

THREE DAYS EXPLORING THE HIGHLAND HEART OF TASSIE



This three-day Tasmania **road trip** is more than just a drive—it's a reconnection with a place that still feels like the wild heart of the island. You won't find glamping domes on every corner or big resort towns. It's still remote, still simple, still about slowing down and listening to the wind. Whether you're a first-timer or returning like me, this journey through the high country is one of Tasmania's most underrated escapes.

Day 1: Hobart to Tarraleah – Into the misty highlands

Leaving Hobart, it doesn't take long for things to shift. The Derwent River fades into the rear-view mirror, the air cools, and by the time you've passed New Norfolk and turned at Ouse, the terrain opens up like a deep breath. The Central Highlands don't scream for your attention—they just wait patiently for you to notice.

First stop: Ouse. It's still the sleepy gateway to the Highlands it always was. There's a general store and a humble café or two, where the flat white is strong and the chat is stronger. For anyone wanting to stretch their legs, there's a peaceful riverside walk and a tiny but fascinating colonial cemetery that whispers stories of settlers and bushrangers.

Your first destination is **Tarraleah**, a curious little town that once housed hydroelectric workers and has since been reimagined as an eco-retreat of sorts. Some buildings are still frozen in time, and that's part of the charm.

The **Tarraleah Lodge** offers a step back into the art deco era with sweeping Highland views and open fires, while the **Highlander Cabins**

provide a more modest but comfortable alternative.

Grab a local whisky at the old **Chalet Bar**, then settle in for a hearty dinner at The **Teez Café**. The trout here is often caught the same day. If not, it'll still taste like it.

Overnight suggestion:

- **Upmarket:** Tarraleah Lodge
- **Budget:** Highland Cabins at Tarraleah

Day 2: Steppes, lakes and the long quiet roads

If there's one thing I've always loved about the Central Highlands, it's the roads—ribbons of bitumen rolling through silent landscapes. Day two is all about exploring them.

Not far from Tarraleah is the **Steppes State Reserve**, home to the quietly profound **Steppes Sculptures**—a circle of carved stones set among the gums, each one telling a piece of the region's pastoral and Indigenous story.

There's not always a crowd, and that's the point. You can sit in silence here for a while, listening to birdsong and wind through dry grass. It's timeless, and that hasn't changed.

From there, head deeper into the lake district. These Highland lakes—Bronte, Pine Tier, Laughing Jack, Dee Lagoon—are scattered like puddles across a vast granite tabletop. In the 80s, they were the go-to for trout fishers and off-grid campers.

That hasn’t changed much, although facilities are a touch better. Fishing in Tasmania still feels like the real deal here, and licenses are available online from the Inland Fisheries Service.

Bronte Park is your next overnight stop. The Bronte Park Chalet is basic but warm, and the bar still serves a good counter meal.

Short walks around the lake give you peaceful views and a good chance to spot local wildlife.

Things to do:

- Visit the Steppes Sculptures
- Drop a line at Pine Tier Lagoon or Bronte Lagoon
- Take a short bushwalk near Laughing Jack Lagoon
- Chat with locals at the Bronte Park General Store

Overnight suggestion:

- **Upmarket:** None in this remote area
- **Budget:** Bronte Park Chalet or lakeside camping

Day 3: Lake St Clair and the road home

Start early and head west to **Lake St Clair**, the deepest freshwater lake in Australia. On still mornings, mist hugs the water and the silence is absolute. The visitor centre is a good place to start, and from there, you can take one of two recommended short walks:

- Watersmeet Track – a flat 30-minute loop
- Larmairremener tabelti – a cultural trail showcasing Aboriginal history

Stop for a meal at **Lake St Clair Lodge**, or just enjoy a quiet coffee before heading back towards Hobart. On the return journey, swing through Hamilton for a final taste of highland history. The town is small but charming, with an excellent café called Jackson’s Emporium.

Overnight suggestion:

- **Upmarket:** Lake St Clair Lodge
- **Budget:** Camping nearby or return to Hobart

TASMANIA CENTRAL HIGHLANDS 3-DAY ITINERARY

Day	Route	Highlights	Distance	Drive Time
1	Hobart → Tarraleah	Ouse, Tarraleah heritage, whisky and wallabies	127 km	01:50
2	Tarraleah → Bronte	Steppes, fishing, scenic lakes	82 km	01:15
3	Bronte → Lake St Clair → Hobart	Lake St Clair walks, Hamilton café	179 km	02:45