

Strahan

Living with wilderness



Parks and Wildlife Service Tasmania

DEPARTMENT of TOURISM, PARKS
HERITAGE and the ARTS

No township reflects Tasmania's past, or its natural beauty, better than Strahan. Set against the dark waters of Macquarie Harbour, Strahan's history speaks of explorers, convicts, Huon piners, track cutters — and more recently of pro-dam lobby groups and the blockaders from the Franklin Dam protests.

The Gordon River links Strahan to even older events. For over 35,000 years Tasmanian Aborigines have been part of the land here, nurturing a culture that has survived both an Ice Age and persecution by Tasmania's colonists. Even the trees that fringe the Gordon tell of more ancient times when Tasmania was part of the supercontinent Gondwana — then inhabited by dinosaurs and small primitive mammals. Today the resemblance of these relicts to plant life from other continents reminds us of the other pieces to the 'jigsaw continent' of Gondwana: South America, New Zealand, Africa, India and Antarctica.

To the west, the ocean extends for 20,000 kilometres before it reaches land — allowing the 'roaring forties' to whip up the huge waves that have made Hells Gates at the mouth of the harbour scene of many shipwrecks and drownings. Tragedies of another kind — mass whale strandings — have also occurred along Ocean Beach to the north.

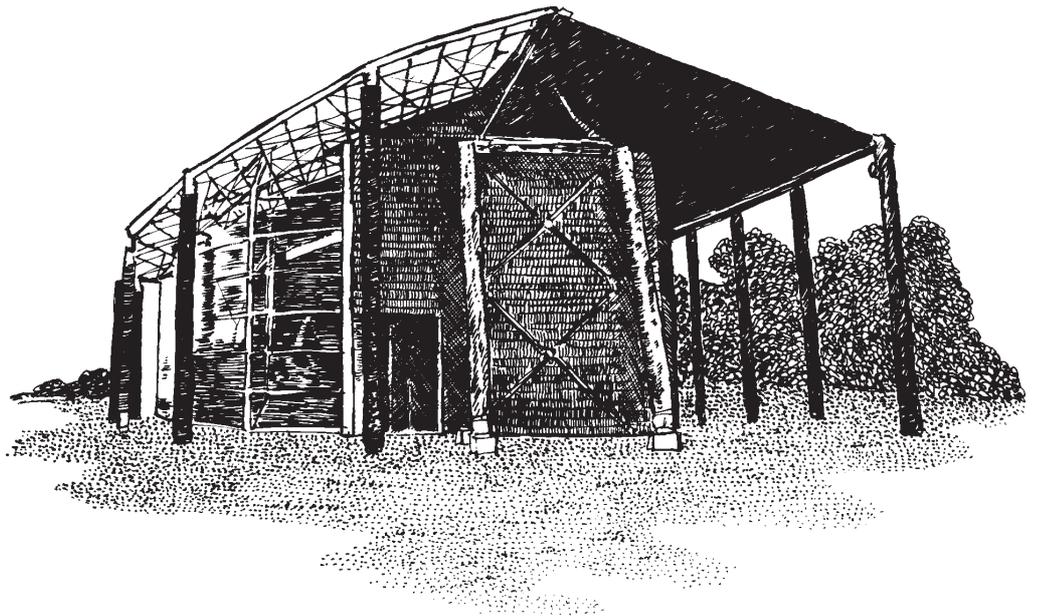
Today, Strahan is best known as the western gateway to the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area; acting as an access point for visitors who wish to see the Gordon River and the ancient rainforests that line its banks.

Strahan offers the visitor a range of places to see and interesting things to do, all within short distances of the township. This notesheet introduces many of these features and will help you to enjoy your stay in the area.

Points of interest around Strahan

Strahan Wharf Centre

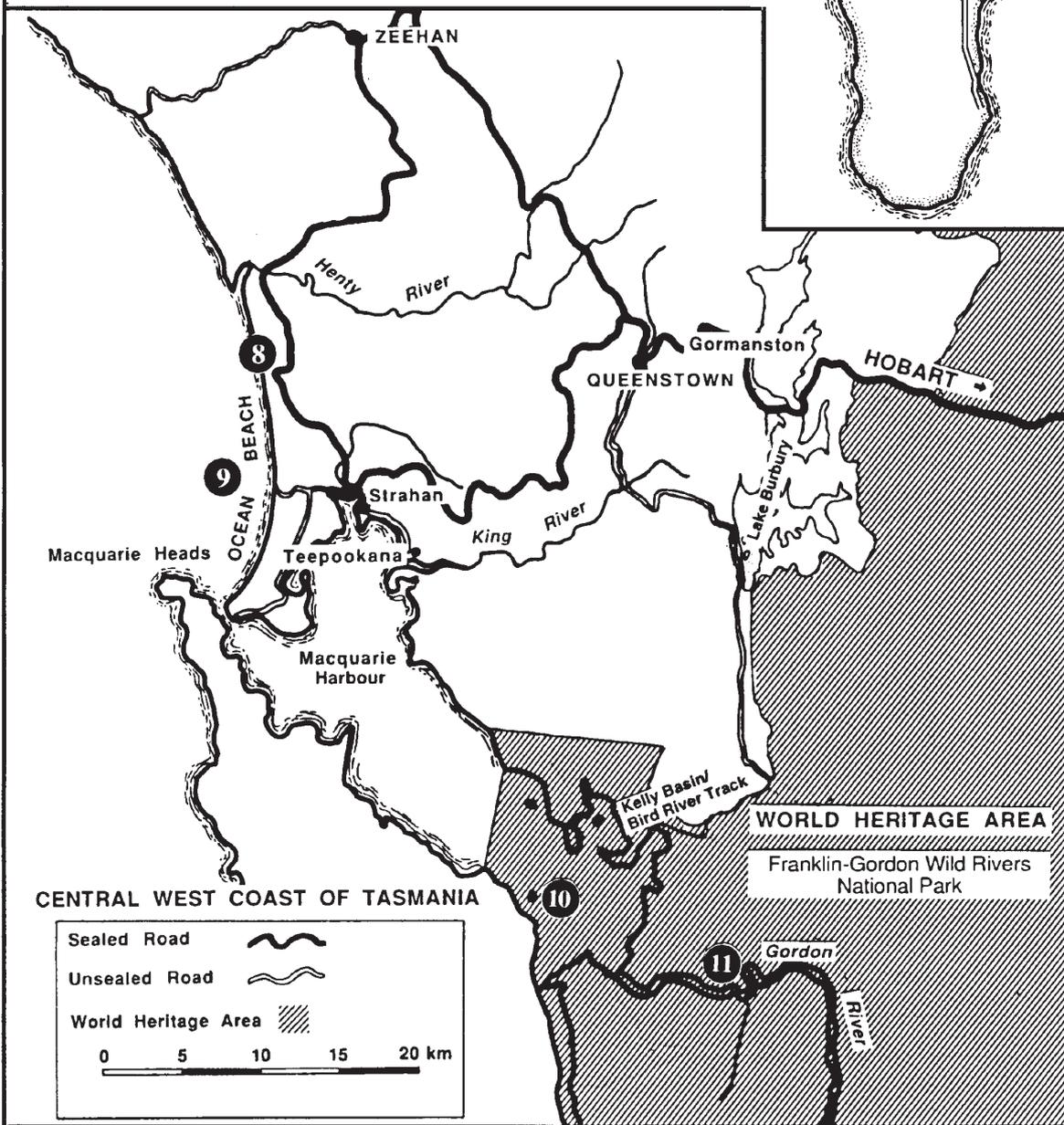
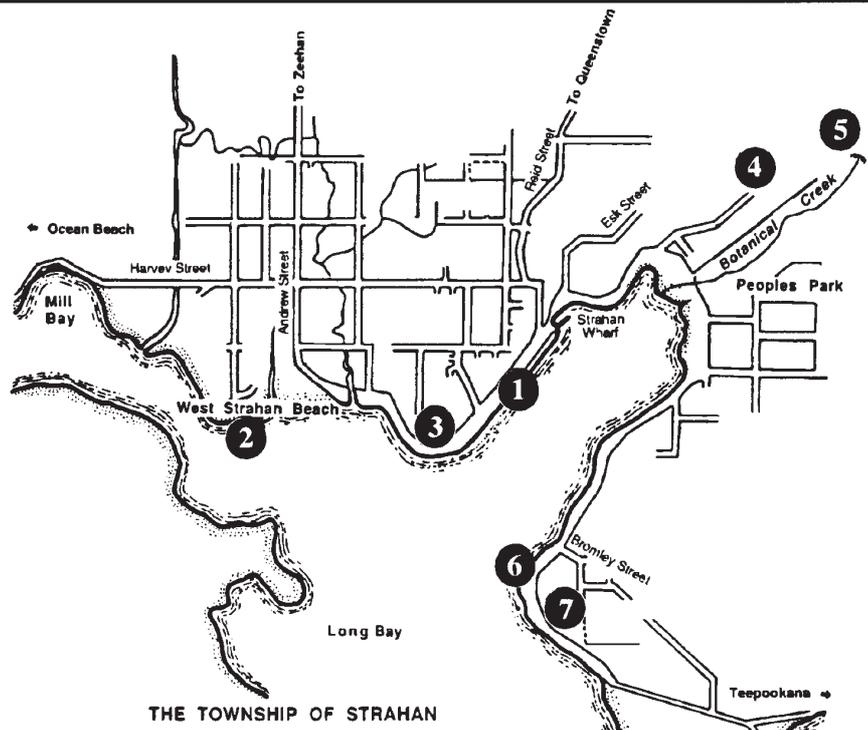
Since the time that Aborigines first settled here, the lives of the people who have lived along the shores of Macquarie Harbour have been intimately linked to the ocean, the rivers and the surrounding forests. The Aborigines' close connection with the land meant that they acted as stewards for future generations and the land became the basis for both their culture and religion. With the arrival of Europeans came new attitudes and demands, causing friction and conflict. In time, the environment was seen by some of the community as not just a resource, but something to be valued in its own right. The result was more conflict — and today our attitudes to the land still evolve.



The story of land-use conflict and its impact on the lives of people is a complex and ongoing one. Here at the Wharf Centre, this story is told in a series of walk-through displays that combine fact and design in a way that is both thought-provoking and artistic. The experience is well worth the small entrance fee and you may find that it helps you to shape your own attitudes towards our natural and cultural heritage.

Your visit to the centre will help you to see how the different facets of Strahan fit together to create the personality of a unique township. The friendly locals at the reception desk will also help you to get the most out of your visit to Strahan.

- ① Strahan Wharf Centre
- ② Foreshore Walk
- ③ Customs House (Post Office)
- ④ Water Tower Hill
- ⑤ Hogarth Falls
- ⑥ Regatta Point Railway Station
- ⑦ Strahan Cemetery
- ⑧ Henty Dunes
- ⑨ Ocean Beach
- ⑩ Sarah Island
- ⑪ Heritage Landing



Customs House

Opened in 1900, this building was used by the various government authorities in Strahan's heyday as the major shipping port for the west coast. Since then, the building has been used as a Court, Customs Office, Marine Board, Telegraph and Post Office, Strahan Town Board and Public Works Department.

The building boasts the grand architectural style of the early 1900s, retaining much of its original native timber fittings. Today the building houses the Parks and Wildlife Service office, the Post Office and the Country Womens Association. The ground floor features a World Heritage Area display with literature and additional information on the national parks and reserves in the area and around the state. National park passes are available at the Wharf Centre and the Parks and Wildlife Service office.

Foreshore walk

This hour-long walk begins at the West Strahan picnic area and continues through Strahan to the Regatta Point Railway Station. The walk passes many points of interest, including Ormiston House, the Huon pine sawmill, Franklin Manor and Strahan Wharf Centre.

Water Tower Hill

The Water Tower Hill lookout is at the top of Esk Road (behind the Harbour Cafe). On a clear day you can look over Macquarie Harbour, Ocean Beach and the mountains near Zeehan.

Hogarth Falls

Only a short drive from the town's centre, the Hogarth Falls lets Strahan show off some of its natural beauty. An easy 40 minute (return) walk takes you through rainforest with remnant swamp gums towering overhead. The walk follows Botanical Creek — home to a variety of native fish and the shy platypus. Dusk is the best time to see platypus feeding in the creek, but you will have to be quiet. After dark, wallabies, possums and quolls become active.

During the day, the forest is rich in wildlife. The homes of one of Tasmania's yabbies border the track in wetter areas. These water-filled miniature mud chimneys form stable environments in which the yabbies live. These muddy areas are also good places to see the tracks left by last night's wildlife. It can be fun to work out who made them.

The falls are a pleasant ending to the track, even during the drier times of the year. The bands of rock at the base of the falls hint at the changes that have taken place within the landscape. Exposed by millions of years of erosion, these outcrops of rock were once deep beneath the surface in horizontal layers, but have been folded by pressures within the earth's crust until

they were left as vertical bands. Folding like this has occurred over much of southwestern Tasmania, shaping the landscape and influencing the drainage patterns of many of the rivers in the area including the Franklin and Gordon.

Access: Turn into Peoples Park and follow the dirt road for 200 m to the track entrance. Your dog can enjoy this walk too if it is on a leash.

Regatta Point Railway Station

Even though the hustle and bustle of shunting steam trains is a thing of the past, Regatta Point Railway Station still retains much of its historic charm. Located directly across the small bay from the Customs House, it can be reached by following the main road through Strahan to the east for 2 km.

The railway station was built in 1899 and was the terminus for the railway lines from the mines at Zeehan and Queenstown. The line from Queenstown was known as the ABT railway, named after the German designer of this rack-rail system which allowed trains to pull heavy loads of ore over the steep slopes to Strahan. The scenic drive along the railway to Teepookana is covered in a separate brochure.

Strahan Cemetery

The graves of Strahan Cemetery tell many stories of the hardships that early inhabitants faced. Elaborate Huon pine grave markers are both memorials to some of Strahan's early pioneering families and the amazing durability of the timber itself.

Among the graves are those of a number of people who played an important role in the development of the southwest. These include the graves of Frederick Henry who founded the township of Strahan (then known as Long Bay) in 1883, and Thomas Bather Moore, the well-known surveyor and track cutter who explored much of this area. Rupert Cecil Alabaster, the manager of the Oonah mine and smelter at Zeehan, became severely depressed over the closure of the mine in 1911. He committed suicide in the Customs House and is buried in the Strahan Cemetery.

Access: The cemetery is in the street behind the Regatta Point Railway Station.

Gordon River and Macquarie Harbour

Strahan is the starting point for cruise boat trips to the Gordon River. Commercial tour boats leave from the Strahan wharf for half-day and full-day cruises. Scenic flights, 4WD tours and charter yachts are also available. Depending on the cruise, visitors have the opportunity to explore the convict settlement ruins at Sarah Island, walk amongst the ancient rainforest trees at Heritage Landing or even experience travelling through Hells Gates at the mouth of Macquarie Harbour..

Remember that these trips are very popular in the summer, and it is best to book in advance.

Sarah Island

From 1822 to 1833, Sarah Island was the site of the penal colony dreaded by Tasmania's convicts.

The convicts sent here suffered severe

hardship and punishment. To

ruins of the original buildings

they still provide a haunting

what it was like during this

period of Tasmania's

history. A self-guided

walk with informative

signs will help visitors

to learn more about

the island and its

penal settlement. Access is by commercial tour boat

or private boat. Full day cruises to the Gordon River

include a visit to Sarah Island.

Heritage Landing

On the cruise up the Gordon River the boat stops at Heritage Landing allowing visitors to walk through the

rainforest that fringes its banks. A signed boardwalk

passing through ancient forests introduces you to

some of the plants and animals found there. The

highlight of the walk is a gigantic 2,000 year old Huon

pine which survived the era of the piners and is now

protected in this World Heritage Area.

You may see Tasmanian pademelons around the

boardwalk. Help keep our wildlife wild by **not**

feeding these animals. Processed food causes disease

and may make them suffer a slow and painful death.

Please **do not touch** any of the trees along the walk.

Touching them will quickly remove their protective

bark and moss and will kill these very old trees.

Henty Dunes

The Henty Dunes are a series of giant, 30 m high dunes about 14 km from Strahan Post Office on the

Zeehan Road. You will reach a point where pine

plantations are growing on both sides of the road.

Here two dirt tracks lead off to the left. Follow the

second track for 300 m to a small picnic area. From

the carpark it takes about 2 hours to walk to the

beach and back (5 km), but you may want to spend

more time walking along the beach or exploring the

nearby lagoon. Take care as there is no defined track

across the dunes.

Ocean Beach

Stretching for over 30 km from Macquarie Heads in the south to Trial Harbour in the north, Ocean Beach

is the longest beach in Tasmania. Sunsets over the

ocean, giant windswept sand dunes and roaring surf

make this an idyllic location for a

long stroll with family or friends. In

late September, the first of

thousands of shearwaters

(muttonbirds) reach their breeding

rookery here, after their 15,000 km

migratory flight from the Arctic

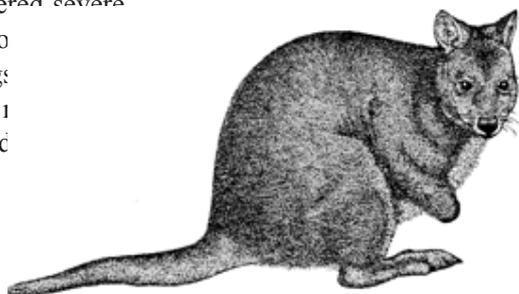
region. During the summer months

they provide an amazing wildlife

spectacle each night at dusk as they

return from their feeding forays over

the ocean.



Tasmanian pademelon

To get to Ocean Beach, drive out of Strahan towards Zeehan and turn left at the first intersection past the

caravan park. Follow this road for 4 km and park

behind the dunes. A walkway over the dunes and a

viewing platform have been built for your comfort.

Please stay on this walkway to reduce erosion of the

dunes and the destruction of the shearwater burrows.

Aboriginal shell middens also occur along the beach

and care should be taken not to disturb them as they

are an important part of Tasmania's cultural heritage.

Take care. Strong rips and currents can make Ocean Beach unsafe for swimming. Pets are permitted on the

beach but dogs should be kept under control at all

times.

Further information

Strahan Visitor Centre located on the wharf near the Huon pine sawmill.

Phone: (03) 6471 7488

Parks and Wildlife Service at the Customs House

Phone: (03) 6471 7122

FURTHER INFORMATION

Head Office: 134 Macquarie Street Hobart TAS 7000
Phone: 1300 135 513

Internet: www.parks.tas.gov.au
December 2003 © State of Tasmania