



## Visitors to Selected Parks & Reserves, Tasmania – 2017 to 2021 (Calendar Year)

### Reference Site Numbers

The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) manages 19 national parks and over 800 reserves within Tasmania. The PWS does not count visitors to every national park or reserve but produces regular estimates at 14 selected sites in Tasmania – called “Reference Sites”.

Calendar Year <sup>1</sup> (Rounded to thousands)	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	% Change		Notes
						2019 (pre COVID-19) to 2021 (Two years)	2020 to 2021 (One year)	
Reference Site	'000	'000	'000	'000	'000			
Freycinet*	301	316	323	225	259	-20%	+15%	
Cradle Mountain (Dove Lake)*	268	286	279	152	179	-36%	+18%	
Mount Field*	188	222	202	141	172	-15%	+22%	2
Tasman Arch (Tasman Peninsula)*	205	202	204	112	102	-50%	-9%	
Lake St Clair (Cynthia Bay)*	93	94	93	62	77	-17%	+24%	3
Narawntapu (Western entrance)#	48	51	55	53	58	+6%	+10%	
Gordon River (interstate and overseas visitors to Tas only)^	87	79	82	42	54	-35%	+26%	4, 5
Tamar Island Wetlands#	37	44	52	39	40	-23%	+3%	
Maria Island*	23	34	43	30	34	-20%	+13%	6, 7
Hastings Caves & Thermal Springs*	46	45	41	24	32	-23%	+32%	8
Mole Creek Karst (caves)*	60	60	58	26	28	-52%	+8%	9
Highfield House (Stanley)*	12	12	12	10	13	+6%	+26%	
Overland Track*	9	9	9	7	9	-4%	+31%	10
Three Capes Track*	12	12	11	7	10	-13%	+30%	11, 12
<b>Total number of visits/entries to all 14 Reference Sites</b>	<b>1,391</b>	<b>1,466</b>	<b>1,465</b>	<b>931</b>	<b>1,067</b>	<b>-27%</b>	<b>+15%</b>	<b>13</b>

\* Visit #Entry ^Survey

These results are estimations and can be subject to revisions if some data is not available at the time of this report.

#### Notes:

- Rounding to thousands.** Visitor numbers are rounded to thousands. The percentage changes are calculated on unrounded numbers.
- Mt Field** – the estimate for 2019 has been revised from 192,000 to 202,000. The 2020 estimate has been revised from 148,000 to 141,000.
- Lake St Clair (2020)** – the estimate of 61,000 for 2020 has been revised to 62,000.
- Gordon River (cruises).** Includes visitors to Tasmania from interstate and overseas only. Excludes Tasmanians. Source of data is the *Tasmanian Visitor Survey* (Tourism Tasmania).
- Gordon River (cruises) (2020) – COVID-19.** The *Tasmanian Visitor Survey* was paused in March 2020 because of COVID-19 and recommenced later in 2020.
- Maria Island** – data includes arrivals at Darlington (including arrivals by ferry, cruise ships, commercial operators, or arrivals by air). Most visitors arrive at Darlington. A much smaller number of private or other vessels land elsewhere on Maria Island but cannot be tracked and are not included in these estimates.
- Maria Island** – The Tasman Highway at Paradise Gorge was closed for just under six weeks to clear unsafe overhanging rocks. This road closure disrupted access between Hobart and Maria Island for visitors. The road was fully closed for just under six weeks between 28 May and 8 July 2021 – both lanes returned to full operation on 30 July 2021. Had the road not been closed, visitation to Maria Island could possibly have been higher.
- Hastings Cave and Thermal Springs – COVID-19.** Visitor numbers and group sizes allowed within the caves have been reduced because of social distancing and COVID19 safety plans.

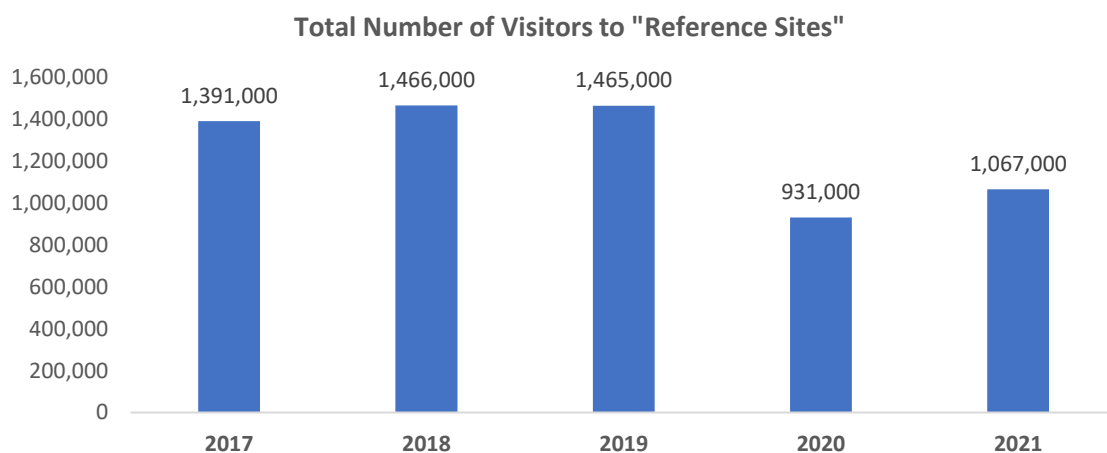


9. **Mole Creek Karst (Marakoopa and King Solomon caves) – COVID-19.** Visitor numbers and group sizes allowed within the caves have been reduced because of social distancing and COVID-19 safety plans.
10. **Overland Track – COVID-19.** Because of COVID-19 social distancing requirements, the number of daily walking departures on the Overland Track were also capped at lower levels in 2020 and 2021.
11. **Three Capes Track – COVID-19.** Because of COVID-19 social distancing requirements, the number of daily walking departures on the Three Capes Track were also capped at lower levels in 2020 and 2021.
12. **Three Capes Track – Break in series starting 2021.** From January 2021, walker counts from the commercial tourism operator has been included in the total for Three Capes. Up to December 2020, only data from the PWS walk has been reported.
13. **Total 14 Reference sites – Break in series starting 2021.** Because of the break in series for data for the Three Capes Track (note 11), the total number for all 14 Reference Sites is consequently affected.

#### Note about the effect of COVID-19 on visitor estimates since 2020

COVID-19 has affected some data gathering routines and affected estimation processes. Visitor estimates for some sites are provisional and may be subject to revision. If data has been published and subsequently revised, the revision is shown in the notes.

Sources - PWS; and Tourism Tasmania (for Gordon River [cruises], via the *Tasmanian Visitor Survey*).



#### Visitor Trends to Parks and Reserves in 2021

After widespread declines in visitor numbers in 2020 due to the implications of COVID-19, visitor numbers did start to increase in 2021 in many of Tasmania's parks and reserves.

In 2021 there was a total of approximately 1,067,000 visitors to all the 14 Reference Sites for which the PWS regularly reports data, up 15 per cent compared to 2020. Whilst they have increased, the 2021 visitor numbers are still 27 per cent below the 2019 pre COVID-19 impacted levels.

Visitation to Reference Sites with typically high proportions of international and interstate visitation was understandably still below the pre COVID-19 levels of 2019. But visitation to all these sites, other than Tasman Arch, did increase in 2021 as interstate borders periodically opened. Visitor numbers in 2021 were up compared to 2020 at:

- Freycinet up by 15 per cent (but remained 20 per cent lower than 2019),
- Cradle Mountain up 18 per cent (but remained 36 per cent lower than 2019),
- Mount Field up 22 per cent (but remained 15 per cent lower than 2019),
- Lake St Clair up 24 per cent (but remained 17 per cent lower than 2019),
- Maria Island up 13 per cent (but remained 20 per cent lower than 2019), and
- Tamar Island Wetlands in Launceston up by 3 per cent (but remained 23 per cent lower than 2019).

Visitation at the Tasman Arch on the Tasman Peninsula declined again – down a further nine per cent in 2021. Its visitation numbers in 2021 were 50 per cent below the pre COVID-19 levels of 2019, a contributing factor is likely to be because this site is traditionally highly visited by interstate and overseas visitors, who combine a trip to this location with a trip to Port Arthur.



Visitor numbers during 2020 and 2021 at some sites were constrained by reduced tour and walker numbers because of COVID-19 social distancing rules. As capacity levels have increased, demand has started to return:

- Visitor numbers at Mole Creek Caves, which typically has a high proportion of international and interstate visitation, were up eight per cent in 2021 compared to 2020, but remained 52 per cent lower than 2019,
- Visitation to Hastings Cave and Thermal Springs was up 32 per cent in 2021. The Thermal Springs component of the site typically has a high proportion of Tasmanian visitors. Visitation in 2021 was 23 per cent lower than in 2019,
- The Overland Track numbers have almost returned to the 2019 pre-COVID-19 levels, up 31 per cent in 2021 compared to 2020 and only four per cent lower than 2019 levels.

Two sites that typically have high proportions of visitation by Tasmanians have experienced increasingly higher visitor numbers. Highfield House in Stanley increased 26 per cent in 2021 to 13,000 which is its highest year on record. Visitation to Narawntapu National Park reached a new record of 58,000 visitors in 2021 with visitor numbers six per cent higher than the 2019 pre-COVID-19 levels.

For the Three Capes Track, there was a break in data series in 2021. Up until December 2020, only data from the PWS Three Capes Track walk was reported. From January 2021 onward, data about walkers on commercial tours will be included. The per cent change from 2020 (PWS only data) to 2021 (PWS plus operator data) is not directly comparable. Nevertheless, walker numbers on the PWS Three Capes Track (excluding commercial walkers) did improve in 2021, but are still not back to pre-COVID levels, largely a result of capacity restrictions associated with COVID-19.

Tasmanians appear to have continued to increase their visitation to parks and reserves, and as the Tasmanian border periodically opened in 2021 to mainland Australia states, interstate visitation started to increasingly return. In general, visitation started to increase in the early months of 2021, followed by a stronger than usual autumn and winter period. Some visitors may have delayed their normal summer holidays and decided to travel around Easter and into the normally quieter winter or “off” season. However, interstate visitation was disrupted by further periodic Tasmanian border closures in the second half of 2021.

The Parks and Wildlife Service will continue to monitor visitation to its Reference Sites and the subsequent impact of interstate and international border re-openings on visitor numbers.

### **Disclaimer**

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This information was created by the Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) for its own purposes based on the latest available data and information as of April 2022. The information was created via surveys or other estimating procedures. These results are estimations and can be subject to revisions if some data is not available at the time of this report. While care has been taken to ensure the information is as correct and accurate as possible, it should be used for general information and should not be treated as perfect or exact.

### **Further information**

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#### Parks and Wildlife Service

- Email [visitor.research@parks.tas.gov.au](mailto:visitor.research@parks.tas.gov.au)
- [Parks visitation and tourism | Parks & Wildlife Service Tasmania](#)
- 1300 TASPARKS (1300 827 727) Monday to Friday (9:00am to 4:30pm)

#### Tourism Tasmania

- [Visitor Statistics - Tourism Tasmania Corporate](#)
- [Industry Recovery - Tourism Tasmania Corporate](#)



## Appendix A – 14 Reference Sites – infographic

### TASMANIAN PARKS AND WILDLIFE SERVICE Visitors to Selected Parks and Reserves, Tasmania 2021 Calendar Year



The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) manages 19 national parks and over 800 reserves within Tasmania. The PWS does not count visitors to every national park or reserve but produces regular estimates at 14 selected sites in Tasmania - called "Reference Sites".

The data is for the year ended 31 December 2021 and is compared to prior calendar years. Visitor estimates are based on PWS activity data and visitor estimates from Tourism Tasmania's Tasmanian Visitor Survey.



<b>TOTAL NUMBER TO ALL 14 REFERENCE SITES</b>	2021 visit estimates	% change - 2020 to 2021	% change - 2019 (pre COVID-19) to 2021
	1,067,000	↑ UP 15%	↓ DOWN 27%



## Appendix B – Visitors to Selected Parks and Reserves, Tasmania, 2017 to 2021 Calendar Years – data used in infographic

The Tasmania Parks and Wildlife Service (PWS) manages 19 national parks and over 800 reserves within Tasmania. The PWS does not count visitors to every national park or reserve but produces regular estimates at 14 selected sites in Tasmania – called “Reference Sites”.

The data is for the year ended 31 December 2021 and is compared to prior calendar years. Visitor estimates are based on PWS activity data and visitor estimates from Tourism Tasmania’s Tasmanian Visitor Survey.

	Visit estimates 2021	% change - 2020 to 2021	% change -2019 (pre COVID- 19) to 2021
FREYCINET	259,000	+15%	-20%
CRADLE MOUNTAIN	179,000	+18%	-36%
MOUNT FIELD	172,000	+22%	-15%
TASMAN ARCH	102,000	-9%	-50%
LAKE ST CLAIR	77,000	+24%	-17%
NARAWNTAPU	58,000	+10%	+6%
GORDON RIVER	54,000	+26%	-35%
TAMAR ISLAND WETLANDS	40,000	+3%	-23%
MARIA ISLAND	34,000	+13%	-20%
HASTINGS CAVES AND THERMAL SPRINGS	32,000	+32%	-23%
MOLE CREEK CAVES	28,000	+8%	-52%
HIGHFIELD HOUSE	13,000	+26%	+6%
OVERLAND TRACK	9,000	+31%	-4%
THREE CAPES TRACK	10,000	+30%	-13%
<b>TOTAL NUMBER TO ALL 14 REFERENCE SITES</b>	<b>1,067,000</b>	<b>+15%</b>	<b>-27%</b>