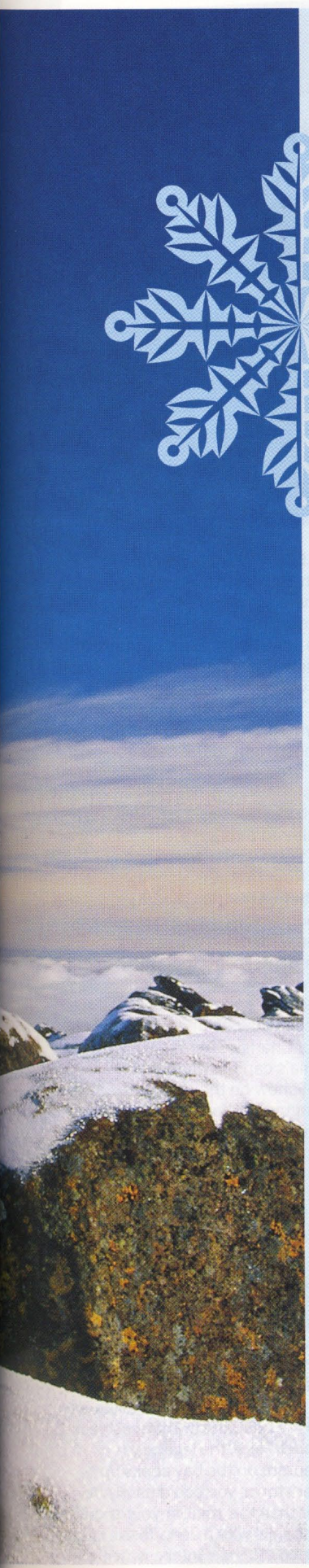
WORDS GABI MOCATTA

Jet★ flies direct to Hobart and Launceston from Melbourne and Sydney and to Launceston from Brisbane, visit www.jetstar.com



THIS PAGE: At 1,617m, Mount Ossa within Cradle Mountain–Lake St. Clair National Park is Tasmania's highest peak
OPPOSITE: Snuggle up at Lemonthyme Lodge

Photo: Tourism Tasmania/Don Fuchs



chillin' in tassie

Leave the grey damp behind and head to Tasmania where winter means white snow and roaring log fires – and more blue skies and sunshine than you'd imagine

At 42 degrees south, Tassie is blessed with a winter that's alternately ferocious and wonderful. It's the kind of winter where you migrate your woolly clothes to the front of your wardrobe with the first flutter of falling leaves. Winter in Tasmania is often so gloriously clear and crisp that when you breathe the air, you feel like you're drinking champagne – and the most essential item of your winter wardrobe is sunglasses.

When the cold hits, head for the mountains to hike the legendary Overland Track, the 65km walk through mountain wilderness in the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park. Be well prepared for weather that can change at the drop of a beanie and luxuriate in blissfully crowd-free walking under clear skies, where everything is filigreed with ice.

If the thought of carrying all your keep-warm necessities doesn't warm your heart, you're better off at a mountain lodge. **Cradle Mountain Lodge** on the west coast is a Tasmanian classic. Set in alpine forest just steps from the park's entrance, it's all timber and tartan: the perfect warm retreat from icy days outdoors. Most of the cabins have spas and log fires and there's hearty fare at the Highlander Restaurant.

Those who love low-key with just a dose of wintry indulgencw will fall in love with **Lemonthyme Lodge**. This place feels like it's grown out of the forest that surrounds it, with luxurious wood cabins nestled between head-high ferns. This is a place to spend long evenings around the fire while the snow settles gently on the trees outside.

By day, there are walks to nearby waterfalls that are spectacular with rain and snow-melt in winter and pademelons hopping about.

One of the best places for walks in the snow is the central Walls of Jerusalem National Park, where the right geography means there's often a dusting, even in summer. With good gear – tough, waterproof boots and warm, windproof layers, as well as a map and some bushwalking savvy – a day's walk here is a pleasant way to get into deep winter. Wind down afterwards at the delightful **Mole Creek Guest House**, where meat pies and bread and butter pudding sate winter appetites.

Close to Mole Creek are two places in Tassie where the temperature never changes – summer or winter. Magnificent **King Solomons and Marakoopa Caves**, at a cool nine degrees, are rich with intricate limestone formations and glow worms year round.

When it does snow, try skiing at Ben Lomond National Park, which reaches lofty



Photo: Gabi Mocatta

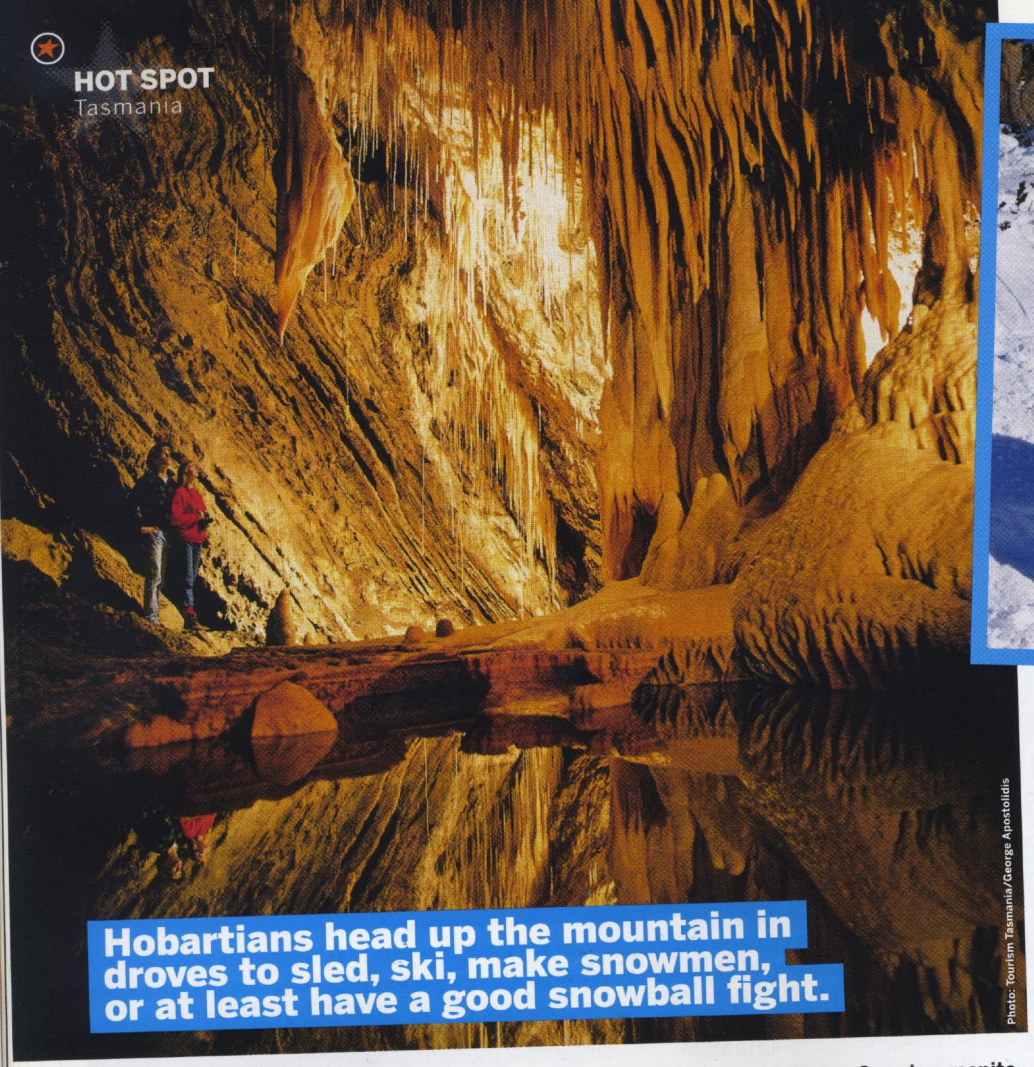


Photo: Tourism Tasmania/George Apostolidis

Hobartians head up the mountain in droves to sled, ski, make snowmen, or at least have a good snowball fight.

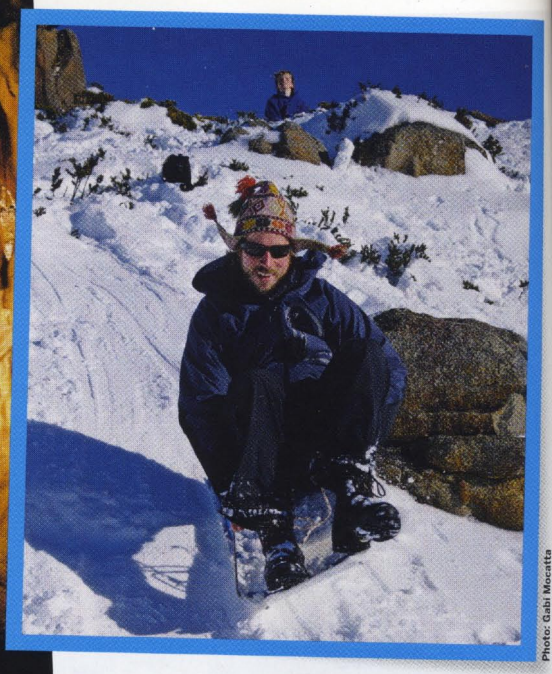


Photo: Gabi Mocatta

heights of 1,573m near Launceston in the state's north. Between July and September whenever there's enough snow, the resort's seven lifts grind into action and snow bunnies come out to play. Up on the mountain, **Ben Lomond Snow Sports** does ski, boot and lift packages – with a lesson thrown in if you'd like. Stay at Tasmania's highest pub, the **Creek Inn** where, snow conditions permitting, you can swoosh right to the door.

Tasmania's towns gear up well for winter, too. Launceston's the spot to dress warmly and stroll through the city's parks, basking in the winter sun filtered through the bare European trees. There's also winter warming to be done at **Aquarius Roman Baths**, where you can turn a shade of beetroot in the Caldarium, get the circulation pumping in the icey Frigidarium or buff up the winter skin with a invigorating seaweed massage. Follow that with blistering vindaloo curry at the city's best Indian, **Pickled Evenings** and then snuggle up in Launceston's funkiest place to stay, **TwoFourTwo** at the "Paris end" of Charles Street.

In Tasmania's capital, winter is heralded by a sugaring of snow on the slopes of 1,270m Mount Wellington. Hobartians just can't help themselves when the white stuff comes down: they head up the mountain in droves to sled, ski, make snowmen, or at least have a good snowball fight. Join them, and when you come down from the slopes head to a cosy café like the **Macquarie Street Foodstore** to order lashings of chunky winter soup and possibly the finest mocha latte in the world.

With winter the stillest and sunniest time in Tassie, cruising is also on the agenda. In the interests of spoiling oneself rotten, head to **Peppermint Bay** restaurant and bar– just south of Hobart – by water. A leisurely cruise with **Hobart Cruises** takes you down the beautiful D'Entrecasteaux Channel. Here, the legendary restaurant on the bay cooks up a winter storm: you could hardly do better than the melt-in-your-mouth lamb shanks with a deep Tassie pinot as you gaze out to the wintery, watery views.

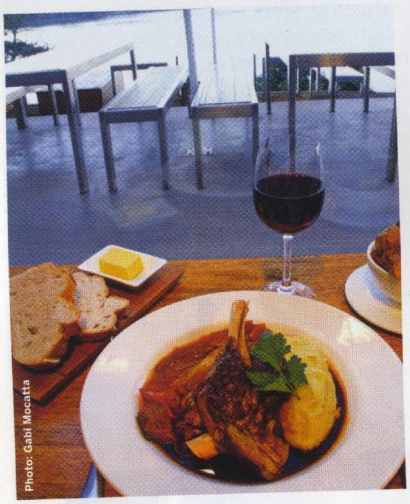


Photo: Gabi Mocatta

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP: Marakoopa Cave is a respite from the chills; try your hand at tobaganning; meet the local wombats; hearty fare from Peppermint Bay



Photo: Tourism Tasmania/Ray Yaxley

Malcolm Riley, weatherman, Bureau of Meteorology and avid sea kayaker

"I remember one winter's day – about eight degrees – when I was kayaking Hobart's D'Entrecasteaux Channel. The water was like a millpond, not a cloud in the sky and I was kayaking though a perfect reflection of snow-capped Mount Wellington... unforgettable. One of my favourite places to eat is the **Cock and Bull English Pub** [50 Wellington St, tel: +61 (3) 6331 0844] in Launceston. It's the home of true, hearty winter food."

