Tasmania’s Winter Festival Comes of Age

Tasmania’s connections with the Antarctic have long been a part of our cultural fabric. The Antarctic Midwinter Festival provides a wonderful opportunity to celebrate our historic and ongoing links with the amazing place that is Antarctica and just keeps getting better.

This year, the festival drew the attention of a wider cross-section of people than ever, with a lively music program and an Antarctic-themed art and science fair held at Princes Wharf 2.

The Veolia Solstice Lantern Parade kicked off the three-day event on 22 June at Hobart’s Salamanca Place. This is the third year that the parade has been coordinated under the guidance of Community Arts Events Coordinator Naomi Marantelli. Since April, students from St Marys College and Albeura Street Primary School have been working with other community members in a series of workshops to build the candle-lit lanterns. Sixty lanterns in total were constructed from cane frames and covered with greaseproof paper. Many were made in the shape of the sea albatross and sea petrel, with some featuring an impressive wingspan of up to 2 metres. Thirty-five egg-shaped lanterns carried messages about saving these threatened birds from long-line fishing practices. Over 400 people participated in the parade, watched by almost 2,000 spectators who lined the streets of Salamanca. Forty Salsa and Samba dancers added to the magic of the evening when they put on a lively show at the parade’s conclusion.

Some old favourite community events were expanded as part of the 2007 festival. The Huskies Picnic included a Beanie Fest, a zany sied race and the chance for children to make and wear penguin masks in a special March of the Penguins. As part of the Midwinter Market at Salamanca, a chilly snow carving competition was held on the lawn area, providing the opportunity for children to explore the markets and participate in the Antarctic Clue Quest.

The One Planet Extreme Photo Competition attracted a bigger field of entries from Australia and around the world, with the 50 finalist photos of extraordinary extreme environments displayed outdoors along the walls of Princes Wharf 1. Hobart’s Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery also hosted a series of workshops for children and adults, and launched an exciting new 3D show in the Island to Ice Exhibit.

For details of the Antarctic Midwinter Festival, go to www.antarctic-tasmania.info.
Motorcycle Friendly Freycinet

There have been motorcycle friendly eateries, accommodation and tourist venues in the past but in what could be an Australian first, the entire Glamorgan Spring Bay municipality has been declared ‘motorcycle friendly’.

The municipality, which encompasses the world famous Freycinet Peninsula, has recently adopted the motorcycle friendly tag at the instigation of Clr Bertrand Cadart who has lived in the municipality at Bicheno for seven years.

As a long-time motorcyclist, Bertrand appreciated the region’s winding roads through magnificent coastal and mountain scenery and the sunny and dry east coast climate but he quickly realised there was a potential tourism group who weren’t aware of what the municipality had to offer.

Clr Cadart said there’s a large community of touring motorcyclists on the mainland who aren’t aware that Tasmania has some of the best motorcycling roads in the world and it is one place where they can ride at the speed limit and still have fun.

Clr Cadart put the ‘motorcycle friendly’ idea to his fellow councillors who saw the benefits of encouraging motorcyclists to the region and supported the proposal. Other East Coast councils are invited to join them to form a motorcycle friendly block of councils.

To ensure that the region meets riders’ expectations, the council is inviting motorcyclists to submit their ideas on what would make them feel that they were in a motorcycle friendly environment. There will be a prize of a three-night, fully-catered accommodation package at three different locations in the municipality for the best suggestion. Riders can submit their ideas via email to motorcycle@freycinet.tas.gov.au. To be eligible for the prize, suggestions should be submitted by 31 October.

Further information on motorcycle friendly Glamorgan Spring Bay is available at Council’s website www.gsbc@tas.gov.au, or by contacting Bertrand Cadart on (03) 6375 1957.

Swinging Bridges Increase Visitor Appeal

Two new swinging bridges over the Picton and Huon Rivers provide a significant addition to Tasmania’s network of nature-based tourism attractions.

The new bridge over the Picton is situated at the same location as where a similar structure stood for 125 years until the 1960s when it fell into disrepair and was eventually washed away in a flood.

Construction of the bridges provides an added experience for people visiting the popular Tahune AirWalk near Geeveston. Visitors to Tahune can walk to the swinging bridges via the historic McKay’s Track which runs past the ruins of Constable McPartland’s House, and return via the River Edge Return Walk on the opposite side of the Huon River. The stunning, two to three-hour walk also provides visitors the opportunity to drop-in to the Warra Long Term Research Facility.

The opening of the swinging bridges is the latest in a series of upgrades to cater for AirWalk visitors, including expansion of the Visitor Centre, redevelopment of the Bluestone Centre, the addition of the Eagle Glider hang-gliding attraction and an upgrade of the Huon Pine walking track. Forestry Tasmania is now investigating accommodation options for the area.