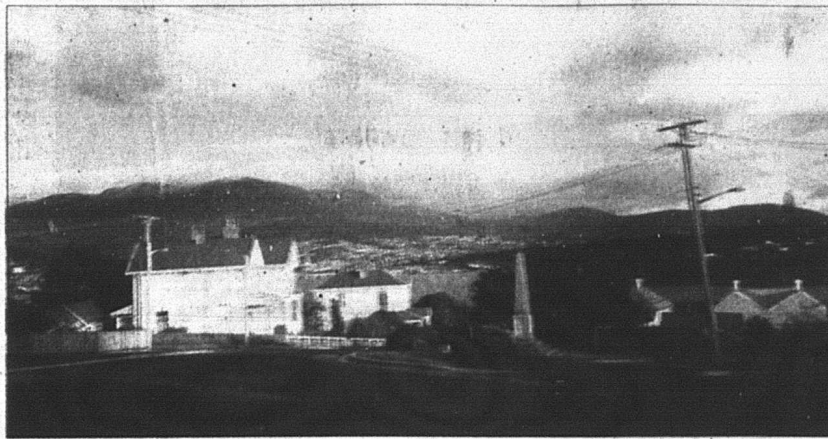


**THE CITY** of Hobart on the south side of the island of Tasmania is nestled between the mouth of the Derwent River and snow-capped Mount Wellington. This view of the central city and the harbor is from the suburb of Bellrive across the river.



# Discovering Tasmania

Where The Past Shares Time With The Present

A native of Creston, Teresa Heinz has been writing for *The Daily Record* since she was a student at Norwayne High School.

She is now a research assistant in the Department of Media, Communication and Culture at Murdoch University in Perth, Western Australia, where she has lived since February 1997.

Earlier this year she wrote for us about a train trip she took across the island continent. Today, she takes us off the southern coast to Tasmania.

By **TERESA HEINZ**  
Special to *The Daily Record*

**HOBART, Tasmania**—Tasmania, Australia's only island state, is probably better known as the "forgotten state."

Europeans first visited the small island 155 miles south of Melbourne in 1642, when Abel Tasman, a Dutch navigator, named it Van Diemen's Land. In the 1800s, ships sailing around the island to New South Wales paused at the island, and some convicts and soldiers remained.

With rolling green hills, wet climate and trees brought from England by the first settlers, Tasmania retains a distinct British feel.

Despite a rich heritage, Tasmania's people and the state often are stereotyped as being backward or not a part of Australia at all. Maps of Australia sometimes don't even show Tasmania.

My questions about Tasmania, in fact, got jokes instead of answers. When I told a lecturer at school about my proposed trip to the island, he simply asked, "Where?" with a mischievous glimmer in his eye.

As a result, I had little to go on last July when I visited Tasmania's capital, Hobart, and Port Arthur, a former penal settlement.

### A Winter Welcome

By the time I arrived in the northern port city of Devonport on July 11, I was seasick from the ferry journey across the Bass Strait. The strait is regarded as one of the roughest stretches of water in the world.

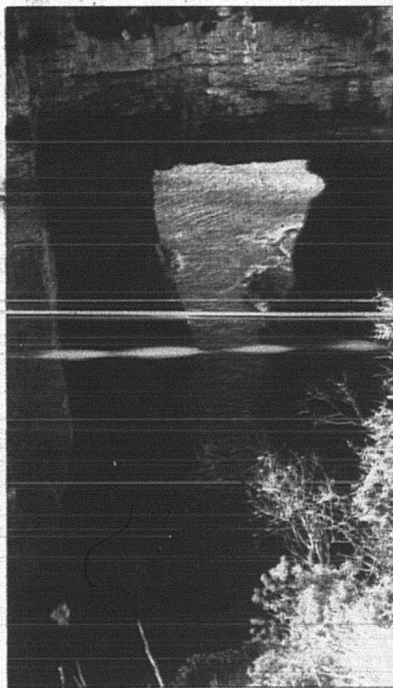
It was dark, cold, and raining when I walked into the ferry terminal.

I spent my first few days in Tassie on the organic farm of two acquaintances, Hans and Denise. Hans farmed, while Denise worked as a primary school teacher. Their homestead, where they live out their passion for natural cooking, beer brewing and the land, is set in the luscious green hills outside of Devonport. They call it "Heron-on-Earth."

After what seemed like hours, my taxi arrived at their farm and Hans greeted me in the front garden. "Hello! I'm Teresa," I said, taking my backpack from the taxi.

Hans noticing that I was freezing, and whisked me into the farmhouse. Soon, I was sampling his homemade brew and describing my ferry journey. After Denise joined us, we ate homemade pizza by the wood fire.

Although the surroundings were beautiful, in such



Teresa Heinz photos

**THE TASMAN PENINSULA**, where Port Arthur is located, has some rugged, striking coastal scenery. This is Hell's Kitchen and the Tasman Arch.

miserable weather it was too cold to bike into the nearby village. I stayed in an adjoining farmhouse that Hans built to run on solar energy.

The endless spouts of heavy rain matched the chill that I could not remove from the guest house. I was almost relieved when Denise offered to drive me into Devonport two days later. From Devonport, I would catch the bus through central Tasmania to Hobart.

David Rose, director of communications at Tourism Tasmania in Hobart, said a half million people

visit Tasmania each year — many for its natural beauty.

"Tasmania positions itself as Australia's natural state," Rose said. "Because it is so small, everything is very accessible and people can come very close to nature very quickly."

I admired the nature as my bus traveled from Devonport through the midlands, which include the city of Launceston and numerous beautiful villages. Hop fields, vineyards, hedgerows, apple orchards and pasture surrounded us.

In Launceston, I walked through the city center that forms the hub of Australia's third-oldest city. I could have been in England as I walked through the shopping precinct. Small shops, a pedestrian mall, gardens, and overcast skies gave the town the feel of an English high street.

A couple hours north of Hobart is Ross, a village that used to be a major stagecoach stop. From the bus, I saw convict-built Ross Bridge, the third-oldest bridge in Australia.

I also passed through Oatlands, a town about an hour north of Hobart. It has the largest number of buildings dating before 1837 in Australia. The main street alone contains 87 historic buildings, including the convict-built courthouse (circa 1829). As in most of the towns, some of Oatlands' buildings have been converted into cozy bed and breakfasts.

### Timeless Hobart

Hobart's commanding location is largely derived from its location. The city, which faces the Derwent River estuary, lies on the lower slopes of snow-capped Mount Wellington.

On one side of the shoreline is Sullivan's Cove, where the first settlers arrived in 1804. It is still a docking point for fishing, ferry and cruise ships. On the other is Battery Point, where a cannon battery was established in 1818.

Australia's second-oldest city (after Sydney) was founded as Hobart Town in 1842. Lt. Col. David Collins, governor of Tasmania's first European settlement at Risdon Cove, thought that a settlement farther down the river would be a better location for living and trading. A group of 262 people (178 of whom were convicts) moved to the site of Hobart, where they set up a makeshift village of wattle-and-daub huts.

Unlike most Australian cities, where the bulldoze-in-the-name-of-progress mentality prevails, Hobart's past remains today. The city's high-rise buildings aren't very tall, and they allow a major presence for the Georgian sandstone buildings, churches, and cottages. Each evening, Mount Wellington is fronted by buildings that glow from the setting sun's rays.

Rose said that Tasmania's well-preserved buildings make it especially appealing for visitors.

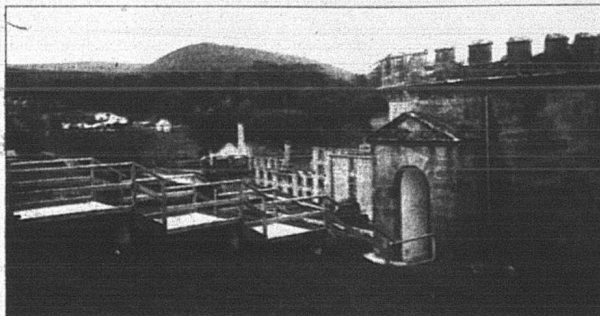
"For Australia, Tasmania has the largest range of historic buildings left to be standing," Rose said. "Nowhere else, not even in Sydney, would you find its range and diversity of colonial history."

History was almost the furthest thing from my mind after my bus reached Hobart. After falling to

See Pg. C2 — TASMANIA



**THE CENTRAL PRISON** of the infamous Port Arthur penal colony has been opened to tourists. The homes in the background were cottages for the officers at the facility for Australia's worst felons.



# TASMANIA

(Continued From Page C1)

reach several friends by telephone. I scanned my travel guide for a night's accommodation.

The listing for the Bellevue Hotel on the other side of the Derwent River caught my eye. The guidebook described the converted stone schoolhouse as "peaceful," and after the tiring journey, I was ready for a respite.

It took half an hour to decipher the city's bus system, but I eventually found a bus that took me through the old city, across the massive bridge over the river and into the hills on the other side.

After leaving the bus, I glanced around and was breathless at the beauty. Through the trees I stared at the top of Mount Wellington, shimmering above the colorful harbor below. This beauty matched that of the schoolhouse surrounded by ancient oak trees and vines.

I initially thought the hostel was deserted. As I walked into the unlocked stone building, its silence was magnified by boxes of blankets, old books, and worn furniture scattered inside and out.

"Hello?" I called out. I heard steps in the flat above, and a short, stocky, elderly man walked into the kitchen. He appeared surprised after I explained that I wanted to spend the night.

He looked stern, but his voice was friendly. "I'm Cliff. You're probably the last guest to stay here," he said. "The government just repurchased the building and we're moving out on Saturday. But you're welcome to stay until then."

I hadn't planned on staying in Hobart the entire week, so I paid for two nights and Cliff led me to a sun-room that contained four bunk beds and overlooked the sea. The room was freezing and I spent the night in thermal underwear under layers of wool blankets.

The hostel, like the city, is full of history. I spent several afternoons admiring the dorms that used to be classrooms.

"The place became a youth hostel in the 1960s," Cliff explained, pouring some more hot water for tea.

If I were to write a biography, Cliff would make a fascinating object of discussion. A white settler in his youth, Cliff returned to his native northern England after World War II to settle down.

"I saw where they wanted me to live, and it was terrible, a shack," Cliff recalled. "So I went to Australia, and couldn't believe the fruit trees growing right along the streets."

Eventually, Cliff settled in Tasmania, worked in the fishing industry, and became a youth hostel warden in his retirement. He lived in the upstairs quarters until last year, when the government purchased the building and placed it on the private market.

In many ways, I was honored to be Cliff's last guest. He seemed to sense that "Why don't you stay longer for free, until the building is sold?" He asked me several days later.

I agreed heartily, happy that I had a whole week to explore old Hobart.

**A Week of History**

While Hobart is charming, its beauty is challenged by the fact that it is full of hills. Hobart's main thoroughfare, Elizabeth Street, joins the other main streets that run down a steep hill toward the harbor. Most streets are lined with old glass-fronted shops with wide doorways and leaded windows.

I was ready for a rest halfway up Elizabeth Street, where I noticed a familiar Australian landmark: the Hobart Country Women's Association shop. These shops are staffed by volunteers who supply homemade biscuits, cakes, cookies, jams,

and sauces. I bought a jar of plum preserves and set about to explore the end of the city toward the harbor.

That afternoon, I met my friends Tricia and Andrew, who live on Mount Wellington, at a cafe. We initially discussed a visit to the Royal Botanical Gardens, but when Andrew briefly left the table, Tricia and I agreed on our destination: the Cadbury Chocolate Factory.

Tricia and I drove to the factory in suburban Claremont, where we took the guided tour and stuffed our pockets with free chocolates. I was amazed at the variety of Cadbury when I lived in Britain, but Australia's chocolate wallabies and Freddo frogs are likewise tasty.

Everything smelled like chocolate in the end, so I was glad to spend the late afternoon exploring the Hobart shoreline. The harbor front of Salamanca Place is lined with tall sandstone warehouses, once used for the whaling trade. Now, they house trendy shops that provide the backdrop to one of Australia's largest outdoor markets each Saturday.

Wedged between two warehouses are the Kelly Steps, which meander up to Battery Point. During colonial times, this area was a maritime village and the diverse architecture reflects the lifestyles of fisherman, master mariners, and sailors.

The legacy of this past is present in the colorful, well-preserved Battery Point today. In fact, the winding streets and tiny cottages are so typical of Britain that I had to remind myself that I was in Australia.

While Battery Point was the highlight of my visit, other historic treasures abound. At the high end of Elizabeth Street is the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, where Tasmanian colonial art pictorially recites the state's past.

An important part of this past is the relationship between Tasmania's early white settlers and Aborigines. As I walked through the museum, I learned a little about Tasmania's tragic racial history.

**Tasmania's Aboriginal Past**

Although there are conflicting debates about why Tasmania Aborigines did not survive white settlement, several points remain clear.

While some white settlers on the mainland formed treaties and lived side-by-side with Aborigines, this cooperation didn't exist in Tasmania. The Europeans fenced off land to create farms and took away Aboriginal hunting grounds.

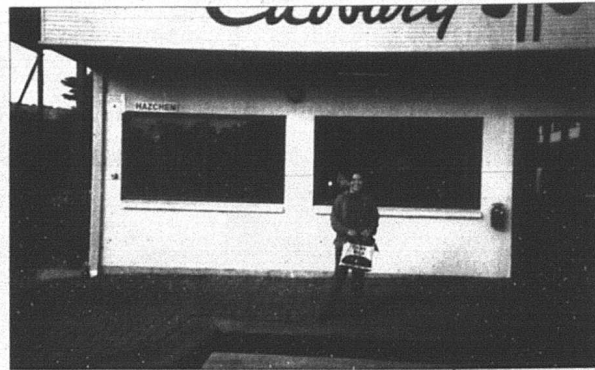
Soon the killing on both sides was widespread. In 1828, Tasmania's governor proclaimed martial law, and gave whites the right to shoot or arrest any Aborigine found in an area of white settlement.

In the end, the tension culminated in a forced march similar to the American "Trail of Tears," when the Cherokee were forced to leave Georgia and march 1,000 miles west on foot. In the late 1800s, whites tried to push all Aborigines off the main island and corner them on the Tasman Peninsula. The whites formed a human chain, or Black Line, and closed the river as they moved through the state.

By 1834, all Aborigines were moved to a reserve on Flinders Island, where many died from disease. The only Aborigines in Tasmania today live in the Furneaux group of islands off the state's northeast coast.

There is a strong movement to improve race relations in Australia. Federal Native Title legislation seeks to reimburse or give Aborigines back tribal lands that were taken by white settlement, mining, and businesses.

Most Australian cities also circulate Sorry Books, that people can sign and record their feelings about deeds done to Aborigines. In a few years, Australians will probably vote to change the national flag, with proposed designs that reflect Aboriginal history.



OUR INTREPID TRAVELER, Teresa Heinz, stands before a chocobolic shrine — the Cadbury Chocolate factory in the Hobart suburb of Claremont.

The reconciliation movement is also apparent in Hobart. While walking down Elizabeth Street, I noticed the Aboriginal flag flying in front of an Aboriginal community center and art gallery. The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, too, features Tasmanian Aboriginal art, old relics, and sections on different tribes who lived around the state.

Despite these attempts to foster reconciliation, the legacy of the racial tension still creeps into Tasmania's darker corners: in the island's distinct British feel, through the residents who proudly guard their separateness from the Australian mainland, and in the faded, colonial portraits of tired-looking Aboriginal tribal leaders that hang in the Tasmanian Art Gallery.

**Port Arthur's Convict Legacy**

When the colonial portraits were being painted, Tasmania's penal settlement at Port Arthur was in full operation.

Port Arthur lies downstream from Hobart on the Derwent. When the prison first opened in 1830, Governor Arthur chose the Tasman Peninsula because it was connected to the main portion of the island only by a narrow strip of land, Eaglehawk Neck. Guard dogs were chained in a line across the neck to keep prisoners from escaping.

Prisoners who committed further crimes in the Australian colony were confined at Port Arthur. Between 1830 and 1877, more than 12,000 convicts were imprisoned at Port Arthur, which they called "Hell on Earth."

Today, the old convict settlement with its golden stone buildings and officers' cottages possesses an almost otherworldly beauty. After I arrived there from Hobart on July 19, I walked up the hill to the site's main building, which I booked a night's lodging and prepared for a day of exploration.

Although the site appears small at first glance, the grounds are extensive. Port Arthur was a thriving center in its day. Industries such as shipbuilding, coal mining, and timber milling were based there, while convicts helped operate Australia's first railway on the Peninsula by pushing the carriages along the tracks.

Most of the buildings are ruins now, but ongoing preservation work has resulted in the restoration of many buildings.

Visitors, if they dare, can sit in Port Arthur's pitch-black solitary confinement cell or explore the exercise yard, where convicts wore masks, endured torture and were forbidden to speak.

The former insane asylum now houses a museum, which has displays of old photographs of the prison, objects once used there, gen-

## If You Go Down Under ...

**BEFORE YOU GO:** Tasmania can be a paradise for the outdoors enthusiast, history buff, or casual sightseer.

The Australian-written Lonely Planet series is the definitive Down Under travel source. Lonely Planet publishes a "Tasmania" (\$24.95) guidebook, that has maps, photos, and descriptions. If you have Internet access, Lonely Planet maintains a "Destination Tasmania" web site with pictures and travel information. Address: <http://www.lonelyplanet.com/austr/tas.htm>

For up-to-date information on traveling in Tasmania, contact the Australian Tourist Commission in New York. Address: 25th Floor, 100 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10017. Helpline: (212) 687-6300; Fax: 661-3340.

As with mainland Australia, Americans need a tourist visa to visit Tasmania. The most common three-month visas are free, while six-month visas are \$29. Apply for the visa by contacting the Australian Embassy in Washington, D.C. Address: 1601 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington, D.C. 20036. Phone: (202) 797-3009; Fax: 797-3168. To get the visa you need a passport and a round-trip ticket to Australia. Be sure to apply at least a month in advance.

Although Qantas (Australia's major international airline) operates flights into Hobart, the traveler will likely connect to Tasmania via a mainland capital city, such as Sydney or Melbourne. Tasmania also has a small internal airline and airports at Hobart, Devonport, Launceston, and Burnie.

Air fares to Tasmania from the U.S. constantly change depending on the season, but flights generally cost \$1,500 to \$2,000. Costs are highest in the summer (December through February).

Another common way to reach Tasmania from the mainland is by boat. TT Line's Spirit of Tasmania operates overnight

between Melbourne and Devonport. The ferry is more like a cruise ship than a ferry. It has nine decks, bars, saunas, swimming pools, restaurants and game rooms. Your local travel agent can reserve tickets for the ferry.

**GETTING AROUND:** Because of Tasmania's small population and country nature, there is little public transportation. The three main bus companies, Tigerline, Tasmanian Redline Coaches, and Tasmanian Wilderness Transport, operate between all major towns and tourist centers such as Lake St. Clair-Cradle Mountain. However, service is infrequent or non-existent on the weekends.

The bus companies offer special passes with unrestricted travel for a set number of days. Contact your travel agent for details.

The most common way to tour Tasmania is by car — Avis, Hertz and Budget can be found in the ports and cities. Not only does car travel avoid the erratic bus schedules, but it allows visitors to explore areas such as the wineries and the Heritage Highway.

Tasmania is also a popular area for bicycle touring. It takes about 10 to 14 days for a fit rider to cycle between Hobart and Launceston; cyclists should allow 14 to 28 days for a full circuit of the island. Bikes can be rented throughout the state.

**PORT ARTHUR:** The former penal settlement is open to the public. The entry pass is valid for 24 hours and includes a guided tour, audio-visual presentation and Isle of the Dead boat tour. The pass allows visitors to stay overnight on the Peninsula and return the next day. Two-hour ghost tours begin each night at 8 p.m. (9:30 p.m. during summer).

For information, contact Port Arthur's visitor information center: Port Arthur Historic Site, Port Arthur, TAS 7182, Australia. Phone: 011-61-3-6250-2539.

eral artifacts of the time period and names of Port Arthur convicts. Perhaps it's just an overactive imagination, but there is an uneasy feeling around the prison's grounds. It is a feeling of stories untold, lives not finished and suffering.

The site, which overlooks the bay and the Isle of the Dead, where convicts and child prisoners are buried is regarded as one of Australia's most haunted places.

The information office displays photos that visitors have sent back over the years. When I looked at the images, I realized that most of them were taken in one of the restored cottages. In every one, streaks of light wound around the photographed people.

Some of Port Arthur's staff claim sightings of ghosts and offer two-hour ghost tours every night. Because I wanted to take the tour, but wasn't keen to do it alone, I asked a fellow youth hostel guest.

"I don't believe in that stuff," Amy insisted, but curiosity soon won out.

We met other interested people at the information office at nightfall. The guide, who distributed lanterns and we walked through the prison cells, various cellars, the insane asylum, and officers' cottages.

At one point, we paused in the model prison's corridor while Jenni explained its ghost-related history. Just after she began speaking, both Amy and I heard soft footsteps and a door close at the far end of the hall. Amy mentioned it to Jenni, who said that no one else was in the building because she had locked the door behind us.

After the tour ended, Amy and I crept up the steep hill to the youth hostel. We met the warden, Mike, who kindly informed us that the hostel was haunted by a ghost named Alice.

"I hear footsteps all the time," said Mike, a former ghost tour leader. He shared one tour experience, when he went back to the solitary confinement cell to retrieve an

umbrella. "I was followed by a presence," Mike recalled, "and it wasn't friendly."

With stories like that about the place where I was sleeping, I wasn't going to take any chances in meeting Alice, the crying child, or the supposed other ghosts. I slept that night with the light on.

**The Mysterious Island**

I didn't realize further than Port Arthur, but the Peninsula is home to many caves, coastal formations, forests, and beaches. On the other side of the Estuary, across from Port Arthur, is Bruny Island. The island's forests, hills, villages, and historic sites are reached only by a ferry out of Kettering, Australia's second oldest lighthouse is on South Bruny.

Despite all its natural diversity, Rose said Tourism Tasmania does not advertise internationally due to its small budget. Still, the state expects to see a rise in European and North American visitors due to their countries' strong currencies against the weak Australian dollar.

"Tasmania is not a holiday destination for everyone," Rose said. "We are conscious of the fact that our visitors often have appreciation for natural scenery, history, fine food and wine, and a way of life that is dying — where hospitality, courtesy, and interest thrive."

It was only fitting that my journey back up to Devonport by bus was made in the cold rain. Only a few of us took the night bus that traveled through the country, picking up farmers and lone people here and there.

I glanced sideways to see the driver and a female passenger, who sat in the first seat, earnestly discuss the existence of an afterlife.

"But surely you believe in ghosts," the woman said. "What about the ones at Port Arthur?" The driver paused, then looked back at her through his mirror. "Oh, those," he said, chuckling in that way Tasmanians do. "I don't worry about 'em."