

MACQ 01 HOBART

## COOL HUNTING

A HOTEL WITH A STORY OR TWO TO TELL

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**T**he snow has already arrived on Mount Wellington. The locals around Hobart way are keen to share this fact – they do so the minute you arrive – but there’s no real need. The icy blast that greets you as you step off the plane in Hobart lets you know in its direct, wordless, fashion. Pack your scarf and your gloves, it’s saying, winter has blown into town.

Traditionally, winter has been the off-season for Tasmanian tourism. Did tourists want to head to the shivering south over temperate locations with their swimming pools and swim-up cocktail lounges?

But a funny thing has happened in the post-pandemic world. For reasons even Tassie locals find inexplicable, travellers are increasingly seeking “experiences” as an alternative to resort holidays, and if that means heading somewhere wild and rugged, where the pleasure comes not from diving into a stylised swimming pool but in discovering a real heritage city with pristine wilderness on its doorstep, then that’s what we’re doing now.

Perfectly positioned to capture this market is Hobart’s MACq 01. Launched by Tasmanian hoteliers Federal Group in 2017 as “Australia’s first storytelling hotel”, this is a property whose moment has finally

arrived. On the waterfront on Hobart’s gorgeous Hunter St, just across from its glamorous sister property the Henry Jones Art Hotel, MACq 01 offers a journey into the history and psyche of Tasmania, even before leaving the building. Stuffed with local artefacts, art and references to the cold-climate warriors who have made the state what it is, this is a hotel that indeed has a story to tell.

The deep dive into Tasmania’s personality starts at the room level, each of which is named after a notable Tasmanian whose life story is told on the door. My almost comically roomy premium waterfront suite, for instance, is named after Martin Cash, a bushranger with a back story. Cash first turned up in NSW in 1827, an Irish convict transported “for shooting a man in the buttocks for kissing his girlfriend”. After later free settling in Van Diemen’s Land, he got back to his old tricks and wound up in Port Arthur, managing to escape that dreadful place to become a well-known bushranger. Captured again, he was sentenced to death, talked his way out of that fate and was packed off to Norfolk Island. There he decided to go straight and ended up the island’s constable. He eventually drifted back to Hobart, working at







Government House as its gardener, and died in New Zealand at the age of 69. What a life, what times.

Across 114 rooms, MACq 01 is full of stories like this, highlighting the likes of Alec Campbell, a Launceston boy who became Australia's last living Anzac, to Lucy Beeton, a Tasmanian Aboriginal woman who campaigned for indigenous justice and education.

You could spend hours staring at people's doors, or take the guided tour that runs through the highlights (ask at reception for a booking), including carefully located relics and plaques scattered through the premises. A standout feature is found just outside the hotel on the dock overlooking the Derwent River, right where convicts were once disgorged from the ships. Here you'll find the beautiful and poignant Rowan Gillespie sculpture, *Footsteps*, which pays homage to the 13,000 women and 2000 children convicts unloaded here between 1803 and 1853. It will send a chill down your spine.

MACq 01 is also working hard to

curate wider Tasmanian experiences at the hotel, bringing the island in, if you like. Until June 30, Arras in the City is a wine tasting experience offering glasses from the remote Arras vineyard. The flight of four sparklings, including the exceptional 2014 House of Arras Grand Vintage, are accompanied by outstanding morsels built around unique local ingredients (think crayfish on a sesame crisp, King Island beef tartare). Take a seat by the fire and while away the afternoon with a taste of the island at your fingertips. It's an immersive experience for all the senses.

As I leave the island it is warmer than when I arrived. "That's Tassie weather," says my cabbie with a laugh as I unwind the scarf from my neck and peel back the cardigan. "Unpredictable." Well, I didn't mind the cold, I tell him. It's atmospheric. "Oh, it will be freezing again soon. Look at those clouds rolling in." He laughs gleefully, and I get it. Winter is a part of Tassie's story.

macq01.com.au

**Cold comforts:** Derwent River outlook; Arras tastings; *Footsteps* sculpture, heritage artefacts; lobby; room with a view



### CHECKLIST

❖ **Perfect for:** Heritage buffs, food and wine lovers, cold-weather lovers.

❖ **Dining:** It makes sense to dine in-house when the weather is icy and the hospitality inside is warm. MACq 01's Old Wharf restaurant is popular with guests and frequented by locals too who go for chef Alvin Sim's take on modern Tasmanian cuisine. Expect local seafood by the bucketload (you'll be tiring of Tassie salmon by day two), executed very well in dishes like a Bruny Island wallaby pie. The Story Bar, located at the end of the hotel with a view over the mouth of the Derwent, is a beautiful place for a warming Tassie pinot noir or local whisky at the end of a

cold day out in the fresh air. For excellent sparkling wines, the Arras in the City experience is \$95, from 3pm-6pm daily, bookings not required. A lively row of affordable seafood outlets has also opened on nearby Constitution Dock. There's the Tassie salmon, fried fish or a tray of Bruny Island oysters for \$14 for a half dozen.

❖ **Getting there:** MACq 01 is a 20-minute cab ride from Hobart Airport. MACq 01 is on Hunter St, a 10-minute walk from famous Salamanca Place.

❖ **Bottom line:** From \$360 per night for a Hunter Street room; premium waterfront suites start at \$680 per night, including breakfast.