



from left: The oldest bridge in Australia at Richmond; fresh walnuts



◀ aesthetics haven't changed much in more than a century. Here, the oldest bridge in the country spans the Coal River, its graceful lines and honey-coloured sandstone show no signs of the horror it must have been for convicts to build. Richmond is a good place to shop for antiques and, if hunger strikes, the bakery is famous for its pies.

The coast itself consists of deserted white-sand beaches with turquoise water. The Freycinet Peninsula loops down to point south so that, as the road clings to the coast, you can enjoy breathtaking views over Great Oyster Bay and back up the peninsula. You can stay around Swansea or book a room at Freycinet Lodge in the Freycinet National Park on the peninsula itself. Both make a great base for exploring the National Park, including the popular Wineglass Bay walk, which is a good two-and-a-half-hour trek and a great way of working up an appetite.

Further up the coast it's crayfish central. At St Helens, we feast at The Captain's Catch on the wharf and I realise that I've never eaten a really fresh crayfish before. This is the first time I've ever tasted the sea in the sweet flesh and now I can see why people make such a fuss.

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Next, the food tour turns west, taking a detour to the Pyengana cheese factory. There was a one-generation gap in cheddar making in the village of Pyengana before Jon Healey reinstated the tradition. With the knowledge lost, Jon wondered where he might learn the skills. Then his brother met a man, who knew a man, who offered young Jon a non-paying job learning cheesemaking in the Swiss Alps. So Jon, then 15, hopped on a plane to Zurich. For his 18th birthday, his parents bought him some bargain-basement equipment from a closed-down cheese factory and, 16 years later, his cloth-wrapped cheddar is recognised as one of the best in Australia. You can hear the story, taste the different ages of cheddar and buy products cooked by industrious relatives at the Pyengana Dairy Company.

travel notes

where to go: To prepare an itinerary for your own food tour, visit the Tourism Tasmania website – www.discover.tasmania.com – and download a copy of the *Cellar Door & Farm Gate Guide 2003 – 2004*. It includes contact details for Kate's Berry Farm, Andrea Cole's Freycinet Marine Farm and the Pyengana Dairy Company. It's also worth downloading a copy of *Tasmania's Great Short Walks*. If you don't have internet access and would like a copy of these publications, Tourism Tasmania will send them to you for free. Tel 1300 655 145.

where to stay: Andrea Cole's Shuckers Cottage, right on Pelican Bay, sleeps up to five people and costs \$120 per night, which includes a plate of fresh seafood every day. Tel (03) 6257 0140. There's also Freycinet Lodge in the Freycinet National Park, tel (03) 6257 0101; www.freycinetlodge.com.au or the Edge of the Bay Resort at Coles Bay, tel (03) 6257 0102; www.edgeofthebay.com.au

take a tour: For information on Gourmet Safaris' next Tassie tour, tel (02) 9960 5675; www.gourmetsafaris.com.au

And then it's on to Launceston where our Tasmanian food tour climaxes with a meal in the state's finest restaurant, Stillwater. Here, in a renovated flour mill on the Tamar River, chef Don Cameron prepares imaginative dishes that are served in a friendly and welcoming space. There's no big-city attitude here and the food speaks for itself. Favourites from the degustation menu include a duckling tartlet in the shortest of short pastry, and seared scallops on a succulent roasted mushroom. There's also a sashimi scallop drizzled with artichoke essence and truffle oil. It's delicious but, when it comes to raw scallops, nothing can beat that fresh scallop drizzled with nothing but the cleanest seawater and served in the shell on Andrea Cole's boat off the east coast. ●