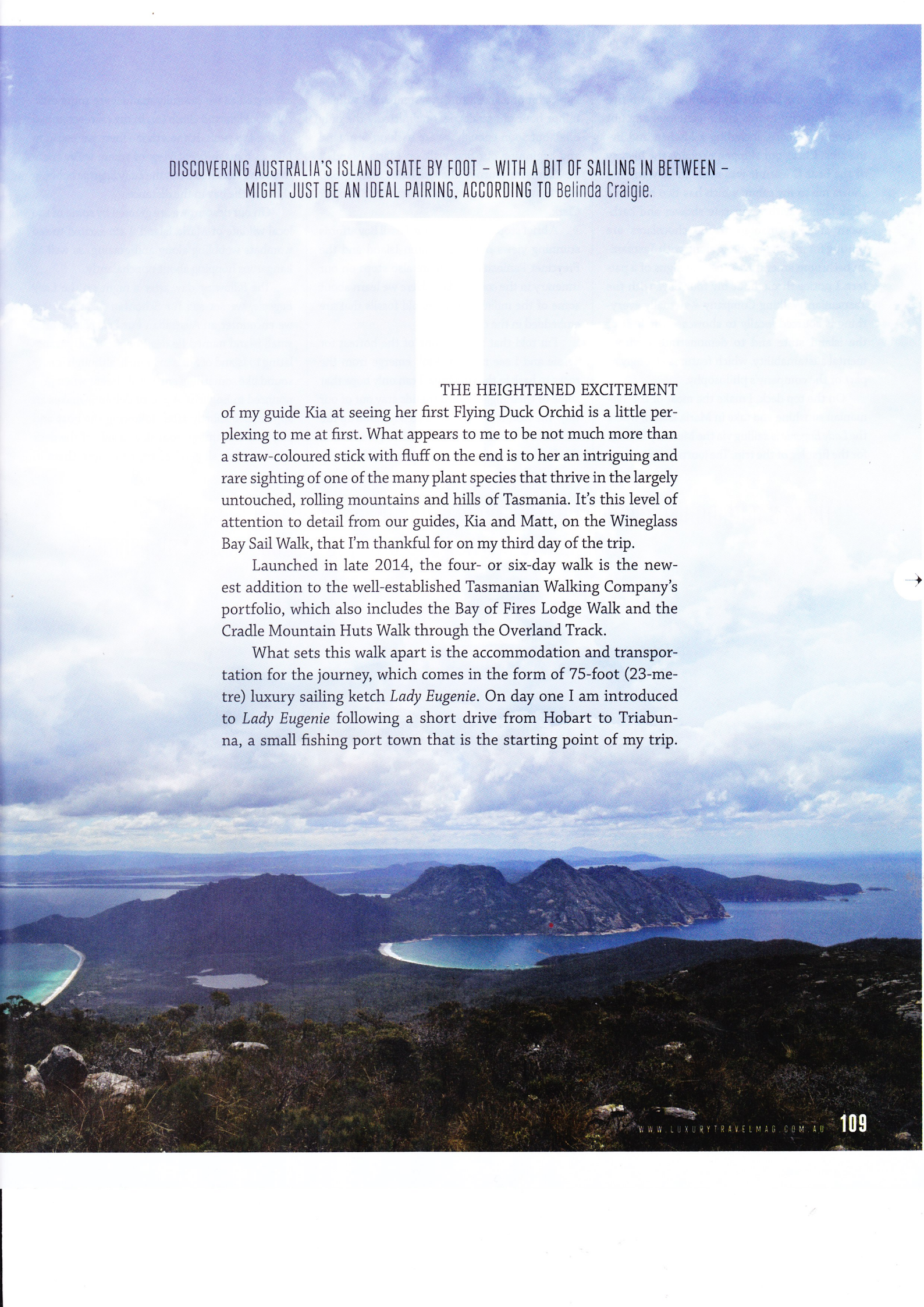


DO THIS  
WALK\_TASMANIA

# SAILS — & — STEPS





DISCOVERING AUSTRALIA'S ISLAND STATE BY FOOT – WITH A BIT OF SAILING IN BETWEEN –  
MIGHT JUST BE AN IDEAL PAIRING, ACCORDING TO Belinda Craigie.

THE HEIGHTENED EXCITEMENT of my guide Kia at seeing her first Flying Duck Orchid is a little perplexing to me at first. What appears to me to be not much more than a straw-coloured stick with fluff on the end is to her an intriguing and rare sighting of one of the many plant species that thrive in the largely untouched, rolling mountains and hills of Tasmania. It's this level of attention to detail from our guides, Kia and Matt, on the Wineglass Bay Sail Walk, that I'm thankful for on my third day of the trip.

Launched in late 2014, the four- or six-day walk is the newest addition to the well-established Tasmanian Walking Company's portfolio, which also includes the Bay of Fires Lodge Walk and the Cradle Mountain Huts Walk through the Overland Track.

What sets this walk apart is the accommodation and transportation for the journey, which comes in the form of 75-foot (23-metre) luxury sailing ketch *Lady Eugenie*. On day one I am introduced to *Lady Eugenie* following a short drive from Hobart to Triabunna, a small fishing port town that is the starting point of my trip.

The boat is beautifully maintained with five double capacity rooms and a generous amount of common space, including a kitchen and living area. Chris, our skipper, explains the history of the boat (I learn it was made in Taiwan) and shows me to my cabin, which has two beds in a bunk layout, with a separate shower and bathroom area. Tasmanian truffle chocolates are waiting for me on my pillow along with Tasmanian bathroom amenities – the first signs of a pattern I notice throughout my four days with the Tasmanian Walking Company – virtually everything is sourced locally to showcase the best of the island state and to demonstrate environmental sustainability, which features strongly as part of the company's philosophy.

On the top deck, I make the most of the Tasmanian sunshine and take in Maria Island, where the *Lady Eugenie* is sailing via the Mercury Passage for the first leg of the trip. The journey over is per-

haps a bit of a shock to the system and I suffer a minor bout of sea sickness (admittedly the only one), but soon enough we are back on firm land and beginning our first walk on Maria Island, a 12-kilometre journey that includes scaling 630 metres up a striking mountain named Bishop & Clerk.

A brief stopover for lunch at Fossil Bay affords stunning views out to Schouten Island and the Freycinet Peninsula, which are also stops on our itinerary in the coming days. Here we learn about some of the millions of years old fossils that are embedded in the cliffs.

I'm told that today is one of the hottest for Tassie and I see many a skink emerge from the rocks to bask in the sunshine. I can only hope that some of their bigger lizard friends stay out of our way. The next few hours are a steady climb up the mountain, where the bush becomes greener and the dirt beneath my feet turns to rock. My thighs

are tested as we carefully manoeuvre some difficult boulders and climb (or, in my case, scramble) up the top peak. It's worth it – here we pause to take in a magnificent view of where we've come from and I can make out the *Lady Eugenie* bobbing about in the bay in the distance.

On our descent we are greeted by some of the local wildlife of Maria Island. I am excited to see wombats wobbling along and grazing, as well as kangaroos hopping about nonchalantly.

The following day, after a night on the *Lady Eugenie*, we set sail for Schouten Island, where we encounter an Australian Fur Seal colony on a small island named Ile des Phoques (aptly translating to Island of Seals in French, although it may sound like something entirely different when pronounced in English). A pod of dolphins makes an appearance shortly after, following the boat and playfully swimming from side to side of the deck where we are all perched trying to spot them in

There's nothing like climbing to the top of a mountain and being rewarded with panoramic views to give you a sense of accomplishment.



the ocean (I'm doing this while also trying to keep my sea legs – the water looks very cold).

After anchoring at Schouten Island, the guides give us the option of staying back and exploring the beach or heading up Bear Hill, a six-kilometre journey up a steep granite hill. I opt for the latter option and strap on my walking boots. In comparison to the rocky terrain of Bishop & Clerk, Bear Hill is made from large granite boulders that can be slippery when wet and a fair amount of confidence and skill in your step is required closer to the top. My legs are thankful for this shorter walk and when we climb back down, I practically fly into the water for a dip in the ocean.

Back on the boat, I dry off with a few Tasmanian oysters and a beer in hand and am feeling beyond relaxed as the sun sets and the smell of Tasmanian salmon (dinner) wafts down the deck. Because of wind conditions, we are eating

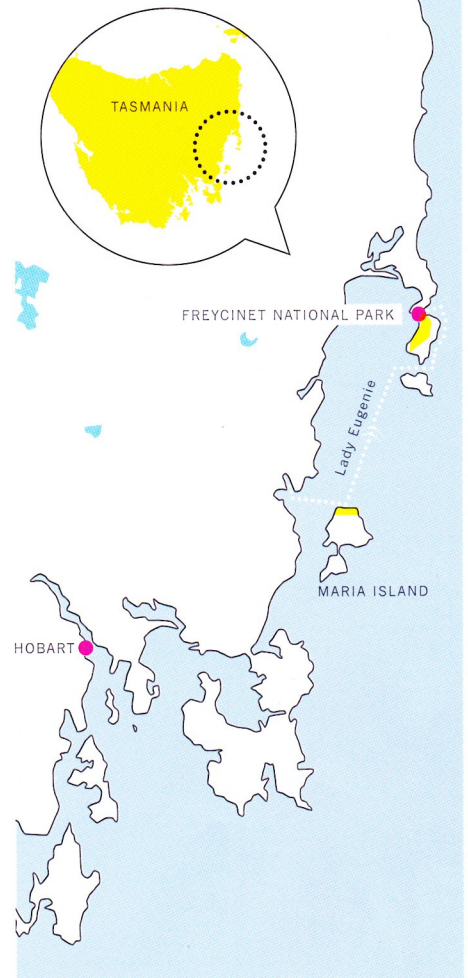
onboard tonight but otherwise a barefoot beach dinner on the shores of Schouten Island is on the itinerary.

We have our longest walk of the trip the following day – a 16-kilometre journey up Mt Graham. Arriving at the top is truly breath-taking (and not just because I am huffing and puffing), as we can literally see just how far we have come, from Maria Island to Schouten Island, as well as ahead to the white sanded shores of Wineglass Bay, where the *Lady Eugenie* is now anchored.

There's nothing like climbing to the top of a mountain and being rewarded with panoramic views to give you a sense of accomplishment.

Tomorrow we will have our final, short walk from Wineglass Bay through the saddle of the Hazards Mountains, then to our bus that will drive us back to Hobart and civilisation. For now I decide to savour the view, the fresh air of the wild and the seclusion.

## TASMANIA



### WINE GLASS BAY WALK

The Wineglass Bay Sail Walk operates from October to May and is available as a four- or six-day trip. Rates are all-inclusive of meals and beverages and are priced from A\$2,990 per person, twin share for a four-day itinerary or A\$3,990 for six days. The itinerary alternates from North – South and South – North each journey and guests are provided with a raincoat, daypack and a 50-litre hiking pack, which is worn once on the trip for about two hours. A high level of fitness is recommended, however there are more easy-going options available for each walk if preferred.

[wineglassbaysailwalk.com.au](http://wineglassbaysailwalk.com.au)

Trips depart from the all-suite, four-star Salamanca Inn ([salamancainn.com.au](http://salamancainn.com.au)), with rooms priced from A\$235 per night. Luxury accommodation options are available in Hobart if preferred, such as the Henry Jones Art Hotel, Islington Hotel, Salamanca Wharf Hotel and Lenna of Hobart.