

The Convict Brick Trail

by Damien Thomas

The oldest surviving brick built arch bridge in Australia

You just know you are going to be in for a rare treat when you realise you will be visiting the oldest surviving brick arch bridge in Australia.

History abounds in the quaint **Tasmanian township of Campbell Town**, and its surrounds. Sarah Johnson was just 14 years old when she was convicted of theft. She was transported on the ship 'Britannia' in 1798 to serve a 7-year sentence. Her story, along with hundreds of others, is commemorated in the **Convict Brick Trail**, which winds its way past 40 historic buildings. The trail starts outside **The Fox Hunters Return**, adjacent to the **Red Bridge**. Take time to wander into **The Book Cellar** below, to see where the convicts building the bridge were housed.



The Red Bridge was designed by James Blackburn, an engineer but also a convict. All 1.5 million clay bricks were made on site in 1838. It is amazing you can still drive or walk over the bridge. It is also very photogenic, so while there are some excellent cafes in town, I prefer to pick up a takeaway coffee and a Tasmanian Curried Scallop Pie (boasting 6 scallops - no less), from **Banjo's**, an iconic Tasmanian bakery chain. I usually succumb to a French vanilla slice or tart as well. A stroll along the walking paths on the banks of the **Elizabeth River** brings me to a seat where I can enjoy the scenery and admire the craftsmanship of the convicts as I leisurely consume my early lunch. Then it is out with my phone to capture the symmetry of the bridge arches reflected in the river.

“**Tip:** Book well in advance. The API Tassie holiday homes are hot!”

The river was named 'Elizabeth' by Governor Lachlan Macquarie, immortalising his second wife not once, but twice, as her maiden name was Campbell, from which he named the town.

Initially housing convicts, this cellar is now a bookstore.



The superfine merino industry is thanks to this lady.

Another photographic opportunity presents itself where the statue of **Eliza Forlonge** stands, holding the horn of one of her superfine merino sheep. The park and backdrop are a picture postcard. Eliza is credited with establishing the superfine merino industry in Tasmania. This formidable lady travelled through Saxony three times to acquire the finest merinos and transport them to this colony.

Campbell Town also offers some unrepeatable retail therapy opportunities in small one-of-a-kind boutiques. **Lake Leather** is a favourite and I usually extend the historic embrace with a wander through **Wides Antiques**, while both ladies and gents will look stylish in something snapped up from **Coco Blue**.

I recommend you make sure your phone is fully charged before you set off on this day trip, as you will need your camera many times. The **Lake Leake Highway** is a delight for all your senses. **Lake Leake** itself is, of course, an amazing sight. It only takes around 90 minutes' drive from **Swansea** on the east coast to arrive in **Campbell Town**. My recommendation for this day trip is not to venture any further than **Conara**, but rather return the same way you came as the full loop past **Fingal** and **St Marys** will take you a lot longer than it looks on the map.

The town of **Swansea** is ideally located as a base from which to explore the famous **Coles Bay**, **Freycinet Peninsula**, **Maria Island**, **Shouten Island**, the penguins of **Bicheno**, the night feeding of animals at the wildlife park etc. There are historic buildings in the township, and it has become a centre for lots of different dining experiences. So, this day trip adds another fascinating option for your stay in **API's comfortable 3-bedroom holiday home**, where a game of Bocce or Finska in the backyard is a great way to finish off a fabulous day. **API**

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The unmistakable Coles Bay.

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