

Luxury lodges

WINE AND DINE IN CRYSTAL CLEAR WATERS IN TASMANIA, ENJOY THE BOUNTIFUL FRUITS OF THE HUNTER VALLEY OR KICK BACK AND RELAX IN A HIDDEN POCKET OF THE BLUE MOUNTAINS, ALL IN LUXURIOUS STYLE.

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This page clockwise from top left: Saffire lodge's Palate restaurant; the magnificent Coles Bay; tranquillity room at Spa Saffire; the sleek lines of the Spa Saffire exterior. **Opposite page:** Organised serenity in the picture perfect Wolgan Valley.

The unveiling of Hobart's \$175 million MONA complex and the opening of the spectacular Saffire, the state's first true luxury lodge, has helped transform Tasmania into a high-end tourism magnet. Long renowned for its history, fine produce and cool-climate wines, Tasmania now has a globally recognised museum complex and a world-class gourmet retreat.

Saffire, at beautiful Coles Bay on the Freycinet Peninsula, opened last year and is designed as the ultimate boutique getaway for movers and shakers.

The \$32 million resort, strikingly designed to look like a stingray from the air, has just 20 suites, all with remarkable views over white sandy beaches and Great Oyster Bay to the Hazards, a granite range that rises sharply from the peninsula.

All suites are furnished with state-of-the-art audio, visual and communications technology and have high-tech bathrooms and private decks.

At 140 square metres, the four premier suites are larger than many suburban homes and boast their own plunge pools.

The Palate restaurant showcases Tasmania's fresh produce with Hugh Whitehouse, formerly of the two-hat Darley's at Lillianfels in the NSW Blue Mountains, in charge of the kitchen and also conducting custom-designed cooking classes. Think dishes like carpaccio of local scallops with shima wasabi and baby fennel, or ragout of rabbit and roasted chestnuts wrapped in Tunisian pastry.

The wine list highlights the state's best drops – names like Stefano Lubiana, Craigow, Moorilla and Home Hill – with all wines served in Riedel glasses.

Several activities, meals and drinks are built in to the all-inclusive tariffs, so guests can tailor experiences to get maximum enjoyment from their stay.

Inclusive options range from a quadbike wetlands excursion, an up-close visit to a marine farm ending with a tasting of local oysters and mussels accompanied by fine

Tassie sparkling wine; a wilderness walk to Wineglass Bay, one of the world's most beautiful beaches; or maybe a treatment in Spa Saffire. The resort also has its own luxury motor launch for exploring nearby bays and islands.

For wine lovers, the resort is on the doorstep of fine East Coast producers – including Freycinet Estate and Spring Vale – and an impressive in-house list is served by a knowledgeable team of sommeliers.

Service levels are one of Saffire's key selling points. While staff are unobtrusive, general manager Matt Casey, formerly in charge of Hobart's acclaimed Henry Jones Art Hotel, has achieved his aim of training them to international standards. Saffire has both setting and style.

Saffire is 2.5 hours from both Hobart and Launceston. Prices for the deluxe suites start at \$1450 per suite per night. For details see saffire-freycinet.com.au or phone (03) 6256 7888.