

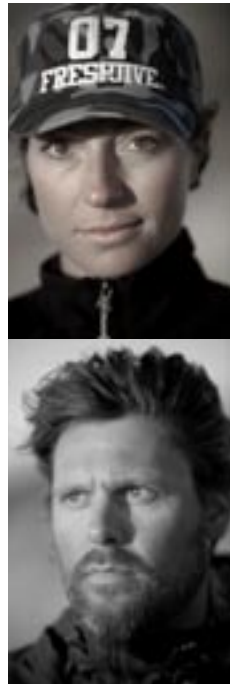
TASMANIA

a Danish perspective

Following the marriage of their Crown Prince to a Tasmanian, a Danish couple set out to see the state for themselves

The couple has taken a year off to travel the world, Australia being the place they have chosen to spend most of their time.

While travelling they write articles for Danish newspapers and magazines.



Katrine Engberg

is a trained dancer and choreographer with a career in musicals, TV shows and theatre productions behind her. She currently works in the fashion industry, producing shows during the Danish Fashion Week and writing for Danish fashion magazine *Cover*.

Timm Vladimir

is a well-known Danish actor and TV presenter, recognised for roles in Danish films as well as hosting *Popstars*, the Danish Music Awards and Nordic Music Awards. His own series of diving travel programs, *Below the Surface*, has been broadcast on Danish television and on the Discovery Channel. Lately his passion for photography has resulted in numerous travel displays in *Cover* as well as a recently published book.

And now Tasmania as well ...



JØRGEN SCHYTTE

The Royal Guards, Amalienborg Palace Square, Copenhagen

When our beloved Crown Prince, HRM Frederik of Denmark, married a Tasmanian girl, Mary Donaldson, I know I was no means alone in my disappointment. We are, after all, a nation of reputedly beautiful and intelligent girls. I, for one, know a number of 'candidates' who would have 'qualified', and who felt quite insulted when it became clear that Denmark's most prized bachelor had chosen his bride abroad. For some reason he found it necessary to go to the end of the world to find his queen – our queen!



Danish countryside
PHOTO: NICOLAJ PERJESI



North-West Tasmania



The Hazards, Coles Bay, East Coast
PHOTOS: WARREN BOYLES



Cradle Mountain, Central Highlands

A Tasmanian commoner to sit on the throne of Denmark? Could Tasmania really offer a genuine match to traditional Danish quality? I really had to go and see for myself. So, with my partner, I set off on a latter-day Viking odyssey across the known world – the final leg, a short voyage on the *Spirit of Tasmania* across Bass Strait to Devonport on Tasmania's North-West Coast.

The first thing that struck us on leaving Devonport were the similarities of the landscape of this part of Tasmania to that of Denmark. The same lush green pastures with sheep and cows, fields of golden wheat and slow-moving rivers: a friendly place of peace and prosperity. A place to feel safe. We felt immediately at home in the mild afternoon sun.

But as we progressed inland, these similarities rapidly vanished. Denmark is, I am forced to admit, lacking in mountains – embarrassingly, our highest point is a mere 150 metres above

sea level. We were duly impressed after travelling through increasingly rugged terrain when the snow-capped peak of Cradle Mountain came dramatically into view. (Tasmania has been called the 'island of mountains'.)

From 'Cradle' we travelled across the state to the East Coast. Here we were enthralled by the beautiful tranquillity of Wineglass Bay, which is every bit as clear and spectacular as Mary promised in a recent Danish documentary. Furthermore, the deserted beaches in the Bay of Fires left us thinking we were alone in paradise. Alone, that is, apart from the odd wombat and wallaby audibly munching away behind our tent. We had found a secluded bush camp with a private beachfront and a fireplace full of wood and we reluctantly agreed that Tasmania's landscape offers more diversity and beauty than our own. Not a great start.

Tasmania 1 – Denmark 0

Now we Copenhageners pride ourselves on our beautiful capital by the water. Everywhere you go, there is water. Canals, beaches, ponds and lakes create a picturesque setting for our beautiful old buildings. Even the queen's castle – now also the home of a certain 'half-Tasmanian' family – is right on the harbour. We felt quite certain that there could be nothing in Tasmania to match Copenhagen. That is, until we reached the state's capital city, Hobart. What an outrage! It seemed at first glance that every other house in Hobart is right on the water's edge. The Derwent estuary stretches on for ever, with magnificent smaller havens, sheltered from wind and weather, private little jetties and the occasional pretty bridge that

links east to west. Truly stunning. In the centre of the city are Georgian sandstone buildings, ancient by Tasmanian standards. On the wharves are lovingly restored warehouses, with hip hotels and designer cafés giving our Copenhagen pride a severe blow. As we spotted our first whale in the bay, we realised that yet another point was lost.

Tasmania 2 – Denmark 0

The Midlands 'Heritage Highway' is Tasmania's major highway linking north and south. At last, an advantage! Tasmanians are very proud of their 'heritage buildings'. To proud Europeans like us the notion of something, built a mere 150 or so years ago, being 'old' is highly amusing. In Copenhagen many of the buildings used as libraries, university



Nyhavn, harbour tour, Copenhagen
PHOTO: THOMAS NYKROG



Harbourside, Hobart
PHOTO: MATT NEWTON



Lake cabins, Cradle Mountain
PHOTOS: TIMM VLADIMIR



CENTRE: 'Incomprehensible creatures', from top: koala (another non-Tasmanian), Tasmanian devil and wallaby



RIGHT: Androo Kelly, ildsjæl and devil whisperer

departments and even shops in the centre of the city are more than 400 years old. And for most of us even our houses are no less than a hundred years old with all the draft, damp and rats in the basement that accompany this privilege. So, hear me Tasmania: 150 years is not 'old'!

Ha!

Tasmania 2 – Denmark 1

However, visiting a new country is also about the people. After all, our Frederik chose a woman, not a country. So, back to my main point. What qualities do you Tasmanians have that made our Crown Prince prefer one of you to one of us? Healthily self absorbed, as are all Scandinavians, we just cannot get over the fact that he went and chose ... a Tasmanian! Keeping in mind the undisputed

beauty of Mary I chose not to investigate further the general Tasmanian female's build and looks. You are quite obviously doing all right in that department. As to intelligence, well, Mary studied and learned enough Danish to be able to give a perfectly fluent Danish speech on the announcement of her engagement (for ever thereafter enthralling the Danes) so we will leave that alone as well.

So how about kindness and friendliness? Danes take trouble to be as accommodating as possible and take life with a sensible balance of humour and scepticism. Well, most of the time, anyway. (Not so much when it rains and sometimes a bit less during winter, which stretches from October till April.) But we do try ...

A couple of Tasmanians we met on a camping ground near magnificent Eddystone Point smilingly presented us with some fillets of freshly caught trumpeter (a prized local

fish) so that we didn't have to dine on pasta for the third night in a row. And this after only two minutes' conversation. Accommodating? Several families invited us to come to their homes, have a meal and stay 'as long as we liked'. Friendly? We were amazed at the openness and generosity we met everywhere.

Tasmania 3 – Denmark 1

damn & blast!

We quickly learnt that Tasmanians are passionate about their state: about sports (including cricket and that ferocious game, Australian Rules football), the outdoors and all the things that make Tasmania what it is. Its wildlife, for instance.

Our meeting with the Trowunna Wildlife Park owner, Androo Kelly, left a lasting impression.

He has dedicated the last 20 years of his life to studying and caring for Tasmanian wildlife, such as the famous Tasmanian devils, wombats and other – to Europeans – incomprehensible creatures. When we visited him we were introduced to the two devils about to given as a present from the Tasmanian community to the Danish royal family as a gift to our newborn Danish prince. After an hour in his company we were ready to give up our regular jobs and commit ourselves full time to the cause of rescuing the Tasmanian devil! What passion! In Danish such a person is called an 'ildsjæl' – a fire soul. Androo is just one of many Tasmanian fire souls we met in our brief visit to the heart-shaped 'country'.

Tasmania – Denmark

Oh yeah, whatever!



NICOLA PERESI



WARREN BOYLES

ABOVE: Danish countryside, East Jutland

BELOW: Paradise and Mount Roland

At the end of our trip we not only understood why Frederik chose a Tasmanian woman to be his wife and queen, but we are also immensely grateful. We had fallen in love with the beauty and uniqueness of Tasmania just as deeply as Frederik had fallen in love with your Mary – *our* Mary, as we like to think of her nowadays. You see, just as you have given us a beautiful princess, we have given you our handsome prince, for his heart now is certainly just as Tasmanian as it is Danish. And so both our countries have benefited from this happy union.

We are looking forward to many future trips to Freycinet National Park and Cradle Mountain Lodge and that quaint little Errol Flynn café in Hobart and the West Coast and ... and ... Oh, and if you happen to visit Denmark some day, stay as long as you like. 🇩🇰

Final score
Tasmania – Denmark

Love all!