

# weekender.

## SAIL AWAY...

### DOWN TO THE ISLE IN COMFORT

The Spirit of Tasmania recently underwent a major transformation. In the Weekender we take a look at the magnificent facilities available for travellers to and from the Apple Isle. Full story Weekender page 4-5



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## COVER STORY



Take time to reflect in the memorial garden at Port Arthur, which is dedicated to the people killed during the 1996 massacre.

# APPLE OF OUR ISLE

Fairfax reporter Kim Quinlan was fortunate enough to take the revamped Spirit of Tasmania to discover the Apple Isle recently. She tells about her trip and the must-sees while in Tassie.

**T**ASMANIA is renowned for its relaxed island lifestyle and the only way to start off your trip is to arrive feeling relaxed after an overnight trip on the revamped Spirit of Tasmania.

Sailing by night is really the only way to go, particularly if you are fortunate enough to be in one of the many cabins available.

And there's something romantic about watching the sun set over the water and the twinkling lights of Melbourne from the deck of the new-look Spirit of Tasmania as you set sail for the Apple Isle.

There is plenty to do on the overnight journey to Tasmania. From enjoying a top drop of wine or craft beer, to sumptuous meals in the various eateries, to relaxing in the many comfortable lounge chairs while watching TV, quiet time in the reading room,

listening to live music in the Terrace Lounge Bar, catching up on the latest movies on the ship's cinema and even a flutter in the gaming room, the Spirit of Tasmania has it all.

Children have not been forgotten, with a designated kids' area, including play equipment, Xbox consoles, an arcade-style games area and, during the day journeys, circus performers and face painting.

From the moment we checked our car in to the time we disembarked at the other end, the Spirit of Tasmania's wonderful staff offered us nothing but a smile, helpful advice and fabulous care and attention.

Accommodation on the revamped Spirit of Tasmania ranges from 121 recliners in a private lounge, to 222 cabins featuring either twin beds (we were lucky enough to have one

of these), four bunks or you can spoil yourself with a deluxe cabin.

Each recliner in the private lounge features individual reading lights, tray table, USB port and blankets and pillows.

Our cabin was equipped with two single beds (there are also four-bed cabins), private ensuite facilities with bedding and towels. There is a choice of inside or porthole views (we were lucky enough to have a porthole cabin).

But if you really want to feel special, why not treat yourself to a fully refurbished deluxe cabin, which comes complete with a queen-size bed, private ensuite, flat-screen TV and double porthole windows to take in the view.

By taking your own vehicle on the ship, you instantly have the best chance of discovering Tasmania's hidden gems as you leisurely

wend your way around the island. Some of the smaller towns like Sorell, Richmond and the historic precinct of Ross have many hidden treasures, including craft stores, local produce sellers, bakeries, wineries and antique shops.

Our first stop after leaving the Spirit of Tasmania at Devonport was a sumptuous breakfast at The House of Anvers.

The House of Anvers contains a real chocolate taste sensation. Nestled among 1.12 hectares of old tree gardens, you can see qualified confectionery staff tempering, moulding and enrobing fine couverture chocolates, truffles, pralines and fudges.

The rambling drive to Launceston led us to our first port of call in our trip, the luxurious terrace at TwoFourTwo Boutique Apartments in the heart of the city. A home-a-way-from home, the two-storey apartment featured a fully-appointed kitchen/dining area, outdoor eatery with barbecue, living room with all the amenities.



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At the top of the spiral staircase was the massive bedroom with one of the most comfortable king-sized beds I have ever slept in. There was also a luxurious bathroom with shower over a spa bath, as well as a balcony to watch the world go by outside.

A must-see during your stay in Launceston is the picturesque Cataract Gorge, a unique natural formation only a two-minute drive from the centre of the city. Called The Gorge by the locals, it is a rare natural phenomenon on the banks of the Tamar River. While there have devonshire tea in the scenic gardens, be amazed by the friendly peacocks meandering around the grounds or take the world's longest single chairlift span - 308 metres - across the gorge.

Our next stop was Hobart and the penthouse suite of the Salamanca Wharf Hotel, which offered a true boutique contemporary apartment hotel experience in the heart of the city's premier entertainment precinct. The hotel fuses the ultimate in luxurious comfort with every attention to detailed catered for, including a bath in the massive bedroom.

The hotel, which is adorned with bespoke furniture crafted from local Tasmanian timber, comprises four loft penthouses, 15 one-bedroom apartments and three studio apartments.

On the ground floor of the hotel is Castray Esplanade Food and Wine.

No trip to Tasmania is complete without a visit to the haunting and historic Port Arthur. A 40-minute guided tour is a must before you embark on your day of meandering around the former penal colony. You can also take a 20-minute boat trip out to Isle of the Dead. While there, take time to reflect in the Memorial Gardens dedicated to the 35 people killed in the 1996 massacre at the popular tourist attraction.

Three full days is definitely not long enough to see everything Tasmania has to offer, but it certainly gives you a taste for more. And taking the revamped Spirit of Tasmania over and back is really the only way to go.

**Kim Quinlan was a guest of The Spirit of Tasmania.**



Stay in luxury while you take the Spirit of Tasmania over to the Apple Isle.



With so many and varied seating areas on the Spirit of Tasmania, you will never be bored or uncomfortable.



Never go hungry with the various eateries on board the Spirit of Tasmania.



There is fun for the whole family on the Spirit of Tasmania.



No visit to Tasmania is complete without a tour of the historic Port Arthur precinct.



The luxury penthouse at Salamanca Wharf Hotel is a great place to unwind after a busy day of sightseeing in and around Hobart.