

Totally nuts about the North-West

The historic village of Stanley where fertile farmlands tumble into the wild waters of Bass Strait is a fantastic place to base yourself to discover the delights of Tassie's Circular Head region. From the amazing food and fascinating history to the spectacular natural wonders of the Tarkine and beyond - there's no better spot for a unique holiday at home, writes **Stephanie Dalton**

Slap bang in the eye of the Roaring Forties, nestled on Tasmania's rugged North-West Coast, you'll find the historic town of Stanley, where fertile farmlands tumble into the wild waters of Bass Strait.

To describe Stanley as picturesque is to undersell it.

As you approach the beautifully preserved town the first thing you see is The Nut, a volcanic plug that rises 152m from the sea like a strange box above the bay.

The first European to see 'The Nut' was Matthew Flinders, who in 1798 recorded that he had seen a "cliffy round lump resembling a Christmas cake".

While Christmas cake isn't the first thing that springs to my mind, there is no denying the beauty of the conspicuous landmark.

If you want to get your blood pumping, pack your walking shoes and take the one-hour, 4.6km circuit to the summit of The

Nut. From the top there are wonderfully varied views along the coast and back to the rich farmland and forests of the North-West.

Then, explore the expansive plateau with its open heath, patches of woodland, filled with friendly pademelons.

If you are more of an indoor cat, Stanley has plenty of options.

Trawl the quaint art galleries and artisan and antique stores, explore the town's heritage sites or cosy up in a cafe or delightfully moody speak-easy.

I suggest the Stanley Wine Bar, a small, eclectic wine bar located in the centre of town in a renovated Victorian cottage.

After years of restoring and upcycling, owners Michael Pine and Shelley Jackson opened the bar in December 2018, and it's been a favourite haunt for Stanley locals and holiday visitors ever since.

There is a wine list if you'd like to look at one, but really the best way to order is to describe what you like to drink to



Michael and then you can just let him do the rest.

If you need something to line your belly after a visit to the wine bar, check out Hursey Seafoods.

A three-generation fishing institution, Hursey's is a popular seafood restaurant, takeaway, and fresh fish sales venue.

With its iconic big orange southern rock lobster, locally known as crayfish or

'cray', perched atop the white two-level restaurant, you can't miss it. Naturally, the award-winning restaurant specialises in freshly cooked crayfish, but there is also an abundance of fresh Tasmanian seafood available, including scallops split on site, wild-caught striped trumpeter and trevally, and much-loved favourites like gummy shark and blue-eye.

STANLEY, THE BASE FOR TARKINE EXPLORATION

Just a stone's throw from the second-largest expanse of cool temperate rainforest in the world, Stanley is the perfect base for exploring the Tarkine.

A conservation movement coined the name Tarkine to pay homage to the Tarkiner, the anglicised pronunciation of one of the Aboriginal tribes that inhabited the western Tasmanian coastline from the Arthur to the Pieman rivers.

In addition to an expanse of uninterrupted 477,000ha of untouched



MAKE A NOTE

The Stanley Hotel and Apartments offer a range of accommodation options all located in the centre of Stanley including Abbey's Spa Cottage. The beautiful heritage cottage is located at 46 Alexander Tce, Stanley and is a 90-minute drive from Devonport. Rates start from \$330 a night, with off-street parking at the rear of the property. For more information visit www.stanleytasmania.com.au/abbeyspacottage

Hursey Seafoods is located at 2 Alexander Tce, Stanley and is open seven days a week from 12-2.30pm for lunch and 5.30-8pm for dinner. Visit www.hurseyseafoods.com.au/ or contact (03) 6458 1103 to book.

Stanley Wine Bar is located at 2 Church St, Stanley and is open from 5-9pm Thursday to Saturday, and 2-6pm Sunday.

Highfield Historic Site is located at 143 Green Hills Rd, Stanley. The house is open 7 Days a Week from 9:30 am to 4.30pm closed Christmas Day. Day tours are self-guided with a \$15 entry fee for adults, \$12 for concession, and \$5 for children 5-17.

Tall Timbers 4WD Tours depart from 5/13 Scotchtown Rd, Smithton at 9am and return at 5pm. The Tarkine Coast Aboriginal Heritage Tour includes a full day 4WD tour with an experienced guide, morning tea, and gourmet lunch including fresh Tasmanian produce and beverages. Prices start from \$270. A minimum of two adult passengers is required to operate the tour. Child rates apply for ages 6 to 14 (not suitable for children younger than 6 years).

wilderness, alive with unique creatures and habitats not found anywhere else, the Tarkine has one of the highest concentrations of Aboriginal sites in the southern hemisphere and is of ongoing cultural significance.

Tall Timbers at Smithton offer full-day 4WD adventure tours that explore the remoteness of the Tarkine, delivering an unbiased insight into the history that provides significance to the people of the area.

A DARK PAST

Look a little beyond the region's spectacular scenery, ancient rainforests, and rugged coastline, and you can find the crumbling and darker ruins of the North-West's past.

Stanley is a town whose seductive charms soften the melancholy notes of its colonial history of the Van Diemen's Land Company.

Formed in England in 1825, the VDL

Company was granted the rights by Royal Charter to what was a huge tract of unsettled land to raise fine wool sheep on a large scale, with Stanley chosen as the centre of operations.

Despite directions to the contrary, the Tasmanian Aboriginal occupants of the area were severely mistreated by the VDL Co.'s agents, resulting in mass killings and the near-destruction of the Indigenous Circular Head people.

This period of violent conflict between British colonists and Tasmanian Aboriginals, known as the Black War, has sparked debate among historians over whether it should be defined as an act of genocide by the British colonists.

A visit to the Highfield Historic Site, often regarded as the 'birthplace' of European settlement in Tasmania's North-West, will help provide some insight as to why many believe acts like the Cape Grim massacre should be considered as such.

Exhibits at this Georgian jewel, which is open to the public, tell how VDL Company manager Edward Curr quickly developed a reputation as a cruel despot for his brutal treatment of the local Aboriginal population.

While ultimately the company's sheep succumbed to the extreme cold and rain and the wool enterprise failed, the VDL Company explored, surveyed, and developed the North-West from Highfield, helping lay the foundations of centres such as Burnie and beyond.

It seems fitting that on the far fringe of Tasmania, you'll find an eclectic wine bar in a lovingly restored Victorian cottage.

The past in Tasmanian towns like Stanley is never really past.

But it has nothing on the enchantments of the present.

The author was a guest of the Circular Head Tourism Association and Tourism Tasmania