



The *Lady Eugenie* sits patiently under the gaze of Bear Hill.

A LUXURY TALE OF SAILS & TRAILS

Justin Jamieson discovers a type of hiking
in Tasmania that is right up his alley.

Photography by **Justin Jamieson**





The peaks of Bishop and Clerk.



Another stunning view from the top of Bear Hill.



end is near: walking
n from Mount Graham
Wineglass Bay

Tasmania has truly turned on the charm as the *Lady Eugenie*, a 23-metre luxury sailboat and our home for the next four nights, motors towards a still-distant Maria Island, about an hour off Tasmania's south-east coast. I lie back on the teak deck and am slowly rocked to sleep under the warmth of the Tasmanian sun. There is something innately relaxing about being out on the water. The fresh air, the soft splash of lapping waves against the hull and the gentle motion of the ocean all combine to wash away the stresses of daily life. Matt, our guide, gives me a nudge as we cruise closer to our destination. "See up there?" he asks, wild-eyed with excitement. "That's where we're heading today. Perfect day for it!" I look up at the towering peaks of Maria Island's highest mountain, Bishop and Clerk, and try to share his enthusiasm.

The Wineglass Bay Sail Walk was set up by the Tasmanian Walking Company in 2014, aimed, I would imagine, squarely at 'hikers' like myself. That is to say the type of person who likes the thought of hiking and nature and stunning scenery, yet also enjoys creature comforts. While the company's other hikes include the six-day Cradle Mountain Huts Walk and the rather arduous Overland Trek, the brilliant idea of travelling on a luxury yacht to hike three of Tasmania's more accessible and spectacular trails, sleeping in an almost-too-comfy double bed and gorging on the best of Tasmania's produce also seems to me to be an obvious choice.

It is a six-hour trek to Maria's twin peaks and, as we set off, I look back at the *Lady Eugenie*, her mast swaying as the bay ripples. I've made the mistake of checking out the dinner menu before departure and can quite easily imagine spending the afternoon enjoying an ice-cold Cascade Pale Ale and Tasmanian cheese platter while soaking up the surrounds. But this is not just a luxury cruise.

The walk begins at a leisurely pace along the coastline, slowly gaining in difficulty as we near the peak. The odd wombat watches us wander by as the terrain changes from open grass to thick bush to craggy vertical climbs. Finally we reach a cluster of boulders that provides the perfect platform to look back down from where we came. There is a sheer 600-metre drop on one side with the peaks of Bishop and Clerk framing the slowly setting sun. In the distance the *Lady Eugenie* is now just a speck and the sense of accomplishment is incredible. For the first time I think I understand what hikers are on about.

The following morning I make the most of the yacht's comfort and sleep in. My calf muscles are stiff from the previous day's climb and I may

have had one glass too many of the top-shelf Tasmanian pinot noir on offer the night before. Odd barking noises are coming from somewhere near the top deck and I surface just as we cruise past Ile des Phoques, a tiny island and overcrowded home to a yappy Australian fur seal colony. Dolphins swim alongside us. "Almost perfect, hey?" shouts Chris the skipper, a grin on his face like it is his first-ever trip.

"It's an easy one today. Bear Hill!" says Matt with a smile. He points at what looks like a neatly stacked pyramid of burnt orange rocks rising out of the greenery of Schouten Island. "It's more of a climb really. Should be up and down in a few hours if we go for it." He clearly has no idea about my calf muscles. Two hours

Our final journey on day three is the longest, most difficult and easily the most rewarding. It is a seven-hour hike through Freycinet National Park up to the 579-metre summit of Mount Graham for an almost bird's-eye view of Freycinet's number-one attraction, Wineglass Bay. It is easy to see why this beach consistently ranks among the top 10 in the world. "I know," I say to Kia, our guide on this hike, as we gaze down across the bay then back to Schouten Island behind us. "It's perfect." We lose sight of Wineglass Bay as we descend Mount Graham along Quartzite Ridge, stopping to sit on one of the huge rocks and stare out at the clear waters of the Tasman Sea.

It is only a couple of hours from Mount Graham down to the beach, and our shoes are

“ In the distance the *Lady Eugenie* is now just a speck and the sense of accomplishment is incredible. For the first time I think I understand what hikers are on about. ”

later we're standing on top of a large, round and surprisingly smooth granite boulder, once again looking down on the *Lady Eugenie*, anchored in a perfect half-moon bay. The water is a clichéd aqua hue and in the distance we can see the Freycinet Peninsula. The weather gods have truly blessed us and I find it hard to think of anywhere in Australia more stunning.

"Almost perfect," says Matt. "Almost?" I ask him incredulously. "Yeah," he sighs, "the winds have picked up a bit so we can't have dinner on the beach. Ah well, ya can't have everything." As I explain to him later, dinner on the boat is still pretty spectacular.

off and our aching bare feet in the chilly water before you can say "fill my wineglass". I can see the *Lady Eugenie* anchored on her own, perfectly positioned out in the bay. A bunch of other hikers, their tents already pitched behind the dunes, relax on the sand, content, like us, with their day's adventure. One of them sits beside me and opens a can of tuna. "What a great day," he says to me. "I've earned this!" I smile back, not only to be polite, but also because I can see Captain Chris motoring in from *Lady Eugenie* and I know what awaits us back on board. "You're right," I say to my new friend. "It's just perfect." ⊗

GET PLANNING



GET THERE

Pick up for the start of the adventure is in Hobart. Jetstar flies there direct from Melbourne, Sydney, Brisbane and Perth, with connections to other cities. Return flights from Sydney start at about AU\$178.

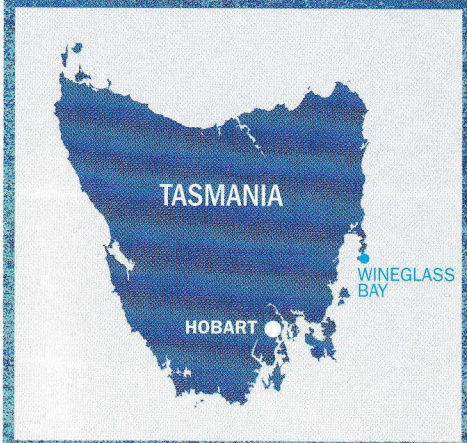
jetstar.com



TOUR THERE

The Wineglass Bay Sail Walk accommodates eight to 10 guests in five cabins, all with private showers, toilets and power points, on board the *Lady Eugenie*. Four-day adventures start at AU\$2990 a person; the six-day itinerary starts at AU\$3990 on a twin-share basis. The tours operate from October to May.

wineglassbaysailwalk.com.au



The perfect end to the trip. A glass of wine on the deck of *Lady Eugenie* on Wineglass Bay.