

TASMANIA 2015

In February of 2015, six members of our Chicago-based hiking group went to Tasmania to hike the Overland Track.

Tasmania is an island state of the Commonwealth of Australia, located 150 miles off of the southeastern coast of the Australian mainland, near the city of Melbourne. Tasmania is roughly the same size as the state of West Virginia. Approximately 45% of the island lies in reserves, such as national parks or World Heritage Sites.

Our group journeyed to Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. The park is situated in the middle of Tasmania in what is known as the Central Highlands. There are many hiking trails within the park, but the most famous is the Overland Track.

The track courses for 82 kilometers through terrain ranging from alpine plains, temperate rainforest, mountains, and next to wild rivers.



The license plate of Tasmania depicts the supposedly extinct Tasmanian wolf. Early morning mist shrouds the forest at with Barn Bluff in the background. This mountain reminded me of Devil's Tower in WY.



At the starting point of the Overland Track. We had to carry food for 6 days and 5 nights. Our packs weighed about 35 pounds. We were fortunate to have good weather most of the way. Average daytime temp: 60 F Nighttime: 40 F.



We stayed at designated campsites each night. Huts were available, some old and rustic, others spacious and new. We carried tents in case the huts were full. The park restricts the number of hikers to about 40 each day. Permits required.



Cradle Mountain (5069 feet) is the fifth tallest mountain in Tasmania. It is uniquely shaped and composed of dolerite columns. Hikers are allowed to rock scramble to the summit if they're up to the challenge. It was a lot harder than it looked.



Fog rolls over the top of Cradle Mountain. Note the hikers that still have to be extremely careful as they traverse the rocks to reach the actual summit. But once there, the view is breathtaking. The trail can be seen far below.



Panoramic views of the alpine meadows and moorlands along the Overland track.



An unusual plant in the alpine region of Tasmania is the Pandani tree. It resembles a Palm and can grow 20 feet high. Hugh ferns are also common in the temperate rainforests.



We did a side hike to the summit of Mt Ossa (5305 feet), the highest mountain in Tasmania.



I was going to climb to the very top of Mt Ossa...but the sheer drop of hundreds of feet changed my mind. Glaciered scarred landscape of the Tasmanian highlands.



We saw echidnas (egg laying mammals that look like giant hedgehogs) and wallabies (pattymelon) along the way.



I wanted to see the Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoo (only cockatoo endemic to Tasmania) and the Tasmanian devil in the wild. I saw neither. I had to settle on seeing them at a local zoo. The devils are dying out from an infectious cancer.



Baby orphaned wombat. Australian tiger snake. All snakes found in Tasmania are venomous.



The Tasman Sea...looking due south. The next land mass is Antarctica. Spectacular dolomite cliffs.



Port Arthur was a convict settlement occupied in the 18th and 19th century. The ruins are a World Heritage site and Tasmania's #1 tourist attraction. All in all, Tasmania was a spectacular hiking destination.

