

WONDERFUL WEST COAST

The Tasmanian west coast boasts some of the best camping and 4WD driving in the country, and this trip samples just a small portion of this incredible destination

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The Tasmanian West Coast is one of the iconic regions of Australia when it comes to 4WDing and camping. Spectacular coastal scenery, challenging 4WD tracks, remote and beautiful campsites, and variable weather conditions make this area one of the premier destinations that every 4WDer should make an effort to get to and experience for themselves.

The northwest area of Tasmania is dominated by the Arthur Pieman Conservation Area, which is the name given to the area between the mighty Arthur and Pieman Rivers. The main route to access this area is from the north via the Bass Highway and Arthur River Road.

The Arthur Pieman Conservation Area is managed by the Parks and Wildlife service, and a permit is required for access to the area. This can be obtained from the Ranger Office at Arthur River, along with a camping permit for the days you wish to camp in the

park. The rangers will provide up-to-date information about the track conditions and are a good source of knowledge for the best campsites in the area.

From Arthur River head south on the Temma Road south is a well-maintained road all the way down to Temma. There are a number of camping options off the Temma Road including Nelson Bay, Stinking Beach and Camp Elsewhere. Camp Elsewhere is the pick of these spots with a number of sheltered camping areas amongst the tea-tree, and usually you have this area pretty much to yourself. The beach is only a short walk across the dunes from the campsites, and the top of the dunes is a spectacular place to watch the sun set into the ocean.

From Temma the road peters out to a rough track so air down, lock in the hubs and engage 4WD. This is now the Temma-Greens Creek Track which meanders through coastal heathlands. There are a number of water holes along the track and the depth of these will depend on recent

WHERE

This trek takes in some of the many highlights of the Tasmanian West Coast including Arthur River, Sandy Cape, Granville and Trial Harbour, and the Zeehan area.

CAMPING

There are several fantastic remote campsites in the Arthur Pieman Area including Camp Elsewhere and Sandy Cape. Arthur River also has a main camping area with toilet facilities, and a caravan park with cabins and showers/toilets.

Trial and Granville Harbours have free camping areas but no facilities.

Zeehan Caravan Park is perfect if you're looking for some facilities, it has a comfortable camp kitchen/lounge with wood heater for those cool Tasmanian nights

SUPPLIES AND FACILITIES

It is best to stock up at one of the major centres such as Smithton prior to arriving at Arthur River. Smithton has several fuel outlets, supermarkets, mechanical repairs, and a range of other shops.

Arthur River has a shop with basic supplies available.

Zeehan has two fuel outlets and a Foodworks supermarket. There is also a Hotel and Take-away food outlet.

FUEL

Smithton
\$1.66/L Diesel
\$1.61/L Unleaded

Zeehan
\$1.65/L Diesel
\$1.64/L Unleaded

Recent rain made this boghole impassable and we got well and truly stuck!



THE TRACK DOWN TO SANDY CAPE IS ONE OF THE GREAT 4WD ADVENTURES IN TASMANIA



There's nothing like relaxing around the campfire after an enjoyable day 4WDing

rains, but generally these will not cause any concern. Approximately 5km from Temma is the infamous Balfour Track on the left; more on the Balfour Track a little later.

From the Balfour Track junction continue southwards to Greens Point where there is a lookout that affords spectacular views up and down the coast, with the Sandy Cape lighthouse clearly in view. Continue down the hill to Greens Creek which is also

a designated camping area and the start of the Sandy Cape Track.

The track down to Sandy Cape is one of the great 4WD adventures in Tasmania with the beaches, headlands and rivers presenting a challenge that you are unlikely to find anywhere else in Australia. However the area is wild and should not be taken lightly. The beaches are treacherous with extremely soft sand

and quicksand areas, and misjudging the river crossings has claimed many vehicles in the past. On average, several vehicles are lost in this area every year. Travel with the company of at least one other 4WD, stay close together, and take particular care at the river mouths. Generally the best course of action is to keep as close as possible to the sea and when crossing rivers, wait for the waves

Heading down to the beach and to the start of some serious 4WD driving



This incredible sheltered campsite was at Camp Elsewhere in the Arthur-Pieman Conservation Area

to recede and cross on the hard washed sand at the immediate outlet of the river.

The reward at the end of the Sandy Cape Track is the fantastic coastal views from the rocky outcrops around the lighthouse and the incredible remote camping. Also there is real satisfaction and a sense of achievement at completing one of the great 4WD challenges in Tasmania and Australia.

At Sandy Cape there are two main camping areas – Sandy Cape and Pedder River. The Pedder River campsite has the advantage of the river for swimming, but both sites have plenty of shade and flat sites.

There is a track heading south from Sandy Cape but this only travels a few kilometers to Johnsons Head. Access further south is only permitted under special circumstances with a permit (and key) from Parks & Wildlife Service. It has been recently announced by Parks that future access conditions will be relaxed which is fantastic news, and a good excuse to explore this area further.

After a pleasant night or two at Sandy Cape, it's time to backtrack along the beach and then back to the Balfour Track junction.

Now is a good time to tackle the Balfour Track if continuing southwards.

Any track which starts with a sign that states winches and snorkels are required is going to be fun! The Balfour Track leads inland to the old mining town of Balfour which was a thriving settlement in the 1900s but is now all but deserted. It is worth spending a little time roaming the old mine, cemetery and building ruins. The Balfour Track is a real challenge and is not for the faint-hearted. Deep bogholes will be encountered and suitable precautions such as a water blind (bra) are recommended. Travel with at least one other 4WD if tackling this track. Note that the town of Balfour can be accessed via the Western Explorer if you don't wish to tackle the Balfour Track.

The Balfour Track joins into the Western Explorer (Norfolk Road) which is the main road between Arthur River and Corinna, so after taking the Balfour Track you can head back north to Arthur River or south to Corinna and further down the west coast.

Heading south from Balfour it is only about an hour via the Western Explorer

WHAT TO TAKE

Take sufficient food and drinking water for the planned duration of your trip. Basic equipment spares and recovery equipment should also be carried. There is mobile phone coverage available near Arthur River and Zeehan, but then alternative communication such as a satellite phone is needed and should be carried.

RESTRICTIONS AND PERMITS

An off-road permit is required to access the Arthur Pieman Conservation Area, and this can be picked up from the Parks office at Arthur River. Cost is \$30 per month (at time of travel) and the permit includes a DVD, maps, and notes.

BUDGET ATTRACTIONS

With such spectacular scenery, you will be snapping away with your camera. There are several opportunities for a swim, and a range of bush walks on offer. The fishing is fantastic with beach, rock and river options available to cast a line. Exploring the many old mine sites and ruins at the deserted settlements is also enjoyable. Needless to say, the 4WD driving is fantastic!

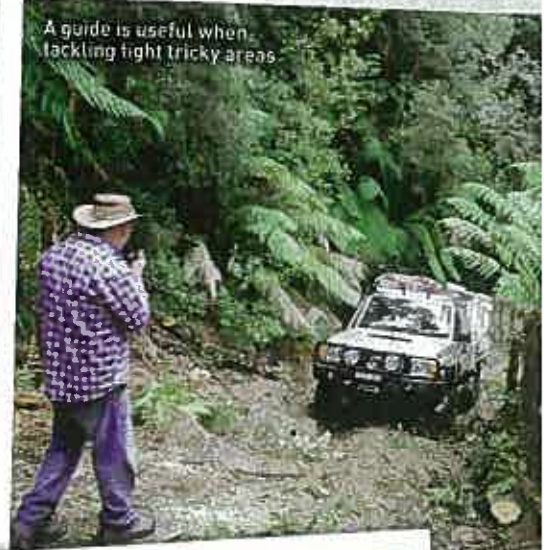
to Corinna on the Pieman River. To cross the Pieman River you need to engage the services of 'The Fatman' – Tasmania's only cable-driven vehicle barge. The ferry operates on demand and charges a small fee; make sure you arrive within the designated operating hours (9am – 7pm). There is a nice campground in Corinna if you miss the ferry or want to spend a little more time in this picturesque town.

Once across the Pieman River, continue south down the Corinna Road then turn right at Heemskirk Road before taking the Granville Harbour Road a further 10km. Now it's only another 9km to Granville Harbour.

Granville Harbour consists of several beachside houses with some top camping sites north of the settlement. Pieman Heads

can be accessed by continuing northwards, however this is a difficult track particularly the section along the Four Mile Beach. The reward is spectacular coastal scenery and some challenging driving.

Speaking of challenging driving, the trek southwards from Granville Harbour along Climies Track is one of the more difficult assignments to be faced in this area. Climies Track starts with a steep climb from the bridge at the Tasman River through a severely rutted and clay-based section that is extremely difficult especially if recent rain has fallen. And this is just the beginning! Further along is the infamous crossing of Granite Creek at the top of a waterfall plunging straight down into the sea way below, and plenty of more challenges before reaching Trial Harbour.



A guide is useful when tackling tight tricky areas

TRIP STANDARD

Trip rating A through to E grade, with E meaning a 2WD could do the trip, and A requiring a lift, lockers, a winch and aggressive tyres to complete. The Sandy Cape and Balfour Tracks are rated B, and in adverse conditions A. Montezuma Falls Track is C in the dry, increasing to B in wet conditions. Climies Track is B in dry conditions, and A if recent rains have fallen.

BEST TIME TO TRAVEL

March offers the best weather of the year in Tassie offers the best weather of the year in Tassie



Greens Creek and beach along the Sandy Cape Track - this is wild Tassie at its best

THE REWARD IS A ONCE IN A LIFETIME TRIP FULL OF MEMORABLE MOMENTS AND SPECTACULAR SCENERY



One of the many bogholes along the Sandy Cape Track



An alternative is to backtrack along Granville Harbour Road to Heemskirk Road, turn right towards Zeehan and then turn right into Trial Harbour Road. This is longer but certainly the quickest route, and given the continued deterioration of Climies Track may be a more prudent choice.

Trial Harbour is adjacent the small settlement of Remine that consists of a few holiday cottages. There is a camping area to the north and a number of 4WD tracks to old mines in the area worth exploring if you have time.

Back inland from Trial Harbour is the small town of Zeehan. Zeehan was known

as the 'silver city' in its glory days in the late nineteenth century due to the large deposits of silver and lead extensively mined in the area. For more details on the area the West Coast Pioneers Memorial museum in Zeehan is worth a visit. This museum has range of exhibits displaying the history of west coast mining and the resilience and resourcefulness of the early pioneers.

Montezuma Falls is the highest single-fall waterfall in Tasmania (104m) and only a short drive from Zeehan. The drive into the falls is via the old railway formation through dense rainforest and is a fantastic experience. The narrow railway cuttings

make you feel like you are fully immersed into the forest. The track has a number of challenging creek crossings and plenty of muddy sections to keep you on your toes. A lookout and suspension bridge is found at the end of the track, which allows fantastic viewing of the spectacular waterfall. For an extra challenge on the way back take the Ring River Track which commences 4km back from falls. Note that this track is very difficult with huge ruts, steep slippery sections, and dense undergrowth.

On the outskirts of Zeehan is the Spray Mine and Tunnel, which vehicles used to be able to drive through but now is a pleasant walk. The tunnel and road leading to it formed part of a railway that was used to transport ore from the Spray Mine to the smelters in Zeehan.

The West Coast of Tasmania presents many challenges to the avid 4WDer and many difficulties are likely to be encountered. It is not an area to take lightly and comprehensive preparation is needed to tackle the more difficult tracks. But the reward is certainly a once in a lifetime trip full of memorable moments and spectacular scenery that is unlike anywhere else in Australia, and once completed you are likely to start planning your next trip back to this wonderful part of Australia. ■



CONTACTS & INFORMATION

TASMANIAN PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE

Ph: 1300 135 513
Arthur River Office: (03) 6457 1225
W: www.parks.tas.gov.au

FORESTRY TASMANIA

Ph: 1300 FOREST
W: www.forestrytas.com.au

ZEEHAN CARAVAN PARK

Ph: (03) 6471 6633

ARTHUR RIVER CABIN PARK

Ph: (03) 6457 1212
W: www.arthurrivercabinpark.com

CORINNA FERRY

(Operates on demand 9am to 7pm summer, 9am to 5pm winter)
Cost: \$20 (\$25 if towing). Total max length 9m.
Ph: (03) 6446 1170

MAPS AND GUIDES

Tasmania by HEMA

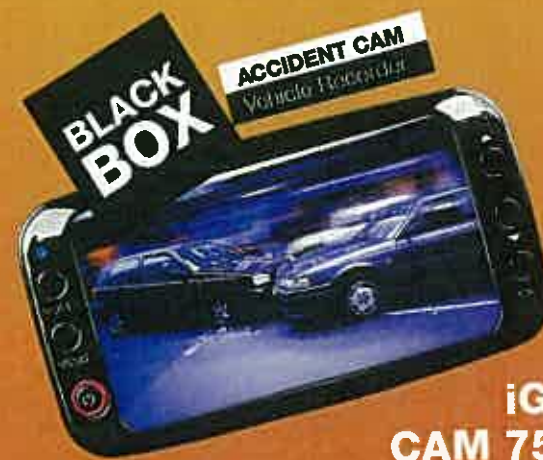
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