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Definition: **Tasmania** from *Collins English Dictionary*

n

1 an island in the S Pacific, south of mainland Australia: forms, with offshore islands, the smallest state of Australia; discovered by the Dutch explorer Tasman in 1642; used as a penal colony by the British (1803–53); mostly forested and mountainous. Capital: Hobart. Pop: 512 000 (2012 est). Area: 68 332 sq km (26 383 sq miles) Former name (1642–1855): **Van Diemen's Land**



Summary Article: **Tasmania**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Image from: [Australia in Merriam-Webster's Geographical Dictionary](#)

Island in the Indian Ocean, southeast of Australia, separated from the mainland by Bass Strait; state of Australia; area about 68,000 sq km/26,000 sq mi; population (2001 est) 472,900. The capital is Hobart. Products include wool, dairy products, apples and other fruit, processed foods, timber, paper, iron, tungsten, copper, silver, coal, and cement. The University of Tasmania, established in 1890, now has campuses in both Hobart and Launceston.

History The first European to visit Tasmania, on 24 November 1642, was Dutch navigator Abel Tasman, who named the island Van Diemen's Land, after the governor general of the Dutch East Indies, Anthony van Diemen. In 1777 Tasmania was visited by the English navigator Captain James Cook, who thought it formed part of the mainland. Lieutenant William Bligh planted English fruit trees at Adventure Bay, on the southeast coast of Bruny Island south of Hobart, on the outward voyage of the *Bounty* to Pitcairn Island in 1788. In 1798 British explorers George Bass and Matthew Flinders circumnavigated Tasmania, thereby proving it was an island.

19th century In 1803 the British decided to establish a second colony in Australia (the first was Sydney Cove in 1788), and Governor Philip Gidley King of New South Wales sent Lieutenant David Bowen to settle with a group of convicts at Risdon Cove, on the River Derwent. Hobart Town was founded in 1804. The island was mainly used as a penal settlement: half of the total number of convicts sent to Australia were transported to Tasmania between 1803 and 1853. Conditions for prisoners were notoriously harsh, particularly at Port Arthur, a penal settlement on the south coast, founded in 1830 to house convicts who had committed serious crimes while imprisoned on the mainland or elsewhere on Van Diemen's Land. In 1825 the island, which had previously formed part of New South Wales, became a separate colony, and in 1856 the name of Van Diemen's Land was officially changed to Tasmania and responsible government granted. In 1901 Tasmania united with the states of the mainland in establishing the Commonwealth of Australia.

Territory Tasmania is the smallest of the Australian states. Over 50 islands are administered by Tasmania. The main ones are the Furneaux group, at the eastern end of Bass Strait, including Flinders Island, Cape Barren Island, and Clarke Island; Chappell Islands and the Kent group, at the eastern end of Bass Strait; the Hunter Islands, including King Island, at the western end of Bass Strait; Bruny Island and Maria Island, off the south and southeast coasts; and the uninhabited, subarctic, volcanic Macquarie

Island.

Geography Tasmania was once joined to mainland Australia, but is now separated by Bass Strait, which is about 230 km/143 mi wide. The island's interior is mountainous, its two mountain chains being continuations of the Dividing Range of the mainland. The central plateau averages 915 m/3,000 ft in height, and contains Tasmania's highest peak, Mount Ossa (1,617 m/5,305 ft). Other peaks are Barn Bluff (1,560 m/5,118 ft), Mount Field West (1,430 m/4,692 ft), and Cradle Mountain (1,540 m/5,052 ft). The eastern range runs parallel with the east coast, and has an average height of 1,150m/3,773 ft. The highest peaks are Mount Barrow (1,400 m/4,593 ft) and Ben Lomond (1,573 m/5,161 ft).

In the south is Mount Wellington (1260 m/4,134 ft), at the foot of which stands Hobart. The central plateau is dotted with numerous freshwater lakes, the largest being the Great Lake (104 sq km/40 sq mi), which is 1,160 m/3,806 ft above sea level; other lakes include Lake Sorell (about 52 sq km/20 sq mi); Lake St Clair; Arthur Lake; and Lake Echo. These lakes form the headwaters of the rivers flowing south, west, and north. Among the main rivers is the Derwent, which issues from Lake St Clair and flows for about 210 km/130 mi to its estuary at Hobart, where there is a deep and sheltered harbour. Other rivers flowing into the Southern Ocean are the Huon (about 160 km/99 mi in length) on the south coast and the Arthur on the northwest coast. On the north of the island, flowing into Bass Strait, are the Mersey and the Tamar; the Tamar is navigable up to Launceston, 64 km/40 mi from its mouth. The rivers Gordon and King enter the sea on the west coast. The west coast of Tasmania is wild and rocky, but there are several accessible ports, including Port Davey (formerly used by whaling vessels), Pieman River, and Macquarie Harbour.

Ports on the north coast include Launceston, Devonport, and Stanley. The east coast is sheltered and generally flat, with ports at George's Bay, Oyster Bay, Prosser Bay, Spring Bay, and Fortescue Bay. The south and southeast of the island is studded with safe bays and harbours, the main ones being Storm Bay and D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Forests cover more than 40% of Tasmania, mainly eucalyptus and pine. In the southwest of the island there is temperate rainforest and a World Heritage Area.

Climate Tasmania has a temperate climate. The average temperature of Hobart in the hottest month is 17°C/62°F. The winter is cold enough to produce thin ice in the lowlands and snow in the mountains and plateaux. The average temperature in the coldest month is 8°C/46°F. The mean temperature for the year is 12°C/54°F. The average rainfall is about 575 mm/23 in, but there is much variation in different districts, rainfall in the west sometimes reaching 4,318 mm/170 in a year.

Economy Overall, Tasmania's economic development has not kept pace with that of mainland Australia and, largely because of lack of sufficient employment, the later 20th century saw a steady pattern of migration to other Australian states. Even so, Tasmania has a diverse economy, based on agriculture, mining, forestry, manufacturing, and tourism. Pasture land is used for grazing dairy and beef cattle and sheep for both wool and meat production, and pastoral products are major exports. The mild, moist climate is suitable for growing fruit and vegetables. Apples are the most important fruit crop, followed by pears, raspberries, and blackcurrants. The chief vegetable crops are peas, beans, and potatoes, and 80% of Australia's hops are grown in Tasmania. The climate is not suitable for large-scale cereal growing. Barley and oats are grown, but the amount of land sown with wheat is negligible.

Tasmania has large mineral deposits, and mining operations include silver, lead, zinc, gold, and copper at Rosebery; copper and gold at Mount Lyell, near Queenstown; and iron ore in the Savage River area. These centres are in the rugged western half of the state where most of the mining takes place.

Outside this region there are mineral sands (sands containing concentrations of heavy metals) and tungsten on King Island in Bass Strait; natural gas and oil are also found in the Bass Strait. Iron, copper, lead, zinc, high-grade silica, and tungsten are exported, and mining has stimulated one of the major sectors of the manufacturing sector, mineral refining and smelting. There are mineral processing facilities in Hobart, Paswinco, and Risdon for zinc, alloys, cadmium, and sulphuric acid. Iron ore from the Savage River area is refined into pellets at Port Latta and exported to Japan; and alumina from Queensland is smelted into aluminium at Bell Bay, 50 km/31 mi north of Launceston. Bell Bay also has an alumina refinery and a plant producing high-carbon ferro-manganese. One of the world's largest zinc refineries is located at Lutana.

Industries using timber as a raw material, especially the production of woodpulp, paper, and newsprint, expanded substantially in the late 20th century as Tasmania's forests were increasingly exploited. Newsprint and paper are produced at Burnie, on the northwest coast, and Boyer; pulp and paper at Wesley Vale and Port Huon, 59 km/37 mi southwest of Hobart; and woodchips at Long Reach. Industrial gases (liquid oxygen and nitrogen) are manufactured at Hobart, Launceston, and Burnie.

After World War II mining and manufacturing developed rapidly, and, in spite of strong environmental objections, the construction of large hydroelectric projects, notably on the Derwent, Forth, and Mersey rivers, provided relatively cheap power supplies and promoted industrialization. Tasmania has a wide variety of metalworking (especially car bearings) and food-processing (dairy products, and chocolate) industries. Vegetables are frozen and canned at Devonport and Ulverstone. One of the reasons for the development of electrolytic refineries and smelters in Tasmania is the availability of abundant electricity. The high rainfall and mountainous terrain of much of the island is ideal for the generation of hydroelectric power. This supplies all of the island's electricity requirements.

Tourism Tourism makes a major contribution to the economy of Tasmania, and by the late 20th century some 500,000 people visited the island annually, many of them to escape the hotter summers of mainland Australia. Many visitors are attracted to the national parks which cover more than 20% of the island. The largest of these is South West National Park, which is part of a vast World Heritage Area in the southwest of the island, recognized by UNESCO. This region includes the Franklin Lower Gordon Wild Rivers National Park and the Cradle Mountain–Lake St Clair National Park. Franklin River is a wilderness area saved from a hydroelectric scheme in 1983, and also has a prehistoric site. Port Arthur, a former penal settlement on the Tasman Peninsula on the south coast, 100 km/62 mi southeast of Hobart, also attracts many visitors. The area referred to as the 'Land of a Thousand Lakes' in central Tasmania is also a popular tourist destination, and the lakes are popular for angling and fishing.

Environmental issues Industrialization has damaged Tasmania's environment, and since the 1970s conservationists have opposed developments in mining, hydroelectricity, and logging. In recent years there have been no new dams (the Hydroelectric Corporation stopped building dams and power stations in 1994), but hydroelectric power generation continues to supply almost all of Tasmania's power needs. Mining has also had a heavy impact on the environment: the area around Queenstown, in the west of the island, has suffered particularly from the effects of mining, with the destruction of the surrounding rainforest. Rehabilitation of these areas is taking place under the supervision of the government and mining companies. Environmental impact studies are now usually carried out before a new mining operation is undertaken.

The flooding of Lake Pedder in 1971 for a hydroelectric scheme led to the foundation of the Wilderness

Society in 1972. This group of conservationists succeeded in 1983 in saving the Franklin River, one of Tasmania's last wild rivers, when construction of a dam on the Gordon River was halted by a ruling of Australia's High Court. Other environmental campaigns have opposed logging and woodchipping (pulping trees for paper) for export to Japan. In 1986 conservationists succeeded in their opposition to the timber industry's plans for logging near Geeveston, southwest of Hobart, and some of the forests were listed as World Heritage Areas. Also in the late 1980s there were considerable protests against the woodchipping industry which supplied the Wesley Vale Pulp Mill. In 1989 the debate resulted in five Green Independents being elected to the Tasmanian Parliament. They successfully negotiated the Salamanca Agreement which created 600,000 ha/1,500,000 acres of World Heritage Areas, significantly reducing the amount of forest available in Tasmania for woodchipping.

Government Tasmania has a parliament consisting of an upper house (Legislative Council) and a lower house (House of Assembly) with 19 and 35 members respectively. A governor, representing the British sovereign, is the nominal head of the state. Power of government is vested in the premier and the cabinet (comprising a maximum of 10 members), and the two houses. The state has 12 members in the Commonwealth Senate and five in the House of Representatives.

Aboriginal peoples The Aboriginal people of Tasmania are ethnically distinct from those of mainland Australia. In the early 19th century, when the first white settlements were established in Tasmania, the indigenous population numbered about 5,000. They were nomadic people, who lived in tribes and shared their resources in an exchange economy. White settlers attempted to enclose and clear land, and this led to violent confrontation with the indigenous peoples. In 1828 martial law was declared by the British governor, and all Aboriginal people were expelled from the settled areas. The British government decided to confine the remaining Aborigines on Bruny Island, south of Hobart. In 1830, 3,000 settlers formed the Black Line, an armed human barrier, to move across the island rounding up Aborigines – only 135 Aborigines survived the Black Line. In 1834 they were transported to Flinders Island, a barren island off the northeast coast of Tasmania. Most died within a few years. In 1847 the 47 survivors were transferred to Oyster Cove, near Hobart. The last survivor, Truganini, who was born on Bruny Island, died in 1876 at Oyster Cove, south of Hobart. Until 1976 her skeleton was displayed in the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart. It was then cremated and the ashes scattered in the D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Truganini was reputed to have been the last Aboriginal Tasmanian. However, since the 1970s more than 6,000 Aborigines have claimed descent from the indigenous Tasmanian people, and have formed a movement to obtain land rights. In 1997 the Aboriginal people of Flinders Island won their claim to Wybalenna. The Tasmanian state government handed back the former settlement in 1999.

Flora and fauna Tasmania is home to the black currawong, the orange-bellied parrot, Burnett's wallaby, the golden possum, and the Tasmanian devil (a marsupial found only in Tasmania, which was once considered a pest by farmers but is now valued for keeping down rodent numbers). Trees common on the island include the Tasmanian blue gum, the state's floral emblem; the King William pine; and the Huon pine, which is found in southern Tasmania, and provides fine timber for boatbuilding. Other plants include the Tasmanian waratah, the leatherwood tree, and the flying duck orchid.

Tasmania used to be the home of the Tasmanian tiger, the thylacine, which is now believed to be extinct. It was the largest carnivorous marsupial, about 150 cm/60 in long, with light brown fur with dark stripes across its lower back. They were common at the beginning of the 20th century, but were hunted because they were believed to be a threat to sheep.

GM free In July 2001, Tasmania announced its intention to extend an already existing ban on genetically modified (GM) crops and to declare itself permanently free of GM plants. Tasmania is the only Australian state to announce such a ban.

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Tasmania

images

Abel Tasman arriving in the Fiji Islands

Tasmania – flag

Tasmanian devil

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Tasmania. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/tasmania>



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