

Post



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Seals stink. OMG! - April 11, 2025

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SUMMARY

Well organized tour to North and South Bruny islands. Bus to ferry to North Bruny Island. Stop at Truganini Lookout and Rookery on the neck between North and South Bruny. 235 steps to top for views or boardwalk to beach. Drive to Adventure Bay on South Island and arrive at Pennucott Wilderness Journeys facility. We are treated to "elevenses", tea or coffee and a blueberry muffin. Outfitted with long waterproof cover ups and piled into open boats ("fully air conditioned") for a 3-hour cruise down to where the Tasman Sea meets the Great Southern Ocean. AWESOME, beautiful views with hilarious captain. - Karen

DETAIL

What do we know about today? We're going to see an Island named Bruny and we're going by bus, ferry and boat. 7:45 is our departure time so we're heading out the door at 7:30 am, flat white in hand.

As I wait in the lobby I see three people behind the desk and assume they are from overseas. I inquire and sure enough Canada (BC), India, and Nepal. It works out well for Australia. What was their old credo? Grow or die. They grew.

There's a ton of people waiting at the tour office for a bus. Thankfully there are two buses, we're being split in two. We get sassy Nat who has a great sense of humor. She's from Bruny Island. On our drive there, to the ferry, we stop, as they do every day, to pick up supplies. There are two buses and they split the responsibilities. Someone's already picked up the bread and rolls. The fish and meat are already in the hold under where we're sitting. The other bus will be picking up the cheese and milk, and we'll be making a stop for produce. We see the boxes of lettuce and vegetables being loaded onto the bus and they look very fresh. Yum. We'll be boating and then eating.

We again hear the story of the icebreaker the school and government spec'ed and ordered. It's actually not too tall to fit under the bridge (to go get fuel) but it's not very good at steering. Breaking ice? Yes. Precise steering (like the kind you'd want under an expensive and critical bridge? Not so much. So every time it needs to refuel it's a six day round trip. Whoops!

Driving along we see sheep and some alpaca. I see what I think is a wild kangaroo. We're told they're fairly rare, but they exist in these parts. We pass through the town of Snug. Apparently when Captain Cook was here and his boat needed refuge from a storm they stopped there. In the journal they said the inlet was "Snug" and the name stuck.

We pass through an area that was totally burned to the ground, in a brush fire, back in the late 1970s. It's had a while to grow back, but you can still see lots of tall, bare, eucalyptus standing dead and tall. Why are they still up? No termites here. The part that's grown back, in the intervening 50+ years, looks good. On one side of the road it's just Eucalyptus (they don't sprout new trees unless there's a fire). On the other side of the road they also hand planted a bunch of trees for variety.

We pass a few harbors. In the greater Hobart area there are 600,000 people and 60,000 of them own boats. The transition from the 'mainland' (of the island of Tasmania) to the island of Bruny is easy. We're on a bus and the bus rolls onto the ferry. Easy-peasy. We pass signs that say "Help us keep feral cats off Bruny island". It's great fun for the feral cats to breed and kill all the native wildlife, but it's hell on the wildlife, especially the Little Penguins. It's sad but people are vigilant about keeping the kitties on the 'mainland'.

Off at the other end of the ferry ride we continue on. There's one road on Bruny, from the top all the way down the 74 kilometers from the top of the north island to the bottom of the South Island. We'll see the whole thing (partly by boat).

We stop at a rookery where we're promised we'll see no nesting birds, and they're right, we don't. It's a fun walk up all the stairs and a nice view, but just a seagull or two.

At the launching spot for our boats we start with a hot beverage and blueberry cupcake to tide us over. Our funny boat guide takes us through the important notes for our ride. We'll all be wearing heavy rain outfits to keep us warm and dry. She informs us that they're "One-size-fits-none".

On the boat we wriggle into our outfits. They're all red with caps and go down well below our knees. We all look identically silly. Our captain, Rick, is very funny. He explains that they're required by law to have a life vest, so they bought one. That one is his (he shows it to us). Later on he says "There's a whale out there". We all look. He goes on, "somewhere". Someone asks how deep the water is and Rick tells him. He says there are many submerged rocks and they know where they are... most of them... finding new ones daily. Funny guy.

We're out here to see the ocean, the shoreline (tall rock cliffs) and hopefully to see animals. We motor along and later zoom along, slamming down on the water every second or so. It's exhilarating and jarring. We zoom between two rock with barely enough room for us. We stop on the other side to catch our breath and settle our stomachs. Captain Rick points to some rock and says "You see those rocks over there, those are The Rolling Stones, that one on the right is Mic Jagged." We all laugh. He says "Do you want do that again??" and we all yell "YES!!" to which he says "You see those rocks over there, those are The Rolling Stones, that one on the right is..." we laugh again. He's funny. But then he really does zoom us back through the narrow alley between the two spires, the opposite way this time.

Further along the seas get really rough. We were given two ginger pills each, to ward off motion sickness and we all partook. We now see why. We're where the Tasman Sea meets the Great Southern Ocean. Our funny captain has told us the air is different out here, the purest air in the world. He wants us to smell it. We do. It is one of the most foul smells you'll ever smell. It's the seals. There are scores of them, lying, and presumably pooping and peeing, on the rocks. As we motor by they raise their heads, curious. These are all males, some smaller and younger, some old and massive. We see some slip gracefully into the water and try to catch a picture with the pitching boat.

Across the way is the nursery with mom, dad and the small offspring. They're a bit more skittish. Eventually we head back, now heading further off shore. There are flocks of seagulls and that may mean feeding sea life, though not in this case. There are graceful albatross with a wingspan of up to 11 feet, though these aren't that long. We're told the bird can circle the globe in 46 days if they wanted to and travel 10,000 miles in a single trip.

Back at the dock we agree it was a good outing but we're ready for it to be over and to have lunch. The food is really good and we spring for a couple of local beers to wash it down. Choosing, and keeping straight, who's getting what is apparently the hardest part of this daily tour. The forty-some odd of us in the two big buses each got shown a menu, chose between the fish and chips or pumpkin soup with sandwich and salad. Then we got a little credit card sized laminated card to hang onto with that printed on it in big letter. No crises here and did I say the food was excellent?

Back on the bus we relax as we head back northward. There are too many vehicles at the ferry so we wait twenty minutes for the next one. By the time we're heading out to dinner it's dark (7 pm) and a delightfully bracing 57°

We arrive at our chosen mid-scale fancy seafood place for dinner as a single gentleman in front of us is requesting a table for one. They break down their only table for four so he could have a table for one. He overhears us ask for a table for four and insists they put the tables back together. He'll just have dinner at the counter. The locals here are so friendly. We buy him a drink.

Our 30 year-old waitress doesn't have an Aussie accent, so we inquire as to where she's from. "Guess!" she demands. We start with places in Europe. "Southern hemisphere." We move over to South America and she confesses she's from South Africa. We're all headed there next!

No one working here is from Australia and their system seems to work well. As we sip our waitress agrees that Australia does have wine, but it does not compare to the more delicious wines of South African. We'll see, we say, as we order four more glasses of the local stuff.

Photos



For today's island tour, we will be going by bus first. Lots of people so two buses. Our guide, Nat, explains how things will work. She's funny.



At our first stop, Nat buys produce and stows it below deck on the bus. Not a lot of stuff on Bruny Island is grown or made on Bruny Island.



The bus isn't totally full so we can sit where we want. Most of us elect to sit by a window.



Waiting for the ferry, the view of the boats in the harbor entertains. We are loving this blue sky.



Funny Nat points out where we're headed and explains the geography of Bruny island.



At a rookery, we stop and hike up the many stairs for the beautiful view. Feral cats have ensured that we see no nesting penguins or other birds, sadly.



The view is great however, the island is really two islands connected by along narrow thread of land. Not a lot of tourists on the beach at this time of year.



Nat explains about Covid and how \$40,000 houses quickly became million dollar houses. They don't look very impressive to us.



Before our boat ride, we are fortified with coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and a muffin.



Time for the boat ride. It's inflatable and holds a lot of people. Thankfully there are two of them.



Captain Rick is a salty old cur. He's very funny. Enjoys his job apparently.



Tricia flashes the V for victory sign, indicating that they successful got into their fashionable red rain slickers.



First animals? Cormorants.



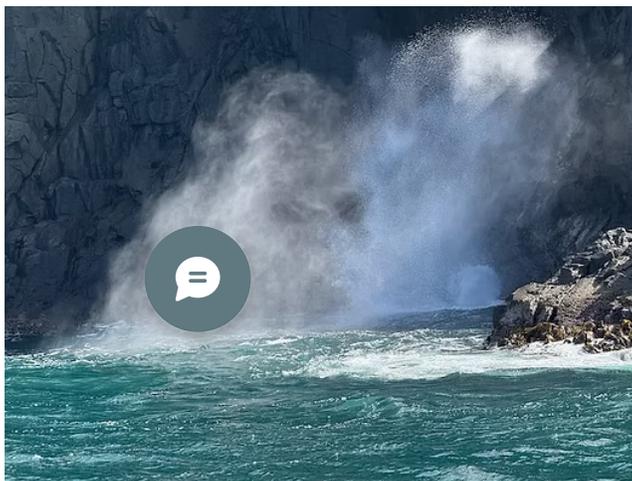
The narrow channel we zoomed through. The spire on the left is supposed to be the Virgin Mary praying. The spire on the right is supposed to be a king on his horse. We can see that.



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The other boat emerging from a bird
poop covered rock.



One of the little caves was so close to the water that it would empty, and when it filled back up (with the next big swell) it would woosh out a huge billow of white sea mist



Majestic looking but foul smelling male seals baskets in the sun, digesting their marine diet.



Young seals being herded upward to safety by their parents.



On the ferry back. A full and fun day!

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