

TAKE A HIKE

# The naked truth about Freycinet

Wineglass Bay Sail Walk, Tasmania



Wineglass Bay, Freycinet National Park.

Tasmania is hiker heaven, says Cameron Wilson. He's done several multi-day walks there since 2002 and hasn't packed boardies once.

It begins, as the best things in life often do, with a nude swim. It was my first time at Wineglass Bay, on the east coast of Tasmania. What, you imagined my first swim there would be a boardies-on affair? Think again, my friend, and ask yourself how such prim, conservative ideals entered your life. You used to be cool, man. What happened? So when I was asked to go back to the glorious Freycinet Peninsula – and take another frolic at Wineglass – the answer was an easy yes.

“The trail gets slithery with all that dolerite scree near the top. Don't feel you have to keep climbing.” So says Adrien, our guide for the day on Maria Island.

A visit to the island is no certainty. Anchorages on this trip are weather dependent – a reminder that transportation by yacht is an adventure in itself.

We hike down to the former convict settlement of Darlington just before sunset, where the grass is alive with Cape Barren geese, Forester kangaroos and Maria Island's blonde-furred wombats.

Leigh and Lily from Perth are my only companions besides the crew of four, and a nicer father-daughter pair you couldn't find. Skipper Colin anchors the 23m ketch *Lady Eugenie* in Crocketts Bay, then Leigh, Lily, guides Adrien and Maddy and I tender ashore, and set off up boulder-y Bear Hill.

Ninety minutes later we emerge from the bush, where I swim *sans pantalon* in the gin-clear shallows. Deckhand Mitch has set a table and chairs in the sand, and we're treated to Bruny Island oysters, Champagne and beer, before I've even dried off.

Dinner tonight is salmon fillets and salads. After too many glasses of Tassie pinot noir, Paul Simon, Van Morrison, The Pretenders and the Red Hot Chili Peppers all get a run, along with Colin's beloved 1970s Welsh rockers Budgie.

Early next morning we motor through Schouten Passage to reach the shelter of Wineglass Bay. Leigh, Maddy and I embark on the four-hour return hike to the 579m peak of Mount Graham – an ascent

through a forest of giant gums dotted with orchids. Towards the summit the trail turns to button grass, then we're among Freycinet's pink granite boulders. The trail then turns marshy again before plunging back into the forest, and we land on (arguably) the most beautiful beach in the world.

Many words have been spent trying to describe Wineglass Bay. Simply, every Australian should get to swim here. The ocean temp is around 16 degrees Celsius, but I splash about for 15 minutes wearing only a goofy smile, and I want to never leave.

## NEED TO KNOW

- Take hiking shoes or boots for hiking.
- Go barefoot on the boat or else pick up a \$39 pair of Dunlop Volleys to wear.
- As with all Tasmanian wilderness trips, a swimsuit is entirely optional.
- A four-day (three-night) trip with the Tasmanian Walking Company is priced from \$2895 to \$3195 per person; six days is from \$3995 to \$4395. The price includes guides, crew, accommodation, all meals and Tasmanian wines, along with your final stop at Darlington Vineyard for a wine tasting and canapes.

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