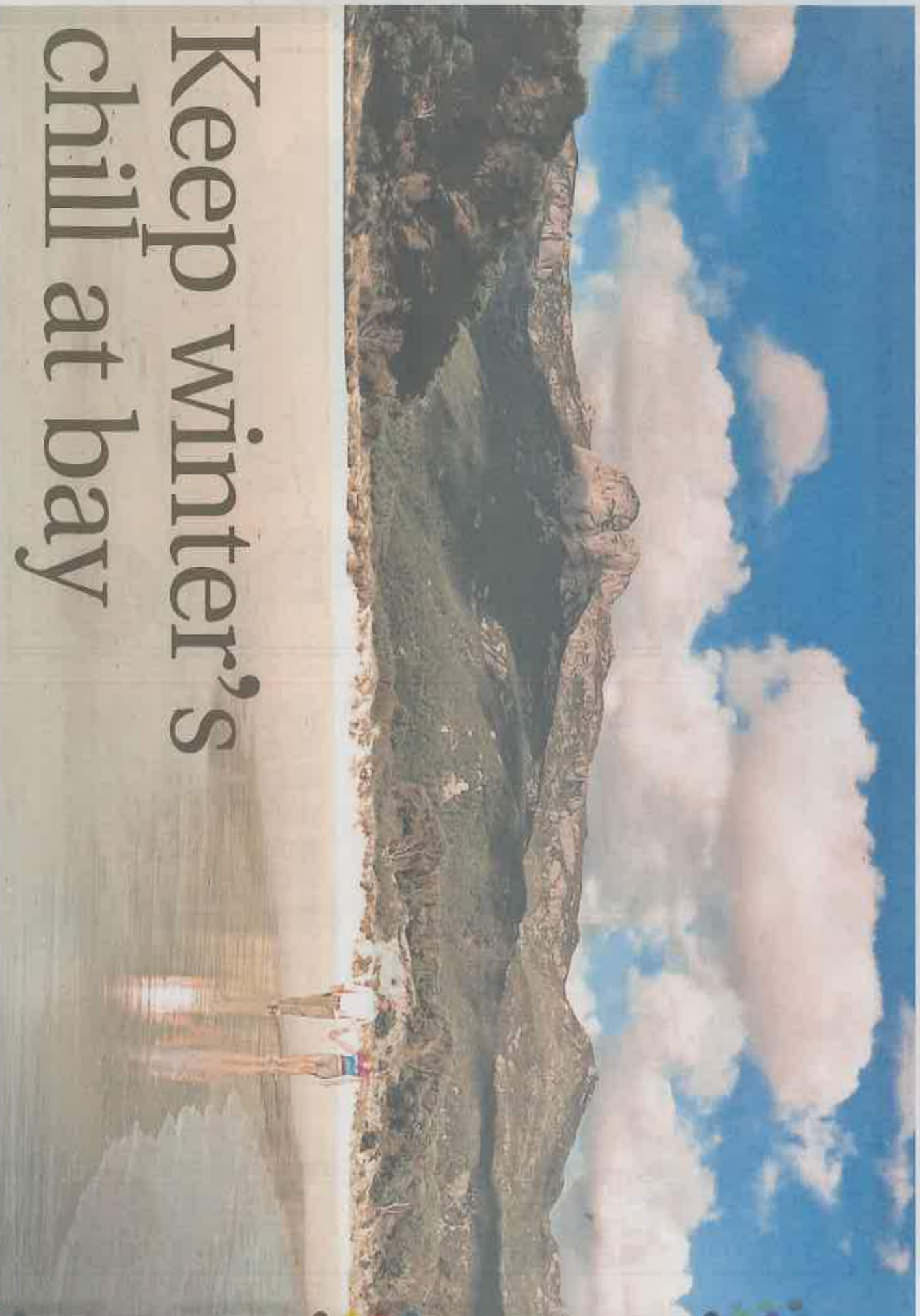


Discover Tasmania



Keep winter's chill at bay

Light the fire, fill a wine glass and snuggle up under a warm blanket on a cool trip to Tasmania, writes **Greg Clarke**

FIREs in winter, they are as necessary as cosying up to something or someone warm while reading Cormac McCarthy's terrifyingly chilling novel. Fly north to Flinders Island for a winter weekend and hole up in one of

the places below and you might not have to organise a firedrake or a brushpile.

These dazzlingly perfect hotspots have some cracking fireplaces and nearby wood piles.

Palana Beach House

On the beach at Palana, at the northern tip of Flinders Island, is a self-contained beach house with views over Bass Strait and the Outer and Inner Sister Islands. One of the owners, Tony Griggs, says it's a whopping 65 steps from the front gate to a white sand beach.

Winter guests might be interested in the stone chimney, the wood heater and the recycled galvanised rainwater tank brimming with firewood as much as the proximity to the beach.

"We have had some of our best times at Palana when it has been freezing cold outside," offers Griggs, who segues into a tale about a walk along the beach in the heart of winter and lying

beside a crackling fire at dusk with a red wine.

Griggs is in a good place to appreciate the appeal of the cold. "We currently work and reside in the United Arab Emirates," he says. (All bookings are completed over the internet. A neighbour takes care of all other details.)

"Sometimes we figure we don't make a lot out of rentals for the hassles it can cause, not to mention the work in arranging clients' payments, but we figure tourism is the potential life blood of Flinders and are happy to have people come and experience and enjoy what we enjoy," Griggs says.

He is, however, quick to add there are loads of positives. "We get a buzz receiving great feedback from clients

who say, 'wow, it was so special' and go on to describe what they experienced. What's amazing is that the way they describe it [their time at Palana] is how we feel."

Griggs' wife, Linda Nichol, has lived on many islands including the Shetlands and Christmas Island. "Without doubt, when we discovered Flinders Island (in 2005), we knew we had found the closest thing to paradise. We are about to build our retirement home next door [to Palana Beach House] and move back to live permanently on Flinders in the next few years," Griggs says.

The open-plan Palana Beach has walls lined with rare celery top pine. The house has two queen size and two single beds. There are comfortable couches where you can stretch out and

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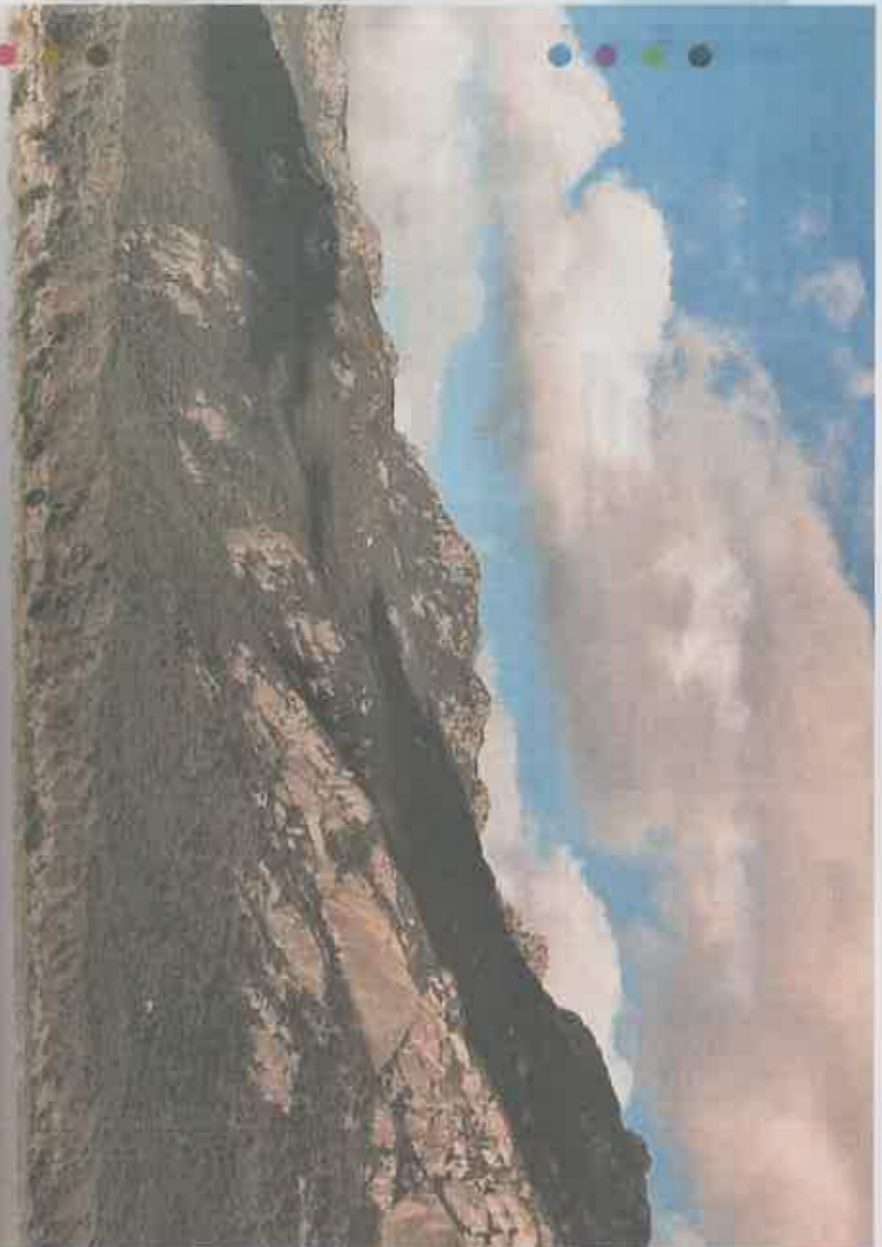
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They camped against a boulder and he made a shelter of poles with a tarp. He got a fire going and they set about dragging up a great bushpile of wood to see them through the night... He dozed in the wonderful warmth. The boy's shadow crossed over him carrying an armload of wood. He watched him stoke the flames. God's own fire-drake. The sparks rushed upward and died in the starless sky.

The Road, Cormac McCarthy



WARM UP: Trousers Point on Flinders Island (left); Wybalenna Chapel (top) and Camerons Inlet. Pictures: Tourism Tasmania, John de la Roche, Steve Lovegrove and Richard Eastwood

Beach House and the Furneaux Tavern in Lady Barron, which has a wood heater in the restaurant. www.flindersisland.com.au and www.visitflindersisland.com.au

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Airlines of Tasmania

The company has services from Launceston to Flinders Island every day of the week. It also flies to Melbourne's Essendon airport.

The Saturday flight departs Launceston at 8am. There is a flight from Flinders Island to Launceston at 5pm Sundays. You can work all day Friday and be back home in plenty of time for work on a Monday morning. Return flights between Launceston and Flinders Island cost \$320 for adults and \$222 return for children (from 3-11 years old). The student fare (for 12 to 16-year-olds) is \$250 return. An aged pensioner fare is \$300. The fares are a little cheaper when booked on-line. www.airtasmania.com.au

Long-term plan

On Saturday September 4, the Father's Day weekend, there will be a pub-to-pub run on Flinders Island. The 26km run begins at the Furneaux Tavern in Lady Barron and ends at the Interstate Hotel in Whitemark (there is also a relay event over the course). If you are not up for the 26km run, there will be a 5km run on Sunday, September 5. This will be held on the same day as the Flinders Fine Fare, a food event staged for the first time last year.

The 5km run starts and finishes at the sports club in Whitemark. On the Sunday there will also be 1km and 2km runs and walks. Both these shorter courses are mostly flat.

More winter warmth

Green Valley Homestead is a stylishly furnished three-bedroom, two-bathroom house (and a combustion stove; there is also a heat pump, however). Just off the wonderfully named Butler Factory Rd, the house has views to Mt Strezlecki but is just a five-minute drive from Whitemark. It costs \$150 a couple a night to stay at Green Valley Homestead. The price includes a continental breakfast. It costs an extra \$25 a night for each extra adult and/or child.

Green Valley has been open just three months and sleeps up to six people.

Other warm places on the island include Echo Hills, a sister property of the Green Valley, the Partridge Farm at Badger Corner, the West End

beach and just 300m from the Whitemark Hotel.

The house is owned by Joy and Peter Robinson.

"We have tonnes of wood,"

Joy says.

The house is also well insulated, which means you can crank the wood heater up and be hot.

"Absolutely," Joy says. "[And] it burns through the night."

One of the bedrooms has a king-size bed, the other a queen-size and the other bedroom has two single beds. Joy provides supplies for a cooked breakfast along with homemade biscuits and/or cakes for her guests.

It costs \$125 a couple a night to stay at Leafmoor in Whitemark. It costs \$30 a night for each extra person. Phone the Robinsons direct on 6369 3517.

Leafmoor in Whitemark

This restored three-bedroom weatherboard house is within walking distance to shops, the golf club, the

watch the fire. Two stand-alone bedrooms with undercover balcony access look straight on to the beach.

Other natural attractions apart from the beach include the occasional sea eagles which are sometimes seen in the late afternoon soaring above the beach looking for early dinner. At night, wallabies come and obligingly mow the grass.

Palana Beach house costs \$180 a couple a night during winter. It costs \$35 a night a person for each extra guest. There is a minimum three-night stay or a surcharge for cleaning applies. www.flindersislandbeach.com



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