

THE WANDERER

AUSTRALIA'S LARGEST RV CLUB MAGAZINE

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A TASTY TRAIL IN TASSIE

From truffles to cheese, salmon to cider – when you travel around Australia’s island food bowl, you’ll never go hungry, thirsty or without a scenic campsite to sleep off your latest feast.

WORDS JANE NICHOLLS

I’m a lovelorn mainlander who makes up for wishing we’d moved to Tasmania 20 years ago by visiting at least once a year. Sometimes I fly, but I far prefer an extended road trip in our own vehicle – I’ve crossed Bass Strait aboard the Spirit of Tasmania six times.

On the cusp of last summer, I decided to begin the holiday by visiting producers along the north-west Tasting Trail and pick up supplies for the trip. Strict quarantine rules mean you may not bring mainland-bought fruit, vegetables, fish or honey into the Island State, but knowing the gourmet route I’ve plotted, I’m all too happy to arrive with an empty fridge.

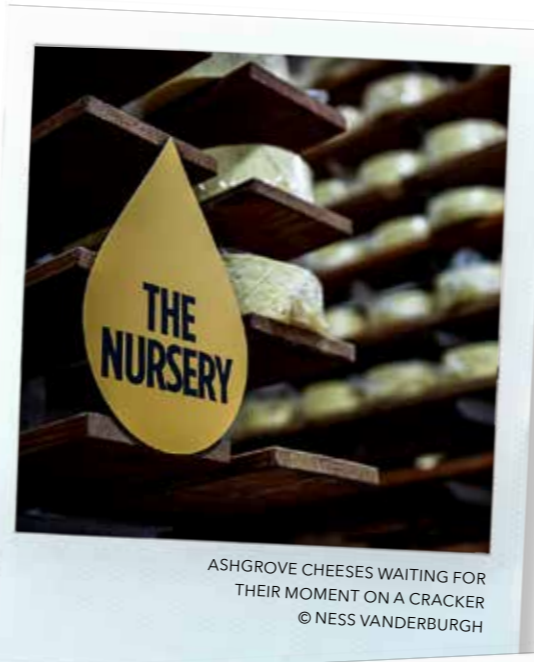
The Tasting Trail sprawls from Smithton across in the north-west. I’ve planned our route mostly through the appropriately monikered Meander Valley to visit producers on our way to Cradle Mountain. Consider my recommendations as an appetiser: there are 42 producers on the Tasting Trail map, including premium producers of ice creams, berries, spirits, honey, craft beers, oysters, pickled onions and charcuterie. Each April, the annual TrailGraze weekend celebrates all this deliciousness with special events – but you’ll find gastronomic delights whenever you visit.



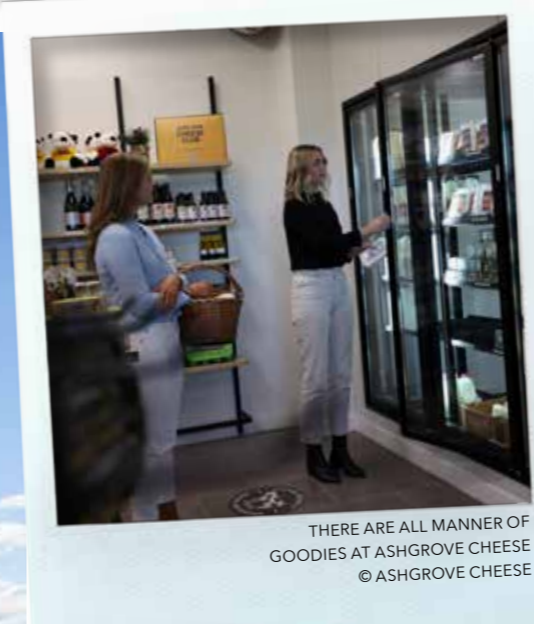
A GENTLE START

The Spirit of Tasmania docks in Devonport around dawn. As it's too early for much action, we drive out to 'The Bluff' Beach and my favourite local breakfast spot, Drift, which opens at 6.30am. We take a walk around the track to the 1889 Mersey Bluff Lighthouse with its distinctive vertical red-and-white stripes, then head back down the hill to Drift for great coffee (I usually prefer my own stovetop brew, but regard this as a place where it's worth paying for!) and poached eggs with a side of umami-rich Tassie mushrooms.

After lingering over a second coffee while we watch sandflat-feeding shorebirds and a lone swimmer, we drive an almost straight shot of around 10 kilometres to historic Spreyton Cider, where the cellar door opens at 10am. They have been growing apples here since 1908 and collecting awards for their cider since they started making it in 2012. Build your own cider tasting paddle for \$20 for six, including a can of your favourite to take away. Consider our cider stores replenished!



ASHGROVE CHEESES WAITING FOR THEIR MOMENT ON A CRACKER © NESS VANDERBURGH



THERE ARE ALL MANNER OF GOODIES AT ASHGROVE CHEESE © ASHGROVE CHEESE



STOCK UP AT THE HAZELBRAE HAZELNUTS SHOP © NESS VANDERBURGH

MEANDERING AND MUNCHING

Time to get deeper into the Tasting Trail as we head for Cradle Mountain. This is not a direct route, but rather a journey around some producers whose flavours I fancy, including some old favourites.

First up, we drive about 30 minutes to Ashgrove Dairy Door to pick up some of their delicious cheese. Ashgrove is another family-owned enterprise with milk sourced from herds of Brown Swiss, Jersey, and Holstein-Friesian cows. The Dairy Door has a mini-supermarket with milk, cream and butter as you'd expect, plus eggs, plus jams and chutneys, chocolate, wine, beer and other essentials. I especially love their Milk on Tap with returnable glass bottles. There's a cafe and you can book cheese tastings (\$25 or with wine for \$45, or self-guided mini tasting for \$12), or High Cheese (high tea for cheese lovers, \$35 per person).

Then it's 40 kilometres to Hazelbrae Hazelnuts, a family-run orchard with the freshest hazelnuts I've ever tasted. Unlike most commercial hazelnut growers, Hazelbrae stores the harvested nuts and cracks and roasts them weekly. After a tasting in the well-stocked shop, I pick up vacuum-packed hazelnuts, oil, nuts in dukkah and chilli and Nutter Butter. There are also treats for sweet tooths, a small kids' playground and a self-guided orchard tour for \$10.

We have tried not to nibble too much as it's only about 30 kilometres to lunch at Meander Valley Vineyard - I've heard the wood-fired pizzas are fabulous flavour bombs and they do not disappoint. We pick up a couple of bottles of their award-winning wine, including their Baco Noir - an unusual French-American hybrid grape which I can't wait to try around the firepit at Cradle Mountain later.



IT'S FASCINATING TO LEARN ABOUT HAZELNUT GROWING IN THE ORCHARD AT HAZELBRAE HAZELNUTS © NESS VANDERBURGH



ONCE YOU TRY FRESH HAZELNUTS NOTHING ELSE WILL EVER SUFFICE. THEY CRACK AND ROAST THEM EVERY WEEK AT HAZELBRAE HAZELNUTS © NESS VANDERBURGH



WOOD-FIRED PIZZAS AT MEANDER VALLEY VINEYARD



CAMP 41 BILLABONG AND FAIRY LIGHTS

TASTING OUR WAY TO CRADLE MOUNTAIN

At The Truffle Farm, four kilometres away, you might meet siblings Anna and Henry Terry – whose parents started the farm in the 1990s. The pair were fan favourites on the 2018 season of *My Kitchen Rules*. Today, Anna's in charge of the farm fun and Henry sells their value-add truffle products at Salamanca Market in Hobart. Labrador Doug is an adorable goofball with a great nose for the buried treasures. For TrailGraze, they're running 50-minute mini tours in addition to their signature tours; and there'll be truffle ice cream and other treats in the farm shop and a free treasure hunt for kids.

Another seven kilometres or so down the road is another favourite of mine, 41 Degrees South, where they grow Atlantic salmon on land using an innovative and sustainable system that biofilters water from the tanks through a wetland. They hot-smoke the fish on-site using a family recipe of German-born founder Zygy Pyka, and it's delicious. The farm also grows ginseng and these days is run by the Pykas' daughter Charlotte and her husband.

Last December, Zygy and his wife Angelika 'retired' to open Camp 41 next door, with 10 low-impact sites with power and water.



ANNA TERRY DEMONSTRATING THE TREASURE-HUNTING PROCESS AT THE TRUFFLE FARM
© NESS VANDERBURGH

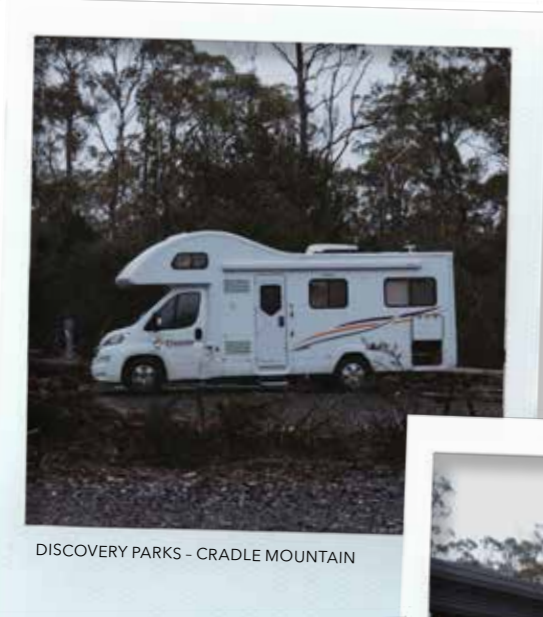


FRESH TRUFFLES AT THE TRUFFLE FARM
© NESS VANDERBURGH

The pet-friendly camp can easily accommodate 30-foot RVs on flat sites by the serene pond with bush walks all around. You can also take a private trail to the 41 Degrees South cafe and shop, where campers can enjoy the farm tour for free (valued at \$10 per person).

But for us it's time to navigate the final winding 90 kilometres to Discovery Parks - Cradle Mountain, briefly stopping at the IGA in the town of Sheffield (famous for its murals) to top up on groceries to make full use of the barbecues and pizza ovens at the park's superbly equipped camp kitchens (there are two; Melaleuca is my pick). The Discovery Parks shop is also well stocked with reasonably priced fresh, chilled and frozen food and a great range of Tasmanian wines, beers and even pre-mixes - like a mini Tasting Trail right here in the park!

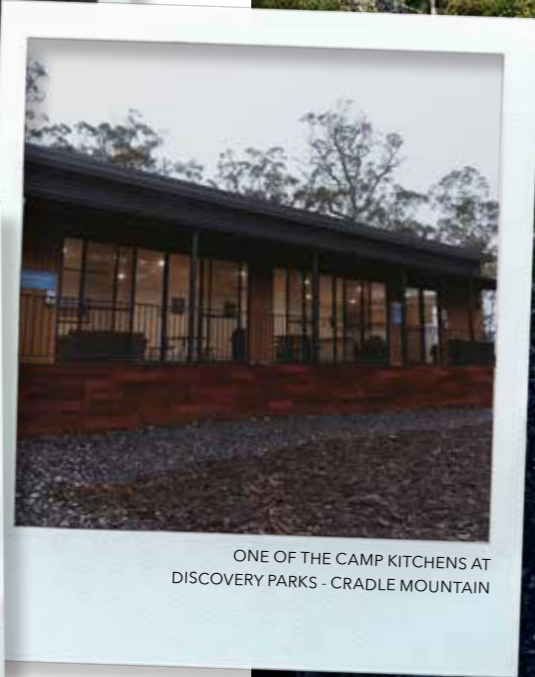
I'm excited for the activities we've got planned in Cradle Mountain, including walking around Dove Lake and paddling across it in hand-built King Billy pine kayaks. In between, I'll be plotting the path to the producers we'll visit when we leave the highlands because wherever your Tasmanian road trip takes you, you're never far from the next farm gate.



DISCOVERY PARKS - CRADLE MOUNTAIN



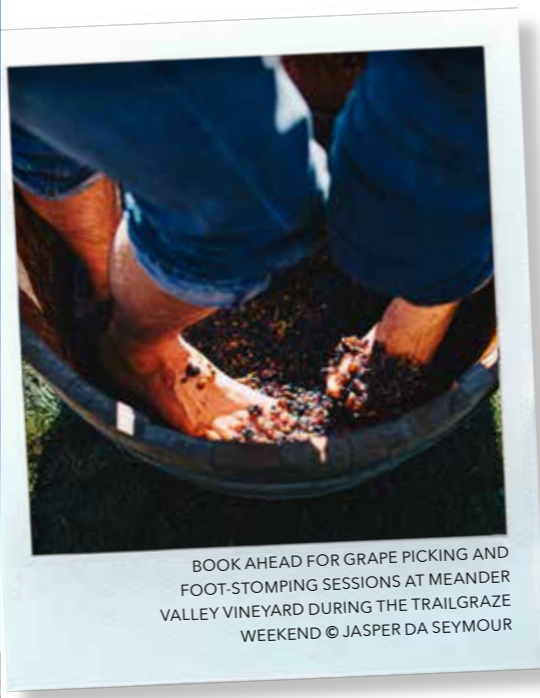
CAFE AT SPREYTON CIDER



ONE OF THE CAMP KITCHENS AT DISCOVERY PARKS - CRADLE MOUNTAIN



CRADLE MOUNTAIN LAKE ST CLAIR NATIONAL PARK © UNSPLASH



BOOK AHEAD FOR GRAPE PICKING AND FOOT-STOMPING SESSIONS AT MEANDER VALLEY VINEYARD DURING THE TRAILGRAZE WEEKEND © JASPER DA SEYMOUR

TIPS

- TrailGraze 2025 runs from April 11 to 13 – there are free and special ticketed events over the weekend, or check out the Tasting Trail map.
- Biosecurity concerns mean while you have to come over empty-eskied, it's perfectly legal to load up with fresh Tassie produce when you head back to the Geelong-bound ferry. Hill St Grocer in Devonport is a one-stop shop for Tasmanian and general produce, either to stock up on extras for your holiday or to squirrel away supplies to take back home.

JOURNEY PLANNER

Where to stay: You can take your RV onboard the Spirit of Tasmania. Or, if you fly to Tasmania, you can hire a motorhome from multiple locations across Tasmania. 🚐



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