

# Location, location, Launceston

Built at the confluence of three rivers, Tasmania's northern city is sitting very pretty indeed.

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**H**ISTORY HAS BEEN very generous to Launceston. Established in 1806, Tasmania's second-largest city is one of Australia's oldest with a history of great wealth, built first on a pastoral expansion and then a mining boom. By the turn of the century it boasted streetscapes of fine Georgian and Victorian buildings as well as exceptional parks and gardens, set off by its location at the juncture of three rivers – the Tamar, the South Esk and the North Esk.

Its historical legacy is still largely intact thanks to relatively slow development during the 1960s, a time when many other cities in Australia were busily tearing down their elegant 19th-century

buildings to clear the way for high-rise towers, apartment blocks, fast-food joints and shopping malls.

Launceston's architectural gems are the magnificent houses built by early pastoralists, on country properties close to the city. Not only were these lucky entrepreneurs given large grants of land, they also had virtually free labour courtesy of a system of assignment, whereby convict workers were given to free settlers who were responsible only for the cost of feeding and clothing them. It was a recipe for prosperity. Some of Australia's finest historic homes, such as Clarendon House (1838), Entally House (1819) and Woolmers (1817), which are open to the public, are all within a relatively short drive of the city. ➤



On the waterfront,  
Tamar River

## LAUNCESTON TASMANIA



**Black Cow (left and above)**  
**Stillwater Restaurant (top right)**  
**Peppers Seaport restaurant zone (right)**

**L**AUNCESTON'S OTHER GREAT attraction is its size. With a population of just over 100,000, it is big enough to support a lively arts scene and thriving food and wine culture, but small enough for the many attractions in its hinterland to be readily accessible. Many visitors fly to Launceston for the weekend to shop in its smart boutiques, dine in its restaurants and visit its museums and galleries. However, they can just as easily tour the Tamar Valley wineries, admire some of Australia's most significant historic buildings and villages and, in winter, make daytrips to the ski fields. Spoil for choice, really.



## EAT & DRINK

### Stillwater

2 Bridge Road. (03) 6331 4153.

[www.stillwater.net.au](http://www.stillwater.net.au)

Good food, professional service and a light-filled dining room in a restored riverside flour mill make Stillwater Launceston's premier restaurant. There's a six-course tasting menu or à la carte options such as seared scallops on cauliflower puree, lamb racks spiked with local ginseng, and poached meringue with raspberry sherbet. There's a separate bar menu for those who fancy a glass of sparkling with their freshly shucked oysters.

### Mud

28 Seaport Boulevard.

(03) 6334 5066.

[www.mudbar.com.au](http://www.mudbar.com.au)

Within the Peppers Seaport complex that has breathed new life into Launceston's riverfront,

Mud is laid-back and casual, although its mainly Italian- and Spanish-inspired food is anything but. Seasonal risottos and pasta, or grilled pork chops, or roast chicken with rosemary and garlic roast potatoes, press all the right buttons for diners wanting to eat well without fuss. The bar is also Launceston's best watering hole.

### Black Cow

George & Paterson Streets.

(03) 6331 9333.

[www.blackcowbistro.com.au](http://www.blackcowbistro.com.au)

Tasmania is justly renowned for its grass-fed beef and this lively bistro is a place to enjoy it. First name the cut – maybe full-flavoured 35 day-aged Cape Grim rump, porterhouse from the far north-west or tender local eye fillet – then match it with beetroot relish or Black Cow butter; then add sides such as cauliflower and parmesan gratin

and butter-roasted mushrooms. This is not cutting-edge cuisine, but it's none the worse for that.

### Strathlynn

95 Rosevears Drive.

(03) 6330 2388.

Some 20 minutes from the CBD this vineyard restaurant should be on the agenda, even for those not planning a vineyard excursion. Its menu is strong on local ingredients and robust flavours that, unsurprisingly, are wine-friendly. Braised chicken with semolina gnocchi and local greens is typical. The option of small portion sizes is also good and makes desserts such as lemon and coconut semifreddo eminently manageable.

### Me Wah

39-41 Invermay Road.

(03) 6331 1308. [mewah.com.au](http://mewah.com.au)

To look at, both from the street

and inside, Me Wah looks like any suburban Chinese restaurant. There's nothing that even hints at the superb offerings available within. The extensive wine list includes some of the world's finest wines (some Tasmanian), the roast Cantonese-style duck is sensational and the slow-braised abalone is a good way to experience one of Tasmania's most exceptional seafoods.

### Tant Pour Tant

226 Charles Street.

(03) 6334 9884.

[www.tantpourtant.com.au](http://www.tantpourtant.com.au)

This pint-sized cafe is home to Launceston's best cakes and pastries. Master-craftsman Paul Herbig creates a daily selection of cakes, including his award-winning framboise, macarons, croissants, brioche and other pastries that taste as good as they look. Open early for breakfast. ➤

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Clockwise from left: Woolmers Estate; water fountain in central Launceston; Rosevears Estate vineyards; Cataract Gorge



### Fresh on Charles

178 Charles Street.  
(03) 6331 4299.

Fresh is a funky cafe with a cheerful vibe, friendly staff and great vegetarian food served all day. Breakfast here is a must with a choice of six freshly-made fruit juices, dishes such as apple couscous porridge or baked eggs with chilli beans, and good coffee.



### DO Woolmers Estate

Woolmers Lane, Longford.  
(03) 6391 2230.

[www.woolmers.com.au](http://www.woolmers.com.au)  
Recently World Heritage-listed, Woolmers is one of Tasmania's most impressive Georgian estates. It was built in 1817 and owned by six generations of the one family – the Archers – until its last occupant, “Young William”, passed away in 1994. It's now a public museum and also houses

the National Rose Garden, which has hundreds of rose varieties, and a kitchen garden featuring heirloom varieties.

### Cataract Gorge

Basin Road. (03) 6331 5915.  
[launcestoncataractgorge.com.au](http://launcestoncataractgorge.com.au)

Literally on the edge of the city, Cataract Gorge segues from manicured shady gardens into rugged bush. Highlights include historic Duck Reach power station, a cliff-hugging riverside walk and a chairlift that runs high above the water. Enjoy it in comfort with Tamar River Cruises ([www.tamarrivercruises.com.au](http://www.tamarrivercruises.com.au)), which operates regular 50-minute Cataract Gorge cruises as well as longer journeys towards the mouth of the river.

### Tamar Valley Wine Route

[www.tamarvalleywines.com.au](http://www.tamarvalleywines.com.au)  
Few cities have such an interesting

choice of vineyards so close to the CBD. An excursion that takes in both sides of the Tamar River is a lovely daytrip with plenty of scenic diversions. Many vineyards, such as Pipers Brook, Tamar Ridge and Holm Oak have cellar doors with advertised opening times; and smaller operations, such as Iron Pot Bay and Sinapius, will open by appointment.

### Boag's Brewery

39 Williams Street.  
(03) 6332 6300. [boags.com.au](http://boags.com.au)

In the heart of the city, Boag's Brewery has been part of the fabric of Launceston since 1881. Tours include explanations of the brewing process and beer tastings. Options range from a one-hour Discovery Tour to a special Saturday-only Amber Ticket Tasting where Boag's seven full-strength beers are analysed in detail.

### Evandale

[www.evandaletasmania.com](http://www.evandaletasmania.com)

Evandale is one of Tasmania's prettiest 19th-century villages and just a short drive from Launceston. The main street is lined with antique shops and galleries. On Sunday there's a popular market. Evandale is also close to the up-and-coming Relbia wine region and Clarendon House, another fine Georgian mansion open to the public.



### SHOP Design Centre & Tasmanian Wood Design Collection

Tamar & Brisbane Streets. (03) 6331 5506. [designcentre.com.au](http://designcentre.com.au)

For more than 30 years, the Design Centre has nurtured Tasmania's contemporary wood designers. The retail operation sells furniture made by craftsmen such as local designer Kevin ➤

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Perkins, and quirky collectables such as Indeco's kitchen accessories and Wild Trout's fly fishing nets. It also houses the Tasmanian Wood Design Collection, a permanent exhibition of some of Tasmania's best wood design.

### Cocobean Chocolate

82 George Street.

(03) 6331 7016.

[cocobeanchocolate.com.au](http://cocobeanchocolate.com.au)

Drop into Cocobean for coffee or, naturally, a hot chocolate. However, the real shopping pleasure comes from choosing your own selection of fine house-made chocolates from a range that includes flavours such as lime and pistachio, and chilli.

### Justin Paul

88a George Street.

(03) 6331 5095.

[www.justinpaul.com.au](http://www.justinpaul.com.au)

The racks in this upmarket boutique are devoted to beautiful, wearable clothes from an international collection of designers including Kenzo, Marc Cain, Paule Ka and Jovani.

### The Pinot Shop

135 Paterson Street. (03) 6331

3977. [www.pinotshop.com](http://www.pinotshop.com)

Although pinot noir is owner Michele Round's obsession, she does stock wines made with other grapes and has the best collection of Tasmanian wines in town. Make this your first stop before embarking on the Tamar Valley Wine Route and you'll get plenty of good local intelligence about must-visit vineyards and must-try wines.

## STAY

### Peppers Seaport

28 Seaport Boulevard.

(03) 6345 3333.

[www.peppers.com.au/seaport](http://www.peppers.com.au/seaport)

The light, bright, generously proportioned rooms in this riverfront hotel – built in the shape of a ship on what was the old dry dock – make it the perfect base for exploring Launceston and the Tamar Valley. Opt for a river-view suite, if available, to fully appreciate its relaxed waterside mood. There are plenty of dining options within easy walking distance. From \$199 for a river-view room.

### TwoFourTwo

242 Charles Street.

(03) 6331 9242.

[www.twofourtwo.com.au](http://www.twofourtwo.com.au)

This excellent alternative to hotel accommodation is located in the heart of Launceston's Charles Street eating strip. Four elegant apartments provide all the kitchen amenities needed to take advantage of the abundant local produce gathered while touring the region. From \$205.

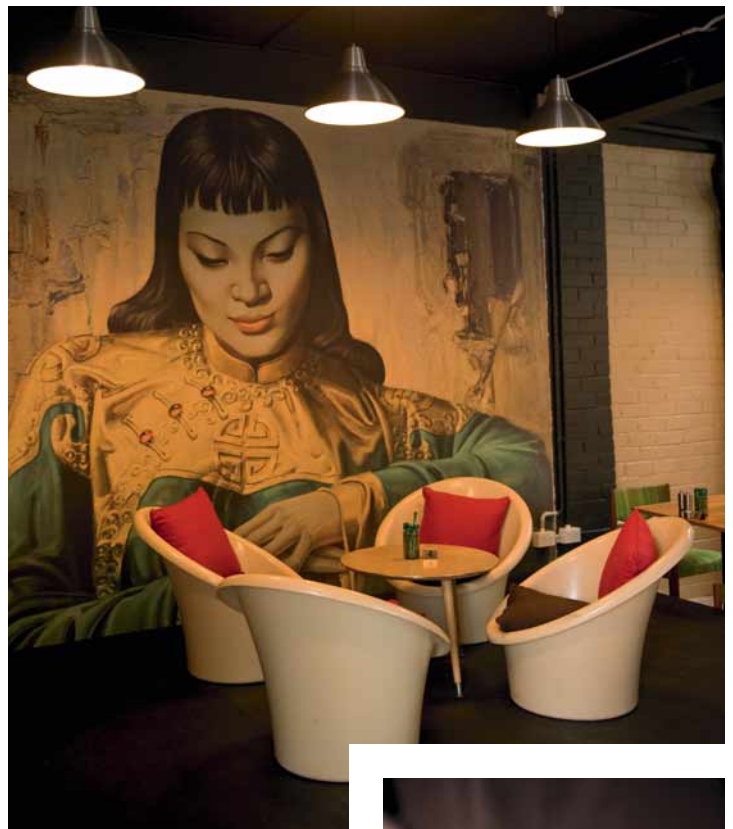
### The Charles

287 Charles Street.

(03) 6337 4100.

[www.hotelcharles.com.au](http://www.hotelcharles.com.au)

Launceston's newest hotel used to be a hospital building. It sits on a slight hill on the fringe of the CBD and has an art deco exterior. The contemporary rooms are spacious with comfortable modern furniture. Most have balconies from which to enjoy views of the city and Tamar Valley. From \$129. 



From Top: Justin Paul; Fresh on Charles; treats at Tant Pour Tant; TwoFourTwo

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For holiday packages to Tasmania call **Qantas Holidays on 13 14 15**.

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