

A scenic coastal landscape at dusk. The foreground shows a rocky shore with a family of four gathered around a campfire. The middle ground features a shallow bay with dark, mossy rocks and calm water. The background shows the ocean with waves breaking under a soft, orange and blue sky. The word "TREASURE" is overlaid in large, white, sans-serif capital letters across the center of the image.

TREASURE



ISLANDS

Overseas travel just got local and jet lag-free, writes **ALICE HANSEN**, as she explores Tasmania's offshore isles.

On a wild island in Bass Strait, Aaron Suine's dark curls blow lightly in the breeze. He's waiting. Just for us. From the moment he opens each car door, we're enveloped into the Kittawa way. It's not simply about staying on a ruggedly handsome coastline, but a feeling. Owners Suine and Nick Stead have mastered understated luxury. It's felt in the small moments; floor-to-ceiling views of the wild landscape paired with handwritten notes and freshly baked treats, or the buttery tenderness of sous-vide King Island eye fillet at dinner.

Kittawa Lodge is perched on 96 acres of untouched landscape, where the Roaring Forties winds sweep in the world's freshest air. It's impossible not to breathe deeply on our sunset tour. The red-necked wallabies raise curious heads, as if well-manicured staff hired to welcome guests. Fully off-grid, Kittawa is a blend of intimate nature and attentive hospitality – akin to the acclaimed luxury lodge Saffire Freycinet.

"We just knew this land was for us," says former lawyer Suine, who moved with husband Stead, an organisational psychologist. "Our dream was to leave our corporate Sydney lives and raise our son Abraham in a wild landscape."

We venture back into our light-filled architectural cocoon. "I'll be back at 8 to serve you dinner," says Suine, disappearing into the evening breeze. Our only task? To fill the oversized tub and sink deeply into the bespoke scent of buddah wood and kunzea salts prepared for Kittawa. As if bundled onto nature's stage by our hosts, two wallabies enter the picture-perfect frame. Sunset heroes.

What follows are four courses (opt for the signature package), served with Italian gusto courtesy of Suine's heritage, in our lodge. It's room service of the finest order. Tasmanian salmon carpaccio – lightly cured in local lemon, honey and thyme – is followed by gnocchi with King Island beef ragù, then eye fillet with roast pumpkin purée, and wild rocket and watercress plucked from the property. Laughter and Premium Arras Grand Vintage sparkling flow easily, with flourless chocolate torte the finishing touch, before

dreamily falling into a king-sized bed. But not before a private wildlife show, as Kittawa's outdoor lights illuminate young joeys flitting from pouches and lifting curious paws to our glass.

Come morning we're swept into world-class golf territory with a visit to Cape Wickham, ranked Australia's top public access course. We soak up all the drama of King's northern tip, where 18 holes hug the wild shores.

Later, we drop in to see Portuguese-born Ana Pimenta who runs Meat Your Beef farm tours with her husband on their 2000-acre property. In a place where some of the world's best beef is raised, we find ourselves standing in a paddock with more than 200 stunners, all gazing our way. And yes, you can meet and then eat. Or meet and pat.

As night falls, we meet some of the island's original isolationists at the famed Boathouse, coined the "restaurant with no food". The locals have gathered a rip-roaring group of friends to share a long table feast of lobster, beef and spirits made by Heidi Weitjens of King Island Distillery, who happily tells us she was made here, too. Between bellows of laughter, we are shown the beating heart of an island connected by old-fashioned community.

Just when we thought Kittawa couldn't surprise us more, we're scooped up by Suine to a secret picnic location overlooking Fitzmaurice Bay. Local brie, King Island Cloud Juice, olives, walnuts, and breathtaking views converge to create picnic perfection. We venture further south in our 4WD to the spectacular microcosm of Seal Rocks State Reserve and the mind-bending calcified forest. This forest has never had trees but that's another story.

As a final stop, we drop into King Island Arts and Cultural Centre to collect rustic mugs and art – a little King to take home and remember the Kittawa way.

Kittawa Lodge is set on 96 acres of wild landscape in King Island. Opposite: King Island crayfish. PREVIOUS PAGES: Kittawa Lodge owners Aaron Suine and Nick Stead with their son, Abraham.



KING ISLAND

PHOTOGRAPHY ADAM GIBSON.

Getting there

King Island is an easy 30-minute flight from Melbourne and currently Sharp Airline flights depart from Hobart, Launceston and Wynyard in Tasmania. Adam from King Island Car Rental will have you sorted on arrival.

EAT

The Boathouse

The “restaurant with no food” is open to all; just pack a picnic or pick up the makings for a gourmet barbecue from the island’s various producers. Its vibrancy is credit to artist Caroline Kininmonth who first laid eyes on it when swimming in Currie Harbour and camping nearby. *38 Lighthouse St, Currie.*

Wild Harvest

Straight from the ocean or paddock to your plate, Wild Harvest serves up broad Bass Strait views, a roaring open fire and the latest catch from abalone to oysters to crayfish. *wildharvestkingisland.com.au*

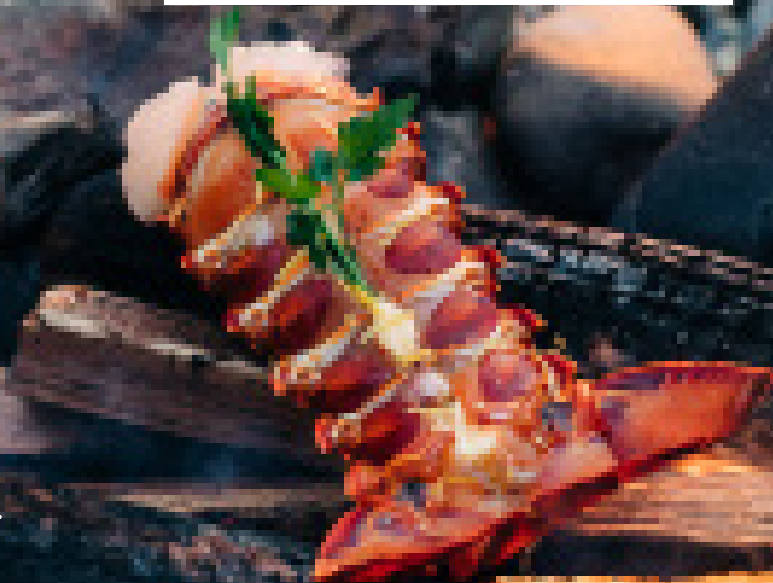
STAY

Kittawa Lodge

Wrap yourself in understated luxury in 96 acres of solitude. Choose from in-house dining to a host of island experiences as part of your stay. *Priced from \$680 (per lodge) per night, kittawalodge.com*

Porky Beach Retreat

Sunset over the grand Southern Ocean is next level at this thoughtfully designed retreat. *Prices from \$750 per night, kingislandescapes.com.au* ►





FLINDERS ISLAND



Sharp Airlines depart from Melbourne and Tasmania. Or schedule your own flight from Bridport Airport with Flinders Island Aviation & Unique Charters.

Jo Youl's arms are full of Flinders Island bounty. She slips off her boots with the type of haste that whispers three toddlers are in tow. Generations go way back here; the 1200-hectare Quoin Farm was bought by her great-grandfather in 1932.

"Chef Mikey has prepared your dinner – grilled asparagus with truffled eggs, smoked fish croquettes, line-caught trevally with lemon and olive oil. Just fire up the barbie. For your picnic, there's wallaby and venison salamis, crusty bread, and these breakfast sausages from our farm," Youl adds, popping supplies in the Wombat Lodge fridge. "We're moving cattle across to Cape Grim today so I must run."

Then she is gone; lunch and dinner sorted. That's not how the morning of a bushwalk normally begins – with delivery of lunch and dinner by esteemed chef Mikey Yeo. We had our sights set on Mount Killiecrankie after a morning yoga session and swim overlooking its glowing granite peak. All we had to do was pick up our hamper and go.

Like our morning visit from Youl, Flinders Island is full of the unexpected. Just off the north-east tip of Tasmania, Flinders is part of the Furneaux Group, a sprinkling of 52 Bass Strait islands. With just a tick over one thousand residents, this understated destination is now gaining serious traction as Australians turn their heads homeward for "overseas" travel.


But it turns out it's not the Flinders of old. These days, places like The Flinders Wharf mean the foodie experience now matches the mighty crays plucked from its waters. This

is where Yeo spends his time, and just next door head distiller Tom Ambroz turns out spirits with Flinders' notes of locally smoked peat at the Furneaux Distillery Co.

As we climb Mount Killiecrankie, it takes just 20 minutes before we're left speechless. A coastline of secret coves, separated by outcrops topped with fire-orange lichen, come into view. We climb a little higher and rock formations, some 350 million years in the making, stop us in our tracks. Hollowed boulders towering four times our height sit precariously on pointed corners, like giant molars eroded across millennia. It's like nature's sculpture park.

We continue to climb, quickly running out of words to describe nature's spectacle. For Wineglass Bay lovers, exploring Flinders Island is like Tasmania's east coast with the volume and variety turned up. From the 278 metre-high peak, we can see Youl's farm sprawled below. I wave; it's only polite. In these parts, every driver lifts a hand to passing traffic.

What was supposed to be a two-hour hike takes three. We're officially on island time. Too full from our farm eggs and bacon, we set off for Stacky's Bight for a late lunch. We follow Youl's self-drawn "pirate map" down a grassy highway, dotted with wallabies and surprisingly speedy wombats until we trust the rental car to go no further, continuing by foot until we reach paradise. Stacky's Bight Beach compels us to kick off our shoes and venture beneath this limestone arch like film extras from *The Beach*. That is, until our toes meet the water. ▶



So swept up, we don't realise it's just struck 5.15pm and we've yet to have lunch. This island time business really is a thing. Still, we make time to search for Killiecrankie Diamonds (a semi-precious topaz) at the far end of Killiecrankie Beach. I pop three minuscule specimens in my pocket to take back to a jeweller friend who I suspect will laugh at my diamond hopefuls. Then again, Flinders is full of surprises. Like sitting atop Mount Strzelecki with locals who have just launched the Walk Flinders Island outfit, savouring energy bites of dried peach, pear and apple from the Trousers Point orchard below.

Days later, somewhere between the most flavoursome beef pie on the planet at Condimental and a foraging excursion discovering the joys of ice plant, beach mustard and noon flower with Yeo, I realise my tiny stones are still in my pocket.

"Take them into Sandro," suggests Yeo, pointing metres from our ice plant. I push open the door of his seaside workshop and the goldsmith looks closely at my tiny pebble. He's quiet and squints through his magnifying glass. Silence follows.

"Yep, you have yourself a diamond," he announces.

For a moment I feel drenched in wealth. Turns out it's nothing to declare through customs at the Lady Barron airstrip, and may not cover my next island latte, but it's an experience so rich I tuck it into my pocket, a precious treasure never to be forgotten.

EAT

The Flinders Wharf & Furneaux Distillery Co.

Perched by the seaside, this is where to feast on locally raised beef and lamb and crays straight off the boat. Slip next door to visit whisky-making Tom in the distillery and soak up the warm community goodness.

16 Esplanade, Whitemark, theflinderswharf.com.au

Flinders Island Condimental

Unassuming and gloriously flavoursome, enter Jon and Alison Hizzard's delicious world of crusty pies and fresh produce transformed into bottles of flavour-packed condiments. *3 Bowman St, Whitemark.*

Cate Cooks

This sweet little roadside tuckshop brims with specialty cakes, grab-and-go bites, fresh juices and stellar coffee just right to prep for a Flinders day of adventure.

3 Walker St, Whitemark, facebook.com/flindersislandchef

STAY

Wombat Lodge

This luxe-style burrow tunes guests into island time with its deep bath, crackling fire and lush farm surrounds.

Quoin Farm, 3951 Palana Rd, Killiecrankie, onislandtime.com.au

Killiecrankie Beach House

Front row seats to the beach and Mount Killiecrankie come standard with this stay. The sun-splashed deck, storybook attic and well-lived feel add to its charm.

2-4 Armstrong Ave, Killiecrankie, onislandtime.com.au

Flinders Island Gourmet Retreat

Fancy a cooking class while on the island? Wendy's tuition moves with the island's seasons and guests can opt for stately onsite accommodation at Badger Corner.

180 Badger Corner Rd, Lady Barron, flindersislandgourmetretreat.com.au

Partridge Farm

Head for the foothills of Strzelecki Range and curl up in a Gypsy cabin handcrafted by owners Rob and Lorraine Holloway. They'll even serve up local wallaby as resident partridges strut the coastal property. *310 Badger Corner Rd, Lady Barron, partridgefarm.com.au*

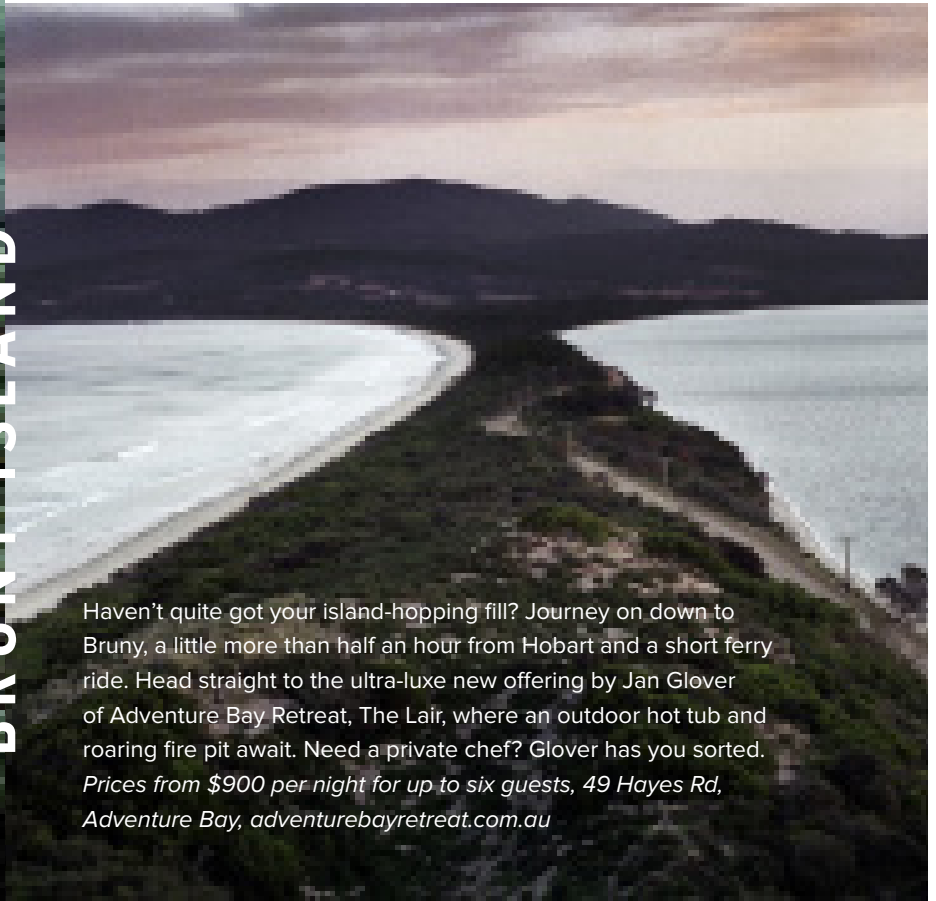
Allports Beach House

Well positioned midway at Emita, this spacious beach house is a short hop to the beach and Flinders' Furneaux Museum. *2 Fowlers Rd, Emita,*

flindersislandaccommodation.com.au



BRUNY ISLAND



Haven't quite got your island-hopping fill? Journey on down to Bruny, a little more than half an hour from Hobart and a short ferry ride. Head straight to the ultra-luxe new offering by Jan Glover of Adventure Bay Retreat, The Lair, where an outdoor hot tub and roaring fire pit await. Need a private chef? Glover has you sorted. *Prices from \$900 per night for up to six guests, 49 Hayes Rd, Adventure Bay, adventurebayretreat.com.au*

SATELLITE ISLAND



From Bruny's Alonnah, travel by boat across to family-owned Satellite Island in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Here, you'll have your very own island. Shuck wild oysters straight from the ancient rock shelf and enjoy a long table outdoor evening with up to eight of your closest pals at the Boathouse. *Prices from \$2050 a night for two, satelliteisland.com.au* ●



Experience Tasmania with *Gourmet Traveller* and *Luxury Escapes* on our 5-day tasting trail, from \$2999 per person. *Details on page 25*

Clockwise from top right: Bruny Island at sunset; Satellite Island. Opposite: Wombat Lodge is surrounded by Quoin Farm, Killiecrankie.