Whilst I would not consider myself an expert hiker by any means, I must admit I discovered a new passion for hiking when travelling around Tasmania. Not only is the state of Tasmania full of some of the most breathtaking landscapes and amazing coastline, it has the perfect climate for hiking.

**What fitness level do you need?**

I visited Tasmania in March-April and the temperatures were mild and cool which made hiking easier. This means that people of all fitness levels can tackle at least one of the many great short walks in Tasmania. There are literally hundreds of hiking adventures that you can have in Tassie. The most famous of all would probably be the Overland Track, a 65km six-day adventure.

Although I would love to tackle that adventure at some point in my life, if you are planning on travelling around Tassie for a few weeks then you won’t have the time or preparation to hike for 7 days straight.

That’s why I enjoyed the day hikes so much. We were able to see some of the most breathtaking places, but we could also move quickly from place to place and travel around the whole of Tasmania.

*The view over Shadow Lake – one of the many sights to see in Tasmania. Photo: Madeleine Kelso*
What equipment should you bring?

What I love about the short walks in Tassie is that you don’t need much equipment, so you don’t have to break the budget to get out there and enjoy nature!

The only equipment we had during our short walks was:

- Hat
- Camelback with water
- Compact raincoat (Tasmania is beautiful but it can rain unexpectedly)
- Sunscreen
- Comfortable runners
- Lighter
- Protein shakes
- and an intrepid sense of adventure!

I’ve managed to narrow down my top 5 top short day hikes in Tassie, so here they are!

Check out the blue sky at Dove Lake at the start of Cradle Mountain! Photo: Madeleine Kelso
The Top 5 Short Hikes to do in Tasmania

1. Wellington Park - Organ Pipes Circuit

This is an approximate 9km return track, with moderate difficulty. The recommended time for completing the track is approximately 4 hours (half-day walk). But we found that there was a lot to see along the way, so it took us about 6 hours to complete.

Also, we found that it’s better to take these walks steadily to ensure you take in as much natural beauty as possible and enjoy the time outdoors. It’s a loop walking track, which means you start and finish at the same place, which in this case is The Springs in Wellington Park. The walk slowly snakes around Kunanyi/Mount Wellington, passing the beautiful sandstone Sphinx Rock which has a lookout platform.

The view of the spectacular Organ Pipes is from the base and is about halfway through the walk. The track then descends back down to The Springs. We did find this walk quite windy and cold, so it’s worth packing a waterproof and windproof jacket. If you are visiting Hobart then I would highly recommend giving this walk a go.

*Pack a windproof jacket for your ascent up Mount Wellington. Photo: Madeleine Kelso*
2. Freycinet National Park - Wineglass Bay Lookout and Hazards Beach Circuit

The Wineglass Bay walking track is a very popular walking loop track amongst Tasmanian tourists. And although this means you will be sharing the circuit with many other people, the magnificent scenery justifies its popularity. The recommended time to complete the walking track is 4-5 hours.

This is a fairly flat and easy walk that has paved steps that lead to the Wineglass Bay lookout. The views from the lookout are amazing, especially on a clear day. The track then descends after the look-out on the beautiful Wineglass Bay beach. The walk continues to Hazards beach which is safe for swimming, and a perfect spot to stop and have lunch. The trail picks up again after a long walk across the beach and follows the track back to the carpark.

We spent a few nights camping in Freycinet National Park camping so we could explore the area. After our walk, we went to the Freycinet Marine Park for an early dinner. There I had the best mussel pot and Kilpatrick oysters I have ever tasted – so add that to your list!

Wineglass Bay lookout is a popular track, but still worth checking out. Photo: Madeleine Kelso

3. Shadow Lake Circuit (Lake St Clair starting point)

Lake St Clair is the starting point for this walk and is also the end of the Overland Track.
There’s a large café and ranger station there where you can find lots of information about the many other hiking trails in Tassie.

There is a ferry that takes people across from one side of the lake to the other. We decided to tackle the Shadow Lake Circuit which is a 15km loop track that takes approximately 4-5hrs to complete.

It is a peaceful walk through the forest that is a 330m gradual climb to Shadow Lake. This is an eerily beautiful spot with the most pristine, and transparent water I have ever seen.

Start at Lake St Clair and make your way around the loop. Photo: Madeleine Kelso

4. South Cape Bay

This walk was just spectacular. It begins from Australia’s most southern road and is approximately 16km in length. The track goes through to the ocean and follows the same track back to the carpark. We camped in the area for a few days so we had plenty of time to explore. I would highly recommend spending a whole day on this walk and have lunch on the ocean cliffs at the other end.

The track is very well maintained, with a few kilometres of boardwalk raising walkers above the marshlands. As the walk continues from the marshlands into the forest, I found this to be one of the most beautiful, untouched parts of Australia. As you start to hear the ocean, you suddenly emerge from the forest and are on the rocky cliffs that hug the Southern Ocean.
Even though it’s a longer walk, it is relatively easy and the rewards at the other end make it worth having a picnic by the cold southern waters.

Take a picnic along so you can have lunch by the ocean at South Cape Bay. Photo: Madeleine Kelso

5. Cradle Mountain Summit Track

If you are considering a visit to Tasmania, a journey to Cradle Mountain is an absolute MUST. Even if you are not a hiker, there is a walk for every age group and fitness level there. The only downside is that it’s very popular as it’s probably one of Australia’s most famous hiking trails. I’d recommend arriving early and packing a lunch as you’re definitely going to want to make a whole day out of it.

There is a tourist car park approximately 20 minutes from Cradle Mountain, as no external vehicles are allowed to drive in and out, so a shuttle bus drove us into the national park. All walks start from the stunning Dove Lake and wind up and around the various mountain ridges that surround the Lake. The main show being, of course, Cradle Mountain.
We decided to tackle the Cradle Mountain summit track which is approximately 12km. We took a slightly longer route and headed via Hansen’s Peak. This walk isn’t suitable if you don’t have a moderate level of fitness, as it does involve some pretty intense mountain climbing. Also, some parts of the track are only climbable via the strategically placed chains on the side of the cliff faces.

Of course, the harder a track is, the more spectacular and stunning the rewards usually are at the top and this is absolutely true of the walking trail. I had a clichéd ‘on top of the world’ moment at the peak of that beautiful mountain. If you’re up for an adventurous challenge, then I would highly recommend giving it a go on your Tasmania visit.

I hope this article will whet your appetite for some spectacular hiking adventures while visiting Tasmania!

*What’s the best hike you’ve done in Tassie?*