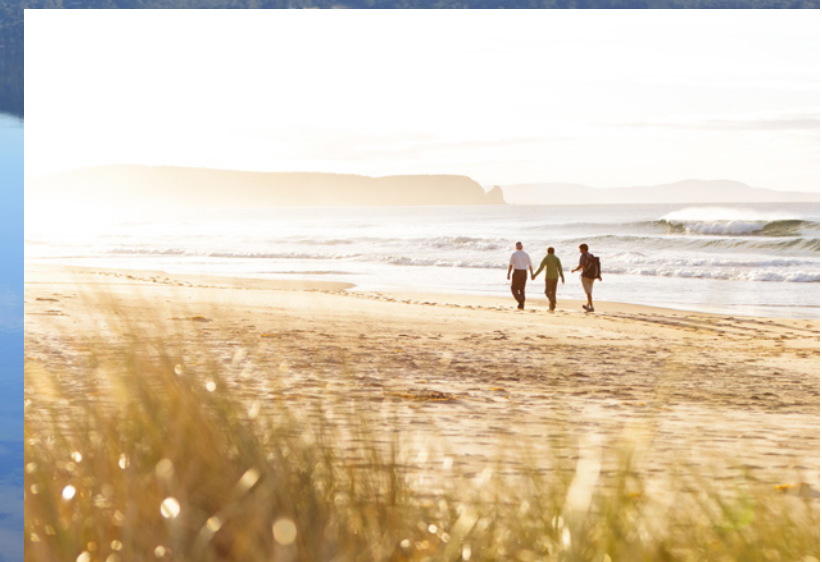
At the helm is Rob. Owner and creator of Tasmania's latest luxury guided walk, the twinkle in his eye tells us his island has magic in store. No sooner have we settled into our seats listening to stories of first inhabitants and heroic explorers

than we pull in to the starting point of our first walk.

Today we are venturing up to Queen Elizabeth Cape, a 12-kilometre trek that promises beach walking, coastal heath and eucalypt forest. The track is deliciously soft and invites us to explore Bruny the superior way – on foot.

As cheery chatter echoes down the line of walkers falling into comfortable stride (no more than eight and an intimate group of five for us), we are greeted with our first local. In riotous fashion I progress from joint leader to the group's back, performing a high-kneed tiger snake dance! I quickly realise that I'll be dancing alone the following three days as the others watch on bemused.

As we climb Mars Bluff, Alex points out endemic green rosellas and yellow-throated honeyeaters (much more to my liking) and we catch our first glimpse of Miles Beach down below. It's glorious,







untouched and entirely devoid of human life. The pace quickens as we head down the dunes, knowing today will be ours. Squeaky underfoot, the group widens as we each carve fresh footprint trails into the sand.

Barely a breath of wind, and we begin our final leg through eucalypt forest, across delicate muttonbird rookeries, and up to Queen Elizabeth Cape. It's here we gather under a shady tree to enjoy pumpkin and feta quiche teamed with walnut, feta and spinach salad and oh so exquisite views across Adventure Bay.

The return trip is equally special. Touching down on Miles Beach once

more, Rob insists we hand over heavy boots and as they dangle from his pack, we enjoy kicking through ankle-deep shallows for the length of the beach.

A leisurely five hours later we arrive back at the van, intrigued by the talk of our next destination. We are fitted with stylish wetsuit booties and are promptly reversed down a dusty driveway, curious as to where we are rolling...backwards.

As the trees clear, an oyster farm reveals itself in glistening low-tide waters. The sight is as refreshing as the elderflower and sparkling water, topped with ice that is placed in our weary hands down by the water. The perfect pick-me-up as the gentle hum of an oyster farmer's boat fills the air.

Sam, of Bruny Island Marine Farm, left behind his stockbroker's suit for waders and his blissfully relaxed nature mirrors his new office space. As warm water swirls about our ankles, we each enjoy a freshly shucked beauty straight from the farmer's hand.

Making the most of the island's bounty, we then make a pit stop at the Bruny Island Cheese Company for a tasting, and select two fine cheeses to accompany us back to our camp. We venture inland, enchanted at where the

bumpy road is leading. The ignition is switched off and the van is silent.

The boys are quick to carry our bags, and as we wander a few more metres, a 100-acre haven is revealed. Towering blackwoods, dogwoods, tall stringybarks and ferns hug the edges of our luxury camp. Stylish tents line the right side and we are promptly shown one of the camp's highlights.

With the flip of a table tennis paddle atop a stick (red means engaged and stops impromptu visitors), we have our very own outdoor forest shower. The open-air front lets us breathe in bush air and watch native birds weave between treetops. It's so invigorating we could be forgiven for forgetting our stark state!

It's by night that our guides really turn on the gourmet heat. On arrival into the 'dining house' we're met with vibrant orange honeysuckle flowers on a long rustic table that promises much laughter and story-sharing of the day's adventures.

With a celebratory giggle, the Sydney lawyer opts for bubbles and we promptly follow suit. In moments we are each handed a Tasmanian Jansz under a setting sun as Alex and Rob busy themselves in preparing fresh Bruny

Island oysters, Woodbridge Smokehouse cold-smoked trout, delicious dips and woodfired bread.

The menu better resembles a fine-dining restaurant than a camp-kitchen effort. Bruny Island wallaby carpaccio with radishini and Grandveve pecorino is followed by Spring Bay mussels in delicious saffron cream while perfectly cooked Murrayfield lamb from northern Bruny is served with lemon, garlic and thyme. Our glasses are attentively topped with Tasmanian whites and reds as darkness falls.

Day two begins in the early hours with a gentle thump past my tent. While the inquisitive wallaby isn't my wake up call, his visit entices me outside. A star-sprinkled sky, punctuated by swift moving clouds against the dark canvas, performs above me. And if I wasn't lured by the crisp sheets of king-sized luxury, I would have been tempted by an 'outdoor fern bed.'

Hours later light fills the tent and a few happy chirps ring through the valley. I lie there and absorb the sound of leaves colliding in the morning breeze, sending calm across the camp. Today we are bound for South Bruny National Park, and as if on cue, the wind picks up and gives this wild, desolate corner of the island an even more rugged personality. The five-hour journey begins by walking the length of Cloudy Bay Beach. Windswept and beautiful, the walk then leads us toward spectacular views of Friars Rocks.

As we settle in for lunch high on East Cloudy Head it's a whimsical feeling looking across the grand Southern Ocean, knowing that 2,500 kilometres beyond, the next stop is Antarctica. Breathtaking

views out to Cape Bruny Lighthouse in the west and the distant Southern Ranges of the Tasmanian mainland complete the panorama.

As with the previous walk, we are then bundled into the van for some gourmet spoiling. Next stop is Australia's southernmost vineyard. We know the drill now; we get to enjoy delicious tasting then generous Rob scoops up our favourites to take with us to camp.

Back at 'home,' we enjoy time to sit on the deck, walk among the ferns, partake in another lavish shower or simply read. Meanwhile the master camp chefs are busily preparing blue-eye trevalla with grapefruit, toasted hazelnut and rocket salad as well as a perfectly-rested fillet of Cape Grim beef.

The final day promises much exhilaration. After a short wet-forest walk we hop aboard Rob Pennicott's award winning wilderness and wildlife cruise. Farewelled by Mr Pennicott himself, we journey along stunning coastline, past some of the highest sea cliffs in the Southern Hemisphere. Playful dolphins, bold male seals, cruising albatross and the taste of salty lips complete our thrilling experience.

As we motor back into the bay our trusty guides are waiting, ready to whisk us away for a final lunch in a pavilion overlooking Adventure Bay. We then stock up on fudge next door and head north to meet our seaplane pilot. It is amusing to see a pilot knee-deep in water, and a plane with an anchor.

Bumping across the waves collecting speed, it's a buzz to gradually rise above the channel. When I feel a rush of air,

I'm fascinated that the pilot has opened his window. Things are certainly different on this little plane.

How can the Bruny Island Long Weekend be described? Its impact can be told in the little tear that appeared as I saw the last tip of Bruny disappear out the plane's window. It can stand proudly in its logo that promises four key elements – gourmet food, guided walking, luxury camping and plentiful wildlife. It certainly over-delivered them all!

And if the only downside is that one guest complained of sand in her teeth from smiling too much on Cloudy Bay Beach, I believe that Rob is onto something incredibly special. **TL**

