



URBAN TOURS BY RENTAL CAR

Hobart: Jewel of Australia

10 January 2007

Table One: Basic Information about the Hobart Metropolitan/Urban Area

Parameter	Value	Similar To
Metro Area (Labor Market) Population ¹	192,000	Eugene, OR; Regina
Urban Area Population	126,000	Doncaster; Abbotsford, BC; Podgorica, Montenegro; Lhasa; Visalia, CA
Urban Land Area (Square Miles) ²	43	Bergen; Hamamatsu, Japan; Kelowna, BC; Geneva
Urban Land Area (Square Kilometers)	125	
Population Per Square Mile	2,600	Nancy; Orlando; Victoria, BC
Population Per Square Kilometer	1,000	

1. Hobart Statistical Division.

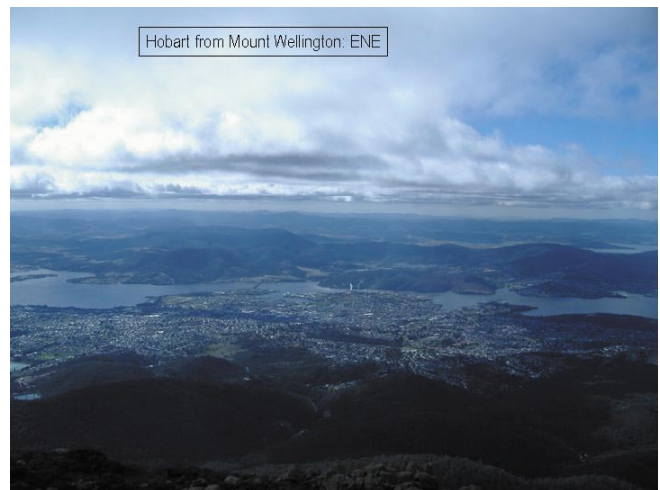
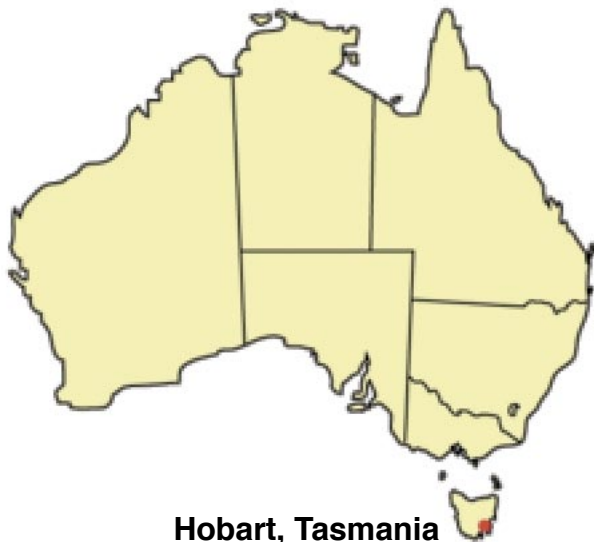
2. Continuously built-up area

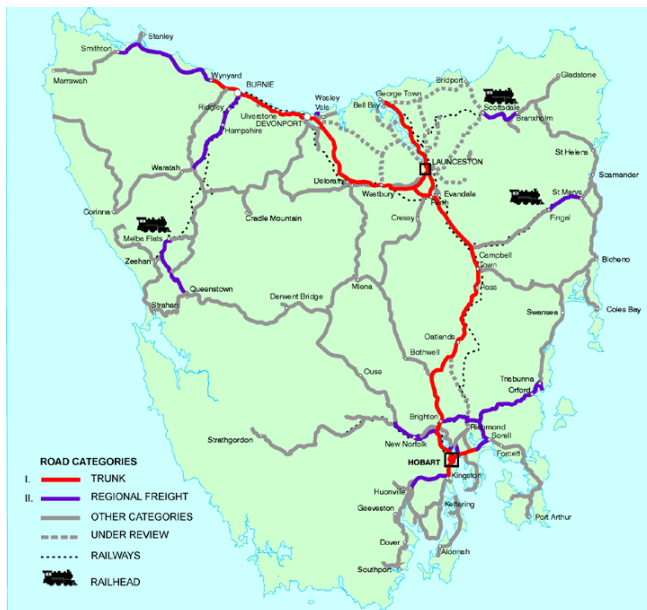
Hobart is undiscovered Australia. Most Australians have never been there and most international tourists pass it by. They should go. Hobart is Australia's gem; a surprisingly cosmopolitan urban area set on a bay, surrounded on three sides by hills, overseen by a mountain.

Hobart is the capital of Tasmania, Australia's smallest state, both in land area and population. Tasmania is also

the largest island in Australia. At 23,000 square miles (61,000 square kilometers), the island is about the same size as Sri Lanka or Hispaniola (which Haiti and the Dominican Republic share) and double the size of British Columbia's Vancouver Island. This island houses nearly 500,000 residents.

Hobart is located on the south shore of the island, at the mouth of the River Derwent. At this location, the river

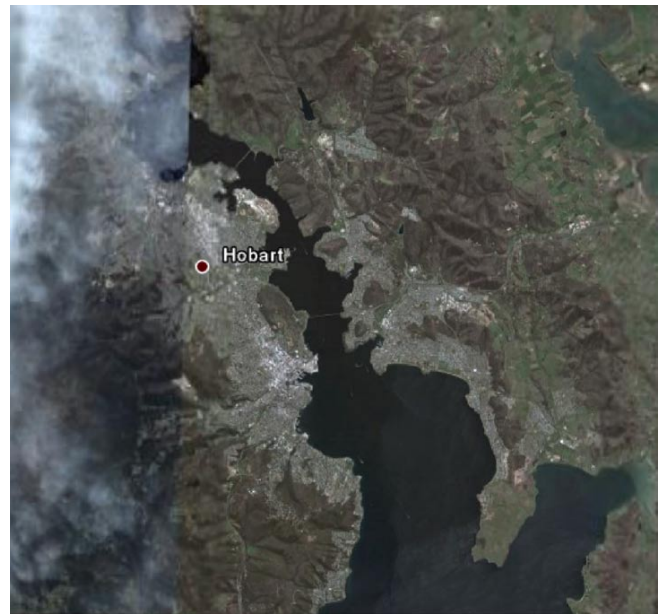




empties into Storm Bay on the Southern Ocean. Storm Bay itself is picturesque, with islands and forested surroundings that resemble the scenery visible from ferries on the Straits of Georgia toward Vancouver Island from the mainland of British Columbia. Up close, however, the resemblance ends. In this part of Tasmania, most of the trees are eucalypts, instead of the firs found in the Pacific Northwest. Nonetheless, the blues and greens from the water and the trees are a soothing sight.

The east shore of Storm Bay is the Tasman Peninsula, which was home of Port Arthur, one of the most notorious penal colonies in Australia. There are a number of small towns along the east coast highway, which we traveled until crossing the mountains to reach Launceston, Tasmania's second largest urban area, to catch a flight for Melbourne. The east coast has that particularly Australian feature: the local bakery, where fresh meat pies (beef, chicken and lamb) are prepared. There are plenty of reasons to visit Australia, but the meat pies alone would be sufficient.

The Hobart urban area is split in two major parts by the river, which empties into the bay. The west side includes the city of Hobart, suburban areas and Australia's first gambling casino. Generally, the development hugs the shore, hemmed in by the hills. The urbanization on this side of the river is generally little more than one mile wide, with Mount Wellington behind. The development on both sides of the river is generally set on rolling hills, making its urban geography similar to that of Wellington, New Zealand. On closer inspection, however, the similarity with Wellington does not hold. It is clear that Hobart has been less affluent through its history and, as a result, tends not to have as quaint and attractive a look as Wellington.



Part of this is doubtless due to the inherent difference between a national and state or provincial capital.

Nevertheless, Hobart is an attractive community. Moreover, it is in as beautiful a setting as will be found in this nation. That is saying a lot. Its competition is from virtually every state and territorial capital: Sydney on the harbour, hilly Brisbane on the Brisbane River, Perth on the Swan, Adelaide between the hills and the Gulf of St. Vincent, Melbourne on Port Philip Bay, and Darwin, jutting into the Timor Sea.

The east and west sides of the river are connected by three bridges. The furthest downstream is the Tasman Bridge, which is also the main crossing. This high bridge partially collapsed when it was hit by a cargo ship in 1975. Its closure exacted a heavy economic toll on the community. The bridge was rebuilt and two other bridges have been built upstream. The east side of the urban area is also hilly and bounded by hills, across which is the airport (on the way to the Tasman Peninsula).

The best view of the Hobart area is from Mount Wellington, which towers nearly 4,000 feet (1,300 meters) over the city, to the west. The mountain rises from Hobart's core. Mount Wellington commands an impressive view of not only the urban area but also the multitude of islands and waterways that form the local geography and the Tasman Peninsula, in the distance.

Hobart has a long history as port. Now, much of the old commercial warehouse and port district has now been converted into restaurants and art galleries, providing an urban environment somewhat unusual for a smaller urban area.

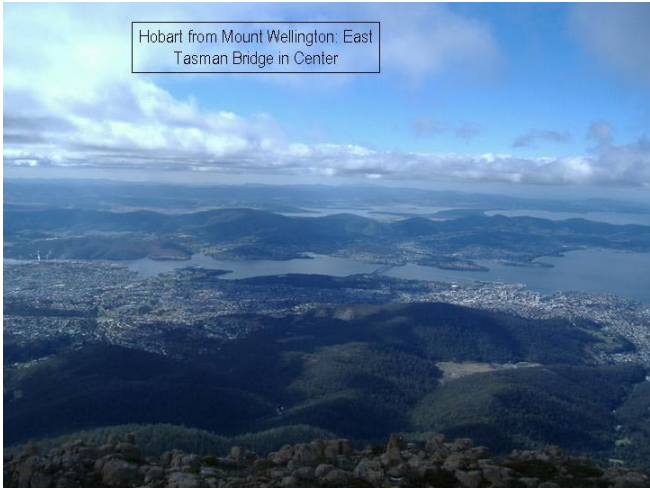
Hobart's central business district is mostly low-rise buildings on fairly narrow streets. Although modern city



Port Arthur (Former Penal Colony)



Hobart CBD & Mount Wellington



Hobart from Mount Wellington: East
Tasman Bridge in Center



Hobart from Mount Wellington: SE



Port Redevelopment



Hobart CBD



planners would label this “pedestrian friendly,” there is still plenty of auto traffic.

Similarly, the residential neighborhoods in the city have homes on small lots, often on narrow streets, and sometimes adjacent to multi-family housing. Yet this traditional neighborhood design has not discouraged many residents from owning autos.

Like virtually all other urban areas in the high-income world, Hobart has new suburbs with new housing. Much of it is on the south side of the city, on the hills overlooking Storm Bay. In contrast with housing in the city, suburban homes tend to be on large lots served by broad streets.

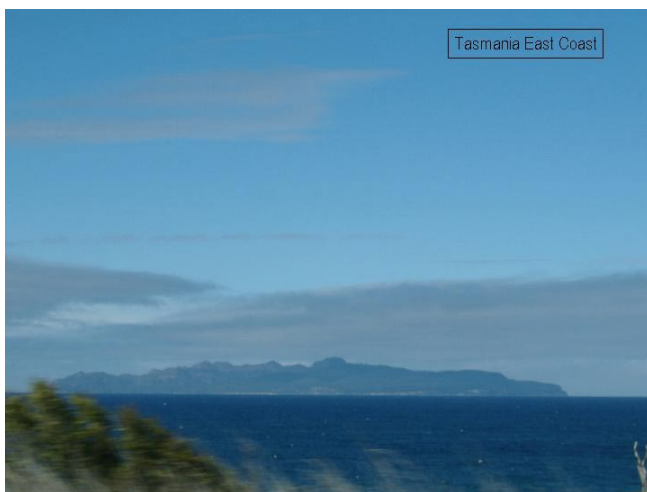
If current trends persist, however, it is likely that there will be less new housing built and a smaller share of Hobart households living in houses that they own. Like the rest of Australia, complex and restricted land use policies are taking their toll. Today, the median house price in Hobart is approximately 7.0 times the median household income, more than double the historic standard of 3.0.

Moreover, like the rest of Australia, there is virtually no reason for governments to tightly restrict the use of land for residential development. There is plenty of land for accommodating additional growth in the Hobart area. Just over the hills to the east (toward the airport), there is sufficient land to house a doubling of the Hobart area’s population at current densities. Yet the Australian Bureau of Statistics (the national statistical and census agency) projects that the Hobart area’s population will increase less than one-fifth this amount by mid-century.

Still, many people are reportedly moving to Tasmania from the Australian mainland. Average mainland incomes are higher, which makes it possible for mainlanders to more easily afford the homes that are less affordable on Tasman incomes. However, this price advantage could soon be lost if land use policies and practices are not liberalized.

But one thing is sure for the tourist. A visit to Australia is not complete without a visit to Tasmania and its attractive capital, Hobart.







Launceston



Visitor Centre: Mount Wellington



Hobart from Mount Wellington: NE



Hobart from Mount Wellington: ENE



Hobart & Storm Bay from Mount Wellington: ESE



Storm Bay & Hobart from Mount Wellington: South



Hobart from Mount Wellington: NE



Hobart from Mount Wellington: NE



Tasmania North Coast: Bass Strait



Tasman Peninsula



Suburban Neighborhood

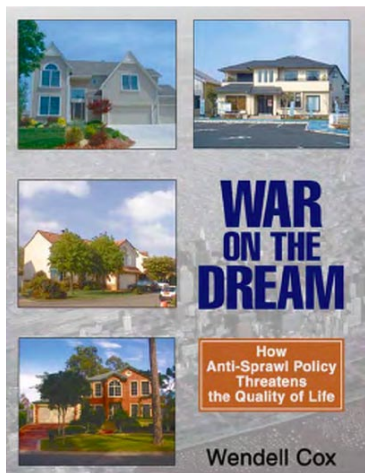


Suburban Neighborhood









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Urban Tours by Rental Car: About the Series

Urban Tours by Rental Car offers perspectives on urban development obtained by automobile tours through urban areas. Rental cars are not the favored method for visiting cities, especially those outside one's own country. Instead, tourists and urban planners favor packaged tours or local public transport systems. Both are splendid ways for seeing the city as it used to be --- the very reason for most tourist visits. The historical core areas contain monuments, prime government and religious edifices and quaint neighborhoods that are often centuries old. This is particularly important to tourists from the newer urban areas of the American, Canadian or Australian West, where history extends not far before World War II. It is further understandable that few tourists travel thousands of miles to see the newer suburban areas that look very much like home. But most tourists do not profess to be students of the urban area.

For the urban planner interested in understanding the whole urban area, it is not enough to study the core alone, regardless of its architectural attractiveness, romanticism, history or affirmation of an individually preferred life style. No one, regardless of the depth of their education can develop reliable conceptions from an unrepresentative sample, and urban cores are the very essence of unrepresentative samples. Both public transport and packaged tours miss the larger part --- the expanse of sprawling residential and business development that rings virtually all major urban areas. They may be of little interest to many urban planners, but they should be.

Stripping away regional architectural facades, one might as well be in the suburbs of Phoenix, Portland, Perth or Paris. Here, the automobile is king, because no public transport system has been developed that can effectively serve destinations outside the core (at least at a price any society can afford). While public transport market shares are higher in European suburban areas than in the New World, much of the difference is attributable to lower incomes and less automobile access. Indeed, public transport's principal weakness, lack of automobile competitiveness, is itself a contributing factor to the rising motorization occurring from the suburbs of Copenhagen and Nagoya to the suburbs of Lagos and Mumbai. To oversimplify this phenomenon as being a "love affair with the automobile" is the equivalent of saying that Singaporeans or Brazilians have a love affair with air conditioning. Human beings prefer comfort to discomfort and they prefer free time to time over which they have no control.

It is no wonder that tourists return to the United States thinking that all Paris looks like the second arrondissement (less than one percent does) and that urban planners think all of Milan looks like the architectural treasures that surround the Cathedral. In fact, the sprawling suburbs of Europe, Japan, Canada and Connecticut resemble one another in many ways. For any seeking to study the urban area in its entirety --- not just the favored haunts of core-dwelling elites --- there is no alternative to "getting behind the wheel." Thus, "urban tours by rental car."