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**208** MAPS | **WORLD'S BEST-SELLING**  
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The town has a caravan park and a couple of motels. **Club Hotel** (☎ 03-5154 1003; 63 Nicholson St; s/d \$25/40) has the cheapest rooms around – typical cheery pub rooms with shared bathrooms, as well as bistro meals and Chinese takeaway.

### Marlo

pop 350

Rather than barrel down the highway from Orbost to Mallacoota, turn off to Marlo, a sleepy holiday town at the mouth of the Snowy River just 15km south of Orbost. It's a lovely spot, popular with anglers, and the road continues on to Cape Conran before rejoining the highway.

The main attraction here is the **PS Curlip** (☎ 03-5154 1699; www.paddlesteamercurlip.com.au; adult/child/family \$28/14/66; ☎ 11.30am & 2.30pm Wed-Sun), a recreation of an 1890 paddle steamer that once chugged up the Snowy River to Orbost. The vessel was rebuilt as a community project.

Marlo has a couple of caravan parks and motels. **Tabbara Lodge** (☎ 03-5154 8231; 1 Marlo Rd; d \$80; ☎) is a friendly place with spacious self-contained rooms around shady gardens containing barbecues and a playground.

You can't beat an afternoon beer from the expansive wooden verandah of the **Marlo Hotel** (☎ 03-5154 8201; www.marlohotel.com.au; 17 Argyle Pde; d from \$110, with spa \$130) with a sublime view of the Snowy River emptying into the sea. The boutique rooms here are above average for a pub – some with spa – and the restaurant serves local seafood such as gummy shark and king prawns (mains \$12 to \$29).

### Cape Conran Coastal Park

Cape Conran is one of the most beautiful spots in the state. The 19km coastal route from Marlo to Cape Conran is especially pretty and there are some great beaches. Be sure to stop at **French's Narrows**, a pretty system of lakes that's home to countless water birds.

A rough track 4km east leads from the cape to the mouth of the Yeerung River, which is another good spot for swimming, canoeing and fishing. There are no shops at Cape Conran – bring provisions and drinking water. There's good surfing at West Cape beach. **Cabbage Tree Palms** is a short, partly unsealed, detour off the road between Cape Conran and the Princes Hwy to Victoria's only stand of native palms – a tiny rainforest oasis.

### SLEEPING

**Parks Victoria** (☎ 03-5154 8438; www.conran.net.au; Yeerung Rd) manages the excellent accommodation at Cape Conran.

**Cape Conran Cabins** (4-person cabins low/high season \$90/138, safari tents \$140) These large rustic cabins are fantastic, resembling oversized cubby houses with lofty mezzanine sleeping areas that can sleep up to eight. They have a remote, airy, beachcomber feel and are just a short walk to the beach. They come with kitchen, verandah and cute outdoor (but private) dunny and shower. Nearby are spacious elevated safari tents – no en suite or kitchen but very cool.

**Banksia Bluff Camping Area** (sites for up to 4 people low/high season \$17/23) Right on the foreshore, the camping ground has toilets, cold showers and fireplaces; bring drinking water if you don't like the taste of bore water. There's a ballot system during peak periods.

### Cann River

pop 250

Cann River is at the junction of the Princes and Monaro Hwys heading north into NSW. There are petrol stations, motels, a supermarket, pub and caravan park here, as well as several places to grab a quick bite, so it's a good place to break the journey and stretch your legs.

### Coopracambra National Park

Remote Coopracambra (38,300 hectares) retains its original ecosystem virtually intact and supports many rare and endangered species. The landscape is rugged and spectacular, with deep gorges where the earliest fossil evidence of four-footed creatures was discovered. The only access is a 4WD track, which runs from the Monaro Hwy to Genoa. **Beehive Falls** are 2km from the Monaro Hwy, 28km north of Cann River.

### Mallacoota

pop 1100

One of Gippsland's true gems, little Mallacoota is Victoria's most easterly town, snuggled on the vast Mallacoota Inlet and surrounded by the tumbling hills and beachside dunes of beautiful Croajingolong National Park. Those prepared to come this far are treated to long empty ocean surf beaches, tidal river mouths and swimming, fishing and boating on the inlet.

On the road in from Genoa you pass turn-offs to **Gypsy Point** and **Karbeethong**, beautiful little communities on the inlet with accommodation. Mallacoota itself has a good range of accommodation, cafes and a pub. At Christmas and Easter it's a crowded family holiday spot – it's certainly no secret – but most of the year it's pretty quiet and very relaxed.

### INFORMATION

**Mallacoota Information Shed** (☎ 03-5158 0800; www.visitmallacoota.com.au; Main Wharf; ☎ 10am-4pm) Brightly painted shed on the wharf with helpful volunteer staff, maps and advice.

**Parks Victoria** (☎ 03-5161 9500; cnr Buckland & Allan Drs) Opposite the wharf.

### ACTIVITIES

The sublime 300km shoreline of Mallacoota Inlet is backed by national park. There are plenty of great short walks (from 30 minutes to four hours) around town, the inlet and in the bush – maps are available from the Information Shed.

There's sometimes surf at Bastion Point and always excellent swimming at Betka Beach where the Betka river mouth runs with the tide. Ask directions to **Tip Beach** (also called Secret Beach), an unofficial nudist beach off Nelson Dr.

One of the great pastimes here is to hire a boat (no licence required) and travel up the inlet. Cut the engine, drop anchor and listen for a moment to the quiet sounds of the birds and the breeze through the trees of the national park. Then dive in for the most delicious nudie swim. There are many public jetties where you can tie your boat up and come ashore for picnic tables and toilets. Hire boats from **Mallacoota Hire Boats** (☎ 0438 447 558; Main Wharf) for \$55 for two hours and \$15 per extra hour. They also rent fishing rods for \$10.

Hit the water under your own steam with **Blue Ocean Kayaks** (☎ 0429 028 017; half/full day \$70/100).

A number of operators offer boat cruises; most require advance booking:

**MV Loch Ard** (☎ 03-5158 0764; Main Wharf; adult/child 2hr cruise \$25/10, 3hr cruise \$38/12) Runs several inlet cruises with wildlife spotting.

**Porkie Bess** (☎ 03-5158 0109, 0408 408 094; 2hr cruise \$25, fishing trip \$50) A 1940s wooden boat offering fishing trips and cruises around the lakes, and ferry services for hikers (\$20 per person, minimum four).

**Rumbottle's Wilderness River Cruises** (☎ 03-5158 8291; Gipsy Point Wharf; 2½hr cruise adult/child \$15/18; ☎ 1.30pm Sun, Tue, Fri) Eco-cruises spotting sea eagles on the Genoa River and Maraming Creek.

**Wilderness Coast Ocean Charters** (☎ 03-5158 0701, 0418 553 809; wildcoast@draget.com.au) Runs trips to Gabo Island (\$60, minimum seven) and may run trips down the coast to view the seal colony off Wingan Inlet if there's enough demand.

### SLEEPING

Prices vary significantly with the seasons; book ahead for Christmas or Easter. There are no backpacker hostels, but some of the half-dozen caravan parks offer budget cabins or bunkrooms. **Mallacoota Houseboats** (☎ 03-5158 0775; 3-night minimum \$850) are a great way to explore the magic waterways. They sleep up to six.

**Mallacoota Hotel Motel** (☎ 03-5158 0455; www.mallacootahotel.com.au; 51-55 Maurice Ave; s/d from \$70/90; ☎) The most central of Mallacoota's numerous motels, and attached to the local pub, the rooms here are comfortable, well equipped and reasonably priced. The bistro is good with mains around \$16 to \$35 and a big outdoor terrace.

**quirky Adobe Mudbrick Flats** (☎ 03-5158 0329; www.adobeholidayflats.com.au; 17 Karbeethong Ave; 2-4-bed apt \$80/100) A labour of love by Margaret and Peter Kurz, these unique mud-brick flats are something special. With an emphasis on recycling and eco-friendliness, there's solar hot water and guests are encouraged to compost their kitchen scraps. Birds, lizards and possums can be hand-fed outside your door. The array of whimsical apartments are comfortable, well equipped and incredibly cheap. A real find.

**Karbeethong Lodge** (☎ 03-5158 0411; www.karbeethonglodge.com.au; 16 Schnapper Point Dr; d with/without bathroom from \$95/75) This delightful early-1900s timber guest house has uninterrupted views over Mallacoota Inlet from the broad verandahs. Karbeethong is perfect for self-caterers, with a large communal kitchen and the guest lounge and dining room have open fires and period furnishings.

**Mallacoota Foreshore Caravan Park** (☎ 03-5158 0300; www.mallacootaholidaypark.com.au; unpowered/powered sites \$17/21; ☎) Curling around the inlet, the grassy sites here morph into one of Victoria's most sociable and scenic caravan parks with sublime views of the inlet and its resident population of black swans and pelicans. No cabins, but the best of Mallacoota's many parks for campers.

**EATING**

**Croajingolong Café** (☎ 03-5158 0098; Allan Dr; mains \$5-15; ☒ breakfast & lunch Tue-Sun) This friendly cafe is a perfect place to linger over a latte and watch the world move slowly by. Wi-fi hotspot.

**Lucy's** (☎ 03-5158 0666; 64 Maurice Ave; mains \$9-19; ☒ 8am-8pm; ☒) Lucy is gaining a heady reputation for her homemade rice noodles, dumplings and abalone. A tasty bowl of noodles is great value at \$9 and it's a good spot for breakfast on the terrace. Internet access is \$2 for 15 minutes.

**Tide Restaurant & Bar** (☎ 03-5158 0100; cnr Maurice Ave & Allan Dr; mains \$19-26; ☒ dinner from 6pm) Tide serves quality seafood from its prime lakeside position. Dine on the deck and arrive early for happy hour drinks from 5pm.

**GETTING THERE & AWAY**

Mallacoota is 23km off the Princes Hwy from Genoa. From Melbourne you can catch a daily **V/Line** (☎ 13 61 96) train to Bairnsdale and bus to Genoa (\$48 one way, 7½ hours), then get the **Mallacoota-Genoa Bus Service** (☎ 0408 315 615), which meets the V/Line coach on Monday, Thursday and Friday, plus Sunday during school holidays (\$3.40 one way, bookings essential).

**Croajingolong National Park**

The coastal wilderness park of Croajingolong (87,500 hectares) is one of Australia's finest national parks. It stretches for about 100km from Bemm River to the NSW border and

includes unspoiled beaches, inlets and forests. The 200m sand dunes at Thurra are the highest on the mainland. Mallacoota Inlet is the largest and most accessible area. There's plentiful wildlife in the park, including huge goannas.

Walkers must be suitably equipped for long-distance walking, with sufficient maps and information on conditions. Contact **Parks Victoria** (☎ Cann River 03-5158 6351, Mallacoota 03-5158 0219) for information, camping permits and track notes. All access roads from the Princes Hwy, except Mallacoota Rd, are unsealed and can be very rough; check conditions with Parks Victoria.

The main camping areas are at Wingan Inlet, Shipwreck Creek, Thurra River and Mueller Inlet. You may need to bring water so check with Parks Victoria. During peak season there's a ballot system for campsites, but space is usually reserved at Wingan Inlet for walk-ins; camping fees cost up to \$21 a site.

Point Hicks was the first part of Australia to be spotted by Captain Cook in 1770. Experience the windy and isolated ruggedness at **Point Hicks Lighthouse** (☎ 03-5158 4268; www.pointhicks.com.au; up to 6 people \$230-300), with ocean views and wood fires. There's a two-night minimum stay and prices are higher on weekends; bring all your own food. There's also a bungalow (\$80 for two) and camping. There's a rugged access road leading 45km from Cann River.

# Tasmania



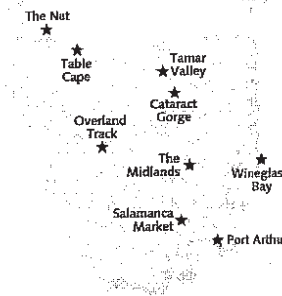
Dazzlin' Tassie is brilliant, beautiful and accessible. It's compact enough to 'do' in a few weeks and layered enough to keep bringing you back. The island state has exquisite beaches, jagged mountain ranges, rarefied alpine plateaus, plentiful wildlife and vast tracts of virgin wilderness, much of it within a World Heritage area. Tasmania produces some of the world's great gourmet food and wine, and has a flourishing arts scene and a burgeoning urban cool.

For too long Australian mainlanders derided their compatriots across Bass Strait, partly because Tasmania took a long time to emerge from the ignominy of its grim past. The first 100 years of European settlement were mired in violence and deprivations imposed upon the island's Indigenous peoples and convicts, and there remains a pervading sense of melancholy and loss. But this is only part of Tasmania's confounding enigma. It's where the courses of mighty rivers were changed to generate hydro-electricity, where railways were built across impossible terrain and where miners and pioneers eked out meagre means in the most hostile and isolated environments. It's a land of contradictions – of wilderness and logging trucks, wildlife and road kill, where the relics of a cruel history are all the more affecting because they're so heartbreakingly beautiful.

Tassie's bushwalking, cycling, rafting and kayaking opportunities rank among the best on the planet. See voluptuous Wineglass Bay, brilliant Bay of Fires and the ragged craggy glory of Cradle Mountain. Come and camp out, or doss down in some superb boutique hotel accommodation. Tasmania is still Australia, but beguilingly, bewitchingly, a little different.

**HIGHLIGHTS**

- ☒ Surf the crowd around the stalls at Hobart's Saturday morning **Salamanca Market** (p644)
- ☒ Walk the **Overland Track** (p713), the essential Tasmanian bushwalk and Aussie rite of passage
- ☒ Ponder what was at **Port Arthur** (p667), the infamous penal settlement
- ☒ Pack a picnic and hike into photogenic **Wineglass Bay** (p674)
- ☒ Idle a while atop the oddball geologic formations at Wynyard's **Table Cape** (p701) and **The Nut** (p702) at Stanley
- ☒ Ride the chairlift high over Launceston's gorgeous **Cataract Gorge** (p681)
- ☒ Taste and graze through the wonderful wineries and restaurants of **Tamar Valley** (p687)
- ☒ Retrace the old inland coach route past historic sandstone buildings in the **Midlands** (p668)



☒ TELEPHONE CODE: 03

☒ POPULATION: 500,300

☒ AREA: 68,322 SQ KM