

Launceston is the second largest city in Tasmania, with a population of 99,675 and is distinctively different from the capital of Hobart. There is great rivalry between these two cities and this just makes it even more exciting to visit and compare.

Launceston is home to a great number of large nineteenth century buildings, and is known as Tasmania's 'Garden City', with a tremendous number of parks and gardens to enjoy. With a vibrant city centre and the amazing natural wonder of the Cataract Gorge just minutes away, Launceston is a must for any visitor to Tasmania. There are many types of accommodation to be found here from backpackers to hotels, however as Tasmania becomes a more popular tourist destination, it's necessary to book in advance.

History

In 1642 Dutch explorer Abel Tasman sighted and mapped a small portion of an island he called Anthonioo van Diemenslandt, which later became known as Van Diemen's Land. In 1798 British explorers George Bass and Matthew Flinders mapped a great deal of Van Diemen's Land, and in 1803 Hobart was settled as a penal colony. In 1804 a site at the mouth of the Tamar River in the north of the island was settled by the British as a military hold to avoid any other countries from colonising Van Diemen's Land. A year later the settlement was moved further south along the Tamar River to where Launceston now resides. Like many places in Australia, Launceston was named after a town in the United Kingdom, in this case Launceston in Cornwall.

Sights & Attractions

Launceston, with its colourful and interesting history is a great place to visit if you're into different aged styles of architecture. Many cities in Australia are quite modern, where Launceston boasts excellent examples of Victorian, Federation, Edwardian and Art Deco architecture and housing. 'Lonnie' as it's known by the locals is the main commercial hub for the north of the state and is a major tourist centre.

There are a number of places to visit near the city centre, such as Cataract gorge. The gorge is a 10 minute walk from town and is situated in a reserve with tree rhododendrons and peacocks, fern glades and spacious lawns. Apart from the river, there's a swimming pool, picnic grounds, great walking tracks and a quality restaurant. It is also home to the longest single span chairlift in the world. The City Park is also nearby, which boasts an enclosure of Japanese Macaque monkeys, a gift from the sister city of Ikeda in Japan.

The Boag's Centre for Beer Lovers is an aptly named visitor centre at the Boag's brewery, beer of choice for Northern Tasmanians; it's a great place for tastings and a tour of the Brewery.

The Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery has interesting displays on Tasmania's aboriginal heritage, an impressive collection of art, old aeroplanes and various exhibitions on Tasmania's immigration and sporting history.

The Tamar Valley, near Launceston is one of the major wine-producing areas, due to its similar climate to France. This region also boasts some delicious fresh produce to taste and has a 3 day festival to celebrate what's on offer here every summer.

Ben Lomond National Park is 50 kilometres southeast of Launceston. The steep rock buttresses of Ben Lomond, Tasmania's highest mountain look over the rich farmlands of the Fingal Valley. The park is a beautiful place for bushwalking and even a bit of skiing in winter.

Another popular place for those interested in history is the Penny Royal World, a working replica of a 19th century gunpowder mill. Historic windmills, corn mills and gunpowder mills have been moved here from their original location stone by stone. Visitors can travel on barges that go underground to watch the production process. Each mill is linked with museums, restaurants and accommodation via a restored tram.

Climate

Launceston has a mild temperate climate, which due to its relative distance south of the mainland of Australia is quite cool, comparatively. During the winter months of June through August, there is an average of 11°C (Degrees Celsius) in daytime temperatures, while summer is still quite cool, but sunny, with an average of 22°C. Launceston has a yearly average of 7.0 hours of sunshine a day compared with Tasmanian's capital Hobart which has 5.9. Although the mountains around Launceston regularly receive snow during the winter months, the Launceston area rarely receives snow. Along with Hobart, Launceston is one of the driest areas in Tasmania.