

Day 5: Swansea — Bicheno

Highlights



This depends which route has been chosen. For many, the highlight is cycling on 9 Mile Beach with the boat crossing over the lagoon (\$15). The boat is very small and can only take two passengers plus bikes! An adventure in itself, but it is weather-

dependent and if it is too stormy this option will not always be possible.

In the evening one can visit the penguin colony but book early, as mentioned above, to avoid disappointment.

Destination

Bicheno was founded in 1850 as the harbour for a nearby coalmine. Most of the mines only operated for 5 years before closing because the miners preferred to try their luck at panning during the goldrush fever in Victoria (on mainland Australia). The place slipped into decline but was resurrected later as a fishing port. It has eventually become a tourist destination as more and more tourists (and many mainland residents) have been attracted to its lovely surroundings and the mild, sunny climate. Property prices are now among the highest in the state. In 2003 Bicheno was voted 'the tidiest town in Tasmania'.



Although it is smaller than St. Helens, without as many areas of natural beauty, thanks to a brilliant advertising campaign, Bicheno has become one of the leading holiday destinations in Tasmania. But don't worry; you won't feel 'squeezed' and there is no night life.



Accommodation: XXXXX B&B gggg

YYYYYYYYYYYY, Bicheno 7215, Tel.: 03-6375 XXXX

You will be staying in a comfortable Bed & Breakfast of the highest standard today. The breakfast tomorrow can hardly be beaten!



Breakfast

Today, though, you have to prepare your own breakfast. We recommend the little table just outside your unit in the morning sun! You will find the necessary cutlery and crockery in the cupboard. You don't need to clean them, just leave them out. The food you will need is available at the 'Swansea Corner Store' opposite the motel. It is open from 7am to 7pm daily and even has fresh rolls and other delicacies in the morning! Of course you may choose to go to a restaurant and there is one located just opposite the motel.



Provisioning

You can't buy food on any of the routes so you must take the whole days' supplies with you! However, you will pass through inhabited areas so in an emergency you could ask for water etc. at a private house. You will have to choose your own 'nice place' for a picnic.

A larger (and cheaper) supermarket is located at the other end of town. You will pass it on your way out. It is open from 9am to 5.30pm and from 9.30am to 4.30pm on Sundays.



Dinner

There is something for everyone here, no matter what your budget and everything can be reached on foot. The Beachfront Tavern is often overflowing with people for a good reason; fantastic meals and huge portions for a very reasonable price. There is also a reasonable bottle shop attached to it.

Having said that, The Silver Sands Motel around the corner isn't bad either. Maybe a bit more expensive, but definitely more spacious and quieter.

There are some small, exclusive and expensive restaurants as well.

Again, keep in mind that the local supermarkets close quite early.



Physical requirements

Both routes start on the flat and the 'boat' option (which is only possible in calm seas) is practically flat all the way. Depending on wind direction the 14km beach ride can last anywhere between 45 und 120 minutes. The alternative is to cycle around the bay, where you have to overcome a hill on quite a long ascent, which uses more energy.

Today's agenda

The day's itinerary depends on the chosen route. For many guests cycling on the beach is a unique experience which can only be outdone by the boat trip. You have the chance to explore some of the Freycinet National Park on this route.

If you choose to go around, it is also a nice ride with some fantastic viewing points.

Either way, today is one of the most beautiful days on the tour with wonderful views of the sea.

Day's route description

These are the three possibilities for today:

- 1) simply follow the highway (rather exhausting, because there is a hill to conquer)
- 2) take the small boat over a lagoon.
- 3) cycle for 14km on the beach and then take the small boat over a lagoon.

The last two options are a bit longer but totally flat. The disadvantages are having to book the boat for a specific time, the possibility of cancellations due to bad weather and a cost of \$15 per person. For bookings and information contact Kirk the skipper on 62 570239. Even if the boat isn't going you can still cycle on the beach, but it is an extra 25km. If you want to do this, follow the beach route first, at the end enter the bitumen road and go back to the highway where you turn right.

On your way to the boat you can use a sealed road or, if you are adventurous enough, cycle 14km directly on the beach! Thanks to firm sand this is always possible except at the peak of high tide or after heavy rain. You can change to the road later as the road runs parallel to the beach but access is limited.

In any case, from your accommodation, turn right through the town. You will pass the big supermarket on your right. At the end of the town (approx. 1km) you will see the right turnoff to the caravan park at Jubilee Beach. The big white signpost on the meadow to the right is quite striking and this is the point where the different routes diverge.

Standard route to the boat

For the beach route you have to turn right here. Continue on for 100m or so and DO NOT enter the caravan park but just keep going straight. It makes a turn a bit later and leads to a car park at the end (less than 1km from the turnoff). A track leads from there to the beach. Please carry your bike over loose sand! Follow the beach to the left. A marvellous journey!

ATTENTION: please don't cycle through loose sand or water! It's best to use the strip of wet, firm sand between the water and the loose sand, close to the dunes.

NOTE after approx. 2km on the beach there may be a river formed by the nearby lagoon. It is usually not very deep but could have a strong current. You have to take your shoes off and push the bike through. If it's really bad you will have to take the luggage off, bring it around to the other side and carry the bike over as well. At worst you may have to return to the highway and use one of the other routes.

After 14 km the beach (17km all up) turns to the left. You will be able to see the pier on the other side of the bay, where the boat will land. When you see a little carpark 100 m further on the left, don't cycle any further, wait there. Read from the section 'all boat routes' below.

All other routes

Continue further along the highway. You will pass the Swansea Bark Mill on your left, a tourist attraction.

- ◆ At 2.4km you will be at the bridge over the Meritt River.
- ◆ At 3km the Redcliff B & B is situated.
- ◆ At 5km on Swan River Road is the signpost to 9 mile Beach. This is your last chance to decide to go by boat (risky though because you won't have booked). If you are staying on the highway please read the section 'highway route' further down.

If you want to reach the boat by road turn right here and follow it to the end (approx. 10km) where there is a little carpark. Carry your bike over the loose sand and you will see the pier on the other side of the bay where the boat lands. Continue reading the section 'all boat routes'.

All boat routes

You will need to take your shoes and the luggage off the bike for the boat crossing. You will be supplied with life jackets. Once you get off the boat at the other end (maybe still delighted) you cycle the 50 m down the pier road and turn right at the end. 100 m further on there is a sharp left-hand bend. Further 200 m (at the phone box) you need to turn left into Swanwick Road. After almost 2km you reach the main road. Turn left here.

The road is on the flat for about 20km but watch out for the car drivers who seem to think it's a race. After this distance you will reach the highway at an information shelter. Turn right here towards Bicheno. Continue reading at 'all routes' below.

Highway route

- ◆ After 9km you will pass a walnut plantation (after going under some trees)
- ◆ At 11km during a long **right-hand** bend there is a turn off to the **left** (the B34 to Lake Leake). Go straight on here.
- ◆ At 16km you come to the settlement of Cranbrook. Here the highway makes a sharp **right** turn.
- ◆ At 19.5km, after a **right** bend, you begin a long ascent with variable gradients.
- ◆ At 24km you begin the downhill stretch which is partially steep with some very sharp and narrow curves. CAUTION: Shortly after the signpost: 'Oyster Bay lookout 400 m' it is not only steep, but there is an extremely sharp **left-hand** bend. Please take the arrows seriously and ride slowly and carefully!
- ◆ At 25km, just 500 m further on there is a small car park with a wide view out into Oyster Bay. Despite your speed, you should consider stopping for a look.

- ◆ At 26.3km, do you fancy some wine-tasting? At a narrow **right-hand** bend, just when you are enjoying the wonderful downhill, you have to turn **left**. It is signposted. The first vineyard is located less than 200 m from the turnoff.
- ◆ At 27km you come to the end of the descent; from now on it's only a little bit up and down.
- ◆ At 32.6km, after a sharp **left-hand** bend, is the turnoff to Coles Bay. Keep straight ahead here. Continue reading at 'all routes'.

All routes

- ◆ From here it's only 11 harmless kilometres (if you don't have a headwind) All the next kilometres are measured from the Coles Bay turnoff.
 - ◆ At 7km you will come across the Lilla Valley bridge.
 - ◆ At 10km you will see the Bicheno town sign.
 - ◆ At 10.4km, after 400m, you can turnoff to the **left** at the Blowhole and do the 'scenic drive' (see tomorrow's notes)
- Shortly after that, you reach a crossroads, where the main road turns **left**. Go straight ahead here. After approx. 100 m you must turn **left** opposite the little supermarket on the **right-hand** side. Your accommodation should be signposted.