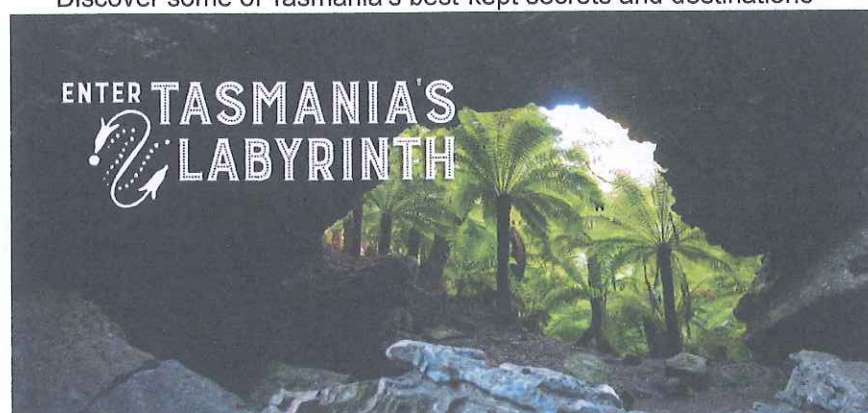


INSIDERS' GUIDE

Discover some of Tasmania's best-kept secrets and destinations



In an increasingly accelerated world the need to snap out of our wifi-induced comas, ignore the urge to check emails, and seek relief from busy routines has never been greater.

Heading somewhere unexpected and unknown is just the prescription you need to relieve the boredom and stresses of modern day life. The medicine – nature.

5 But not the nature you might expect.

With our lives so caught up with what's going on above ground, we don't give a thought to what lies beneath. An underworld separated from the rush above, where you can sink deeply into yourself and listen to your truest thoughts. Taking a moment to stop and appreciate nature makes you feel connected to a tiny part of a massive universe.

10 Deep you go, beyond the surface to a land submerged under a shallow sea. Where time is measured by drips of water, and things glow brighter without light. Caves that came into being when Tasmania was still a part of the supercontinent Gondwana. Shaped when glaciers grew, and melted, and burrowed into the limestone leaving behind the cave systems you see today.



For a small island, it might surprise you to find more caves in Tasmania than anywhere in Australia – and Tassie has the deepest, longest and wildest of them all. At 394 meters below ground Niggly Cave is by far the deepest. With a length of 23km, Exit Cave is the longest. The Kubla Khan cave is long, but it's better known for its whopping 18 metre high stalagmite.

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Tasmanian caves have a better natural integrity. Rivers still flow through them and keep them active. Stalagmites form in front of your eyes, although if you stop to watch them you might not notice – growing at a rate of ten centimetres every thousand years. You can also expect the temperature to drop to about nine degrees when you step through a cave entrance. You could liken it to walking through the entrance of a David Jones store and being greeted by a blast of cool air conditioning. It makes you feel alive.

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Although there are over 300 caves in Tasmania, most are not "tourist" caves. Separated into "show" and "wild" caves, most wild caves are restricted to avoid degradation. Not to worry, Tasmania has some of the most beautiful caves on show. Park guides keen to show off these otherworldly caverns will take you on an underworld exploration into Tasmania's show caves, showing you how these extraordinary worlds form. But if you're tired of crowds and concrete paths Wild Cave Tours in the Mole Creek area can take you into wild caves.

MOLE CREEK KARST NATIONAL PARK

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Mole Creek is a town in the upper Mersey Valley, in the central north of Tasmania. The name Mole Creek comes from a nearby stream which flows above ground, and in portions underground through the caves underlying the area. The caves of the nearby Mole Creek Karst National Park are a world of subterranean adventures that would satisfy any modern cave dweller.

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Guides teach the difference between stalagmites, stalactites, shawls, columns and flowstones in Marakoopa Cave. See sparkling crystals, reflection pools, the Great Cathedral and glow-worms. For those not shy to belt out a tune, the dimly lit expanse of the Great Cathedral cavern gives a chance to test the vocals. It's lights out in the glow-worm cavern. As your eyes adjust, the tiny larvae fill the pitch-black walls like city lights turning on at dusk.



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Operating near Mole Creek, Wild Cave Tours expert crew can take as few as two people on half-day guided tours of stream caves, glow-worm chambers and honeycombed hills in some of these lesser-known wild caves. These unusual experiences invigorate the soul.

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You'll be geared up from head to toe in overalls, and a helmet with head lamp and be led down horizontal caves, through streams into glow-worm caverns, coming out the other end for a gourmet picnic spread of local organic salads, homemade pickles and preserves and a selection of cheeses from nearby Ashgrove Farm.



Kathryn Leahy

Adapted from the Tasmanian tourism website <https://gobehindthescenery.com.au> (2016)

– In what ways does the interplay between image, layout and language help the guide to achieve its purpose?