

MAKE THE MOST
OF YOUR FITNESS IN...

TASSIE'S

TONI KRASICKI HEADS TO
TASMANIA'S RUGGED AND
WINTERY WORLD HERITAGE-
LISTED WILDERNESS TO PUT HER
FITNESS AND DETERMINATION
TO THE TEST.

WILD WEST

**EVEN IN WINTER,
TASMANIA HAS
SO MUCH TO
OFFER THE
ACTIVE
TRAVELLER,
AS TONI KRASICKI
DISCOVERED.**

IF YOU WERE BORN around the time that man first landed on the moon you may remember the song Let the Franklin Flow by Aussie band Goanna in the early 1980s. The song helped propagate a growing awareness of the environmental campaign to save the Franklin River, which still remains the most significant, and perhaps the most successful, environmental campaign in Australian history.

So it's with this knowledge that I spend some time exploring the World Heritage Listed Wilderness Area that covers a staggering 20 per cent of the Apple Isle, including seven national parks. Arriving in Launceston airport is like stepping through a portal to another world. The laidback vibe and crisp pure air does wonders for stressed-out city folks based on the mainland.

My visit coincides with an unseasonal cold

snap and I'm worried that I haven't packed enough warm clothes. There's already a sprinkling of snow on many of the high peaks in Cradle Mountain/Lake St Clair National Park, but I am determined to do some hiking in what I've heard to be some of the most unique surrounds our country has to offer.

Tasmania has become a favourite for hikers from all corners of the world, offering experiences that cater to all fitness levels. You can choose from easy 20-minute circuits to challenging multi-day walks. For the enthusiastic, check out Tasmanian Parks and Wildlife Services's 60 Great Short Walks list (www.parks.tas.gov.au/?base=1315).

We wake to bleak skies and snow on the higher reaches, but its full steam ahead. Our guide, Brian Hall, ensures we are kitted out in



the correct clothing and have lots of food in our packs; just in case. The goal is to hike to the summit of Cradle Mountain beginning at Ronny Creek and taking the steady climb up to the Cradle Plateau.

The beginning of the walk is quite comfortable; we even get up close and personal with some wombats by the boardwalk. Upon reaching the plateau we encounter windy conditions and the icy paths soon become snow-covered. Who knew that sinking shin-deep in fluffy snow drifts could be so much fun?

Kitchen Hut, a wooden shack used by hikers as a rest stop, sits obscured in fog. We're so cold we empty our backpacks of most of our food, raid the ration pack in the first aid kit for extra hot chocolate and don all available clothing. The consensus from the group is to abandon the summit, so we happily make our descent via Marion's Lookout, where we come face-to-face with a shroud of mist – unfortunately – obscuring the view of Dove Lake.

The most important thing to remember about hiking in Tassie is to be prepared for all weather conditions, as it can even snow in the middle of summer! If you are a regular exerciser you'll have no trouble with any of the walks, especially if you're only carrying a day pack. However, the rapid changes in weather conditions are not to be taken lightly. During my five-hour hike I went from feeling comfortable, to shivering, and the weather changes from light rain and fog, to windy/snowy/icy conditions in a heartbeat, so you need to be well prepared.

The snow and fog has set in for a few days so it's time to head further west to explore the untamed coast and wild rivers near Strahan. Strahan sits in a sheltered corner of the massive Macquarie Harbour which is six times the size of Sydney Harbour, and is the gateway to the majestic Gordon River.

A great way to experience the Gordon River is with a little muscle power of your own – a kayak, for example. Or, jump aboard the Lady Jane Franklin II and cruise up to Heritage Landing which is as far as larger vessels are allowed to travel. Much of the impenetrable forest in this area is uninhabited so do the short boardwalk to get a grasp of the enormity of it.

It's surprising how quiet it is and how quickly you are transported to such tranquillity. Paddling upstream through calm waters, you can feel the silence envelope you. I think luck is on my side when the sun makes an appearance to show off

the Gordon River like a prized possession, but no matter how hard I wish to see one, the platypus elude us.

Just like the mainland there are stacks of other activities to get stuck in to. So do like a local and don't let the weather hold you back. You'll find big surf at South Cape Bay where surfers are known to carry their boards for a seven-kilometre walk through the southern section of the Wilderness Area, before hitting the waves. You can also cycle your way around the island, which is a great way to really appreciate the rugged beauty; or if you're feeling extremely adventurous then try abseiling the canyons around Cradle Mountain.

OTHER THINGS TO TRY WHILE IN TASSIE'S WILD WEST:

- ✦ **West Coast Wilderness Railway**
www.purtasmania.com.au
- ✦ **Gordon River Cruises/ Gordon River Paddle**
www.purtasmania.com.au
- ✦ **The Bonnet Island Experience** (to visit Little Penguins)
www.purtasmania.com.au
- ✦ **Piners and Miners** (historic tour)
www.purtasmania.com.au
- ✦ **Tasmania Tiger Exhibition and Wilderness Gallery**
www.wildernessgallery.com.au
- ✦ **Wild Rivers Jet Boat** (King River)
www.wildriversjet.com.au
- ✦ **Sandboarding and Kayaking** (equipment hire)
www.wildriversjet.com.au
- ✦ **Strahan Sea Planes & Helicopters**
www.adventureflights.com.au
- ✦ **Cradle Mountain Canyons (canyoning)**
www.cradlemountaincanyons.com.au

SOME OF THE MORE CHALLENGING 'SHORT WALKS' IN TASMANIA INCLUDE:

- ✦ **Kelly Basin/Bird River:**
Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park
- ✦ **Cradle Mountain Summit:**
Cradle Mt/Lake St Clair National Park
- ✦ **Echo Point:** Cradle Mt/Lake St Clair National Park
- ✦ **Shadow Lake Circuit:** Cradle Mt/Lake St Clair National Park
- ✦ **Mt Rufus:** Cradle Mt/Lake St Clair National Park

AND FOR THE MORE EXPERIENCED HIKERS:

- ✦ **Frenchmans Cap**
Walking Track: four to five days to the summit (Franklin-Gordon Wild Rivers National Park)
- ✦ **The Overland Walk:** six days (Cradle Mt/Lake St Clair National Park)
- ✦ **South Coast Track and Port Davey:** six to eight day and four to five day walks (Southwest National Park)



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