A rugged island sculpted by the wilds of the Southern Ocean and carved by the ice ages of eons past, Tasmania’s Island Heritage is a landscape of beauty that leaves footprints on the heart of all who visit. Nature’s finest work, cloaked by the earth’s cleanest air, Tasmania’s Island Heritage is a landscape of dramatic coastlines, rugged wilderness and snow capped mountains.

**ABORIGINAL FOOTPRINTS**

Separated from mainland Australia by the flooding of Bass Strait 8,000 years ago, the Aboriginal inhabitants of Tasmania became the longest isolated human group in history, surviving 500 generations without outside influence. One of the most complete records of Aboriginal Tasmanians can be found at north-west Rocky Cape National Park. Shell middens and interpretive signs show visitors what the lifestyle of coastal Indigenous people was like. Aboriginal people retain a close spiritual connection to the land and visitors are asked not to enter certain cave sites. For further information visit: [www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=3698](http://www.parks.tas.gov.au/index.aspx?base=3698)

**TASMANIA: WORLD HERITAGE**

Tasmania’s Island Heritage is as spectacular as it is diverse. Sea-scoured coastlines and gentle beaches abound with marine life offer wildlife encounters for all. Towering forests with flowing crystal waters entrance and entice the curious. With one of the last large expanses of temperate rainforest in the world, one-fifth of Tasmania was declared a World Heritage Area in 1982 with an international obligation to protect and conserve this wilderness of outstanding universal value.

In 2010, five Tasmanian convict sites were placed on the UNESCO World Heritage list. These include Port Arthur and the Coal Mines Historic Sites on the Tasman Peninsula, the Cascades Female Factory at South Hobart, Darlington Probation Station on Maria Island and Brickendon-Woolmers Estates near Longford. Each site tells a unique part of the wider convict narrative. To learn more about Tasmania’s convict heritage visit: [www.heritage.tas.gov.au/convict_sites.html](http://www.heritage.tas.gov.au/convict_sites.html)

**TASMANIA: THE LAST REFUGE**

Tasmania’s Island Heritage is the last refuge for many animals, birds and plants that are rare or extinct elsewhere, such as the Tasmanian devil, Tasmanian native hen and the 40-spotted pardalote – one of Australia’s smallest birds. It is an island safe haven protected by isolation, lack of introduced predators and largely preserved habitats, offering the last chance for many species.

Now a Tasmanian icon, Tasmanian devils were once considered vermin in their own homeland. Early European settlers complained of raids on poultry yards, predation on lambs, its spine-chilling screeches and unsavoury temperament and the creature became known as the Tasmanian devil.

HUON PINE TREE: A LIVING RECORD OF THE DINOSAUR AGE

In cool temperate forests, deep within the wilderness of Tasmania’s Island Heritage lies one of the oldest living organisms on earth: the Huon pine. Endemic to Tasmania and found only on the West Coast, Central Plateau and Huon Valley, this slow growing tree can live for up to 3,000 years. The Huon pine tree is a relic of the dinosaur age, surviving for 135 million years. During colonial times, the tree was a valuable ship-building material because it was impervious to rot. Today, it still remains a prized material for ship building and furniture making.

The Tahune Forest walking trail offers visitors the chance to encounter the spectacular pine. On an air-walk suspended high above the forest floor visitors can view the Huon pine and the other unique tree species of Tasmania including eucalypts, celery top, King Billy pine, blackwood, sassafras, beech, myrtle and flowering leatherwood. For more information visit: www.adventureforests.com.au

TASMANIAN TIGER: THE MYTH OF EXISTENCE CONTINUES

Once the world’s largest carnivorous marsupial, the Tasmanian tiger once roamed the wilds of Tasmania. Also known as the thylacine, it was widespread throughout Papua New Guinea and Australia. Considered a threat to livestock by graziers, the offer of a bounty for its scalp accelerated its decline and the animal was hunted to extinction. The last known Tasmania tiger died at Hobart Zoo in 1936. While reported sightings of this striped dog-like creature continue, lack of supporting evidence has led to the conclusion that the species is extinct.

Visitors can find out more about the story of the Tasmanian tiger at the Wilderness Gallery at the Cradle Mountain Chateau. The gallery is host to a stunning collection of artefacts including photographs, rare film footage, a skeleton and unique rug made of Tasmanian tiger skins and a faithful reconstruction of a trappers hut. For more information visit: www.puretasmania.com.au/default.asp?pID=400

AN EXPERIENCE WITH CONSERVATION VOLUNTEERS

Why not make a contribution to preserving this precious environment as part of your Tasmania’s Island Heritage experience? Conservation Volunteers offers several trips that combine guided tours of spectacular wilderness and conservation opportunities. For more information visit: www.conservationvolunteers.com.au/get-involved/holidays/australia/tasmania-experience

For more information on this Landscape or to learn about other naturally beautiful places which offer a different but uniquely Australian experience, visit www.australia.com/au