

Freycinet Retreat's Guide to the Local Area



Introduction

This short guide is designed to introduce you to Freycinet and to give you an insight into what to see and do in the area including our top tips – marked with this symbol ☺. As some of our accommodation has been constructed with access for disabled guests in mind, we have also marked any wheelchair accessible attractions with this symbol ♿. We hope you find the guide to be a useful resource. If you want more detailed information about anything in the area, then you can either ask us, or pop in to a Visitor Information Office either in Bicheno, en route from Hobart in Triabunna, near the wharf, or in St. Helens (to the north). We also have several links to the other operators mentioned in this guide on our website <http://www.freycinet.com/local-area-activities>

Welcome to Freycinet Retreat – about as Eco as you can get!

If you are staying at Freycinet Retreat (previously known as Freycinet Eco Retreat), then you are obviously a discerning traveller! Not only are the views stunning, but the accommodation at the lodges is amongst some of the best in the area. In addition to this, you can also enjoy a warm fuzzy feeling in knowing that we have done the best that budget and practicalities have allowed us to ensure that your stay here leaves as small a carbon footprint as possible. For example - the Bush Retreats and Studios have been constructed, from footings to roofing, following environmentally sustainable design principles. The Bush Retreats have a grid-connect PV system contributing to their power usage, and the Barn Lodge operates off the grid with solar panels and a battery bank. The whole site, including the laundry uses rainwater, and the office is also on a grid-connect photovoltaic panel system. All this and you are sitting in the middle of 1200 acres of sequestering trees. It doesn't get much "greener" than that in an industry where normally speaking "eco-tourism" can be an oxymoron.



Bush Retreat



Studio

Drive Times

Freycinet Retreat is located at Mt Paul which is about 9kms north of Coles Bay in the middle of the Freycinet peninsula. You will have to have your own transport to easily travel around Tasmania. The following drive times from here may be useful: -

Devonport - about 3hrs driving

Launceston airport – about 2hrs

Hobart airport – about 2hrs

Hobart centre – about 2.5hrs

Cradle Mountain – about 4hrs

Stanley – about 5hrs

Port Arthur – about 3.5hrs

Freycinet Area

Parks Passes

Before you can go anywhere in the National Park, you will need to obtain a Parks Pass. These can be Park specific, or if you are travelling around Tasmania, then it may be more cost effective for you to buy an “All Parks” Pass. You can purchase passes at the National Parks Visitor Information Office, which is located at the entrance to the Park, about 1km beyond Coles Bay. Passes can be of one day or longer duration. When you buy a pass, you will be given a useful leaflet which details all the main walks in the area including the ones described below. www.parks.tas.gov.au

Wineglass Bay and all that.....

As you are probably aware the icon for which the area is best known is Wineglass Bay, which is on the tick list for all visitors. Wineglass Bay has been rated as one of Fromer’s top ten beaches in the World and therefore has to appear on our top ten 😊. There are various ways to see this beach. First, and best of all, would be a walk from the Wineglass Bay lookout car park, either to the lookout and



Wineglass Bay - the rocky end

back (about 2hrs return) or the circular walk which takes in the lookout, Wineglass Bay itself, the isthmus across to Hazards Beach and a walk back along the peninsula (in all about a 4hr walk). The track to the lookout has recently been vastly improved by the Freycinet National Park, and is of a quite exceptional standard.

Cruise to Wineglass and Schouten Passage

There is an easier way to get that tick though, and this involves simply handing over a small wad to Freycinet Sea Cruises in order to view the peninsula and Wineglass Bay by motor cruiser. www.wineglassbaycruises.com This cruise leaves every morning from Coles Bay Jetty at the Cut and in the afternoon in the summer you can join a cruise around the Passage which is the stretch of water between the end of the peninsula and Schouten Island, which, as you can probably guess, is the island sitting off the end of the peninsula. There are often sightings of dolphins, seals and whales during this cruise.



The Hazards from a scenic flight

Scenic Flight 😊

If you only ever do one scenic flight in your life, then this has to be it! You can see the peninsula from aspects that you obviously will not get from any other perspective. Flights leave from the runway located along the Friendly Beaches Road – don't forget your camera www.freycinetair.com.au and you could get an aerial shot of your accommodation!

Cape Tourville 😊♿

You can just about see Wineglass Bay from the Cape Tourville Lighthouse walk. This is a beautifully constructed 10 minute board walk with disabled access that takes in some of the rugged cliff terrain and offshore granite formations.

Swimming at Wineglass

If you are feeling brave, or have the body fat normally only associated with humped back whales, then you might want to take a dip in the water at Wineglass. As it is on the ocean side of the peninsula, it can be fairly chilly, but nothing that would put off any of the Brits amongst you. But do be warned – the water has a beguiling appeal, as on entering you will find a steep shelf and quite an undertow.

Other Beaches on the peninsula

Hazards Beach 😊

A warmer and calmer beach for swimming is Hazards Beach, which you will reach if you are doing the Wineglass Bay circuit. In order to enjoy this beach you will not need to cover yourself in lard as it is on the Great Oyster Bay side of the peninsula, and therefore, somewhat up in the temperature stakes.

Swanwick Beach 😊

This beach is officially called Sandpiper Beach, although no one has ever seen a sandpiper here. It is one of the best kept secrets from holiday makers – being the haunt of shackies and locals. It is great for a quick dip as there is usually a sandbank across the river mouth which extends in front of this beach and whilst the water is, therefore, shallow, it is also several degrees warmer than anywhere else on the peninsula, or indeed, Tasmania. It's great for families as, because of the sandbank, it is relatively safe. There are several access points along the road in Swanwick.

Honeymoon Bay 😊

This bay is in the Park, and is a stunner. A lovely small bay area and good for snorkelling amongst the rocks nearby. There is also a larger sandy area a bit further around the headland, and if you have a licence you can pull abalone from the rocks.

Sleepy Bay

Again this in the Park and is a bit more wild and woolly. It makes for a great short walk, but probably not too good for swimming.

Friendly Beaches 😊

This is the beach that you can see from Freycinet Retreat, and in particular from the Studios. It is on the east side of the peninsula and is huge. You can access it from the Friendly Beaches car park along the Friendly Beaches Road past the Freycinet Air runway (North Friendlies) or further south along a gravel track suitable for 4WD only (South Friendlies). Beautiful white sand, practically always deserted and good for surfing when the wind is in the right direction.

Other good beaches on the east coast of Tassie include: -

Redbill Beach in Bicheno – again a good surfing beach, and you can access Diamond Island penguin reserve when the tide is low. Be careful when surfing or swimming as there is a strong rip.

Waub Bay in Bicheno – popular beach for holiday makers in Bicheno and a very attractive bay.

Bay of Fires near St. Helens 😊 – about 2hrs north of Freycinet Retreat, and pretty stunning. Voted by Lonely Planet Guide as their favourite beach in the World. There are some dodgy reviews in the Lonely Planet Guide, but this is probably fairly accurate, albeit a bit over the top – just look out for those white pointer sharks though!

Coles Bay Township (population c.200)

Coles Bay is about 9kms south of Freycinet Retreat and the Park entrance is another 1km beyond Coles Bay. Coles Bay consists of two commercial centres. If you turn right as soon as you come to the first junction in front of Freycinet Adventures (with the canoes often parked outside) then you will come to the supermarket (a bit of a rip-off price-wise and the associated petrol station has the dubious accolade of being the most expensive in Tasmania) 🛒, bakery 🛒, takeaway 🛒 and Iluka Tavern 🍷 and bottle shop 🍷, all of which are opposite Muir Beach. If you carry on instead of turning right in front of Freycinet Adventures and take the second right turn after that, then left onto Jetty Road, you will not only come to the jetty, but also reach the second commercial centre, which consists of a takeaway/café 🛒, Post Office 📮 and a supermarket 🛒.

Other nearby Townships

Bicheno (population c.850)

Bicheno is about 30kms from Freycinet Retreat and offers more in the way of shops and eating options than Coles Bay. There is one main supermarket 🛒, numerous eateries, several clothing/surf shops, a butchers, a chemist, a Post Office, a bakery, several cafes, a laundromat, a newsagent and ANZ agent, a tourist information office, a hairdressers, and a very good hardware store - all 🛒.

Swansea (population c.550)

Swansea is about a 45 minute drive from Freycinet Retreat. This has traditionally been more of a country town with the usual kind of shops present in the high street rather than tourist trap, but in recent years quite a bit of investment has gone on in Swansea with the result that there have been several developments that have made Swansea the envy of other local towns. In particular, it has several good eating options and a great pub (Bark Mill Tavern 🍷).

Things to do in or near Coles Bay

Aqua Taxi - Freycinet Aqua Taxi runs water transportation services in Freycinet National Park, departing from Coles Bay. <http://www.freycinetadventures.com.au/aqua-taxi/>

Snorkelling – as mentioned above this is good at Honeymoon Bay, but there are other locations where snorkelling is good too e.g. Little Bluestone, Hepburn Point, Peggy's Point in Bicheno to name a few.

Boating/Canoeing – The only non-powered boating option available in Coles Bay is by way of canoeing on a guided trip with Freycinet Adventures. www.freycinetadventures.com.au

Boat Ramps – if you have your own boat then there are two boat ramps in the area. One at the end of Jetty Road in Coles Bay, and one in Swanwick Drive in Swanwick. The latter is a bit tricky as you have to negotiate the sand bar – so take a picnic in case you get stuck there until the tide turns.

Fishing – you can fish off the rocks or jetty in Coles Bay or off the beach at Swanwick. Go to the boat ramp or telephone box access points for the latter and walk along the foreshore to fish in the Swan



Swanwick

River. This is superb on those balmy summer evenings. 😊 If you want a fishing experience on a boat, then there is a fishing charter operator in Bicheno called Sea-All Fishing and Marine Tours, which looks like the real deal.

www.seaallfishingandmarinetours.com

Bird watching – we have a RAMSAR site in Freycinet which is located on part of Moulting Lagoon. This can be accessed via a couple of points along the Coles Bay Road or at the end of Flacks Road, which is a right turn out of our driveway onto the Coles Bay Road, turn left a little way along. Apart from the RAMSAR site general bird watching is good at Freycinet Eco Retreat where we have a bird list available in our compendium and on our website. We would be very happy if you can add to this.

Walking – there are various Parks walks available in the area, and these are marked in the leaflet made available from National Parks when you purchase a Parks pass. A summary of a few of the most popular ones are as follows: -

Wineglass Bay walks – see above

Mt Amos – one for the more adventurous as it involves a bit of bouldering, which would be tricky in wet weather.

Friendly Beaches – as long or as short as you like, start either at the northern end along Friendly Beaches Road, or from Freshwater Lagoon at the southern end.

Douglas Apsley – this can either be a rock hop up the river (on a dry day) and a forest walk back, or a forest walk to the gorge waterfall and back.

Denison Beach – at Bicheno, various access points from the Tasman Highway, the easiest being at the Denison River bridge.

Maria Island – see below.

Rockclimbing – Freycinet has some of the best rockclimbing on granite in Tasmania. In particular at White Water Wall in the Park. You can take your own gear or you can arrange a guide through All4 Adventure. www.all4adventure.com.au You could also check out this site for more on climbing in the area www.climbing.com.au

Cycling on Maria Island – if you in the area for a several nights, then you might want to do a day trip to Triabunna and take the ferry to Maria Island. No vehicles are permitted on the Island so this is a great experience. There is nowhere to buy any food etc. either, so make sure you take all you need for your trip. You can even stay overnight on Maria in the Penitentiary. Information on all of this is available from the Information Centre in Bicheno which you will have to visit in advance of the planned outing. It is also available from the info. Centre in Triabunna, but if you go on a day trip and leave it until then to find out about bike hire etc. you won't be able to catch the ferry in time as the TIC generally doesn't open until 10am.

Cycling generally – mountain bike cycling is becoming very popular in Tasmania, and although there are plans for more investment in this activity in the future, the current options in Freycinet are a little limited. Several routes in the Freycinet area are mentioned on the website www.ridetassie.com although Parks would not necessarily approve of all those being promulgated on this site. Also, this is a site put together by enthusiasts, who ask for a \$5 contribution for access to their information. If you're not such a hardened mountain bike rider, and you haven't brought your own bike with you, then it is possible to hire bikes in Swansea and/or take a tour in that area see – www.swanseacycletours.com.au

4WD – if you want a 4WD drive experience, then the best way to do this is to go on a guided tour with All4Adventures. 😊



All4 Adventure

www.all4adventure.com.au This is great fun, especially if it's wet! You can also take your own vehicle on a couple of 4WD routes available in the area, mainly to Bluestone Bay off the Cape Tourville road, and South Friendly off the Coles Bay Road near from where All4 start their trips. This gravel road is not signposted but Parks do produce a leaflet about 4WD routes which can be picked up at the Freycinet Park information centre.

Golf Club - there is a golf club in Swanwick, for which the green fees are a minimal sum per day. A blue tag can be obtained at the time of payment. www.freycinetgolfcourse.com.au

Wildlife -If you want the genuine wildlife experience, then by staying at Freycinet Retreat, you have come to the right place! All our land here is registered as Land for Wildlife, which basically means that we don't do anything to control it – including feeding as this is not sustainable. Wallabies are always evident, day or night, and echidnas can generally be seen during the day too, but for the more elusive species, we would encourage guests to take a walk around at twilight/night/dawn when you are more likely to see wombats, quolls, nightjars, and possibly the odd devil.



Wombat

You can have a more managed experience by either going on a Penguin Tour in Bicheno (book through the surf shop near the laundromat) www.bichenopenguintours.com.au or by visiting Nature World on the Tasman Highway a few kms north of Bicheno. www.natureworld.com.au With the penguin tour, you are guaranteed to see penguins, but you must book in advance as these trips are extremely popular. If you visit Nature World during the afternoon around 4pm, you may catch feeding time, which is always a bit more interesting. There is also an option of viewing devils here see www.devilsinthedark.com.au

Vineyards -There are several boutique vineyards in the Freycinet area offering tastings in their tasting rooms. The principle ones with easily accessible tasting rooms are –

Gala on the Tasman Highway at Cranbrook.

Freycinet Vineyard on the Tasman Highway near Cherry Tree Hill.

Milton on the Tasman Highway just north of Swansea.

Devil's Corner on the Tasman Highway also near Cherry Tree Hill.

Springvale on the Tasman Highway north of Swansea.

Vineyard Tours – there is a business called the Long Lunch, which operates on the peninsula, and which does some very highly recommended tours of several local vineyards. Brad will even pick you up from your accommodation, so you really don't have to drive anywhere. www.longlunchtourco.com.au

Other places to visit

In Bicheno you can go for a ride in the glass-bottomed boat, which putters around the Gulch, which is on the waterfront along from the blowhole. The blowhole is also worth a look and there is a lovely walk along the foreshore from the Blowhole into Bicheno.

Places to Eat

In Coles Bay

The Edge restaurant at the Edge of the Bay Resort 🍴 – stunning setting with views of the Hazards and a great atmosphere. Changing menu, but generally good. Don't even try to go there if you haven't booked!

Tombole 🍴 – in Jetty Road. Extremely good takeaway and Café with wood fired pizzas certainly on Friday and Saturday evenings. Can be closed on Sundays/Mondays.

Coles Bay Bakery 🍴 on the Esplanade.

Jus Food 🍴 on the Esplanade. Fish & chips, which can be surprisingly good, but make sure you ask for what is fresh and don't get the pre-crumbed pre-frozen fish.

Iluka Tavern 🍴 on the Esplanade. Good pub grub.

The Bistro 🍴 at Freycinet Lodge. Open for casual lunches and suppers 7 days a week.

The Bay - Freycinet Lodge Restaurant 🍴. Fine dining, again probably best to book.

Freycinet Marine Farm – almost exactly opposite the entrance to Freycinet Eco Retreat. Here you can taste and/or takeaway, oysters, mussels, crayfish and scallops – all subject to being in season/available. Closes at 5pm.

In **Bicheno** – there are numerous places to eat, a selection of which is as follows: -

Pasinis café – Italian style and other styles. ♿

Blue Edge Bakery – good coffee, and pretty good for breakfast. Otherwise pies and cakes. ♿

Beachfront tavern – pub grub ♿.

Fresh wet fish can be purchased from Trigonía and also from a small shop next to the Glass bottomed boat jetty, both on/near the Gulch.

Fish and chips near the Gulch. You get a bucket of chips, but the fish is fresh.

In **Swansea** – again there are a few places to eat the most notable of which are: -

Fish and Chip/Indian (yes, strange, but it seems to work) ♿.

Bark Mill Tavern ♿.

Ugly Duck Out ♿.

Artifak – good coffee as well as good food.

Between Swansea and Coles Bay on the Tasman Highway

There are a few good options for food if you are travelling on the Tasman Highway between Swansea and Coles Bay, or if you fancy a trip out for lunch from your accommodation.

Milton Vineyard ♿ – serve Tapas during the day.

Springvale Vineyard ♿ – has a pop up restaurant for lunches, with expert chefs and an interesting menu.

Devil's Corner ♿ (ambulatory only) – amazing view – including Mt Paul, which is where FER is located – and a variation on the food provided by Tombolo and the Freycinet Marine Farm available.

Pondering Frog ♿ – near the Coles Bay turn-off – good for a cup of tea and ice-cream stop, but they do have an interesting changing food menu as well e.g. vegetarian chowder. Not had it yet, but looks worth a go, and, we understand that, it is mostly homemade.

If you are travelling through **Orford**, then try Scorchers for a great thin crust wood fired pizza.

If you are travelling through **Campbell Town** then you should stop at Zeps which always has a good menu.

If you are travelling down from **St. Helens** – call in at Eureka Farm ♿ for great relishes, jams, sauces, ice-creams and they do serve lunches as well.

Where to buy food locally for self-catering/picnics

We would recommend that if you intend to self-cater, then your best bet is to stock up before you get to the area. If you're coming from the Hobart airport then you can shop at Woollies (behind MacDonalds) or Coles. If you're coming from the north then you could go into Launceston where there are several Coles and Woollies and there is also a small IGA at Campbell Town.

There are various places in the area where you can purchase local produce for a picnic/barbecue.

Coles Bay – two small supermarkets mentioned above. There is also a bakery on the Esplanade.

Bicheno – the supermarket here is larger and there is more choice. There is a butcher and as mentioned above, fresh fish from the Gulch either next to the glass bottomed boat jetty or just around the corner at the boat ramp. Blue Edge bakery is good for basic rolls etc. Pasinis has a deli counter.

Public Barbecues ♿

Coles Bay – there are a couple of places here where pay as you go barbecues are provided - one at Muir Beach and one at the Community Hall. There is also a barbecue stand near the National Parks Visitor Information Centre, and various picnic tables located around the Esplanade.

Bicheno – there is a pay as you go barbecue in the Lions Park, and a barbecue cover (no barbecue) on the seafront opposite the petrol station.

Swansea – there is a pay as you go barbecue on the foreshore near the public toilets.

Useful but boring

ATMs – there are two in Coles Bay (one at each supermarket), and three in Bicheno (one at the Bendigo Bank, one inside the Newsagents and one outside the Chemist).

Post Offices – there is one in Coles Bay Convenience on Jetty Road, one in Bicheno and one in Swansea.

Doctors – there is a Health Centre in Bicheno for which the telephone number is 03 6375 1257, and a Doctor in Swansea who does have regular clinics in Coles Bay. The telephone number for the Swansea practice is 03 6257 8205.

Petrol Stations – if you don't mind what price you pay for petrol, there is one in Coles Bay at Iluka Supermarket. There is one in Bicheno along the Tasman Highway and there are two in Swansea, both along the High Street through town.

Hardware – The Log Cabin in Bicheno will have just about anything you need. There is also a hardware store in Swansea.

Newsagents – both supermarkets in Coles Bay sell papers, and there is also a newsagent in Bicheno.

Wifi – There is free Wifi available in both Coles Bay (near Freycinet Adventures) and in Bicheno (outside Pasinis). We also have free unlimited high speed internet at Freycinet Eco Retreat which is available in your cabin in the Lodges and Studios. As the Shack is in a black spot, guests staying there are welcome to use our guest wifi, which is available at or near Reception. We will provide you with a code for your wifi on check-in.

Public telephones – One in Swanwick at the end of Swanwick Road. A couple in Coles Bay – one in each “commercial centre”. Bicheno – one outside Cyranos and one on the Tasman Highway just past the laundromat.

Mobile Phone Top-ups – best bet is probably either Coles Bay Convenience or the newsagent in Bicheno. By the way, if you have anything other than a Telstra mobile phone then there are only a few places where you will pick up reception on the peninsula. Having said that, even Telstra is a bit patchy in the area. You can get good Telstra reception elsewhere on the property though, and can even get a Vodafone/Optus signal on certain points as we have line of sight to the mast in Swansea.

