

Tasmania: swimming with wild seals on Tasman Peninsula | Skyscanner Australia

There are few wilder Australian places than Tasmania's southern coast. Which is just the way that Australian and New Zealand fur seals like it. [Skyscanner Australia](#) headed south from Hobart to check out playful seals in their wild ocean environment.

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At 42 degrees south of the Equator the Southern Ocean that lashes Tasmania's coast can be a furious beast on a bad day. On the other hand, when the sea is calm and the sun comes out the Tasman Peninsula is positively balmy.

Dramatic seascape of the Tasman Peninsula

Beneath an implausibly blue sky we motor out of Eaglehawk Neck harbour bound for a date with the seal colony that calls Tasman Peninsula home. With Skipper Damian ('call me Damo') Connor and deckhand Susanne ('call me Susie') Buetow from [Wild Ocean Tasmania](#) enthusiastically guiding us across a wild seascape we potter around a dramatic coastline carved by wind and sea.

Erosion has created spectacular sea cliffs, caves and blowholes that explode with torpedos of salt water. Freestanding cubed dolerite sea stacks look ready to topple over. Tessellated pavements appear to rise and fall with the swell, their buttresses awirl with clumps of brown leathery bull kelp. We poke into caves and hang out beneath arches of rock carved by nature's fury.

Australian and New Zealand fur seals

But this striking coastline is merely the teaser for the real show in Fortescue Bay north of Cape Hauy. Here, a large colony of Australian fur seals has shackled up with New Zealand fur seals in harmonious habitation. Basking on rocks warmed by the sun we crane our necks, cameras snapping as Damo motors in close to the rock ledge for a closer look. Large adults loll supine, flippers askew, lazily raising their heads to check out the intruders. Young pups bounce and roll in the swell before launching themselves upwards where they cavort playfully over rocks.

[Wild Ocean Tasmania swimming with fur seals](#)

Eager to get in the water with these wild creatures, we're kitted up in full-body dry suits designed to keep out the chill of the Southern Ocean. Those of us who have signed up for the Seal Swim clutch our mask and snorkels waiting for the call to hop over the side. But the swell, leftover from strong winds that buffeted the coast the previous day, is a problem. Skipper Damo manoeuvres the boat around the southern side of the cape hoping for calmer water. But it's not to be. We watch the seals from the comfort of the rigid inflatable boat, teased by their proximity but unable to submerge ourselves in their environment.

Later Susie explains that there's only been one other time when conditions prevented them from swimming with seals since they started their tours in 2015.

‘It’s so unfortunate that the weather hasn’t been on our side. Usually we’re pretty spot on, looking at weather models about 20 times per day! But this is Tassie and some weather patterns develop differently from that forecast,’ says Susie.

‘The very best time to swim with the seals is actually between March and May,’ she says. In the end, it matters little that we don’t get in the water.

Dolphins steal the show

A pod of dolphins do their best as a worthy support act, spinning and diving, plunging across our bow, beckoning us to follow their beguiling smiles. Which we do for quite a while, squealing with delight at their daring aerial antics. Too soon they dive deep, leaving us grinning like idiots as we scan the horizon for their return. It’s enough. The dolphin’s chance appearance is a reminder that southern Tasmania’s wilderness comes with no guarantee. The only certainty is the unknown, which makes the Tasman Peninsula, indeed all of Tasmania, a place to treasure.

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About the author

Fiona Harper is one of Australia’s most respected travel writers. Follow her at [Travel Boating Lifestyle](#)

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