

sharp

TRAVELLER

ACTIVITIES / DESTINATIONS / EVENTS




**MELBOURNE URBAN
ADVENTURES**

**TOP DAY TRIPS
FROM LAUNCESTON**

**FURNEAUX
ISLANDS FESTIVAL
2024**



A romantic scene of a couple in wedding attire embracing on a rocky shore. The man is wearing a dark suit and white shirt, and the woman is wearing a white lace wedding dress. They are standing on a large, dark rock. In the background, there is a dense forest of tall trees under a soft, overcast sky. The overall mood is intimate and natural.

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All-inclusive elopement & micro wedding
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COVER IMAGE

Sharp Airlines has been at the forefront of aviation excellence for over three decades, connecting travellers between mainland Tasmania, Melbourne, King Island, and Flinders Island.

Our ongoing commitment to providing exceptional service, safety and comfort has earned us the loyalty of countless passengers.

In the last edition of the Sharp Traveller, I spoke about the advantages of flying with Sharp Airlines and, more specifically, the social and economic benefits in doing so.

When you fly with Sharp Airlines, you choose to land at a certified airport, thereby supporting the businesses and employees it sustains.

For example, Sharp Airlines operate into and out of Whitemark Airport on Flinders Island; and through the passenger taxes and fees that are included in your airfare you are contributing directly to the Flinders Island community by maintaining a significant part of the Island's infrastructure.

Off airport operations do not offer the same level of safety or provide the social and economic benefits that flow to the whole community.

When you choose to fly with Sharp Airlines, you do so in the knowledge that you are making a difference to Island way of life

We thank you for choosing to the Sharp Advantage and in supporting not only the Bass Strait Island communities, but the region generally.

We will continue sharing more about the Sharp Advantage on our social media, so follow us on Facebook and Instagram. In the meantime, thank you for your continued support, and we look forward to welcoming you aboard a flight soon.



Malcolm Sharp

Managing Director/
Head of Flight Operations

In This Edition



MELBOURNE

NBA AD- VEN- TURES

Get pumped on an urban adventure in Melbourne. Up high or down low, we've got plenty of adrenaline thrills (but no spills, please) and activities to show off your skills and daring.

Visit the ultimate **Fortress** for games culture and experiences, or get swept away in the kaleidoscopic circus of cocktails, arcade and ticket games at **Archie Brothers Cirque Electriq**, there's no place on earth like Archie's.

Sing your heart out at **The Funderdome** with groovy private karaoke lounges, steeped in 70's nostalgia. Or visit **GlowGolf Docklands** it is mini golf with a twist and a great place to come and play - yes it is a thing!!!!



Archie Brothers Cirque Electriq
Credit: visitvictoria



Archie Brothers Cirque Electriq
Credit: visitvictoria



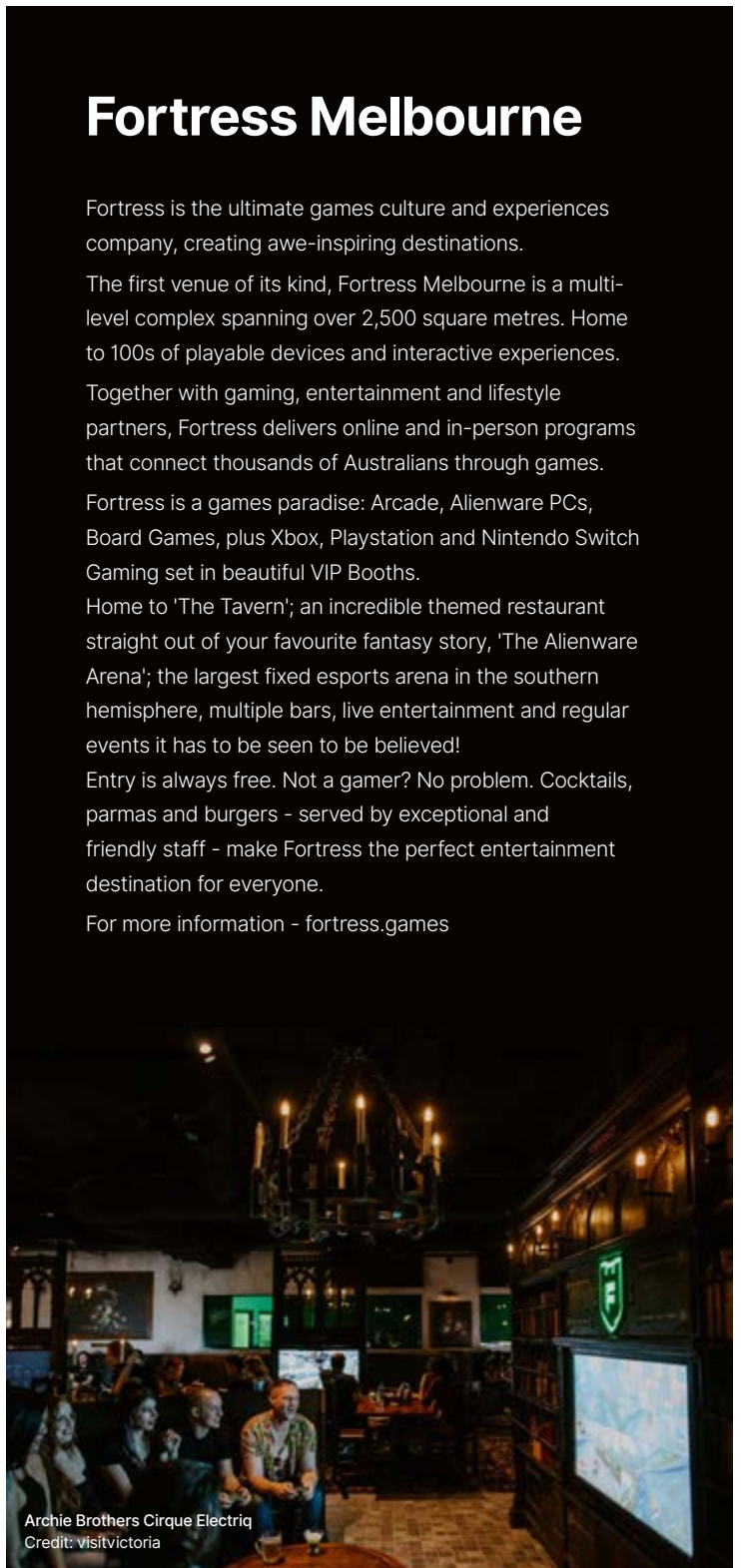
Archie Brothers Cirque Electriq
Credit: visitvictoria



Archie Brothers Cirque Electriq
Credit: visitvictoria



Archie Brothers Cirque Electriq
Credit: visitvictoria



Fortress Melbourne

Fortress is the ultimate games culture and experiences company, creating awe-inspiring destinations.

The first venue of its kind, Fortress Melbourne is a multi-level complex spanning over 2,500 square metres. Home to 100s of playable devices and interactive experiences.

Together with gaming, entertainment and lifestyle partners, Fortress delivers online and in-person programs that connect thousands of Australians through games.

Fortress is a games paradise: Arcade, Alienware PCs, Board Games, plus Xbox, Playstation and Nintendo Switch Gaming set in beautiful VIP Booths.

Home to 'The Tavern'; an incredible themed restaurant straight out of your favourite fantasy story, 'The Alienware Arena'; the largest fixed esports arena in the southern hemisphere, multiple bars, live entertainment and regular events it has to be seen to be believed!

Entry is always free. Not a gamer? No problem. Cocktails, parras and burgers - served by exceptional and friendly staff - make Fortress the perfect entertainment destination for everyone.

For more information - fortress.games



Archie Brothers Cirque Electric
Credit: visitvictoria



Archie Brothers Cirque Electric
Credit: visitvictoria

Archie Brothers Cirque Electric Docklands

Archie Brothers Cirque Electric is your new favourite outing at Melbourne Docklands' The District. Join us in this entertainment wonderland and try your luck against our games, you just might land your hands on the prized goodies at the top of our jackpot. Get swept away in the kaleidoscopic circus of cocktails, arcade and ticket games.



Dodgem cars, VR, ten-pin bowling and endless prizes are all in a day's play at Archie's. Catch-ups, date nights, and regular Thursday afternoons, all just got a lot more fun.

There's no place on earth like Archie's.

More information: archiebrothers.com.au



Archie Brothers Cirque Electric
Credit: visitvictoria



The Funderdome
Credit: visitvictoria



The Funderdome
Credit: visitvictoria



The Funderdome
Credit: visitvictoria



The Funderdome
Credit: visitvictoria



The Funderdome
Credit: visitvictoria

The Funderdome

Remember that time you played for fun and friendship, not fame and fortune? That place is back. Welcome to The Funderdome - where everyone is winning. Tee off with nine or 18 holes of Playas Crazy Golf, Melbourne's world-class Coney Island inspired putt putt.

Level up in New School Arcades with all the latest arcade, virtual reality and redemption games. Including the XD Dark Ride - a rich multi-sensory VR experience with motion seats, synchronised wind, immersive sound and 3D graphics. Fits up to eight players with an individual scoring system.

Go retro in Old School Arcades with all the classics from the golden age of video games. Become a pinball wizard, shoot some hoops, play PacMan, Space Invaders and more.

Sing your heart out in groovy private karaoke lounges, steeped in 70's nostalgia. Choose from two unique private karaoke lounges and sing the night away.

Top it all off at The Clubhouse, the historic centre of The Funderdome; savour legendary drinks and diner eats, yell at the game on the big screen and play shuffleboard, pool, foosball, Atari pong, then go large with giant Jenga or Connect Four.

The Funderdome is a licensed venue with under 18s welcome before 8pm. Come 8pm the Funderdome becomes an over 18s venue only.



More information
funderdome.com.au



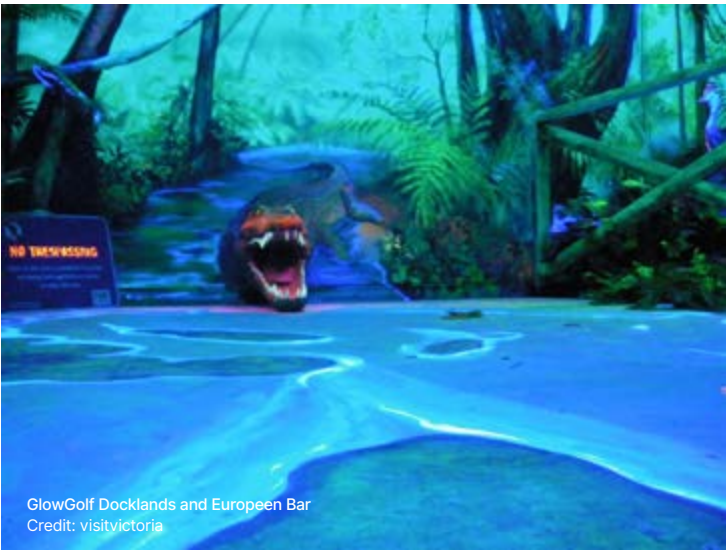
The Funderdome
Credit: visitvictoria



The Funderdome
Credit: visitvictoria



The Funderdome
Credit: visitvictoria



GlowGolf Docklands and European Bar
Credit: visitvictoria



GlowGolf Docklands and European Bar
Credit: visitvictoria

GlowGolf Docklands and European Bar

GlowGolf Docklands is mini golf with a twist, with the majority of the dark under UV lights where the fluorescent paints react and come alive. The specially designed mood lighting literally painted together using fluorescent colours, illuminating depth, creating realism and unsurpassed detail never seen before.

The remaining holes are under mood lighting that has been designed to match the theme of the mini golf hole. The most popular hole being is the Kingswood Ute.

Just be careful around hole eleven because the guy in the toilet has some rather noisy problems. Check out hole 18 for your randomly generated score - this hole is a heart breaker.

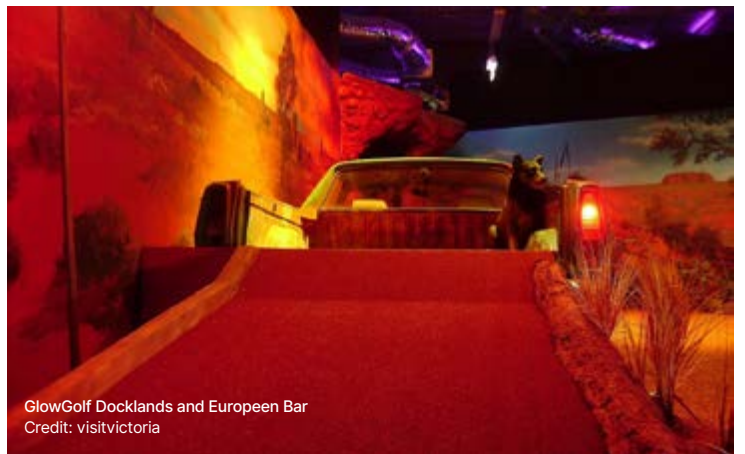
GlowGolf Docklands is a great place to come and play for corporate functions, hens and bucks nights, birthdays or just to have a lot of fun with your family or group of friends.

GlowGolf Docklands is a fantastic idea for a date night.

Drop in and have a drink in the worlds smallest bar, Bar European, licensed to serve four people only.



GlowGolf Docklands and European Bar
Credit: visitvictoria



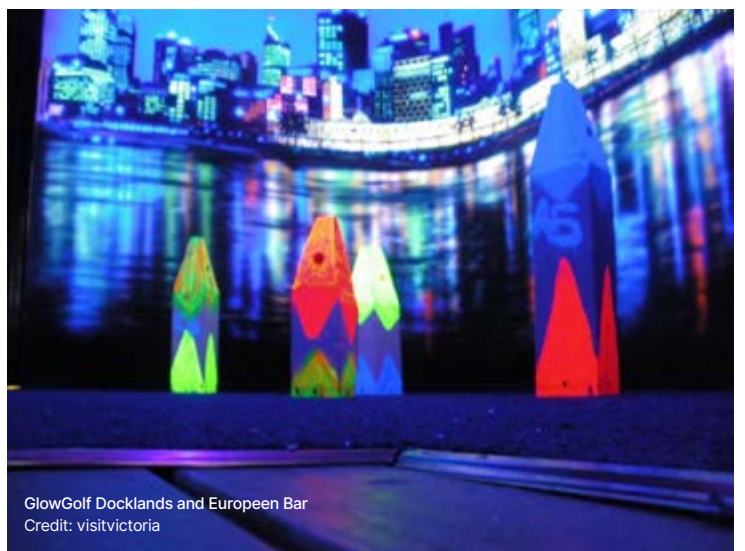
GlowGolf Docklands and European Bar
Credit: visitvictoria



GlowGolf Docklands and European Bar
Credit: visitvictoria



More information:
glowgolf.com.au



GlowGolf Docklands and European Bar
Credit: visitvictoria



Lumber Punks
Credit: visitvictoria



Lumber Punks
Credit: visitvictoria

Lumber Punks
Credit: visitvictoria



Lumber Punks Axe Throwing Melbourne

Axe throwing - yes it is a thing. No - it isn't just for Lumberjanes or Jacks, or Vikings for that matter, Axe Throwing is a fun activity for every occasion and for EVERYONE.

All Lumber Punks venues have totally self contained lanes, highly trained Axe Throwing Coaches who are ready to host even the smallest, to the largest of groups!

Since 2017, Lumber Punks have trained thousands of throwers around the country on the skill of Axe Throwing and now, the Punks are here in Melbourne.

Their experienced Axe Throwing Coaches take you through a formatted session with everyone nailing bullseyes and leaving an axe viking in the making.



Lumber Punks
Credit: visitvictoria

Each session comprises of:

- Safety** - Each session starts with a group safety and training induction. They take safety super seriously - after all, they are throwing axes.
- Practice** - Once inducted, they get you in your lanes and throwing. In no time you'll become comfortable with your grip, distance, rotation and the axes.
- Coaching** - As you improve your technique, their expert coaches give you one on one feedback on your throw - tailoring the technique to suit you.
- Game On** - Now that everyone is an axe-pert in the making, they teach you the game of Axe Throwing so you and your group can battle for eternal glory.



More information:
lumberpunks.com



Lumber Punks
Credit: visitvictoria



Lumber Punks
Credit: visitvictoria

A close-up photograph of a jeweller wearing a white lab coat and a magnifying glass. The jeweller is focused on working on a diamond ring. The background is a warm, golden-brown color, suggesting a workshop or studio environment. The text 'PRESERVING' is overlaid in white, uppercase letters on the left side of the image.

PRESERVING

The Art

OF HANDMADE JEWELLERY
IN MELBOURNE



Credit: MDT Design - 1.jpg



Credit: IMG_4160 (1).jpg

Melbourne, known for its vibrant arts and culture scene, has long been a hub for creativity and craftsmanship. Among the city's myriad of talented artisans, MDTdesign stands out as a shining beacon in the jewellery industry. With their unwavering commitment to excellence, meticulous attention to detail, and innovative designs, MDTdesign has earned a well-deserved reputation as one of Melbourne's premier jewellery businesses.



Since its establishment in 1981, MDTdesign has been a prominent player in Melbourne's jewellery industry. Originally located on Swanston Street, the business recently found a new home on Collins Street. As a boutique that prides itself on the traditional art of handmade jewellery, MDTdesign stands out in an industry largely dominated by mass production. Their commitment to creating durable, heirloom-quality pieces is evidence of their dedication to craftsmanship and the preservation of traditional jewellery-making techniques.



Reviving Handmade Craftsmanship:

In an era where mass-produced jewellery dominates the market, MDTdesign is a breath of fresh air. With their focus on individually handmaking each piece, they have become one of the few jewellery boutiques in Melbourne and Australia alike that offer such an authentic approach to craftsmanship and a lifelong relationship with their clientele, inviting them into the boutique for complimentary jewellery servicing regularly. By foregoing mass production, MDTdesign ensures that each piece of jewellery is meticulously crafted by skilled artisans. By dedicating themselves to this labour-intensive process, they ensure that each piece they create is not only exquisite but also built to last—a durable heirloom that can stand the test of time, serving as a lasting confirmation of the MDTdesign quality of work.



Custom Designs and Intricate Structures

At MDTdesign, clients have the unique opportunity to collaborate with a designer to create a custom piece of jewellery tailored specifically to their preferences. What sets MDTdesign apart is that this personalized service comes at no additional cost, exemplifying their commitment to providing exceptional experiences to their clientele.

The ability to handmade their jewels also grants MDTdesign a creative advantage, allowing them to specialize in intricate structures and unique designs. Techniques like Tension Set Diamonds, which utilize the tension in the metal to securely hold the stone, and Mokume Gane metal designs, which create stunning woodgrain patterns through the layering of precious metals, are just a glimpse into the innovative possibilities offered by MDTdesign.





Awards and Recognition

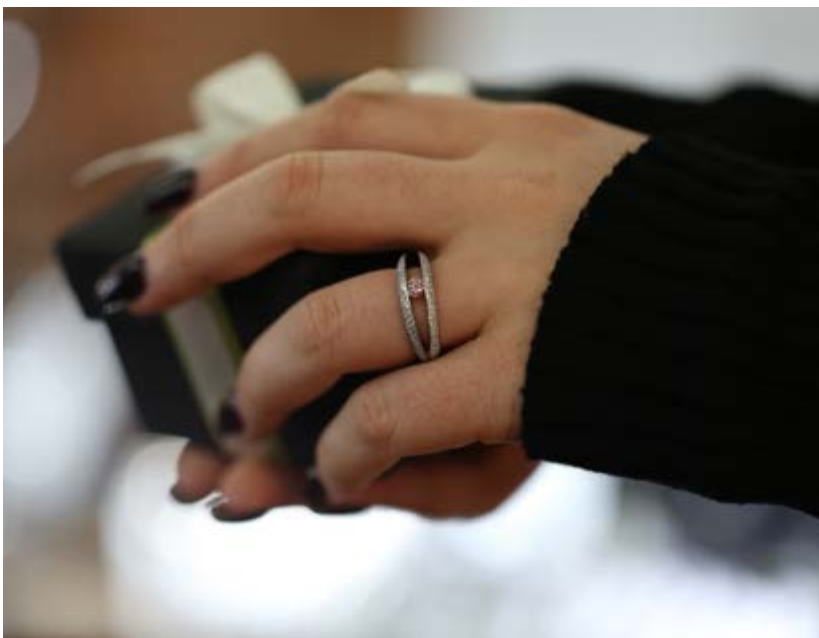
MDTdesign's dedication to excellence and their exceptional craftsmanship have not gone unnoticed. As Australia's Most Awarded Jewellers, their boutique proudly displays a collection of accolades that line their walls. These awards are proof of their commitment to pushing the boundaries of jewellery design and their ability to create exclusive pieces that are truly works of art. From innovative designs to technical mastery, MDTdesign's recognition within the industry further solidifies their position as a leader in Melbourne's jewellery scene.





Family Matters

MDTdesign stands out not only for its exceptional craftsmanship but also for its deep-rooted family values. Under the directorship of Nicholas Theocari, the business not only comprises his expertise but also the contributions of his sons and daughter who can all be found at the Boutique. The family involvement reflects the deep-rooted commitment and passion for their craft that runs through the business's veins. It further emphasizes the dedication and personal touch that MDTdesign brings to each interaction with their clients. The family's presence within the business fosters a warm and inviting atmosphere, making clients feel like part of an extended family themselves.



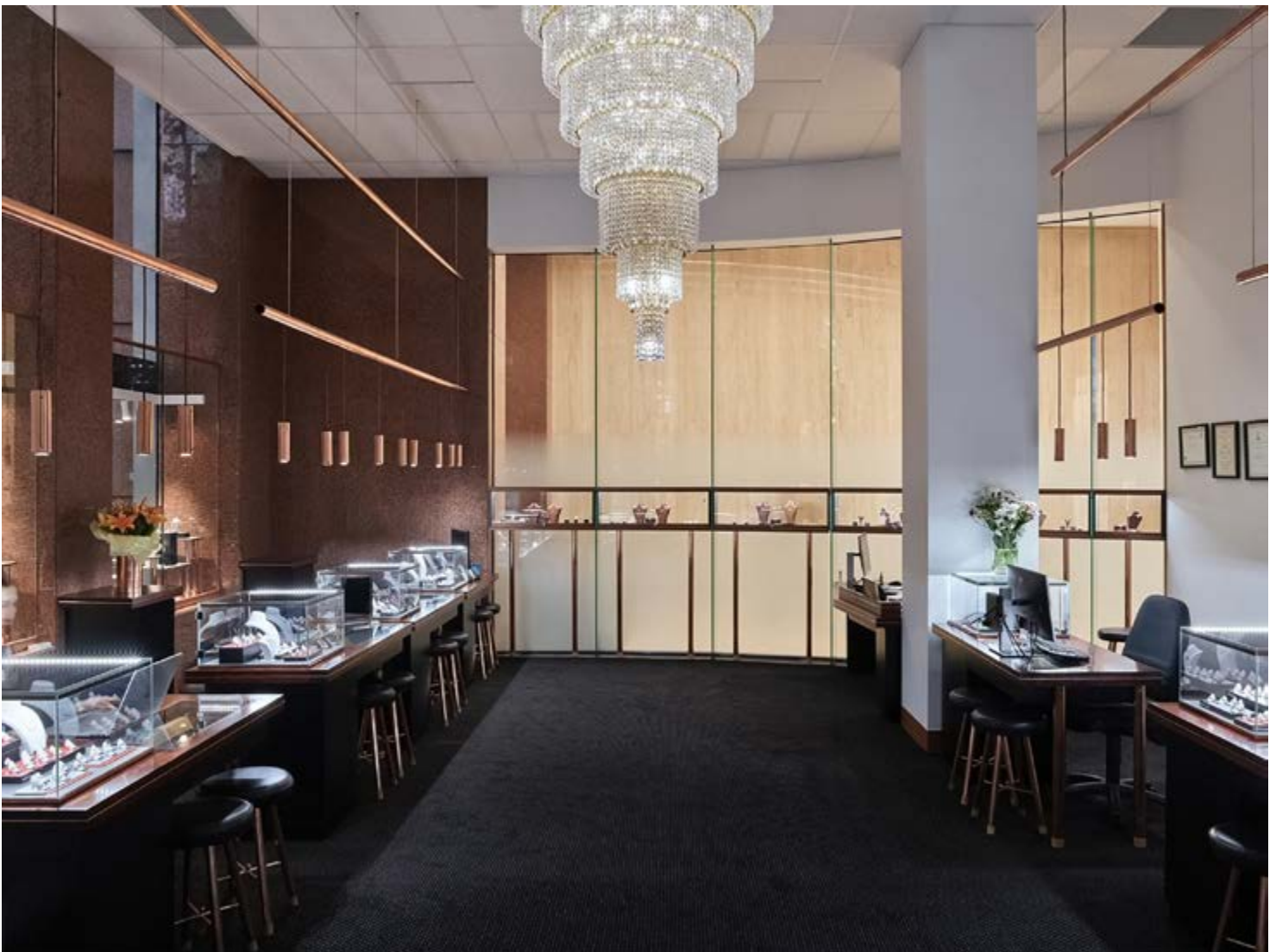
On-Site Workshop and Services

MDTdesign's commitment to their craft extends beyond creating new pieces. Peer through the viewing windows in their boutique to see their state-of-the-art Jewellery Workshop, meaning each and every piece of jewellery is worked on entirely on location.

The on-site jewellery workshop, located behind the boutique, provides them with the ability to offer a range of services, including jewellery remakes, repairs, and resizing. This ensures that their customers can trust them with their precious jewellery, knowing that the same level of care that goes into creating their original designs will also be applied to any necessary maintenance or alterations- additionally this means that your jewellery does not have to leave the premises whilst the MDTdesign team are working on it.

Conclusion

In a world dominated by mass production methods that cut cost and quality, MDTdesign stands out as a champion of traditional handmade jewellery. With a focus on creating the highest quality, bespoke pieces that are made to stand the test of time and a commitment to preserving the art of jewellery making, MDTdesign has become a shining beacon of authenticity in Melbourne's jewellery industry. As they continue to offer exceptional designs, personalized experiences, and an unwavering commitment to quality, MDTdesign's legacy as a kingpin of handmade craftsmanship is set to endure for years to come.



MDT *design*

Individually designed, hand-made jewellery



Tension Set Designs



AUSTRALIA'S MOST AWARD WINNING JEWELLERS

MDTDESIGN.COM.AU

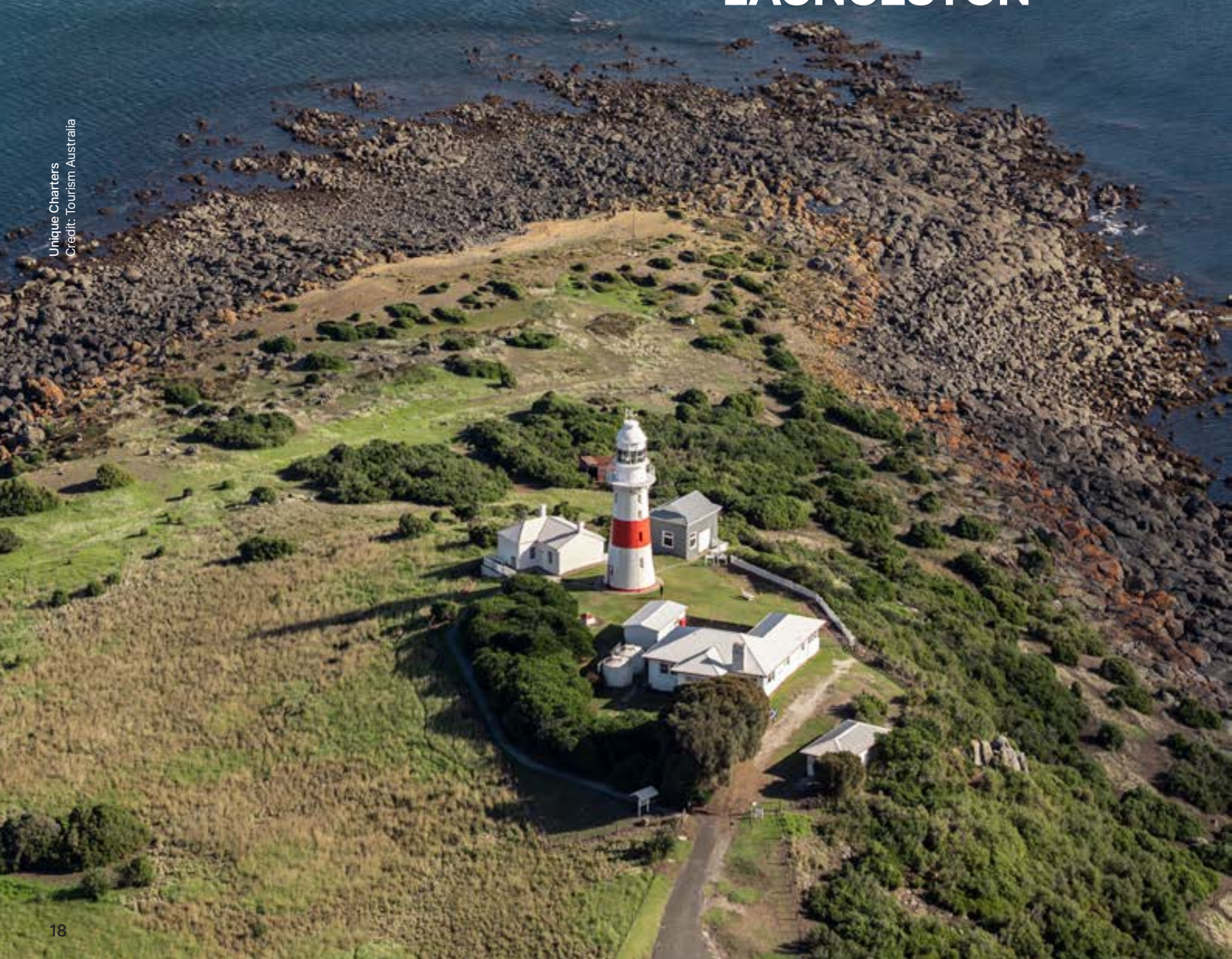
348 COLLINS STREET MELBOURNE AUSTRALIA • 03 9654 6805 • SALES@MDTDESIGN.COM.AU





TOP DAY *Tips* FROM LAUNCESTON

Unique Charters
Credit: Tourism Australia



Wine tasting, mountain biking, historical estates, underground caves and wildlife parks.

Simply choose a direction and head out for a day of fun.

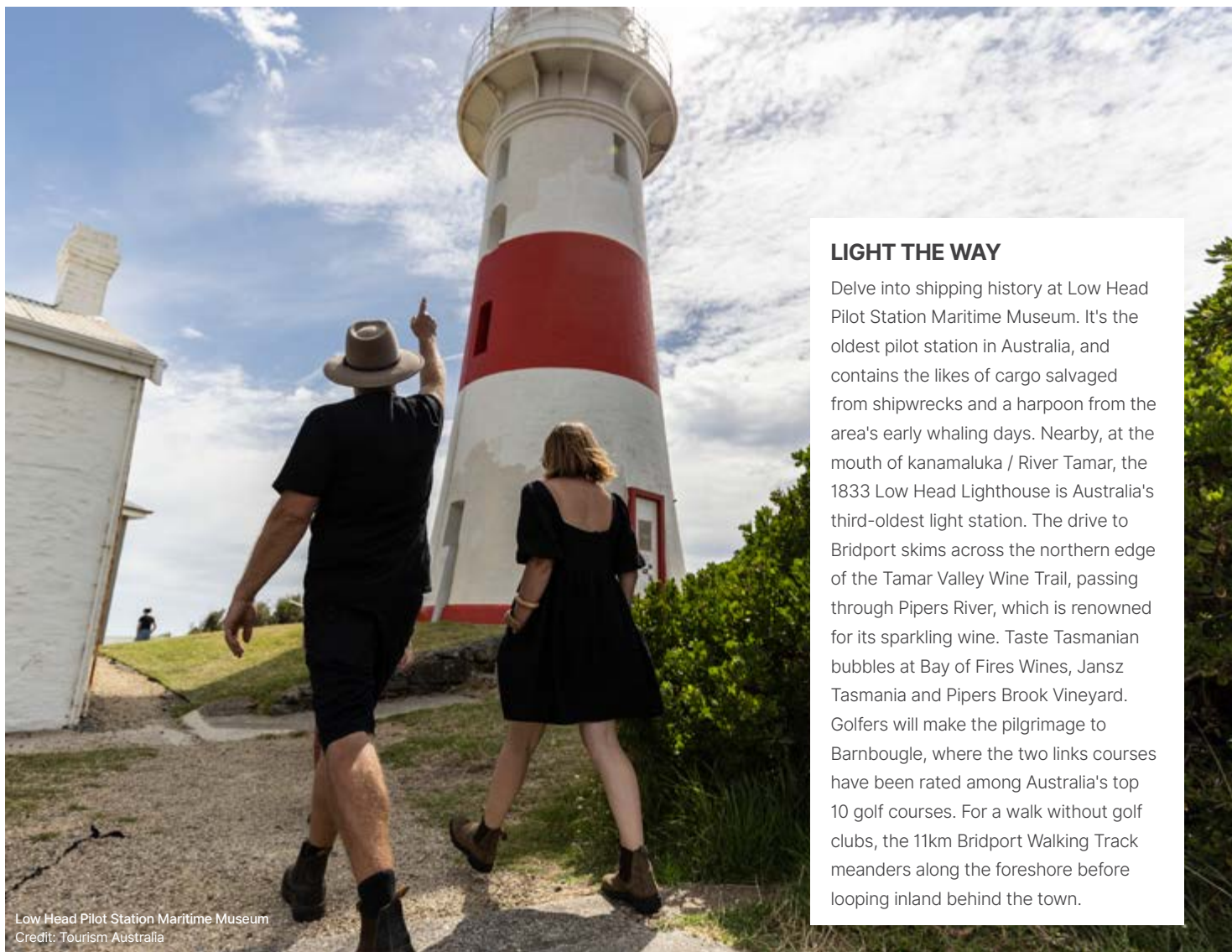
Here are five top day trips from Launceston.

North-east

FEEL THE FLOW

Fly through the treetops at Hollybank Forest Reserve on a zip-lining tour or high ropes course with Hollybank Wilderness Adventures, or join a Segway tour. Not enough adrenaline? Head to Derby. There's more than 120km of flowing mountain biking for all abilities along the trails of Blue Derby; bike hire and shuttles can be arranged at Vertigo MTB. The magnificent rainforest of Blue Tier will soothe the soul, but for pure relaxation book

a session in the Floating Sauna Lake Derby. Feel the heat of the wood-fire sauna before plunging into the cold lake just outside - it's skin tingling good. Head to Weldborough Hotel for a hearty meal before exploring the mysteriously pretty Little Blue Lake. There's cheese to be tried at Pyengana Dairy Company and one of the tallest waterfalls in Tasmania to be seen at St Columba Falls.



LIGHT THE WAY

Delve into shipping history at Low Head Pilot Station Maritime Museum. It's the oldest pilot station in Australia, and contains the likes of cargo salvaged from shipwrecks and a harpoon from the area's early whaling days. Nearby, at the mouth of kanamaluka / River Tamar, the 1833 Low Head Lighthouse is Australia's third-oldest light station. The drive to Bridport skims across the northern edge of the Tamar Valley Wine Trail, passing through Pipers River, which is renowned for its sparkling wine. Taste Tasmanian bubbles at Bay of Fires Wines, Jansz Tasmania and Pipers Brook Vineyard. Golfers will make the pilgrimage to Barnbougle, where the two links courses have been rated among Australia's top 10 golf courses. For a walk without golf clubs, the 11km Bridport Walking Track meanders along the foreshore before looping inland behind the town.

Low Head Pilot Station Maritime Museum
Credit: Tourism Australia



Mole Creek Caves tour (formerly Marakoopa Cave tour)
Credit: Tourism Australia & Graham Freeman



Mole Creek Caves tour (formerly Marakoopa Cave tour)
Credit: Tourism Australia & Graham Freeman



Trowunna Wildlife Park
Credit: Tourism Tasmania & Adrian Cook

West

UNDER THE SURFACE

Take a coffee break at Deloraine, and stretch the legs on the sculpture trail along the Meander River. The Great Western Tiers is a significant site for Tasmanian Aboriginal people; see artworks and bush tucker growing along the kooparooka niara Cultural Trail. Thrill seekers will try river sledding on the Meander River and plunge underground at Mole Creek. There's a hidden world of spectacular formations within a network of limestone caves, featuring sparkling crystals and underground streams, with glow-worms and other creatures that never see the light of day. Head off the beaten track on a wild cave tour with speleologists and brave a 24m abseil. Back on the surface, meet wombats and Tasmanian devils, among other charismatic wildlife, at Trowunna Wildlife Sanctuary.

North

GRAPE ESCAPE

Follow the **Tamar Valley Wine Trail** through premier cool-climate vineyards and cellar doors. This is the state's oldest winegrowing area: compact, picturesque and packed with gourmet experiences for travellers. The trail links about 30 cellar doors on both sides of kanamaluka / River Tamar. The east bank is the sparkling side, literally, with the "méthode Tasmanoise" of Jansz Wine Room among sparkling winemakers including **Clover Hill Wines**, Pipers Brook Vineyard and **Delamere Vineyards**.

On the west bank, swing by the new cellar door at Stoney Rise Wine Company, and follow a quiet backroad to **Swinging Gate Vineyard** for relaxed tastings or a session at its day spa. Take a pause from wine tasting and visit Beaconsfield Mine and Heritage Centre. Step into the mysterious world of seahorses and seadragons at Seahorse World in Beauty Point. And close by is Platypus House, where the elusive platypus can be seen up close.



Pyengana Dairy Company
Credit: Tourism Australia



Pyengana Dairy Company
Credit: Tourism Australia



Brickendon Estate
Credit: Tourism Australia



Brickendon Estate
Credit: Tourism Australia



Brickendon Estate
Credit: Alastair Bett

South

LEARN FROM HISTORY

A cluster of historic towns close to Launceston creates a fascinating drive high on natural beauty and colonial heritage. With its entire townscape classified by the National Trust, Evandale is a treasury of historical buildings. Explore the town on foot and head to the Sunday-morning market. Near Evandale, Clarendon is one of Australia's grandest colonial estates, with an elegant portico and a heritage walled garden. Take a guided tour of its period-furnished interiors. Neighbouring Brickendon and Woolmers estates near Longford are UNESCO World Heritage-listed convict sites - allow time to explore these pioneering properties. Brickendon features a convict-built farm village dating back to the 1820s. Woolmers Estate offers homestead tours, or wander the grounds to see the formal rose garden and Australia's oldest operating shearing shed. The 2.8km Convict Farm Walk links the two properties. Further down the Heritage Highway is the town of Ross. Stand on Australia's third oldest bridge and learn about convict life at Ross Female Factory.



Ross Female Factory
Credit: Alastair Bett



FOKI *The* 2024

Organising a music festival is more than just a weekend full of fun with over 200 volunteers helping to create a great atmosphere and making sure everything runs smoothly.

For the 10th time, the Festival of King Island is in full organising mode for the first weekend in February 2024. A very small committee started planning for the next festival just after the last one has finished. They look back, reflect and always wonder if there is anything that can be done better or can they improve certain things?

Then it all starts again - new poster designs, merchandise, and most importantly, which performers are invited for the next Festival?

With a bit of a naughty twist organiser Kim George says: "We want everybody to have a FOKI'n good time – and so we cater for a range of musical genre!" Whilst most festivals focus on a single style of music, FOKI loves to bring a number of different

styles together (Folk, Rock, Australiana, Blues, Pop, or Jazz), with the focus being that all the punters, no matter what age, have a good time.

Although there are still some organising months ahead, a few new names can already be added to the 2024 festival poster.

The Bad Dad Orchestra is a 9-piece band from Hobart, formed in mid-2015 from a concept devised by the band's late guitarist Liam Guthrie, that evolved quickly into a powerhouse combination of some of Tasmania's premiere contemporary musicians.

The band approached the FOKI organisers a few years ago wanting to come to King Island. The organisers were able to find them a spot in next year's line-up.



The Bad Dad Orchestra
Credit: FOKI



Joel and David Havea
Credit: FOKI



Is Man Kind
Credit: FOKI

Critics have likened The Bad Dad Orchestra sounds as classic Australian pub-rock with a modern twist, whilst others have named it a unique brand of soul.

Since establishing, the band has featured in some of Tasmania's most popular festival line-ups, like Falls Festival, Party in the Paddock, Bruny Island Blues & Roots Festival, and many more.

From the Gold Coast, FOKI will welcome a folk, alt, and rock-influenced three-piece band. The members of Is Man Kind has been playing music for years, though this act only came together at the start of 2021.

Prior to this, lead singer and music mentalist Mars Sahara, and his son, and drummer, The Doctor, were a duo powerhouse. To add a bit of that sexy pizzazz from a key's player is Capt. Jack. Combining they produce a sound that morphs the influences of The Doors, Pink Floyd, Jeff Buckley, and Santana with a hint of Chris Isaak. And their musical statement? "Music for us is about providing a show, not just the noise, so everything we do is about giving people an experience to remember."

A bit of an international flavour will be provided by brothers Joel and David Havea. For Joel, listening to old Tongan music has always transported him to that place. Born to a Tongan father and a Dutch mother in the friendly island's capital of Nuku'alofa, Joel was raised in the rich cultural landscape of Melbourne, Australia.

Since relocating to Europe, Joel has played hundreds of solo and trio shows in over 20 countries, spanning 4 continents.

In the process, he has become a fixture on the festival and club circuit, with performance highlights including Dubai Expo 2020, Bardentreffen World Music Festival (Nürnberg), Reeperbahn Festival (Hamburg), London Folk Festival, Bendigo Blues & Roots Festival (Australia), Copenhagen Songwriters Festival (Denmark), and the prestigious Montreux Jazz Festival in Switzerland.

For those visitors who enjoyed Bobby Alu in 2018, you will enjoy Joel & David Havea too!

The FOKI 2024 list of performers will grow during the coming months, with some returning performers and of course some local bands.

To secure your spot and the foreshore of Currie Harbour, go to foki.com.au and book your discounted early bird tickets now.



foki.com.au



Eastbound Buzz

Eastbound Buzz have steadily made a name for themselves in the Australian indie music scene, following the release of their 2019 debut EP 'Opportunity Shop' with a string of highlights including national radio airplay, festival performances, support slots on national tours and packed hometown headliners. Known for their evocative lyricism and their atmospheric, propelling sound that combines modern influences with a timeless heartland rock songwriting style, the Melbourne quintet built on the success of their debut with the 2022 follow-up EP 'Yathella', which showcased the band's most emotionally honest and inspired songwriting to date. Now, after 6 months road-testing new material at festivals across Australia's East Coast, Eastbound Buzz return with their new single 'Come Around' - an anthem for longing and renewal, driven by a cacophony of guitars, synths and a roaring chorus that is built for the live stage.





Partridge Farm

Discover the enchanting Partridge Farm B&B, a hidden gem nestled at the scenic southern end of Flinders Island. Surrounded by majestic eucalyptus trees, this self-contained holiday accommodation offers breathtaking vistas of Franklin Sound and the outer Furneaux Islands.

Partridge Farm comfortably accommodates up to 12 guests.

for bookings and further details visit www.partridgefarm.com.au





Christmas IS COMING

**Award-winning production
A CHRISTMAS CAROL makes
first cast announcement for 2023
– including Debra Lawrance,
Bernard Curry, Sarah Morrison and
Samantha Morley – and adds extra
previews.**

Last year's runaway hit *A Christmas Carol* today announced that many of the Green Room-nominated ensemble cast will return for the 2023 season at the Comedy Theatre this festive season, including Debra Lawrance (*Please Like Me*, *Five Bedrooms*, *Home and Away*) as The Ghost of Christmas Past and Samantha Morley (*Girl From The North Country*, *Billy Elliot*) as The Ghost of Christmas Present, Bernard Curry (*Savage River*, *Wentworth*) as Bob Cratchit and Sarah Morrison (*Come From Away*, *Ladies in Black*, *Mamma Mia!*) as Belle.

Also reprising their roles for the upcoming season are Anthony Harkin (*Kinky Boots*, *The Sound of Music*, *Next to Normal*) as Jacob Marley, Andrew Coshan (*A View From The Bridge*, *Merrily*

We Roll Along) as Fred and Stephanie Lambourn (Broadway cast of *A Christmas Carol*) as Mrs Cratchit. The lead role of Scrooge will be announced in July, along with the full cast announcement.

Three extra previews have also been added to the season, due to strong demand, with tickets now on sale for Tuesday 14 November at 6.30pm, Wednesday 15 November at 1.00pm and Thursday 16 November at 7.00pm.

Winner of five Tony Awards®, the Old Vic production of *A Christmas Carol* has delighted audiences and critics alike over seven seasons on the West End after premiering in 2017, and in its debut season in Melbourne in 2022. From the writer of *Harry Potter and The Cursed Child* and the director of *Matilda The Musical*, it is a magical interpretation of Charles Dickens' timeless story.

The role of Scrooge has been performed by a raft of celebrated actors including Rhys Ifans (*Notting Hill*), Andrew Lincoln (*The Walking Dead*), Stephen Mangan (*The Split*), Stephen Tompkinson (*DCI Banks*), Paterson Joseph (*Vigil*), and Owen Teale (*Games of Thrones*, *Line of Duty*).

Dickens' 1843 novella tells the story of a selfish and greedy old man, Ebenezer Scrooge, who hates everything related to Christmas. Ultimately a tale of compassion and redemption, after being visited by Christmas Past, Present and Yet to Come, Scrooge is changed into a better man.

The production is brought to life with scenic and costume design by Tony Award® winner Rob Howell, music and arrangements by Tony Award® winner Christopher Nightingale, lighting design by Tony Award® winner Hugh Vanstone, sound design by Tony Award® winner Simon Baker, movement by Lizzi Gee, and includes 12 cherished Christmas carols including 'Joy to the World' and 'Silent Night'. The Old Vic's A Christmas Carol will again fill the Comedy Theatre to the brim with music and merriment.

An Old Vic Production

A CHRISTMAS CAROL

A version by Jack Thorne

Conceived and Directed by Matthew Warchus

Presented by GWB Entertainment

Comedy Theatre, Melbourne

14 November – 31 December 2023

Tickets from \$49.50 (plus booking fee)

christmascarolaustralia.com.au



'This adaptation of the classic Christmas story tugs at the heartstrings'

Time Out



'An unforgettable experience'

– *AU Review*



'The goodwill it inspires should uplift even the most inveterate of Scrooges'

The Age



'Theatrical magic at work'


– *The Guardian*



The Bush PHARMACIST

Unlocking the wild fragrance of Flinders Island





You'll find *Kunzea ambigua* growing in dense thickets along the coastal rim of south east Australia. A hardy native, this mid-sized spreading shrub is a true natural workhorse. *Kunzea* thrives in sandy soils and is adept at returning a vibrant green hue to areas that have previously been cleared. Favoring wild and windy habitats, it's no wonder that Flinders Island has proven to be nothing short of a veritable *Kunzea* kingdom.

Unassuming to look at, *Kunzea* truly begins to come into its own during spring. It is then that sprays of pure white flowers adorn the plant, filling the air with wafts of sweet honey. It's an aroma that hints at the treasure that lies deep within – a golden liquid rich in aromatic delight. It's the very essence of the Tasmanian wilds, a fresh medicinal scent tinged with glorious overtones of eucalyptus alongside the faintest hints of citrus.



On a cool and drizzly afternoon, a wander into Ben Backhaus's essential oil distillery proves almost magical. One is instantly cloaked in the warmest of honey-menthol welcomes. Hanging thick in the air is the distinctive *Kunzea* fragrance that seemingly fills your pores and warms your soul. Pure island magic.

Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo



An old dairy is the perfect framework for this contemporary bush pharmacy. "Back in the 1950s and 60s this was a working dairy," explains Ben. "Whilst rustic, it's providing us with a great base from which to create a whole new sustainable industry for the island. We like the fact it has its own history too – locals often come in and start getting sentimental, reminiscing about the old days – it ties this new business to the island's past in a special way."

Ben's father Steve, an industry expert, devoted a lifetime to putting Australian essential oils on the map. "Dad worked in these circles for more than 30 years and along the way built an extensive global network," explains Ben. "He was so excited when he first visited Flinders years ago and saw the native *Kunzea* stands. It was always his wish to retire here and do something special...he knew straight away how exceptional the island was."

Steve's foresight led to 50 acres in the middle of Bass Strait being carefully transformed into a well-tended *Kunzea* plantation. Nestled between the coast and a stunning mountainous backdrop is row upon row of striking *Kunzea* khaki. "We've produced over one million seedlings now," explains Ben, speaking of the investment crafted alongside his father.

Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo

“There are about 30 acres here under plantation at the moment. It’s certainly been a sacrifice to get it to this point, but it’s starting to get exciting now that there’s something really unique to show to the world.”

Spicy, woody and sweet notes of the Tasmanian bush dance in the air as Ben explains the phenomenal amount of research and development that sits behind each bottle of the Backhaus’s innovative product. Bush Pharmacy, the most southern native oil distillery in the country, is quietly carving a reputation for superior essential oils of unsurpassed quality. With Steve sadly passing away recently, Ben has now firmly stepped into the driver’s seat – ably supported by local mainstay John Woolley. “It’s John and I working out here together now,” he nods. Whilst it’s clear Ben is missing having his father by his side, John’s enthusiasm sees this unlikely pair operating like a well-oiled machine. “John’s been fantastic and together we’re determined to continue to build Dad’s vision.”



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo

Typically growing to a height of 2-3 metres elsewhere, the *Kunzea* on Flinders can reach a staggering 6 metres. “Growing conditions here are ideal,” nods Ben animatedly. “What’s even more exciting is the fact that we’re seeing that plants grown in different areas on the island yield different qualities in terms of their oil. You’d think they’d all be the same, but there is variation in the environment that appears to be reflected in the plant’s genetics. That’s pretty fascinating and something that could ultimately shape the future of our oil production.”

“The plants are slow grown. Things are pure and simple over here on Flinders.”



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo

Kunzea has a unique composition, including a very high level of alpha-pinene, an organic compound that contributes to its woody, medicinal scent. The same chemical constituent is behind the distinctive fragrance of pine, rosemary, frankincense and wild orange, and is thought to support the function of the immune and respiratory systems. It is also said to have natural-occurring anti-bacterial properties.

Indeed, oral histories passed down through Tasmanian generations indicate that *Kunzea* has been used for centuries by the Aboriginal community. “We know that it’s been used for a variety of purposes over time,” says Ben. “It’s traditionally been applied as an insect repellent and used as a healing agent for a range of common ailments. Today, we see it incorporated into a whole range of different products, from those supporting the treatment of muscular aches and pains and insect bite inflammation through to products addressing cold and flu symptoms.”

Kunzea oil is most prized for scent. It is primarily sought after for aromatherapy use, with superior oils being the domain of high end essential oil brands. Aside from massage oils and oils for burning, it is finding its way into boutique soaps, creams and perfumes. “The big brands are just starting to seek it out now too,” says Ben. “There’s unlimited scope for it really which is going to make the next couple of decades very exciting for us.”

Extracting *Kunzea* oil is a process Ben, Steve and John have refined over the past five years. Freshly cut leaves and branchlets are collected and loaded into a huge still. Steam is then pumped into the bottom, serving to permeate the biomass and release the aromatic molecules into vapour – creating the best smelling workplace in the entire Furneaux Group.



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo

The vaporised plant compounds are then chilled with water from the local wetlands, with a condenser capturing the cooled vapour back into liquid form. The aromatic liquid by-product drops are then collected in a separator. As water and oil do not mix, the essential oil floats to the top of the water and can be readily siphoned off. The result is a precious litre or two of golden magic.

John describes a typical day's work. "To give you a bit of idea, if we spend two hours cutting plants, it will take another three hours to run through the extraction process." He continues, "Some days are better than others. It all depends on the yield of the particular plants we are working with. *Kunzea* is quite low yielding...blue gum on the other hand

will produce four times the amount of oil for the same volume of biomass."

“Five cubic metres of *Kunzea* biomass equates to four to five kilograms of oil,” says Ben.

Whilst building its reputation on the back of its *Kunzea* expertise, Bush Pharmacy extracts oils from a range of other natives too. Coastal tea-tree and manuka are popular, alongside blue gum and southern rosalina.

Each fragrance is unique, as is the length of the distillation process.

“Each species is different, and there can be variations within species too,” nods Ben. “For example, each species will require different periods of steaming as they all release their aromatic compounds at various points.”

“We generally harvest annually,” explains John when asked about the intricacies of the plantation. “In saying that, we work



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo

when we can. On Flinders it can get pretty wild, and we have to harvest when it's relatively calm and when the plants are dry. That means we work around what Mother Nature throws at us. It's just part of living out here." He goes on to explain, "The island philosophy and ingenuity are second to none. What we're doing here is all very new, so if we need a special piece of equipment sometimes we just have to make it ourselves. You don't grow up here without leaning to be resourceful."

Ben and John harvest both from the *Kunzea* plantation and from wild locations around the island. "The equipment we have now has allowed us to access more remote sites and to deal with boggy conditions," says John. "It's quite unique to find stands of *Kunzea* alone, usually it's interspersed with other species. It's just another unique element that we find here on Flinders."

Standing amid a squalling Flinders weekend, Ben's heartfelt passion and energy for working with natural products is clearly evident. "We're always learning, building our database and refining our



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo

production techniques," he nods. "By taking samples from the island's unique locations and selecting seed from those same locations we are looking to emulate superior oil quality. We're working hard to define the standard for *Kunzea* oil. And of course to develop full bodied, consistently high quality oils that can be produced in commercial volumes. The past five years have been about constant reinvestment in the business."

"We take a lot of pride in working sustainably to produce natural products that are of the highest standards," says Ben. "I also love the community, working outdoors and being in places that other people don't get to see. It's unbeatable."

With the elements able to wreak havoc in an instant, Bush Pharmacy has invested significantly in a hothouse that would spark the interest of any engineer. Whilst nestled in behind protective stands of coastal scrub and a collection of old farm buildings, it's been specifically designed to withstand 130km/hr winds. "We sometimes open the door at either end to funnel the wind through," explains John. "People often comment that what we're doing is unorthodox, but it's just what we need to do to work with the environment rather than against it."

Sitting within are over 30,000 cells, each carrying a precious collection of seedlings. "*Kunzea* might be a prolific seeder but it doesn't strike easily. We have to let them sit, protected in the greenhouse, for four to five months before being planted out." Ben adds grinning, "It's rather infuriating that billions of seeds are released in the wild, but in reality it's actually quite a difficult plant to cultivate."



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo



Credit: The Tasmanian Tuxedo

"Sometimes a new variation pops up...a broader leaf for example. When we see things like that it creates new opportunities. Perhaps double the leaf will equate to double the oil?"

"*Kunzea ambigua* is a prolific seeder," explains Ben Backhaus. "The wind can blow those seeds hundreds of metres...it's a very resourceful plant. In addition to the stands growing in the wild, we commonly find *Kunzea* around the edges of farms doing its best to regenerate those cleared areas. Ironically, the resource we are keen to harvest is considered a weed to farmers here on Flinders. This generally works pretty well as they are more than happy for us to come in and grab some off their property."

"*Kunzea*...it's basically everyone's worst nightmare except for ours."

Bush Pharmacy has been quick to utilise the discarded biomass out on the farm. "The by-product makes a fantastic mulch," says John, jumping into the tractor to move the latest load. "It packs down really well for horticultural use. We use it out on the paddocks to help enrich the soil and the locals also call in to grab a load for their gardens. Nothing is wasted."

This unique cross between science, innovation, agriculture and sustainability is in safe hands with this

intelligent and well-spoken young man. "I'm proud of how far we've come to date, but there's a lot more yet to come, particularly in terms of exploring the efficacy of these oils. At this point I'm remaining focussed on understanding the plants, getting the best out of our processes and ensuring what we're doing is sustainable. Yes, it can be a struggle, but I'm determined that it will be worth it. What we are building is something special."

Speaking of the bringing a new industry to Flinders, Ben says, "I think most islanders are all for balanced, considered and sustainable change and for things that help the whole community. My mindset has totally changed since moving here... I know that what I do can help lift others up too. The businesses here are intertwined...everyone here has a part to play in the future of Flinders Island."

"I was looking for a journey I think," Ben muses. "Some sort of path to follow...and this has certainly been that. I'm really enjoying the R&D and exploring the opportunities. It's a lifestyle choice too, you either like it or you don't," nods Ben. "Flinders can be an expensive choice in terms of lifestyle, but that's the price you pay for living in paradise."

"I find myself smiling all the time," finishes Ben. "I'd actually be unsure if this would succeed if we weren't on Flinders, but over here people have been just so forthcoming and supportive. I think it's just part of my make up to try and do things myself, a bit like Dad did. Everyone helps everyone here and I think that's the part I love about it the most."

Bush Pharmacy's range of beautiful essential oils are sold through **Essential Oils Tasmania**.

Thank you to **The Tasmanian Tuxedo** for this contribution, for more great Tasmanian stories visit: thetasmaniantuxedo.com

FURNEAUX ISLANDS

Festival 2024

REFLECT – SHARE – CELEBRATE

The Furneaux Islands Festival 2024 marks a significant milestone - ten years of a celebration that evolved from a quiet decision to rethink the concept of Australia Day.

Originally launched in 2014, the Furneaux Islands Festival is not just another event on the community calendar; it is a vibrant affirmation of the shared cultural history of the Furneaux Islands. It aims to foster a sense of awareness and pride in the unique aspects of island life. Initiated by Flinders Council in collaboration with the Flinders Island Aboriginal Association, the festival has become a symbol of unity and cultural diversity, acknowledging the complex histories that define the island communities.



Credit: fifestival



Credit: fifestival



Credit: fifestival

Flinders Island became part of a national conversation in 2013 when the Council decided to discontinue its traditional January 26 beach celebrations, a date often referred to as "Invasion Day" by many in the community, including Aboriginal residents, who make up over 16% of the island's population. The decision led to mixed reactions but also paved the way for an alternative event focused on celebrating the island's multicultural heritage.

During this time, local community members Judy Jacques and Sandro Donati curated an exhibition entitled 'Celebrating the History of Music and Dance of the Furneaux Islands.'

The initial concept envisioned a live concert that would revisit and celebrate the musical heritage on display at the Furneaux Museum. This presented an opportunity to merge two significant events. The result was a community day



Credit: fifestival



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Credit: fifestival

filled with music, food, and celebrations, held for the first time on January 25, 2014.

The inaugural Furneaux Islands Festival emerged from this atmosphere of change, combining the island's rich musical heritage with a commitment to community involvement.

When the Flinders Island Aboriginal Association Incorporated (FIAAI) joined the initiative, it was transformed into an annual three-day event. Maxine Roughley, FIAAI CEO, highlighted that "the island community has shown leadership in rethinking how Australia Day can be celebrated."

While January 26th is kept free on the community calendar for community members to choose how they wish to spend it, the Furneaux Islands Festival offers an inclusive alternative, one that has grown significantly over the years and aims to embrace all members of the community.

As the nation grapples with the question of how to celebrate Australia Day, the Furneaux Islands Festival stands as an example of how local initiatives can lead the way.

Join us in 2024 for a festival that aims to reflect, share, and celebrate. Together, we'll mark a decade of the Furneaux Islands Festival, building on its successes and looking forward to an even brighter future.

Festival Highlights for 2024

Three days of celebration at various locations on Flinders Island, ensuring that the celebration is inclusive and accessible to all.

From the Twilight Food Market Event to the Islander Portrait Prize, to the Community BBQ Day the festival will have something for everyone, encouraging active community participation.

Special programs designed to engage youth, including outdoor activities and mentorship opportunities.



Credit: fifestival



Credit: fifestival



FURNEAUX ISLANDS
FESTIVAL

REFLECT
SHARE
CELEBRATE

19-21
JANUARY
2024

JOIN US IN CELEBRATING THE 10TH
FURNEAUX ISLANDS FESTIVAL ON
FLINDERS ISLAND



THE FURNEAUX ISLANDS FESTIVAL IS A
MULTIFACETED CELEBRATION THAT HONOURS
THE PAST, STRENGTHENS THE PRESENT, AND
ENVISIONS A PROMISING FUTURE FOR THE
FURNEAUX ISLANDS COMMUNITY.



www.fifestival.com.au



An aerial photograph of a large green football oval. The oval is surrounded by a dirt road and a parking lot filled with cars. In the background, there are several buildings, including a large one with a corrugated metal roof. The word 'KICK IN' is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font above the word 'Hope', which is written in a large, white, cursive script font. The entire scene is captured from a high angle, looking down on the oval.

KICK IN Hope

As a community grapples with change, one of Australia's smallest footy leagues fights to survive.

In a miserable Saturday — the “windiest of the season” — Irene Robins sat sheltered in the passenger seat of her hatchback, scrutinising the oval beneath. Despite the cold, the car window was open, her left arm shooting out every minute or so, pre-emptively and expectantly, to collect small fistfuls of cash from passing cars.



Saturdays on King Island are for football.

It was a Grassy home game — Irene's team — which meant she sat sentinel over the ground, taking entry fees from some of the island's 1600-odd residents.

A flipped-open glove box balancing a scattering of coins, notes and a homemade egg sandwich revealed something of a game-day routine.

For Irene, and most of those parked around the oval's perimeter, it amounts to more than just habit.

It is ritual. It is congregation.

"Football is very important to me. It means everything," she said.

"I mean, if there was no football, I'd hate to think what the kids would do."

She paused for a moment: "Or even the adults."

"I think we'd be lost without it."

There is no football league in Australia quite like King Island's. From April to August, the same three teams play one another on loop. North vs Grassy. Grassy vs Currie. Currie vs North. Rinse the chunks of volunteer-tended turf off, and repeat.

Set on an island that was once a land bridge between Tasmania and Victoria, it is the romantic ideal of country sport. It exists to sustain community, and is sustained only by the grit and loving grind of communal effort. The league's vice-president Nicole Conley is an ever-present part of that effort.

"People look forward to Saturdays," she said.

"There's a lot of people who live spread out all over the island — farmers especially — and it means you get to come off the farm, you get to have a break.

"It's so important for people's mental health to know that's going to happen.

"You may have been working on your farm and not seen anyone for a whole week.

"But then come Saturday, you know you can go to town and there'll be some of your mates there."

On the ground

Football was first played on King Island in August 1903. 120 years on, it stands as a national curio — one of the smallest Australian rules football leagues in the country.

From the outside, it is treasured as a portal to times past; a competition where nothing seems to change. Lately, things are not quite the same.

Jan Van Ruiswyk, the mutton-chopped president of the King Island Football Association, has been a part of the league since his family moved to the island in 1970.

"It's at a critical point," he said.



An early photo of the Currie Football Club on King Island in 1912. Supplied - King Island Museum
Credit: Jeremy Story Carter



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter

Money is not so much the issue — the finances of the clubs and league are healthy enough. Aside from the umpires and a small honorarium given to the league secretary, no-one on the ground or behind the scenes is getting paid.

For all the commitment King Islanders make to the league, the bigger issue is people. Specifically, players.

Look out across the picturesque oval in the main township of Currie, and the problem reveals itself. Only 12 players from each team take the field — a recent adjustment, and a third fewer than the standard 18. Benches might only house a couple more.

Players from the club not featuring on game day can often be spotted filling in for one of the other teams. So too, juniors.

Even the ground itself is, according to Van Ruiswyk, as small as it can be while still being AFL compliant — the 50-metre arc more like a generous 40 metres and change.

It is, like so many aspects of life on King Island, something of a contradiction: why in a place that so values football, is it so hard to find footballers?

Build up

Restless waves of change are lapping at King Island's shore.

Around the football ground or at the pub, you are still most likely to meet a flannel-clad farmer — perhaps cattle or kelp — or maybe a worker from the recently reopened tungsten mine down on the south-east of the island.

There are a few immediate answers — some self-employed farmers on the island, for instance, fear the risk of injury preventing them from working.

Then there are those that are more concealed.



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter

But from a distance, or from Instagram, you could develop an impression of King Island as a place of windswept luxury.

Glossy photos of its perfectly untamed natural beauty and drone footage of its brooding coastline are increasingly used to market the island to a higher-end tourist crowd.

Boutique houses and lodges — some of which cost north of \$1000 per night — are emerging to cater to that market.

The island now has as many golf courses as it does footy teams. Two of the three are ranked among the best in Australia, with the one at Cape Wickham considered among the best in the world.

Bucket list-ticking golfers have been known to charter private planes, hire a driver to take them directly to the spectacular links course on the north-western tip of the island, then leave after a round of 18.

"I feel like as a community, we're a little bit sheltered from the golf courses and the tourism," Nicole Conley said.

"Unless you're at the airport and you literally see them come in, you wouldn't even know people are flying their private planes in.

"They are taking them to a golf course, or a retreat or accommodation, then they're jumping back on their plane, and they're leaving again.

"For a majority of us, we don't even know that it's happening. We're just living our lives every day, not realising that this stuff is going on."

One King Islander expressed anxiety that the island couldn't live up to its own new image. Another complained that the only houses being built seemed to be "bespoke".



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter

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Credit: Jeremy Story Carter

The local mayor, Marcus Blackie, is wary of the risk of an increasingly bifurcated economy on King Island.

He wants to convert the recent “increased economic activity” into the sort of community presence that fills out football teams.

He thinks the island needs more restaurants, cafes and services to better capitalise on its luxury market. For that to work, King Island needs more people — 1,000 more by the mayor’s reckoning — and more affordable homes for them to live in.

“We need more of everything,” Cr Blackie said.

“We’re happy to accept the high-end [tourists] and the golfers that arrive in private jets, and those that can afford a massively expensive mansion on our beautiful coastline here.

“But our number one priority would be increasing our residential housing.”

The mayor doubles as one of the game day umpires at the football (the local baker is another).

He calls King Islanders “robust”, but he’s aware of the challenge of maintaining the island’s core sense of community, while growing its economy.

“They are a difficult people to lead,” he says. He quickly adds: “I say that as a compliment.”



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter

A hardened sense of community can be felt immediately on landing on the island. King Islanders, almost to a person, will wave over the steering wheel as they pass — even if you’re from “away”. Locals are quick to joke and quicker to laugh. There’s a buoyancy to conversation, a life and lightness that suggests whatever the challenge, people are happy to be there.

There are, nonetheless, a few things worth grumbling about. Food is not cheap, owing in no small part to the cost of freight. A ham, cheese and tomato sandwich paired with a coffee might set you back \$24. The place is literally synonymous with dairy and the coveted cheese producer King Island Dairy looms large on its identity. Yet two litres of fresh milk at the supermarket costs upwards of \$8.

For such a small community, these forces have a habit of feeding into one another.

From his vantage point, having been involved in both local dairy and football, Stacey Martin can just about draw a through line between the cost of milk, and the lack of football players on a Saturday afternoon.

“Once upon a time we had our own local milk supply,” he said. “It was family owned and run. They sent their excess milk into the dairy and then produced enough milk and cream for the locals to consume. But that is no longer the case.

“All the farms have got bigger (and) there’s less people, less families, less children. Hence, the struggle for numbers around football.”

Mr Martin is still involved in just about all aspects of King Island football — but it’s his work coordinating and coaching junior football on the island that seems to command his most earnest attention.

“Everyone is very aware that there’s a thin line and football could stop any year,” he said.

“We need to keep football going for as long as we possibly can for the juniors that don’t move off the island, who want to make a life here, to give them something to aspire to.”

Boys’ netball, girls’ footy

If you stand on the main street in Currie at the right time of day, you can usually view the procession. A school bell will ring, and a gang of kids disgorge from the only high school on King Island.

Their ages and heights vary wildly — some roughly the size of their backpacks, others awkwardly stretched in that mid-high school way — but implausibly, they are all mates. They might stop by the supermarket for a post-school snack, but soon enough they all make their way to the football oval and stretch out across the field. Juniors football training is one of the only regular organised activities for kids on the island.

It is loose — there’s random idle cartwheels and drills dedicated to who has the best goal celebration — but there’s enough cohesion for it to mean something.

“Even though they’re in grade 10, or grade seven, or grade three, they are all excited,” said Nicole Conley.

“They are teammates. They are friends.”

At a Thursday afternoon training for Grassy’s juniors, a group of boys joked about the semi-viral ‘Div 12 Ressies’ TikTok account while Irene Robins carried around homemade cupcakes.

Among the happy chaos was a group of four girls.



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter

Australian rules football has for so long defaulted to locking out women and girls from meaningful participation.

On King Island, as with a growing number of communities around the country, things are starting to change.

"It's fun," said Savannah, a permanently-grinning 11 year-old.

"You get to tackle all the big boys.

"Yeah you get to dominate them," said her mate Heidi, before bursting into a fit of laughter.

"I dream of playing women's footy when I'm older," said Maddison, the equal oldest of the group at 13.

This year is the first time Grassy's junior team has fielded girls.



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter

It's one of many small but considered adjustments being made around the island — an acknowledgement that survival, of sport and community, can only be achieved through grassroots change.

Netball — the only other junior sport played regularly on the island — now takes place on Saturday mornings, timed so that girls who play can also feature at the football later in the day.

To the thrill of netball President Lauren Harvey, that change has also led to some boys — including her own son — playing netball before their junior football games.

"It has been a really big step forward for our association and a great, great thing for the community to witness," she said.

Grassy club president and self-described "general dogsbody" Tanya Stellmaker said it was incumbent on the adults of King Island to ensure community sport survived, by whatever means necessary.

The potential consequences of failure, she warns, are real.

"We are isolated. We are in the middle of nowhere," she said.

"There would be 30 more kids on the street with nothing to do. I feel like our crime rate would go up.

**"It is fight.
It is a fight every year."**

Welcome to the club

On a typically windy midwinter Tuesday night, players from Currie gathered under lights to train. Breath — from men, kids, dogs — hung in the chill of the air.

I had been in King Island for a few days and had walked down to the football ground to watch seniors training.

As I approached, a man, who later introduced himself as Jimbo, shouted over the fence.



Credit: Jeremy Story Carter

“Hey mate — do you want to have a run? Are you here on Saturday? Do you want to play?”

With that, I was part of the Currie Football Club, established 1904. I tried to caution Currie’s captain, a skilled and commanding half-back called Mole, that I wasn’t much of a player, and even less of an athlete.

Mole, otherwise but only very occasionally known as Joel Williams, said that wasn’t a problem.

The club, he assured, had a rich tradition of topping up its lists with whoever is in town.

“We get people from all over the globe to play. We’ve got two or three blokes this year that hadn’t even seen an AFL footy.”

By the following Saturday, the offer, or demand, had not been rescinded.

Irene Robins was once again working the gate when I drove into the ground. She scowled when I told her I’d be playing for Currie against her Grassy.

In the early juniors game, a high-vis-clad volunteer ran alongside a nine-year-old boy, offering encouragement and gentle advice as he nervously made his debut.

Inside the seniors change rooms, footballs thudded off the concrete floor as Cosmic Psychos’ Nice Day To Go To the Pub blared. Someone asked which way the wind on the ground was blowing. “F**in’ everywhere,” was the response.

I peeled away from the rooms and bumped into Grassy President Tanya Stellmaker, who was positioned outside the canteen.

Her son, 15, was set to make his debut alongside his 55 year-old dad. I suggested it was poignant — maybe even a moment of profound symbolism for her and the family.

Tanya bristled, immediately cutting through any sentimentality. “It was inevitable,” she said.

As soon as the opening siren rang, a crunching physicality ensued. The quality of life on King Island may not always be matched by the quality of football, but there’s a hardness and

commitment to the contest that hints at how much it matters.

I found myself in an unaccountable position up forward.

Early in the game, the ball was launched into a tangle of bodies in the forward pocket. It slipped out the back of the pack, like a piece of kelp falling from a ute on the main street. I gathered it, turned and snapped. I missed.

“Straight to the back line for you maaaate,” chuckled a local over the fence.

The game was paused when a dog called Pepper came running out mid-game to our ruckman, who had to jog her back to the boundary line. Twice.

Grassy, who locals believe are on track to win their third consecutive premiership, were too strong, recording a 11.10.76 to 5.10.40 win.

By some mixed fortune, I finished with three goals and five excruciating points, and left the field convinced that no sound is more exhilarating than a few dozen car horns beeping in reward of a goal.

The generosity of community — of being truly welcomed and feeling part of something bigger — was carried deep into the night.

A Helen Keller quote is used as the Facebook cover photo on King Island’s community noticeboard: “Alone we can do so little, together we can do so much.”

It is an almost jarringly tender sentiment from a hard-headed, “difficult to lead” community.

And yet on King Island, whether viewed from afar, or a brief glimpse within, it reverberates in resounding truth.

“For football to survive on the island now, we have to work together,” said Jan van Ruiswyk.

“We need to do whatever it takes. And that’s exactly what people are doing.”

Words and photos by: **Jeremy Story Carter**
ABC National Regional Reporting Team

A group of four people are seen from behind, standing in a dense forest. They are all looking through binoculars, suggesting they are birdwatchers. The forest is filled with tall, thin trees and green foliage. The scene is captured in a cinematic style with soft lighting.

Wings

ON KING

A project to find and tell the story of
King Island's birds

Launched in April, 2017, the *Wings on King* Project invites bird enthusiasts to visit King Island and help gather data from established survey sites. These sites are situated on both private and public land, across the island so visitors get to see some lovely places most visitors don't.

What will the project achieve?

Using Birds as Indicators of the health of the whole island, we will use the data to identify conservation areas of most importance and undertake actions to ensure a sustainable future for the island, its people and its wildlife.

To do this we need to:

- Learn about the presence, absence and populations of the resident land birds of King Island
- Establish current population levels of the King Island subspecies and monitor these closely
- Establish how the Bass Strait migrating birds use the Island when they are here
- Identify the most important areas of the island for conservation initiatives including new or improved corridors
- Watch for evidence of southward drifts in distribution ranges of mainland terrestrial birds that may be a response to a changing climate

The Project is a project of the King Island Landcare Group and BirdLife Australia in association with Birds of King Island
The next surveys will be held during Spring 2023 from the 9th November to the 11th November.



WINGS ON KING

Spring Bird Surveys

9 – 12th
Nov. 2023

9th – Welcome & Orientation | 10th – Bird Surveys | 11th – Bird Surveys & dinner with guest speaker

*We can't
do it alone.
We need YOU
to give us
a hand.*

Register here :
birdsofkingisland.com



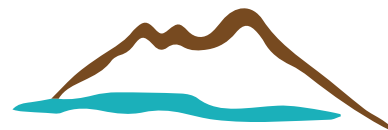
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A HUNDRED STEPS FROM
THE WATER WITH EXPANSIVE
VIEWS ACROSS BASS STRAIT
TO THE OUTER ISLANDS.**



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