

Australia 2009

Tasmania East

Leg details

Date February 13 - February 28, 2009

Leg Hobart - Mt. Wellington - South Bruny Island - Hobart - Copping - Port Arthur - Cape Hauy - Copping - Triabunna - Coles Bay - Campbell Town - Launceston - Mayberry - Marakoopa Caves - King Salomon Cave - Lake Rowallan - Wall of Jerusalem - Devils Gullet - Devonport

PDF



Leg map (click to enlarge in separate window)



On Friday, February 13, we wake up to beautiful sunshine.



Today **Hobart's Mt. Wellington** looks beautiful and the sky is mainly clear. It's either now or never! We quickly pack our gear and drive up to Mt. Wellington. The road is steep at times and we climb a fair bit until we reach the summit at 1'271 m over sea level.



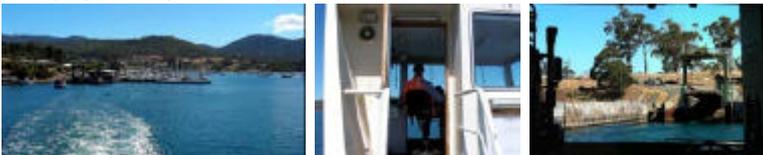
Even though there are still a few bits and pieces of cloud around the views of Hobart and the surrounding areas are stunning. This definitely is one of our Tasi-highlights!



Close by the visitor centre some "organ pipes" have been exposed by wind and weather. After some shopping in **Kingston** we head down to **Kettering** where we catch the ferry to Bruny Island.



The "big" rigs (including the OKA) go below deck, the small ones on top.



The trip does not take long and soon we reach the "ferry terminal" on **Bruny Island**.



As we drive south we pass a very pretty "red" lake.



Then we reach the **Bruny Island Neck Game Reserve** and stop at the Penguin and Mutton Bird rookery. While reading the information signs we learn that during the day the Penguin chicks hide in holes.

[Click here for the information on Penguins.](#)

We decide to come back after dinner to watch the Mutton Birds coming back from their feed at Antarctica and the Penguins come ashore. Should you wonder what Mutton Birds (Short-Tailed Shearwater or Yolla) are then [click here for the detail sheet on the birds.](#)

We pick a camping spot that is only 3 km south of the rookery to stay for the night.

After dinner we head north back to the rookery in Heidi and Peter's car.



Shortly after sunset the Mutton Birds start arriving.

They come in such large numbers that we just stand there in awe.

As we watch we remember details of the ranger talk that we had had at Strahan.

These birds have just come from Antarctica, some 1'500 km south of Tasi, and have flown non-stop for 5 – 7 days to return to their burrow to feed their chicks ... isn't nature great?

It gets crowded and we don't feel comfortable anymore.

Besides that it is by now so dark that the chance of sighting an arriving penguin will be pretty dim until the full moon appears in a few hours.

So we decide to return to the campground and have a look at the penguins further south where there should be less people.

As we head up hill on the board walk a Mutton Bird lands in the middle of a group of people, skids along the planks and falls over the board walk on the other side.

Well, they are known for their limited landing skills

Then we discover the Penguin chicks.



They have left their burrows and are standing besides them, waiting for their parents to arrive with some tucker.

We can hardly get enough watching those cute birds.

They already are fairly large, have real feather and it won't be long before they leave for the ocean.

After this great experience we head back to the camp full of memories.

How lucky have we been in Tasi so far with all these beautiful animal encounters!

On Saturday morning the sun is shining.

It looks like it will be another perfect day.



We head over to **Adventure Bay** and book a boat trip with Bruny Island Eco Tours.

They will sail along the Bruny Island coast down to the Tasman Head and back.

They promise we will see some stunning coast line and quite certain some animals such as birds, penguins and seals.

The boats they are using are commercial copies of army landing boats which are equipped with 3 motors of 275 Hp each and which can cruise at a speed of up to 100 km/h.



Even though the sun is shining and it is warm (... at least for Tasi standards ...) with the speed of the boat the temperature will drop.

So we all are equipped with a large red raincoat with hood.



We head south past the colourful red cliffs.

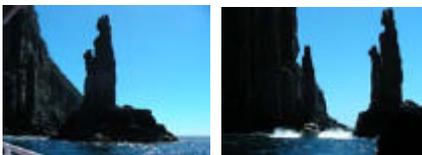
Some outcrops and their names are pointed out to us.

The tour guide is very humorous and we enjoy his jokes.

Even though he must make them every day they feel fresh and generate many laughs amongst the passengers.

We visit the blowhole; it even breathes!

[Click here for a short movie on the blowhole](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 1'029 KB).



We pass **The Monument**, a tall rock pillar.

The boat driver takes us on a thrilling ride in between the pillar and the rock wall.
This is serious fun!

Next we visit some sea caves.

Apparently some dare devils used to swim through these wholes with the waves but only until the day when they saw a large shark swimming through it too



We stop at a rock face where some Great Cormorants and a Black -Faced Cormorant live.

A White -Faced Heron lands gracefully on the rocks nearby.

Also some Seagulls add their "colour" to the scene

No, no, we don't know all those bird-names, it is the tour guide that keeps pointing them out to us.

Mind you, coming here on a daily basis by now he must know which bird is which one and where it lives!



We also learn about Kelp and how it is "glued" to the face of the rock.

Apparently the rock breaks off before the "glue" lets go!

After leaving the Tasman Sea and entering the Southern Ocean at Tasman Head the swell increases a bit.



We continue on to **The Friars** (islands) where we see many male fur seals.

In fact, only male seals have ever been recorded at this site.

The seals do not breed here; the females stay near their breeding colonies on islands in Bass Strait, while the males come south to fish and prepare themselves for the rigorous mating season.

They haul out and growl; the big ones displaying their size and strength.

[Click here for a movie on them](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 5'772 KB).



The young seals live on a separate rock.

They play around in the water and curiously come close to the boat.

[Click here for a movie on the young seals](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 4'646 KB).



A few big seals live with the young ones to teach them all the tricks of the trade.

[Click here for a movie on how some manage — and some don't!](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 3'514 KB).



On the way back we see many Common Dolphins, Albatross and Bottlenose Dolphins.

[Click here for a movie on the dolphins](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 3'232 KB).



The towering crags look very impressive.

The whole experience is exceptional. Not to forget the weather which was absolutely perfect too.

It was an expensive trip but worth every single dollar spent.



We take the 4WD track trough the forest to the western side of the island.

Then we reach a pastoral area and soon after **Cloudy Bay**.



It is a nice beach with an interesting phenomenon: parts of the ocean are red ...
Some clouds start appearing on the sky.
Hmmmmm
Looks like the ladies at the Eco Tours were wrong with their weather forecast



We head over to **Great Taylors Bay** and the **South Bruny National Park** where we stay at the Jetty Beach Camping.
If the weather improves we would like to do the short walk let's see what tomorrow brings.



When strolling through the camping Susi and Heidi find this moth that must just have left its cocoon a short while ago.
It is still expanding its wings ... fascinating!

After dinner Heidi and Peter bring a video of Bruny Island Eco Tours they had bought as souvenir and we revisit this glorious tip in all details including the jokes we heard today.

On Sunday morning the clouds turn into rain.
Hmmm ... no walking today



We head over to the lighthouse but with the rain falling there too is not much to be seen.
Just a lonely black rabbit is having a bit of a feed on the fresh wet grass ... apparently the black rabbits of Tasi are special, same as the white wallabies

Via **Alannah** we head north and visit the **Chocolate Factory**.
Their fudge is just heavenly it just melts on the tongue ... and the flavour!
We cannot resist and buy some.

Next stop further north is the **Cheese Factory**.
They have some interesting cheeses and some bread that was baked in a wood-fired oven.
Well, it is the weather to do some shopping anyway so why not if the produce are so nice.



We continue on and pass the southernmost hotel of Australia.

Next stop is the jetty at **Dennes Point** but with the overcast sky and the rain clouds hanging around the views are not really impressing.
Then we head back along the coast to **Barnes Bay** where we find a camping spot with some nice views onto the bay and some sailing boats.
As it is close to the ferry we decide to set up camp and stay for the night.

On Monday morning the weather has not really improved.
We decide to head back to Hobart and sit out the bad weather at a caravan park.

On the way north we visit **Australia's Antarctic Division in Kingston** which is definitely worth a stop.

On Tuesday the sun is shining which is good as it is washing day.
We also spend some time working on the diaries.

On Wednesday morning ... the sun is shining again ... Peter and Heidi leave towards the Tasmanian Peninsula.
We stay an extra day to do some more work on the web pages.
We finally manage to finish the Savannah Way diary and start work on the Cape York diary

In the evening we receive a mail from Heidi and Pete where they suggest meeting up on Thursday morning at 10 or 11 at the **Tasmanian Devil Park** in **Tarana**.
So we get ready to hit the road again early in the morning.

On Thursday morning, February 19, as we leave Hobart in easterly direction the sun is shining but there are a few clouds around in the east.
After **Sorell** it starts raining we are not impressed by the weather at all!

We had two perfect days while sitting in the caravan park and now, as we start travelling again, the weather deteriorates again!

On the way the OKA every so often makes loud banging noises but Ruedi recons that it is the leave springs.

Susi is not convinced.

It cannot be that leave springs make such a noise!

Ruedi agrees but does not know either what else this loud metallic bang could be.

We also cannot agree on where the noise comes from.

Ruedi recons it has to do with the left wheel and Susi claims that it come from the middle towards the back, behind the compartment where the oils are kept.



We reach the Devil Park shortly before 10 AM and manage to be ready for the first feeding of the devils.
[Click here for a movie on their growling!](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 3'514 KB).



Then the first group gets its food.
They are so funny to watch, how they fight over the meet.
[Click here to watch them fight in a movie](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 3'342 KB).



But the size of their snout is just incredible.
[Click here to see it in a movie](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 1'537 KB).



There are also some more animals in the park that can be visited.
Most of them have had an accident and they cannot be released into the wild anymore.
[Click here for a movie on the small Wallaby](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 2'436 KB).



The Tawny Frogmouth has its name because it opens its mouth like a frog to swallow its food.



The Eastern Quolls or Native Cats (*Dasyurus Viverrinus*) are cute with their spots.
They are closely related to the Tasmanian devil and are quick and efficient killer of small mammals and birds.
The female may bear up to 24 young but only six can survive in the pouch.

Then we continue on to **Fortescue Bay**.

On the dirt track the banging gets more and more frequent.
Then suddenly the OKA jerks.

Hmmmm ... don't we know this feeling?

By now Ruedi is getting really concerned.

The wheels and hubs look normal ...

Susi leans out of the OKA and as we continue on driving she tries to hear where the noise comes from.

We reach the entry of the National Park and stop to pay the camping fees.

Susi claims that the noise comes from underneath the OKA, as if it came from the drive shaft.

Ruedi says that it cannot be as he is driving in 2WD and the drive shaft should not be turning at all!

So Susi gets instructions on what she has to check while Ruedi drives backwards very slowly.

When checking the drive shaft Susi sees that it does not turn in a normal way, it turns a bit irregularly and also moves forwards and backwards.

When she asks Ruedi if that is normal he gets really worried.

The Ranger comes out of the office and has a look too.

He is not impressed ... and offers Ruedi his land line to call Arthur at OKA and also our OKA guru Paul in Melbourne

It very much looks as if the rear differential has collapsed completely.

We decide to set up camp and then have a closer look at the damage.

The Ranger warns us that it is a bit smelly at the camp ground because of a dead seal.

The seal will be picked up by Parks and Wildlife Services later on or tomorrow as they want to conduct an autopsy on the seal to find out if it starved to death or if it has Tuberculosis.

The Ranger tells us that there have been many dead seals this year and also dead penguins.

He picks up about 30 – 40 dead penguins from the beach each week.

So far he has lost but 50% of his penguins this year due to starvation.

The schools of fish have not arrived this year.

Reason could be the missing Krill, climate change or what ever.

But he recons that the whole food chain is affected and is worried about his animals.



Back at the OKA Ruedi tries calling Paul on the Satellite-phone but the reception is very bad at Fortescue Bay.

So Ruedi takes up the Ranger's offer to use the land line and call Paul and also OKA to get some instructions on what to do.

Paul and Arthur agree that it sounds very much like a problem with the rear diff.

Paul recons that if Ruedi removes the rear drive shaft and the damage is not too severe we should be able to drive the OKA to Devonport on front wheel drive only to take the ferry back to Melbourne.

Arthur also wants to know if and what parts Ruedi can find in the diff oil.



So Ruedi goes to work and gets the rear drive shaft down.
 Then he checks the pinion and sees that it has some slack.
 Then he sees a crack in the paint of the diff housing.
 That was not there two days ago when he greased the OKA
 Scratching of the paint does not reveal any crack in the diff housing but a deformation all around the housing is visible.
 Looks like something solid was dragged around inside the housing generating enormous force

Next task is to remove the oil and see what parts will come out of the diff housing.
 The oil is dark and silvery, lots of small parts swim in it.
 Ruedi gets his flexible magnet to remove the broken off parts from the diff housing.
 But some of the parts are too large, he can get hold of them with the magnet but then they cannot be removed through the hole in the housing.
 Ruedi takes some of the parts with him and heads up to the Ranger's office to call OKA again.
 From Linden, the developer of the OKA, Ruedi gets the instructions to swap the front locking hubs with the rear hubs.
 With this set-up when engaging 4WD the OKA will be drivable in front-wheel drive, the back axle will be degraded to a lazy axle and the rear axle shafts will not be turning thus preventing a blockage and possible complete destruction of the axle.
 This should bring us back to Melbourne and we should even be able to finish our trip with the exception of steep gravel roads. No more off-roading.
 In the meantime Paul and OKA will have time to figure out how to solve this problem.

Here some stats:
 Last time we busted the dog clutch in 2006 we had driven some 10'000 km before the diff disintegrated completely just outside of Perth.
 Guess what ...
 We busted the dog clutch at the CREB in September 2008 with 57'020 km on the clock.
 Now we have 66'942 km on the clock
 That makes 9'922 km almost 10 000 km again ...

We wake up to rain on Friday morning.
 It turns into drizzle and by 10:30 the sky looks a bit more promising.



More and more people arrive with their trailers and their fishing boats.
 If they go out into the ocean the weather forecast cannot be that bad and we might as well go hiking!



We decide to tackle the 4 hour walk out to **Cape Hauy** but to take all rain gear with us.



We get some great views of the cliffs.



There are no security chains or anything preventing people getting too close to the steep drops.
 To get pictures Susi and Peter, both not very good with steep drops or heights, crawl to the edge of the rock (no, it was not overhanging!) and then "look down" with the camera ... while Ruedi keeps a watchful eye on them so nothing happens ... he does not like those "escapades" at all ...



Again an Echidna strolls along the track and is not worried about humans at all.
 It is too busy digging around the roots and dirt.
 We can take pictures and movies as close as we want.
 It is amazing!
[Click here for a movie on the Echidna.](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 5'084 KB).



On the way back the weather improves a wee bit and we get some better views of the ocean.
 After returning from the walk Ruedi starts the exchange of the lockers.
 It is a bit more work than he anticipated as a lot of LockTite has been used to secure the screws as the hubs were assembled and this has to be removed before the lockers can

be put back into place.

By dinner time he has only managed to finish one and decides to do the rest tomorrow.

On Saturday morning after a fresh night with only 10°C we tackle the work.



Peter also gets his overall and gives us a hand. Thanks Peter, much appreciated the help.



Susi cleans the screws with the electric drill and a copper brush head.



Shortly after 11 AM we finish, just in time before it starts to drizzle again.

We pack up and return to the main road.

The OKA is going well and it looks like we can continue on travelling.

We head south to **Port Arthur** an old convict station.

But we don't really fancy visiting old buildings so after having a look around at the visitor centre we continue on to the **Remarkable Cave**.



We just have time to visit the caves before the showers set in again

We decide to head over to a camp in the **Tarana Forest** and sit out the rain.

According to the weather forecast the weather should be better tomorrow.

Let's hope for it.

On Sunday, February 22, the sky is overcast but it looks promising.



We continue on towards **Pirate's Bay** and deviate to the **Penzance Lookout** that offers a great view over the whole bay.

The sun is just starting to break through the clouds but a cold wind is blowing.

After the 11°C over night it will take a while to warm up today

Then we head down to **Doo Town**.

People living here like giving their houses names that contain "Doo" like "Dr. Doolittle", "Doo come in", etc.

Close by are some interesting rock formations.



First stop is **The Tasman Arch**, next is **Devil's Kitchen**.



Then we stop at the **Blowhole** that in our view would deserve the name Devil's Kitchen much better.

It is great to see the water coming through the tunnel and then splashing against the rocks.



Then we head over to the **Waterfall Bay**.

The waterfall has no water but the bay is very pretty.



We continue on to the **Tessellated Pavement**.

Imagine how these "pavers" were formed by salt "blasting" the rocks apart as it crystallized and then water and weather finishing the job



Soon we are all busy, some taking pictures some having a closer look at nature ...



In the water-gardens we spot many interesting creatures including a Ghost Crab and some funny looking fishes. [Click here for a movie on the Ghost Crab](#) (file type: .wmv, size: 3'506 KB).

During lunch a young man walks up to Heidi and Peter and asks them if they have recovery gear.



Their friend's truck has "fallen" on its side mirror

The recovery does not take long and luckily there is very little damage done to the vehicle.



We head north via **Copping**, then deviate onto the dirt road towards **Kellevie** and the forests.

The views from **Marion's Beach Lookout** are not bad but there is too much wind up there to stay for the night.

As we climb up to close to 150 m the temperature drops to 14 °C, not really what we like.

We come past **Rhena Beach**.

The temperature down here is back to 18.5°C and the views are very nice so we decide to stay here for the night.



Heidi and Susi head down to the beach to have a closer look at the shells



... and get stuck for then next few hours ...



Susi also finds the waves on the shells to be special.



On Monday, February 23, it is Susi's birthday and we wake up to a stunning sunrise.

We head into **Orford** where after some shopping and internetting we continue on to **Triabunna**.

At the information centre we find out details about the ferry to Maria Island and decide to go there tomorrow.



We visit the small harbour, where large trucks pick up the fresh seafood.

As the weather is deteriorating we decide to head back to **Louisville** and check in at the caravan park.

First we get a bit of a shock when the lady at the counter tells us, that their amenities block only has cold water ... but then the lady says "... but there are public showers at the heated swimming pool and Jacuzzi if you don't mind"

We cannot believe our luck and quickly pay the 20\$.

What a feeling to sit in the Jacuzzi, soak and watch the birds outside having a feed at the many flowers in the blooming shrubs.

In the evening we visit the local restaurant for Susi's birthday dinner.

We can watch the storm clouds rolling in from the north; the ocean already has white caps

During the night a thunderstorm brings the long awaited water for the region.

On Tuesday morning it still rains so we cancel our plans to visit Maria Island but decide to head north to the Freycinet National Park.



At **Mayfield Bay** we visit the **Three Arch Bridge** that was built 1845 by convicts from the nearby Rocky Holls Probation Station. It is a shame that a new bridge was built on top of the old one.



The views of the **Freycinet Peninsula** from the beach are impressive, even with the clouds.



Just south of **Swansea** we stop at the **Spiky Bridge**, a bridge that was also built by convicts. It was built without using mortar.

The ridge looks really funny with its stony spikes.

Spiky Bridge is part of the old convict built coach road which connected Swansea with Little Swanport and the east coast road to Hobart.

After Swansea the road climbs a bit and passes some small mountains.



Shortly after **Cranbrook** we stop at the lookout to have a look at the **Moulting Lagoon**, an important wetland. We leave the Tasman Highway and head south towards Coles Bay.



We deviate to **Friendly Beaches**, an almost endless stretch of white sandy beaches.

But the rain starts coming down and we have to flee into the vehicles.

As the wind is quite strong we decide to continue on and find a better place to sit out the bad weather.

We check out the various camps along the way and head into **Coles Bay**. As it is bucketing down we stay at the tourist information and study the many interesting displays.

We would have liked to camp at Bluestone Bay but the track to reach it is rated medium and we don't dare getting into the sand with the crippled OKA.

So we return to the camping at Moulting Lagoon and set up camp.

Some funny birds can be watched here.

[Click here to listen to their shriek](#) (file type: .wma, size: 81 KB).



The weather stays unstable, rainy and very windy.

On Wednesday morning it does not look any better so we decide to leave Heidi and Peter and to head west.

We have to return to Melbourne one week earlier as planned anyway to get our rear diff fixed.

Heidi and Peter will make their way up further north and join us again in a week's time in Melbourne.

The rain stays with us way past **Campbell Town**.



We head into **Launceston** and visit **Cataract Gorge**. We are so spoiled from all the pretty things we have seen in the last few weeks that Ruedi's comment on the gorge is "... if that is all Launceston has to offer" Soon we are on our way again and head out to **Mole Creek** where we stay at the local Caravan Park for the night. By now the weather has improved a lot; there are still clouds around but the sun is shining most of the time and the temperature has reached beautiful 25.5°C. On Thursday morning we head up to the **Mole Creek Karst National Park** to visit the caves.

The first one we choose is **King Salomon Cave**.



It is a mostly dry cave and has lots of very pretty shawls.



Also some large pillars can be seen.



Some of the needles have changed their direction of growing.



Next we visit the **Marakoopa Cave** to visit the famous glow worms.



This cave also has very pretty formations.



We have chosen the tour which takes us to the subterranean rivers. Even though the temperature is the same as in the Kind Salomon Caves (9°C) it feels much colder in here, probably because of the humidity in the air.

Impressive is the "tuning fork" that has been protected with thick glass so people cannot destroy it.

All at the end of the tour the lights are turned off and we find ourselves underneath the glow worms. They are not that mind-boggling but the details the Ranger gives us on the worms are quite interesting. Fancy coming out of your cocoon without a mouth and having some 5 days to reproduce!

And then giving yourself to your young ones, to become part of the food-chain ... well, that gives me the creeps!

The Ranges later on gives us some details on the walk to the Walls of Jerusalem and recommends that it should only be undertaken if the weather is nice as he has been up there and has walked on snow.



We find ourselves a pretty little spot just beside **Arm River** for the night.

On Thursday, February 28, we wake up to pretty nice weather.

Just a bit of fog and a few clouds are visible so we decide to tackle the **Walls of Jerusalem** walk.

The ascent to **Trappers Hut** is rather steep but we manage the 500 m height-difference in just over 50 minutes. Then we reach the fog and walk through the forest in it.



After the fork that leaves to the **Adelaide Lakes** the fog starts clearing and we can imagine what we missed regarding views



We pass areas of moor-land and pretty little lakes.

We reach the Wild Dog Camp site and have a break on one of the "helicopter-pads" provided to set up tents on them.

Next time we come to Tasi we will take the tents with us and stay up here for a few days.



Then we reach the main valley.

Here again the walkways are all covered with boards to protect nature.

In the small areas where there are no boards the walkway is swampy due to the wet ground.



Almost at the end of the valley Susi's feet just have had it and she decides to take a rest and get fit for the descent while Ruedi continues on for a bit more to see what can be seen from the small pass ahead of us.



Nice views!

Time flies and it is already 1:30 PM and time to return.

Also some new clouds are forming and we want to be down at the car park before it starts raining again.



The views on the way back are great and we really enjoy them.



We also pass a large spider and find the first signs of the coming fall

As we head downhill we cross a lot of people that are heading up with some large back packs.

Looks like a busy weekend up there ...

It takes us some 3 ½ hours to return to the car park and only all at the end a few raindrops fall.

We have been very lucky with the weather.

We stop at the **Lake Rowallan** boat ramp for the night and enjoy a hot shower and a good dinner.

On Saturday morning we get the OKA ready for the ferry, cleaning some critical parts e.g. the shower tray / mud collector at the entry where some seed and similar things could get stuck.

We don't want to bring weeds back to the mainland if possible.



Then we head up to the **Devil's Gullet Lookout**.
There is still a lot of fog and humidity in the air and the views are not as good as it could be.
It must be an absolute stunning view on a clear day ...



Then we continue on via **Paradise** to Sheffield where we shortly visit the lady with the glass marbles studio.
Then we head back Coles Beach in Devonport to have a quiet afternoon before catching the ferry back to the mainland tomorrow.
And this is the end of the Tasmanian journal.
To cut it short: we love Tasi and hope to be back one day!