

Itinerary Hobart to Triabunna

Explore Spring Bay
3 night self-drive



GREAT EASTERN DRIVE

east coast tasmania

Introduction

Pristine beaches, crystal waters, towering forests and tumbling convict ruins, cheeky wombats, astounding views and world class local wines - this is 3 days in Spring Bay on the East Coast of Tasmania.

From Hobart the drive to the historic township of Triabunna, gateway to the magical Maria Island National Park, is only an hour and ten minutes. But this 3 night self-drive itinerary is a portal to a simpler pace of life where time is measured in morning walks and afternoon swims, picnics on the beach or a pub meal by a roaring open fire.

This is a mini break reminiscent of long stretches of childhood summer holidays, where the pleasures of melting ice cream licked from sticky fingers and skin tight with salt will be overlaid with the joys of exploring a coastline alive with history and nature.

You'll find luxury beachside holiday houses to simple self-contained shacks, boutique B&Bs, caravan parks and old style motels. Whether you are exploring alone, or with a family, or have escaped the mundane for a romantic getaway, your trip to Spring Bay will give you memories you'll treasure forever.

Day 1: Hobart to Triabunna

Leaving Hobart behind you'll drive through small farmlets until you reach the toe of Black Charlie's Hill. This is where your drive really begins. The road climbs steeply, winding around hairpin bends before dropping into narrow valleys. Drive up Bust Me Gall and Break Me Neck and let the names conjure teams of horses and bullocks carrying supplies from Hobart town to the isolated East Coast.

As you near the township of Buckland watch for a sign to the Tasmanian Bushland Garden. This jewel of a botanical garden is full of Tasmanian plants. Take the sculpture walk and learn about rewilding, or wander the short Loop Track with sweeping views of the Prosser Plains and the hamlet of Buckland.

On to Buckland and your eye will be caught by the convict built St John the Baptist Church overlooking the river and town. With its authentic gothic architecture and mysterious East Window the church is so arresting you'll want to stop. The past is close as you wander through the graveyard. There are tales to discover of how this stunning stained glass window came to the edge of the wilderness in the Land of Buck.

Back on the Great Eastern Drive and the road follows the beautiful Prosser River. Glance to your left and you might catch a glimpse of the Old Convict Road (a great walk if you're feeling energetic). At the mouth of the Prosser lies the holiday town of Orford and just beyond is your destination for the evening, Triabunna. Stop for a moment and take in your first glimpse of the magical Maria Island. Stretch your legs along Raspins Beach. A path along the Orford waterfront takes in spectacular views to the Island. Birders be alert for the mouth of the Prosser River is a protected sanctuary for the endangered Fairy Tern.

Next stop is the Triabunna Gatehouse. A contrast in style to Buckland's historic church, this modern building featured in the Australian exhibition at the 16th Biennale Architecture in Venice, Italy. Raw materials have been used to tell stories revealing the layers of history on Spring Bay. You can watch a short film about the making of a traditional Tasmanian Aboriginal bark canoe, an image of which forms the backdrop of the main space.

Triabunna started its colonial life as a garrison town and is a treasure trove. Drive along Vicary Street before winding your way down Charles Street past the historic Triabunna Barracks, beloved by archaeologists, to the Marina and Wharf. This is a working Marina filled with the bustle of a busy fishing fleet, moored alongside the Maria Island Ferry. From here it's a stroll to the historic Spring Bay Hotel. Listen to tall stories at the bar and end your evening with a pub meal by the open fire and be spoilt by the world class range of local East Coast wines and spirits.

Day 2: Magical Maria Island

Leave the modern world for a day and board a passenger ferry for the short 30 minute trip across Mercury Passage. Your ferry may be spied on by Sea Eagles or escorted by dolphins, Australian fur seals, penguins or if the season is right, whales.

This is a special place, an UNESCO World Heritage Site, and on the surface a fun day out. But explore a little deeper and you'll uncover the layered ancient fossil cliffs, convict history, a rich indigenous culture, farming heritage, pristine natural scenery, secluded beaches and abundant wildlife, including the now famous wombats of Maria Island. Don't forget to take the Maria Island Pledge to keep it wild and pristine - www.mariaislandpledge.com.au

For the more adventurous a hike up Mt Bishop and Clerk is a walk for the memory bank. The views from the top are astounding. If you want to explore further down the island the best thing to do is hire a mountain bike from the ferry operators, Encounter Maria Island. Although there are no vehicles on the island the tracks are biking heaven.

Make sure you grab a coffee and a takeaway lunch for your day on the Island from the coffee van at the Marina or the local IGA (remember there are no shops on Island). If sightseeing with an edge of sophistication is more your speed, you can take a full day boat cruise around Maria Island, including a guided walking tour with award winning East Coast Cruises. This includes a lunch featuring local Tasmanian produce and wines at a remote beach location. The tour combines viewing wild seals, dolphins, wombats, kangaroos, Cape Barren geese, eagles, wallabies, albatross and whales with world famous geological landscapes and the convict history at the township of Darlington.

The ferry runs several times a day but you should aim to arrive back at the Triabunna Wharf by around 5pm. The end to the perfect day is the perfect meal of famous fish and chips from the Triabunna Fish Van. Buy a takeaway beer from the Spring Bay Hotel, or the "Springy" as it's locally known, and eat your fish and chips as the colours of the setting sun play out over the bay and the fishing fleet heads out for a long night's work.

Day 3: Exploring Spring Bay

After all the busyness of a day on Maria Island, on Day 3 you need to take advantage of the laid back coastal lifestyle. Orford offers several pristine beaches at which to swim, fish or just read a book and take in the magnificent views to Maria Island.

You could head to the local favourite Spring Beach, bordered by magnificent sandstone cliffs at either side with a gentle wave perfect for the kids. Or follow the scenic walk along the cliff top from Spring to Shelly Beach and explore the rock pools and old Prosser Bay sandstone quarry along the way. Or if you've still got energy to burn, pack a picnic lunch and hike the Three Thumbs Track. Located just 7kms outside of Orford along the Wielangta Road, the Three Thumbs Track provides breathtaking views of Orford, Spring Bay and Maria Island. The 2 hour, 4km loop walk takes you through dry eucalyptus forest and small sections of temperate rainforest. Feeling less energetic? Just take the short drive to the look-out.

For an afternoon tipple visit the Darlington Vineyard at Orford or book a tasting at Spring Bay Distillery in Spring Beach – home to world class whiskeys and sensational gins. Shop for some dinner from the honesty stand filled with Paddy's Paddock produce outside 'The Village' in Triabunna or take a short drive to Little Swanport where Boomer Creek has their spectacular cellar door with views over rolling paddocks to the Freycinet Peninsula.

Finish your final day in Spring Bay with a classic counter meal at the Blue Waters Hotel overlooking the Prosser River or head to the East Coaster Resort's Seafood and Wine Bar with views over Spring Bay and a jetty right out front where you can drop in a fishing line and try your luck while waiting for your dinner.

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You'll be sad to leave and want to stay longer, but the rest of the Great Eastern Drive is waiting. You'll take with you memories of the unspoilt beauty of this jewel of a bay on the East Coast of Tassie. And you'll dream of coming back to spend a week or two where you can be energetic and adventurous or just relax and slip into the simple coastal life, good food, good wine and a spectacular landscape of sea and sky.

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