

AREA HISTORY

The Freycinet Peninsula has formed over 400 million years. It is effectively two eroded blocks of granite (known as the Hazards Mountains and Mt Graham/Mt Freycinet), joined by a sand isthmus between the internationally acclaimed Wineglass Bay and Hazards Beach.

Aboriginal people have known this area for at least 35,000 years, substantiated by the presence of middens found today around the coastline. Sadly, almost all evidence of the lives of the earliest Tasmanians was lost when the sea levels began to rise about 10,000 years ago. What remains of this dramatic period is among the most ancient evidence of human culture anywhere in the world.

The first European to sight the Freycinet area was Dutchman Abel Tasman in 1642. He named Schouten Island and marked down the adjacent peninsula as a chain of three islands. This myth was finally dispelled 160 years later when Nicholas Baudin, the French explorer, renamed Tasman's "Vanderlins Eylandt" as Freycinet Peninsula in 1802, after the brothers Henri and Louis de Freycinet, lieutenants on the expedition.

Whaling parties, tin and coal miners and pastoralists were among those who lived and worked on the Freycinet Peninsula. Old mine shafts, abandoned farmers' huts and the remains of whalers' camps form part of the park's rich cultural heritage.

Sapphires are fairly widespread in alluvial tin areas of the North East. In fact, Coles Bay has one of the only deposits of natural sapphires in Tasmania. They vary in colour from green (oriental emerald), blue, yellow (oriental topaz) and purple (oriental amethyst). Described as the "Jewel of Tasmania", Saffire draws its name from these natural gems, as well as the flame-coloured crags that shape the surrounding region.

The area was reserved as a national park in 1916, making it (along with Mt Field) the oldest national park in Tasmania.

In the 1920s, the tourist potential of the area was promoted and led to the establishment of shacks and tourist accommodation at "The Fisheries", Parson's Cove (1929) and, later, cabins at Coles Bay in the 1930s.

In 1934, The Chateau holiday units were established by Ron Richardson. The Chateau offered an exclusive getaway for locals, interstate and international visitors. The complex was re-built in 1954 after a

fire that destroyed the main building, and then during the early 1990s was redeveloped into Freycinet Lodge, which is now a Pure Tasmania property.

The 1960s and 70s saw further developments in the area. Aquaculture has been practiced since the early 1970s. Species cultivated commercially include Pacific oysters, native oysters, mussels, scallops, abalone and sea urchins in the Great Oyster Bay and Mercury Passage.

It was in the early 1980s that wine growing in the region began to re-emerge. Freycinet is situated at 42° south, and enjoys a unique microclimate and a long growing season that extends right into May. The magnificent mix of high sunshine hours, warm temperatures, winter rain and no frosts are all conducive to the production of exceptional cool climate wines. Presently the area boasts more than a dozen wineries.

On ANZAC Day 2003, Coles Bay became Australia's first plastic bag free town, following an initiative by local bakery owner, Ben Kearney, and Planet Ark to protect the ecological integrity of the region.

Wineglass Bay also regularly features on the most illustrious of "world's best beaches" lists.

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