



CLOCKWISE FROM LEFT: *Godfrey's Beach sits below The Nut/Munatruk; The chairlift is a great yet weather-dependent option; Stanley's streets are backdropped by the rocky bluff; Spot adorable red-bellied pademelons; The sleepy town sits on a small peninsula in Bass Strait.*



A Tassie treasure

The Nut/Munatruk in Stanley has become a LANDMARK destination on Tasmania/Lutruwita's *RUGGED* north-west coast. Taylah Darnell makes the CLIMB to find out why.



IT'S A CRISP TASMANIAN morning. The sun is shining bright, completely unobstructed in a cloudless cerulean sky. Yet there's an unrelenting wind that has already managed to crawl under every layer I packed on before leaving The Ark, my cosy bed and breakfast stay in town.

I'm standing in the shadow of The Nut/Munatruk, thought to be an ancient volcanic plug that holds cultural significance among local Palawa. The colossal rocky bluff is now classified as a State Geological Monument by the Geological Society of Australia, looming over the sleepy seaside village of Stanley near the Takayna/Tarkine region of north-west Tasmania/Lutruwita on a poky peninsula in Bass Strait. Home to its own microcosm of flora and fauna that has adapted to survive its unique climate, The Nut is a postcard of Tasmania's natural beauty and rich First Nations heritage.

Passing by the gift shop on my way to the track, I find myself eyeing the chairlift, which hugs the side of the monolith up a very steep 95 metres. But it's out of action thanks to the blustering winds today, a weather-dependent occurrence that's common at this time of year. That leaves the 4.6-kilometre

walking circuit, a breathtaking loop of the plateau preceded by a gruelling 140-metre incline that has my knees knocking just looking at it.

By the halfway point, my heart is pumping and I've certainly worked up a good sweat. But any pain has been overshadowed by an exhilarating lightness; a second gear my body has subconsciously kicked into that gets me through the second half of the climb. My leg muscles are screaming, my chest is tight, and I may have become a little over-reliant on the handrail, but the rush of endorphins induced by this near-vertical ascent is intoxicating.

Up top, the walking track is less strenuous. I spot red-bellied pademelons snacking under coastal white gums, the only subgroup of the species found in Tasmania, and the abandoned burrows of migratory muttonbirds. The Nut was a common site for moonbird (muttonbird) hunting before it became a protected area from harvesting. However, muttonbirding remains an important cultural practice for Palawa today, alongside Kanalaritja (shell stringing) and kelp-basket making. The Nut itself also holds deep cultural significance and is home to an array of middens, quarries and artefact scatters that date back thousands of years.

The descent is easier on my knees, but its physical demand is outweighed by a deep rumination. In fact, it seems near impossible to complete the hike and not feel a palpable sense of place and identity – from the native wildlife and 360-degree views to Munatruk's continued significance as a cultural landmark. It's a snapshot of Tassie life I carry with me to this day, alongside the kitsch keychain I rewarded myself with at the gift shop. **AT**

