

Tasmania's countryside is even more breathtaking in a Ferrari.



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Story by Rob McFarland

“Wanna swap?” shouts a guy in a delivery van. Before I can answer, the lights change and he roars away in a cloud of diesel smoke. Grinning kids wave furiously from passing vehicles, grown men nod approvingly and people of all ages scramble for their phones to take photos and videos.

It turns out few people are immune to the allure of a supercar. Drive one around Sydney or Melbourne and you'll turn a few heads. Be part of a six-strong convoy roaring through rural Tasmania and you will literally stop traffic.

Prancing Horse (prancinghorse.com.au) has been offering a taste of the motoring high life to car enthusiasts for more than 15 years. Co-founder Matt Thio says the company started as a “silly idea” in 2007 but it's since blossomed into a range of driving getaways in spectacularly scenic Australian locales.

There are Prancing Horse drives in NSW's Southern Highlands and



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through the vineyards of the Adelaide Hills but this is the first Tassie itinerary (scheduled again for February 2024). At a welcome briefing in the Peppers Silo Hotel in Launceston, where we'll spend two nights, Thio outlines the day's plan. We'll head west, along a 260-kilometre loop that will take us into the foothills of the Great Western Tiers, a dramatic range of dolerite mountains at the northern boundary of the Tasmanian Wilderness World Heritage Area.

Throughout the day, our group of 12 (five couples and two friends) gets behind the wheel in a wish list of exotic cars, including Ferrari's mid-engined F8 Tributo, a McLaren 570S, Aston Martin's DB11 V12 and the Lamborghini Huracán EVO. During a car swap in the small farming town of Sheffield, two young boys sprint over, wide-eyed with astonishment. “Check out the Lambo!” squeals one. “Whoa,” says the other, shaking his head in disbelief. “This is literally my dream come true.”

After descending towards the island's north coast, we stop for lunch at Ghost Rock Wines (ghostrock.com.au) in Northdown, for three courses that include smoked salmon rillettes, slow-cooked lamb shoulder and warm Persian love cake (but sadly no wine). There are lively discussions about each car's pros and cons. The Ferrari soon emerges as a favourite. “It's just the whole package,” raves one guest. “Sexy, sophisticated and super-quick.”

Each car has its own personality and unique soundtrack, from the sonorous baritone of the Aston's V12 to the attack-dog bark of the Lamborghini. Most are fabulously impractical, with intricate controls and tiny back seats, but without exception they are all exhilaratingly fast. Clambering out of the Lamborghini, one driver describes it as like “riding an angry dragon”.

Leading us into the winding country roads of the Meander Valley, Thio uses a two-way radio to provide regular updates on the route and any upcoming hazards. Our only job is to give each other plenty of space and enjoy the ride. ↘