



## GREAT EASTERN DRIVE

This is one of Australia's most dramatic and beautiful coastal drives. With its spectacular national parks, wildlife and many maritime experiences, this route takes you through a temperate natural paradise.

**START:** Hobart  
**DURATION:** 2 - 5 days

**NATIONAL PARKS AND RESERVES:**

- > Maria Island National Park
- > Freycinet National Park
- > Bay of Fires Conservation Area
- > Douglas-Apsley National Park

LEG	TIME / DISTANCE
Hobart - Orford	1 hr 5 min / 78 km
Orford - Swansea	40 min / 60 km
Swansea - Bicheno	33 min / 43 km
Bicheno - St Helens	1 hr 30 min / 114 km

### Hobart - Orford

- > Depart Hobart for Orford, first established as a mainland port for the convict settlement on Maria Island. Orford has several clean, picturesque beaches - including Raspins, Millingons, Spring and Rheban - with a popular campsite at Raspins Beach. Nearby is the well-regarded nine-hole Orford Golf Course and the Darlington Vineyard.
- > Check into your accommodation in Orford.
- > At Orford there are several walks including the Convict Trail along the Prosser River, the coastal walk along the cliff tops between East Shelly Beach and Spring Beach, and the scenic Thumbs Lookout in the nearby Wielangta Forest, with a spectacular view of the region.
- > Continue on to the Visitor Centre in Triabunna to purchase a ticket for the 30-minute passenger ferry ride to Maria Island National Park where native animals roam free in this wildlife paradise.
- > On Maria Island visit the remains of the Darlington convict settlement dating back to 1825 and wander among the ruins of the mess room, miller's cottage, barn, hop kiln, chapel, prison cells and religious instructor's house.
- > While here, take a short walk to view the spectacular Painted Cliffs and Fossil Cliffs.
- > Return to mainland Tasmania by ferry.
- > Overnight Orford or Triabunna.

## Maria Island - Swansea

- > Drive north from Orford towards the Freycinet Peninsula, one of Australia's best stretches of coastal scenery. Enjoy the stunning view across the long curve of Great Oyster Bay, encompassing Maria Island and the rugged Freycinet Peninsula, tipped by remote Schouten Island.
- > Before Swansea, look out for the convict-built Spikey Bridge (1841), known for its unusual construction.
- > Also approaching Swansea is the entrance to Kate's Berry Farm where you can sample strawberries, raspberries, blackberries and youngberries, not to mention truly great ice-cream.
- > Stop at the seaside town of Swansea – an ideal place for lunch.
- > In Swansea take a look at the Bark Mill Tavern and Bakery - Australia's only restored black wattle bark mill. The fully working mill demonstrates how bark from local black wattle trees was once crushed for export across the world.
- > Within a few kilometres of Swansea you can also sample award-winning cool-climate wines at the cellar doors of wineries such as Spring Vale, Freycinet, Milton, Craigie Knowe, Apsley Gorge, Coombend and more.
- > If you're staying overnight in Coles Bay, continue on the Tasman highway, then take the well-signed turn-off to Coles Bay and Freycinet National Park - a spectacular coastal region.
- > Overnight Swansea or Coles Bay.

## Swansea - Bicheno

- > Continue on the main highway, then take the well-signed turn-off to Coles Bay and Freycinet National Park - a spectacular coastal region.
- > Take an on-shore tour and sample oysters at the Freycinet Marine Farm, 10 minutes from Coles Bay (bookings essential).
- > At Freycinet National Park (park fees apply), walk to a choice of magnificent locations.
- > Climb the trail to the Wineglass Bay Lookout, with its picture-postcard view of Wineglass Bay, one of the world's most photographed beaches, or climb over the top of the Hazards (mountains) to Hazards Beach itself (2.5 hours return).
- > Great drives in the vicinity of the national park include Sleepy Bay on the eastern side of the Peninsula, Cape Tourville Lighthouse (breathtaking view), Bluestone Bay (4WD only) and Friendly Beaches (always beautiful).
- > Alternatively, Freycinet Air provides a range of magic scenic flights.
- > You can also enjoy the unspoiled coastline in a kayak with Freycinet Adventures, take a four-day guided walk with Freycinet Experience Walk, explore the coastline by all-terrain vehicle with All-4 Adventures or head out to sea with Wineglass Bay Cruises.
- > If this is all too hectic, simply relax on the deck of Freycinet Lodge and enjoy the great food and wine of the region - another great way to experience this beautiful part of the world.
- > Alternatively continue to drive north and join a penguin tour in Bicheno and see delightful little penguins parading around their beach-side burrows after dark.
- > Overnight Bicheno.

## Coles Bay - St Helens

- > Drive north to Bicheno.
- > At Bicheno, explore the Gulch and the Blowhole or take a ride in a glass-bottomed boat for a dolphin's eye view of protected marine life.
- > Just 8km north of Bicheno is East Coast Natureworld, a great place to see Tasmanian devils, wombats, snakes, and birdlife, many in a natural environment.
- > Join a penguin tour in Bicheno and see delightful fairy penguins parading around their beachside burrows of an evening.
- > Just out of Bicheno is the Douglas Apsley National Park – a great place to stop in summer for a refreshing dip in the Apsley River Waterhole, or just an enjoyable walk in the national park.

- > Further north you'll discover scenic coastal vistas all the way to Chain of Lagoons, where an inland turn-off will lead up the winding Elephant Pass. Don't miss the renowned stopover for pancakes before continuing on through the rural township of St Marys before looping back to the coast.
- > Back on the coast, walk on an expanse of pristine white sand in the beachside townships of Scamander or Beaumaris.
- > Further north is St Helens, a pretty fishing village located on the shores of Georges Bay inlet and a base for serious game fishing. Charters are available. Family fishing is also popular in the sheltered estuaries, bays and rivers, and boats are available for hire.

## Day 2: St Helens

- > In St Helens, the St Helens History Room showcases the region's tin-mining history and Aboriginal and Chinese heritage. Just north of St Helens, take the short (12km) detour to Binalong Bay and Humbug Point Reserve, with its exceptional views, walks, white beaches, swimming, fishing, diving and estuarine bird watching.
- > Take time to explore the Bay of Fires Conservation Area, stretching from Binalong Bay to Eddystone Point in the north with its brilliant white beaches, emerald coloured waters, lagoons, wildflowers and lichen-covered granite rocks.
- > Continue on to Launceston by joining the North East Trail at St Helens and driving inland.
- > See also touring route - North East Trail