

MAKING WAVES

Stop searching. We've found the ultimate golf destination in Australia this summer. Tasmania boasts two of the best courses in the entire country with Barnbougle Dunes and Lost Farm, but if you think the excitement ends with these seaside gems, think again. BY BRAD CLIFTON

The Spirit of Tasmania leaves Port Melbourne bound for Devonport, a Tasmanian adventure golfers must experience this summer.

Earlier this year, as the clubhouse conversation turned to great golf destinations and it was revealed what a deprived golf journeyman I was, someone asked why I hadn't yet visited Tasmania. I sat there, scratched my head and thought long and hard about it. In the end I had no answer. I had no excuse either. You see, Tasmania is famous for many things... most of which are genuine passions of mine: world-class golf (it goes without saying), whisky distilleries (you better believe it), wine routes (I'm a sucker for a good glass of red) and mouth-watering seafood at every stop. Tassie is also the home of my childhood sporting hero Matthew Richardson – a skinny, long-haired kid from Devonport who would go on to become one of the modern day greats of AFL football with the Richmond Tigers.

And then, of course, there's my incurable addiction to Cadbury chocolate. When you add it all up it stands to reason why I should be quizzed for neglecting the closest place to heaven I'll ever experience in this lifetime. Indeed the depths of my bucket list were overflowing with Tassie treasures. Fed up with the persecution, I promised myself that this embarrassing oversight would be rectified by the end of the year. Within a few months I was boarding the Spirit of Tasmania ship in Port Melbourne. Next stop: The Apple Isle. Armed with a set of golf clubs, luggage and a wry smile, I knew the next time I would set foot on the mainland, those clubhouse conversations would be a whole lot easier. >>



Clockwise from bottom left: There's no luggage limits so pack the car full for your trip to Tassie aboard the Spirit of Tasmania; kick back into the night at the ship's many bars; or catch a flick at the onboard cinema; let the kids keep themselves busy at the game arcade; and be treated to your first taste of Tassie cuisine at the Leatherwood Restaurant.

ALL ABOARD: GETTING INTO THE SPIRIT OF THINGS

There's something special about travelling by boat, especially one that operates by day and night. With that magnificent stretch of water called the Bass Strait dividing the mainland and Tasmania, why travel by air when you can get the true Tassie getaway experience on water?

When you board the **Spirit of Tasmania**, whether by foot or a car packed to the roof, your holiday officially sets sail. With more than 25 years of service and some six million passengers giving it the thumbs up, the Spirit of Tasmania will allow you to pass time by enjoying the ultimate in floating comfort and entertainment. Fitted with an onboard cinema, gift shop, gaming lounge and some great bars and restaurants, you'll

be blown away by this vessel's sheer size. At more than 194 metres in length, the Spirit of Tasmania is 19m longer than the Melbourne Cricket Ground and comes fitted with 222 cabins and a licence to carry 1400 passengers on the 429km voyage. With deluxe, twin, four berth cabins and ocean recliner accommodation options available, not to mention outstanding onboard dining at the Leatherwood Restaurant where you can get your first 'taste of Tassie' with local beef and wines, you'll be hard pressed to pick areas of improvement on what is a very professional and friendly operation by Spirit staff.

When you eventually return to your cabin, it's lights out for a well-earned rest where you will soon wake up to a glorious sunrise as the ship docks in Devonport. *Welcome to Tasmania!*

FIRST STOP: DEVONPORT & SURROUNDS

Friends and colleagues told me Tasmania was easy to travel around but I had no idea until I hopped off the boat and picked up my hire car and road map. At 256 kilometres from north to south and 315km from east to west, Tassie is comparable in size with Scotland, and as I quickly learned, offers an equally colourful history and breathtaking landscape.

Devonport is at the forefront of this and, for many like-minded tourists, is the first stop of a memorable Tassie adventure. A coastal city of 25,000 people, Devonport is situated in the centre of Tasmania's North Coast and is the main link between Australia's only island state and Melbourne thanks to its convenient ferry terminal. The area is loaded with quality golf courses, too, the first of which has some history of its

own – **Devonport Golf Club**. Established way back in 1921, Devonport GC was the brainchild of some local sportsmen who enjoyed hitting golf balls around during the post-war years of 1918 and decided they wanted a proper club for their hobby. Now 91 years on and the club is celebrating being chosen to host the Tasmania Senior Open for the next three years from February. And the 'old timers' will get quite a test, too, with the Devonport layout offering a great mix of challenging tree-lined fairways with strategically placed bunkers, all on a gorgeous peninsula of land leading into the Mersey River.

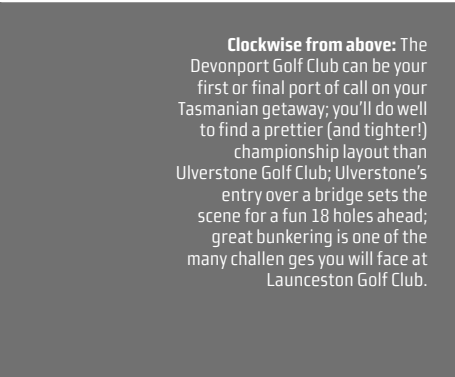
And while it doesn't look like much, the steep par-3 ninth [pictured below] will see a few cricket scores posted if players miss the dinner plate-size green. Their tip? *Don't be short, left or right.* Most of all, *don't be too cocky*, like I was before signing for a 5!

Volunteer members are regularly spotted out on the course getting their hands dirty, ensuring this picturesque layout remains one of the premier clubs in Tasmania.

"We wouldn't want to be anywhere else in the world," one of them quipped. "Just look around you. God's country."

Back on the road and it was off to **Ulverstone Golf Club**, a pretty 18-hole championship layout that was home to the 2010 Australian Junior Girls Championship. From the moment you arrive at Ulverstone's riverfront entry over a bridge, you'll be impressed by the landscape. Highlighted by 18 tight, tree-lined holes with some tricky fairway undulations, Ulverstone is a fun course that requires you to have the radar on from the word go. Headed by club pro Tony Mills, you'll enjoy the hospitality on offer mid-week and the peace and serenity this course dishes up on weekends.

Just down the road the seaside town



Clockwise from above: The Devonport Golf Club can be your first or final port of call on your Tasmanian getaway; you'll do well to find a prettier (and tighter!) championship layout than Ulverstone Golf Club; Ulverstone's entry over a bridge sets the scene for a fun 18 holes ahead; great bunkering is one of the many challenges you will face at Launceston Golf Club.



Country Club Tasmania has it all – a great golf course, excellent accommodation and dining options and even its very own casino [below].

of Penguin intrigued me, if not for its name, for its history as a small timber and mining town that today is overshadowed by the bigger ports of Burnie and Devonport. Seeking some accommodation with a difference, I pulled over on the main street of Penguin, right near a giant concrete penguin statue (who would have thought?), to find the **Madsen Boutique Hotel** – a beautiful old bank building that had been converted into an amazing two-storey, four-star hotel. I grabbed the bottom room, originally the bank entrance room, and was immediately blown away by the facilities. With luxury bedding, bathroom and an ocean view to die for, I knew I had stumbled onto a winner here. Time to check out the Penguin markets.

ALL ROADS LEAD TO LAUNCESTON

The next logical, if not geographical step, would be to take the short scenic drive north-east to Bridport, home to two of the country's most spectacular golf courses in Barnbougle Dunes and Lost Farm. But I resisted the temptation for now, as my plan was to finish off my Tasmania tour with a 'bang' and play the two world-class tracks on my final days before taking off in a charter plane from their fairways [see next month's issue].

So it was off to Launceston I go and the short 1.5-hour drive gave me time to take in some of the breathtaking countryside in the north. With a population of just 500,000 spread out over 68,332sq km, it's hard to



comprehend just how uninhabited Tasmania is. Forget about Melbourne being judged Australia's most livable city this year – Tassie has the hustle and bustle of mainland Australia covered with character, charm and tranquility, all positioned no further than 120km from the ocean from any point on the island.

IMAGES SUPPLIED

WIN A whirlwind golf trip to Tasmania

Thanks to our good friends at **Go Golfing**, we have an amazing Tassie giveaway for AGD readers. Up for grabs is a place in the 13th annual Wrest Point International Masters Golf Championship from January 6-11, 2013 **PLUS** six nights accommodation at Wrest Point Hotel Casino **PLUS** return flights to your nearest capital city.

Voted Australia's best 'week of golf' for the past five years, the Wrest Point International Masters is for club golfers over the age of 35, and there are 15 tournament divisions so you play with golfers your own age and standard. Our winner will enjoy two rounds at both the Royal Hobart and Tasmania courses along with some quality social and entertainment events every night, including Sydney to Hobart yacht race celebrations, Taste of Tasmania wine and food festival, international tennis and the popular Salamanca.

To enter, simply tell us in 25 words or fewer **why Tasmania is your dream golf destination**. E-mail your entries to golfdig@newslifemedia.com.au or post to Australian Golf Digest at Locked Bag 5030, Alexandria, NSW 2015. Be sure to include your full name and contact details. AGD's editorial panel will select the best answer. Entry open to Australian residents aged 18 or over.

Competition opens at 12.01am (AEST) on 12/09/2012 and closes at 11.59pm (AEST) on 30/11/2012. Winners judged on 03/12/2012 at 15:00 AM/ PM AEST at News Life Media of 180 Bourke Road, Alexandria, NSW 2015. Winner notified by within 1 day of determination.

Terms and conditions available at <http://www.newslifemedia.com.au/terms/>. Promoter is News Life Media (ABN 57 088 923 906) of 180 Bourke Road Alexandria, NSW 2015.