

Your Elphin Road Itinerary

Launceston is the second largest city in Tasmania and its central location makes it the ideal base to explore the north of the state. Launceston itself is a vibrant, cultural hub with many cafes, museums and open parklands. We are passionate about this area and have provided a list of suggested activities; they are but a small selection, which we hope will inspire you to make the most of your time in Launceston and to enjoy your holiday.

Sunday

If you are travelling to Launceston from Hobart, the trip can be broken up with several lovely stops at quaint, historic villages along the way. Tasmania is dotted with historic villages; and due to the importance of this route between the two largest settlements, Hobart and Launceston, villages have flourished since colonial times, and continue to do so to this day.

117km north of Hobart is Ross, which has been described as the most beautiful, historic town in Tasmania, and I would have to agree. It is a sleepier and less touristy town than either Richmond or Campbell Town, but it is perhaps better preserved and more "authentically" "historic" because of this. It is a shaded town, which makes it the perfect place to park the car and simply enjoying a leisurely stroll, exploring the town. You should definitely wander down to the Macquarie River and admire the intricately carved sandstone bridge; the faces carved into the bridge are prominent people in the colony at the time. From here, wander up to the Uniting Church, past the old barracks and on to the ruins of the female factory. If you have worked up a thirst, perhaps drop in to the Man O' Ross hotel.

Heading from Ross towards Launceston, the next town of note is Campbell Town. This is a great place to stop for a cuppa or lunch, there are several dining options. Zeps is always busy and make a great coffee. If you have a sweet tooth, a stop at the lolly shop, A Little Piece of Heaven is a must, the name says it all! The Red Bridge is also worth a look; built by convicts, using over a million bricks made locally from local clay it is yet another inspiring example of convict era engineering on display in Tasmania.

From Campbell Town continue towards Launceston, but follow the signs to Evandale and the Launceston Airport. Evandale is another charming historic village that is well worth visiting, particularly on a Sunday as the Evandale Markets are held every Sunday. Here you can buy the freshest produce directly from the farmers and there is always an interesting array of stalls to browse.

Continue on to Launceston. It is probably best to stop at the supermarket and stock up on supplies before arriving at the unit. Finally, settle into the unit and enjoy the comforts of home. Perhaps prepare a meal in fully equipped kitchen using local produce purchased at the Evandale Market or enjoy a meal out in one of Launceston's many fine restaurants.

Monday

Wine lover or not, there is plenty to see and do on the Tamar Valley Wine Route. The route is easily navigated, as it is very well signposted, we suggest tackling the route over several days, however it would still be best to get an early start, in order to allow yourself enough time to fully explore the many attractions.

Set out from Launceston along the West Tamar Highway (A7). Just 15 minutes into the drive, visit Launceston Lakes and Wildlife Park for an encounter with Tasmanian devils, quolls, wombats, emus and 40 different bird species living in natural bushland.

To see more of the Tamar's birdlife, visit the Tamar Islands Wetlands Centre. The Tamar River's many sheltered coves and inlets are a sanctuary for thousands of native water birds. Stroll along the boardwalk to the picturesque Tamar Island and spot the birdlife along the way.

The Tamar Valley is Tasmania's oldest and largest wine-growing region, renowned for its cool-climate wines, specialising in Pinot and Riesling varieties. Because many of the vineyards are small and family-owned, the growers themselves will often greet you and explain just how the wine is made.

Between Legana and Beauty Point there are a number of vineyards, several with outstanding river views. Most have cellar door sales and some have their own restaurants. Rosevears Estate and Daniel Alps at Strathlynn offer lunch menus based on fresh Tasmanian produce.

If you enjoy short walks, visit the enchanting Notley Vineyard, Tamar Valley Fern Gorge, a 10 hectare sanctuary for wildlife that includes a relatively easy one-hour walk through dense rainforest. Alternatively, just a few minutes farther along Frankford Main Road, discover

Glengarry Bush Maze and Tearooms. Set in a beautiful natural setting, these tearooms also offer many puzzles and fun activities for children.

North of Exeter, at Robigana, you can find a quality piece of local art or sample some more Tasmanian wine at Artisan Gallery and Wine Centre. If it's time for a coffee, visit Lynton Farm Café and while you are there purchase some fresh Tamar Valley produce.

The town of Beaconsfield has a rich mining history and today has one of Tasmania's few working gold mines, operating next to the site of the original Grubb Shaft, which started operations more than 100 years ago. The Grubb Shaft Gold and Heritage Museum shows the workings of the old mine, recalling the boom days of gold. The museum has more than 30 visitor-activated displays highlighting the hard life of the early settlers in the region.

From here, return to Launceston along the West Tamar highway again. Perhaps a relaxing evening in the unit, sampling some of the local wares you no doubt purchased today is called for? After all, tomorrow will be another big day.

Tuesday

Today head back down the West Tamar Highway. Five minutes further north of Beaconsfield is Beauty Point. Here families in particular will enjoy visiting Seahorse World and Platypus House both of which open at 9:30am. Seahorse World provides a unique insight into the mystical and intriguing seahorse from birth to adulthood. Located just opposite is Platypus House, the only place in Australia where visitors can watch Tasmanian Platypuses close up. Also featured are hundreds of creepy crawlies, water rats and butterflies.

From Beauty Point, head towards the sweeping beaches, white peaks and coastal heathlands and forest of the Narawntapu National Park. From the western car park at Greens Beach, take an easy 270 metre walk to the West Head lookout, where you'll be rewarded with spectacular cliff top views along Badger Head Beach and westward as far as Table Cape and the Dial Ranges behind Ulverstone.

Heading south, at Beaconsfield take the first turnoff to Batman Bridge, which links the western and the eastern banks of the Tamar River. This is a pleasant scenic drive. On the way, stop in at Lavender House at Rowella where more than 100 different kinds of lavender are grown, flowering between August and May. Browse the showroom, peaceful gardens and fragrant fields or just sit and enjoy a tea or coffee in their tearooms.

Once across Batman Bridge, take a right turn along the partly unsealed but scenic road to the picturesque hamlet of Hillwood or take the East Tamar Highway (A8) route instead. At Hillwood Strawberry Farm treat yourself to strawberries freshly picked and topped with dollops of cream; in summer pick your own and taste some of their locally made fruit wines.

Alternatively take a picnic lunch along the banks of the Tamar River at the Egg Island Picnic Reserve. Hillwood is also the home of Southern Cross Country, which sells lovely handcrafted coats. For a short but challenging walk, take the 1.5km track up Mt Direction

and learn about the historic, semaphore communications systems that once operated between Low Head and Launceston.

From Hillwood it is an easy drive to historic George Town, Australia's third-oldest town, settled in 1804. On the way, stop at Mount George Lookout, where you'll get a great perspective on the valley and surrounding districts. This is another historic semaphore site. In George Town itself, take a self-guided tour along the George Town Heritage Trail, which highlights the historical sites and buildings here and at nearby Low Head. Of particular note is The Grove, a splendid Georgian home dated circa 1830. In November, the George Town on Show Festival runs over a four-week period and showcases the culture and history, food and wine, industry and community of the George Town area.

At Low Head visit Australia's oldest continuously operated pilot station (circa 1805) and a maritime museum. A coastal walk leads to a small beach where penguins come ashore at nightfall. The best way to see the penguins is on the guided tour run by Low Head Penguin Tours, these are run at dusk. So if you are considering this it will probably be best to grab dinner before the tour, there are a number of dining options in George Town that are sure to satisfy.

Wednesday

After all the driving of the last couple of days we'll stick close to Launceston itself today. Launceston is a beautiful city and much of it is easily explored on foot.

The Launceston CBD is a delight and offers a surprisingly vibrant and varied shopping experience for a city of its size. Take the time to wander through the many laneways and arcades. There are also many great cafes dotted throughout Launceston. Whether you seek a leisurely breakfast, lunch or just a coffee you will be sure to find somewhere perfect, K & H café at 106 George Street is a personal favourite. Whilst wandering around Launceston, don't forget to look up. Launceston's streetscapes are immaculately preserved, and feature architecture from many eras, Victorian, Georgian and Art Deco.

Just a couple of blocks from the city centre is City Park. This historic park is home to a conservatory, duck pond, the impressive Design Centre of Tasmania and a monkey enclosure featuring Japanese Macaques. The macaques are fascinating to watch and entry is free. The Design Centre features Australia's only museum collection of contemporary wood design which is housed in a stunning contemporary space overlooking the parklands.

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery is located nearby, at the historic railways yards of Inveresk. The Museum is particularly well known for its Australian colonial art collection; decorative arts, including Australian craft and design, post-1945; Tasmanian natural history; convict collection; Chinese Temple from the 1880s north-east Tasmania tin mining era; and the Planetarium. Unfortunately, the Planetarium is currently closed due to the major renovation of the Royal Park site, but is expected to reopen sometime this year.

If you prefer cars old and new, perhaps a visit to the National Automobile Museum of Tasmania is to be considered. Just opposite City Park on Cimitiere Street and on the way to the Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery. The exhibits at the museum are always changing and feature a variety of cars and motorcycles.

Across the other side of Launceston is Cataract Gorge, perhaps Launceston's best known attraction and justifiably so. This nature reserve features many walking tracks, beautiful historic parklands, the remains of Duck River Power Station, the first municipal hydro-electric power station in Australia, the world's longest single span chair-lift, a swimming pool, cafes and restaurants and stunning natural beauty. No wonder it is so popular! We saved the best for last, so take your time and explore all that the Gorge has to offer.

Thursday

Cradle Mountain is one of Tasmania's premier attractions and no visit to Tasmania is complete without seeing this awesome area. Cradle Mountain is at the northern end of the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park and in turn, is part of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area. Cradle Mountain is about two hours drive from Launceston, although there are several pleasant stops along the way. If you wish to stop at all of the delightful places, listed below, we would recommend breaking the trip across two days.

Take the Midlands and then Bass Highways out of Launceston and follow the signs. The first stop is Westbury, just half an hour out of Launceston. Westbury is a lovely old town with a distinctly "English" feel to it. It is literally packed with beautiful, historic buildings, the best way to see the town is to park the car and explore on foot.

Back in the car continue on the Bass Highway, for just 15 minutes, to the Meander Valley Rd exit which will take you to Deloraine, another charming, historic town. Deloraine is located on the banks of the Meander River and is a very pretty town. In November of each year Deloraine plays host to the Tasmanian Craft Fair, Australia's largest working craft fair, because of this year round you will find a wide selection of arts and crafts in the local galleries and stores.

Back on the Bass Highway for another 15 minutes will take you to Elizabeth Town. Midway between Deloraine and Elizabeth Town, is the Christmas Hills Raspberry Farm and Café. It is a raspberry lover's delight. Just a few kilometres past Elizabeth Town is another gourmet delight. The Ashgrove Cheese Shop, home to the delicious Ashgrove Farm Cheeses. Here you can watch the cheese being made, sample the full range of Ashgrove cheeses (there will be one to suit everyone tastes!), as well as buy a wide range of Tasmanian cheeses and other produce. If all that has made you hungry, you will be pleased to know there is a café serving light meals and drinks which feature Ashgrove cheese and milk.

Another detour that can be taken from Deloraine, is to the Mole Creek Caves, however, there is so much to see here that you may consider making a separate trip here on a second day (and perhaps stopping to savour some of the other suggested detours...). The Mole Creek Area has over 300 known caves and sink holes. The two best known are Marakoopa Cave, which features two underground streams and a glow worm display, and King Solomons Cave which is jam packed with features and lavishly decorated with shawls, stalactites and stalagmites.

Continuing on to Cradle Mountain, the next town that you may consider stopping at is Sheffield. Sheffield is the "Town of Murals". Virtually every blank wall in this town has been covered in murals, mostly depicting the history of the area. Even the garbage bins have mini murals that local school children have painted on them.

Head on to Cradle Mountain. Depending on how long you plan to spend here there are a number of walks that can be undertaken. For the really keen, there is the famous, six day, Overland Track, however, if you are considering this walk please refer to the following website for important information <http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=7771>. A must for the day walker is the Dove Lake Circuit, you should allow about two hours for the walk.

Friday

Over the last two days we shall explore the area to the north east of Launceston, along the east part of the Tamar Valley Wine Route and the North East Trail. Today we will explore area around the Pipers River Region of the Tamar Valley Wine Region, while tomorrow further afield, we'll visit one of the world's best golf courses, the largest lavender farm in the Southern Hemisphere and all with stunning scenery along the way.

Leaving Launceston, take the East Tamar Highway, and then turn right into Lilydale Road. After just 15 minutes you will arrive at the Hollybanks Treetops Adventure, a new and

exciting experience. Visitors glide across the treetops in a unique forest canopy tour, gaining a bird's-eye view of Tasmania's beautiful forests. This fantastic adventure lasts 3 hours and is unlike any other Australian nature experience. You'll probably be peckish after the tour so why not relax over a picnic or barbeque or you can buy lunch from the visitors centre.

Once back on the road after just 5 minutes you'll arrive at the farming hamlet of Lilydale. Look out for the distinctive painted electricity poles that line the streets of the town. Lilydale is famous for its gardens; take a wander around town to take them in.

After Lilydale, the distinctive yellow and blue 'grape' signs point the way to the vineyards of the Pipers River Region. Providence - Tasmania's oldest vineyard - and Clover Hill - makers of premium sparkling wine - are both directly on the trail and their cellar doors are open to the public. A 20 minute drive off the trail along Pipers Brook Road will also allow you to sample the still and sparkling wines of Pipers Brook Vineyard and the Jansz Wine Room and Interpretative Centre. On the way, stop in at Brook Eden Vineyard, just a few minutes along Pipers Brook Rd.

Head back to the unit to sample some of your the delightful wines you will have no doubt have purchased again today, how will you take all this home? Perhaps head out for dinner to another of Launceston's spectacular restaurants, there are many to choose from!

Saturday

Back on the road again and once again head off along the North East Trail. Continue on to the Bridestowe Lavender Farm. Here, soak up the wonderful ambience and scents of, the largest commercial lavender farm in the southern hemisphere. At any time of the year, the farm is a spectacular sight - fresh green in spring, a shimmer of purple in summer, silvery-grey in winter. Have a coffee or lunch in Bridestowe's café, then take a tour (December and January) to see how lavender is harvested and processed for its fragrant oils. Alternatively, picnic under the century old oak trees, stroll through the fields, and browse for gifts in the shop.

Fifteen minutes on from Bridestowe is Scottsdale, the major service town for the north east. Here you can discover the secrets of the region's forest heritage at the contemporary Forest EcoCentre. The award-winning 'building within a building' showcases Tasmania's fine timbers and forest ecology through innovative architecture, design and interactive displays. The EcoCentre also houses the Scottsdale Visitor Information Centre where you can book tours and find out all there is to see and do in the area.

20 minutes north of Scottsdale is the coastal village of Bridport. The town itself is situated on a hillside, taking on the shape of an amphitheatre looking out over Anderson Bay to Barnbougle Beach and the Furneaux group of islands. Bridport is a thriving township all through the year, but especially in summer, as it offers a number of safe, picturesque and warm swimming beaches. It is also a favourite for salt water fishing and equipment can be hired in town if you don't have your own.

Just east of Bridport is Barnbougle Dunes Golf Links - one of the top links courses in Australia, meandering through towering dunes and along Barnbougle Beach with Bass Straight as a back drop. Barnbougle Dunes also has a club house with dining and bar facilities, the perfect place for dinner before heading back to Launceston.