



Image courtesy of Spirit of Tasmania

Tasmanian tigers hunt for MICE

Tasmania has matured like a vintage wine, thankfully unspoiled by too much tinkering. Development is increasingly selective while still opening up beautiful locations for enjoyable MICE venues and accommodation **BY PHOENIX ARRIEN**

Populated by half a million people, Hobart is probably Australia's calmest capital city while Tasmania's second biggest city, Launceston, is located in the north. Tasmania's meetings industry is holding its own against some major competitors and with \$50 million annually injected into the local economy, Tasmania is ready to tackle greater MICE opportunities.

Travel to Tas

The Tasmania Convention Bureau (www.tasmaniaconventions.com) provides free advice and material for business events. Enticingly, the 'Meet in Tasmania' program offers funding for events held during Tasmania's winters. Qantas, Virgin Blue and Tiger Airways touch down here and the Spirit of Tasmania (www.spiritoftasmania.com.au) features vehicle capacity, bars, restaurants, a cinema, gaming lounge and 222 ensuite cabins for its crossing from Victoria. Once on the island, a network of buses ply most major roads and taxis and hire cars are plentiful.

Browsing the range of MICE venues will keep any PA happily absorbed with discovery of a surprisingly unique range of options. Silverdome (www.silverdome.com.au) in Launceston offers the largest space for delegates - up to 4,000. A gigantic arena, an auditorium and meeting rooms are complemented by catering and technology. Wrest Point Hotel and Conference Centre (www.federalgroup.com.au) is a Tasmanian icon. Up to 1,600 delegates meet in 14 fully-equipped meeting rooms, auditorium, boardrooms and exhibition venues, supported by modern technology.

Room to move

There is something, oh, sweetly whimsical about most of Tasmania's accommodation. Even the grand modern hotels, gleaming with sophistication and all mod-cons, still feel warmly inviting. Hotel Grand Chancellor (www.ghi-hotels.com/hgc) offers 243 rooms including Executive Suites and excellent Hobart views. Two restaurants and conference and meeting facilities catering for up to 1,650 dele-



Above: courtesy of Pure Tasmania
Below: courtesy of Tourism Tasmania



Above: courtesy of Federal Hotels

gates, finish up an excellent business base. Freycinet Lodge (www.puretasmania.com.au) is a lovely blend of eco-sensitive and luxury in the east coast's Freycinet National Park. This is bush conferencing at its best with 60 comfortable cabins, dining, three fully-equipped meeting rooms and more for up to 110 delegates.

Food for thought

'Foodies' masquerading as MICE delegates rejoice! An abundance of fruit, fudge, cheese and seafood abound, along with other local produce. The Point Revolving Restaurant (www.wrestpoint.com.au) features 360-degree views of Hobart, mountains and water from the top of a 17-storey tower. Modern Australian dishes are accompanied by wines ranging from 1966 Grange Hermitage to the most recent local boutique batch.

Do venture out of the cities to discover outstanding cuisine. The east coast offers small groups The Banc Restaurant (www.thebancrestaurant.com.au). Located on the main street of Swansea, chef John Bailey was spirited away from London's prestigious Dorchester Hotel by Kerry Packer, only to become enamoured with Tasmanian produce and open his own island restaurant.

After hours

Tasmania is a natural paradise with over 3,000km of walking tracks, beaches, hundreds of mountains, valleys, highland lakes and glacial tarns. South of Hobart spreads the orchards, trees, waters, stone houses and riverside villages of the Huon Valley. To the southeast is Bruny Island, the last major island before Macquarie Island and Antarctica. Up north take a walk to Dove Lake cut into the rugged landscape of the World Heritage Cradle Mountain region. World Heritage Cruises (www.worldheritagecruises.com.au) takes visitors up the famous Gordon River and the West Coast Wilderness Railway chugs through green mountainous forests of the northwest. There's plenty of choice for pre- and post-event. **11**