

PREPARE TO HIKE

Making sure you're fit to walk is a priority. After booking the tour, an email arrives with a gear list, itinerary and details about fitness levels and pre-hike training. Because you carry your own gear for the four days, including clothes, lunch, water, snacks, sleeping linen and rain gear (totalling around 8.5kg to 10kg), the best training is with a pack. Walking on beaches and bush tracks is advised, as well as cross-training to build up stamina and reduce the risk of injury.

Some of Tassie's most spectacular scenery is found in its most remote areas, often accessible only by water, helicopter or on foot. The Bay of Fires, in the north-east of the island, is one such place. Here we joined the Tasmanian Walking Company for a four-day guided walk, to explore the area's amazing coastline.

HIT THE ROAD

Our mini-expedition starts with an early morning pick-up from Launceston CBD, with a pit stop at the Tasmanian Walking Company's base for introductions and a gear check by our guides, Danielle, Ruby and Emma. Backpacks are provided, plus we're kitted out with rain jackets and issued with our lunch, scroggin (hiker's trail mix) and some fruit. A quick cuppa and it's back on to the minibus for the almost-three-hour drive to Mt William National Park, via historic Scottsdale and the tin mining town of Derby.

THE WALK BEGINS

Setting off from Stumpy's Bay in the bright sunshine, we take in the clear views across to the Bass Strait islands before we head south down the spectacular white sand beach. About an hour in, we get to enjoy lunch in a sheltered spot where our lovely guides whip up a brew for us on their little camping stove and a few of the group take a dip in the turquoise waters of the bay. The afternoon's hike is only four hours, but hard work at times – clambering over boulders and walking on the soft sand calls for a bit of extra leg power. So we're over the moon to reach our accommodation for the night at Forester Beach camp among the protective sand dunes and within earshot of the ocean. Here, our amazing guides whip up a restaurant-worthy dinner of salmon and Asian noodle salad, followed by chocolate mousse, while the group relaxes over a glass of wine.

BAREFOOT IN PARADISE

Our second day of walking begins in a relaxed fashion. After wallaby-spotting on the marsupial lawns, we continue



The trail hugs the stunning coastline, affording spectacular views.



ENJOY SOME PAMPERING AFTER A DAY ON THE TRAIL

WALK ON FIRE

SUE RAMSEY TAKES A HIKE THROUGH ONE OF TASMANIA'S MOST SCENIC BEACH LANDSCAPES

NEW TRAVEL

down the coast along ridge lines of sand dunes, stopping for lunch near Eddystone Point Lighthouse. Getting our boots off and walking barefoot along the beach is a high point of the afternoon before our last short ascent to the Bay of Fires Lodge, our luxurious accommodation for the next two nights. Foot baths await, with chilled wine and beer to enhance the experience. Heaven!

TIME TO CHILL

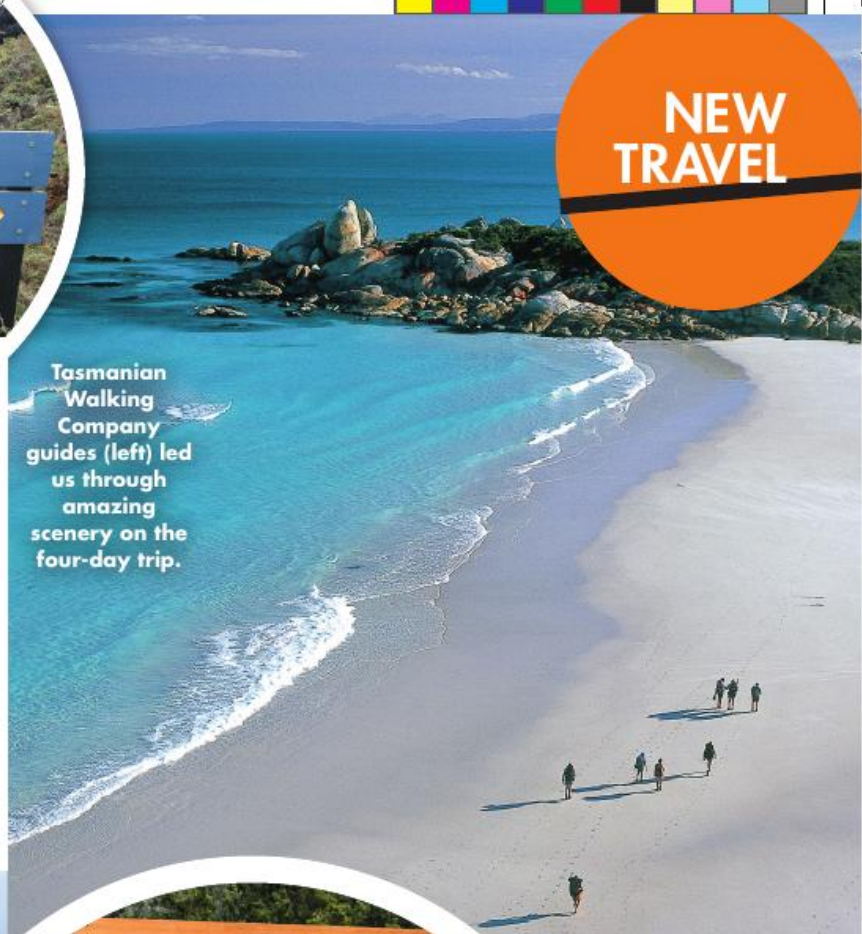
Options for the third day include kayaking on the Ansons River and some of our group do this while we decide to relax at the lodge. Massages are enjoyed in the glorious eco spa, and the library proves a relaxing chill-out zone, with a bonus visit from some wallabies just outside the window. The kayakers are welcomed back from their energetic day with afternoon tea, including cake still warm from the oven. Somehow we manage to find room for another delicious evening meal, perfectly accompanied by Tasmanian wine and beer.

After the usual hearty breakfast, and suitably refreshed,

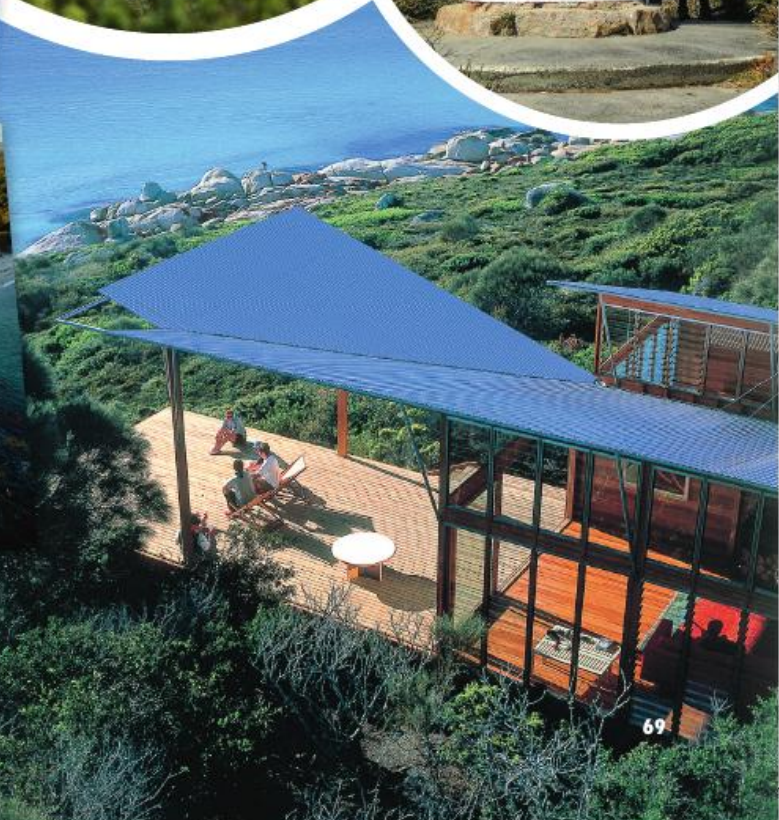
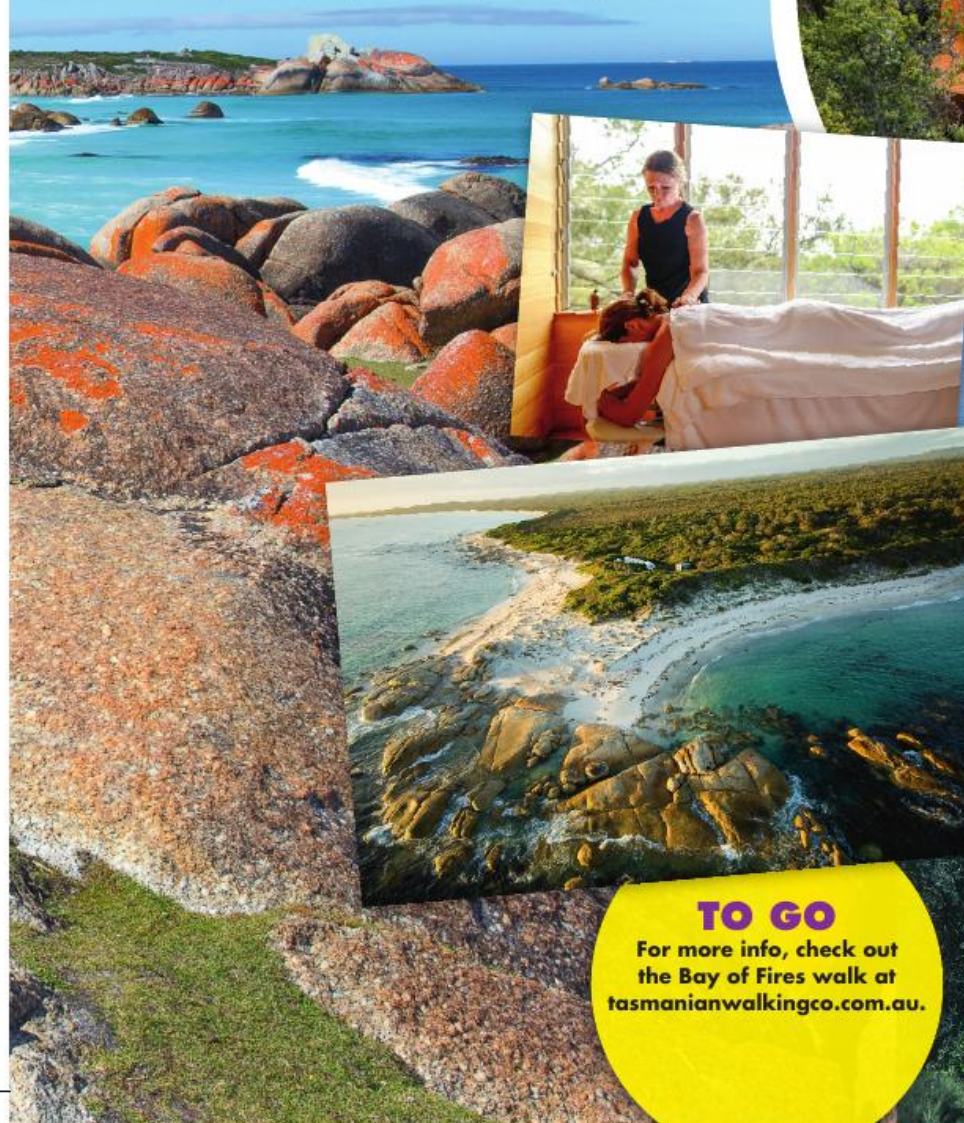
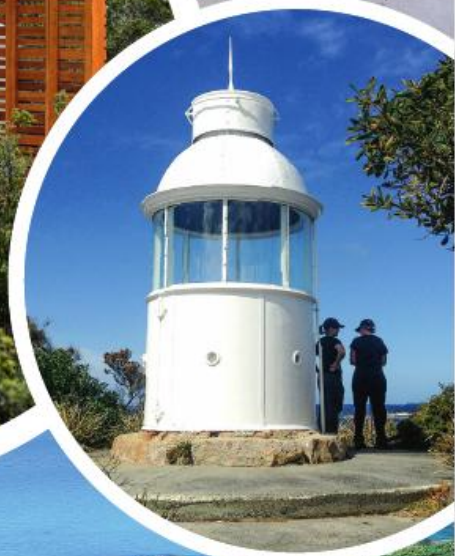
we hoick on our backpacks, lace up our boots and embark on the final one-hour hike through eucalypt forests. At our guide's suggestion, we each walk the final leg alone and in silence so we can fully appreciate our surroundings – a fitting end to an amazing hike!



Tasmanian Walking Company guides (left) led us through amazing scenery on the four-day trip.



The lodge's accommodation is luxurious but blends into the natural surrounds. Right: Eddystone Point Lighthouse is a highlight.



TO GO
For more info, check out the Bay of Fires walk at tasmanianwalkingco.com.au.

Text: Sue Ramsey. Photos: Tasmanian Walking Company, Sue Ramsey.