

Water by Nature Tasmania

Franklin River Tasmania Wilderness Rafting

5, 7 & 10 Day Expeditions

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10-Day Itinerary

This 10-day adventure takes you the full navigable length of the Franklin River, deep in the heart of Tasmania's Wilderness World Heritage Area. Our journey includes an optional walk to the imposing massif of Frenchmans Cap, the monarch of the southwest, as well as rafting through one of Tasmania's most spectacular gorges.

Unpredictable river levels mean our trip will always be an adventure - it is possible to encounter both very low levels and floods within days of each other. Whatever the level, rafts offer the best way to explore this unique wilderness.

Meeting Point

We meet the afternoon before Day 1 at 4 pm at the Astor Hotel, First Floor, 157 Macquarie Street, Hobart (03) 6234 6611. This meeting is to issue and check gear. It is possible to initially meet on Day 1 by prior arrangement. We can also pick up from Bronte Park, Derwent Bridge or Lake St Clair.

Time of Return

We expect to return to Hobart by early evening, usually around 6:30pm. Please note that very occasionally delays can be caused by extreme weather conditions. It is possible but not recommended to fly out of Hobart on the last day of the trip - we cannot guarantee the time of return.

Grade and Fitness

A reasonable level of fitness is important and should increase your enjoyment of this trip. The Frenchmans Cap walk involves an ascent and descent of more than 1,000 metres. In addition, there will be some portages, which require us to carry rafts and equipment around certain rapids. You should feel confident swimming with a buoyancy vest should you fall out or the raft capsizes. Rapids vary from Grade 1 to Grade 6 though most are Grade 2 or 3. The most difficult level run on most trips is Grade 4, and it is possible to walk around many of these rapids should you choose.

Itinerary

This is a guide only and may alter with river levels.

Day 1

We depart at 7 am from the Astor Hotel. We follow the Derwent River, then climb into the Central Highlands, passing Lake St. Clair before descending to the Collingwood River, a tributary of the Franklin. Here your guides will load the rafts and give a safety briefing. The day is spent mastering the rafts and enjoying easy rapids, leading down to our evening camp at the junction with the Franklin proper. A short climb can take us to Donaghy's Hill for views down the Franklin River and to Frenchmans Cap

Day 2

An early start sees us traversing the first of the Franklin's gorges, Aesthesia Ravine. After tackling the Log Jam and Nasty Notch portages, we rocket through the rapids of Descension Gorge before arriving

at the beautiful Irenabyss, or “Chasm of Peace,” our base for the next two nights.

Day 3

Today we scale the Cap. In fine weather, we'll have views of the entire southwest World Heritage Area, including the rapids of the Franklin sparkling below. If the weather is poor or you choose not to climb the Cap, there are a number of lower level walks nearby that offer a different perspective of the river.

Day 4

Today it's straight back into the action. Dozens of rapids, interspersed with quiet reaches, lead us past Mt. Fincham, the Jericho Walls and the Crankle and to our campsite at the base of the Engineer Range. Here we relax under a canopy of towering sassafras and myrtle trees and may go swimming.

Day 5

A spectacular day brings us to the awesome Great Ravine, one of Tasmania's deepest gorges. First we'll tackle the Side Slip rapid before coming to the Churn. Teamwork and tenacity will be required to portage at least part of this huge obstruction in the river. Soon after, we'll arrive at our camp for a well-earned rest on the banks of Serenity Sound, deep in the Great Ravine.

Day 6

We'll use all of our well-practised rafting skills to negotiate the Coruscades, one of the longest rapids on the river. A short float takes us through to our next portage at Thunderush, then it's on to the last obstacle, the Cauldron. Our expert guides will ensure that we pass these awesome rapids safely and efficiently. Our final camp at Rafter's Basin is a great place to relax after the achievements of the day.

Day 7

Today we head into Propsting Gorge and arrive at the Mt. McCall Track, where our resupplies await. Those people only taking part in the Upper Franklin section of the tour will leave us here. Others might join for the Lower Franklin section. After repacking the rafts, we continue through the exciting Trojans rapids before arriving at Rock Island Bend and the Pig Trough with its delightful waterfall cascading into a fern-lined grotto. Safety dictates that we portage the actual Pig Trough rapid before we round the bend to tackle the famous Newland Cascades. This section will have everyone whooping with delight as we plunge through a maelstrom of spray and whitewater. At rapids' end is a place for a deserved break. On the bank, natural overhangs provide the ideal shelter. Echoing cliffs and plumes of spray add to the magnificent setting. We sometimes spend a day here.

Day 8

The river abruptly leaves the quartzite gorges of the Middle Franklin and enters the limestone country of the lower reaches. Tranquil pools are broken by the occasional large rapid. Little Fall is a great spot for action photography. Slowly, the river increases in volume. The Jane River enters from the left just above our midday break on Flat Island, a beach of polished river stone dominated by the impressive Elliot Range. We then continue to our evening camp under a canopy of ancient trees by the deep pool at Blackmans Bend. We may be lucky enough to get a visit from the local platypus.

Day 9

The thick rainforest that clings to the banks is punctuated by limestone cliffs and strange rock formations. The river widens and now flows quietly. There is time to reflect, to conjure up visions of Aboriginal peoples hunting the Ice Age plains before the forest spread to claim the open country. Today we will show you some of the unique limestone caves that sheltered these people some 14,000 years ago. We then tackle the unexpected Double Fall. Soon we encounter the last step down in the river's bedrock, Big Fall. It's a deceptive rapid that we portage easily and quickly. Around the corner is the gaping Pengana Cave, a towering vault in the cliffs. We enjoy our last lunch near the junction of the Franklin and Gordon rivers before making our final camp, perhaps on one of the lower river's many sandy beaches or continue to Sir John Falls.

Day 10

Our final few hours are spent drifting along this mighty river, carried along by the huge volume of water that makes the Gordon Tasmania's largest waterway. Soon we reach the picturesque Sir John Falls, where our yacht “Stormbreaker” will meet us for the return cruise over Macquarie Harbour to Strahan on the west coast (It is also possible to fly from the river to Strahan or Hobart in a seaplane by arrangement.) A coach trip back to Hobart completes our journey.

