

## The Undeniable Influence of The Tour Operator

by Heather Rose

First imagine soaring grey dolerite cliffs scored by time. Now see a deep green ocean where sea birds circle and a pod of dolphins leaps. Take a journey to the far southern tip of one of Australia's southern most islands – [Bruny](#) – off the coast of Tasmania, and you'll find yourself in a landscape that is entirely remote and inaccessible by car. It's a coastline once known only to professional fishermen. Now that stretch of ocean is home to Australia's leading ecotourism experience, winner of the [Australian Tourism Award for Ecotourism](#) for 2009, and client of Green Team Australia.

Rob Pennicott, owner of [Pennicott Wilderness Journeys](#) and creator of Bruny Island and Tasman Island Cruises, is a man with a passion for the sea.

"I used to be a fisherman. I used to take friends with me, and they loved it. And I thought maybe if they loved it, tourists would love it too," he says.

That passion has led Rob to share this wild and inaccessible landscape with more than 150,000 guests since 1999. Last year alone, more than 43,000 people experienced the Great Southern Ocean on one of Rob's custom-designed boats.

"It's an ever-changing environment, and we want people to have one of the best days of their lives, so we designed the boats for comfort, safety, speed stability and ease of viewing," he says. There are no windows, so people are up close with nature. They can smell the salt air and feel connected with everything they see. We carry a maximum of 43 passengers per boat, so your eco-cruising experience is intimate and personal."

The sights include stunning natural cliff formations including Fluted Cape and Breathing Rock, rock columns, caves and blowholes, a fur seal colony, albatross, sea eagles, shearwater, and dolphins. From October and November, they may even see migrating whales.

While the 12.5-meter boats are powered by three 300hp Mercury Verado supercharged 4-stroke engine boats, they're built for high fuel efficiency and the quietest operation making them the world's lowest emission power plants of their type. "We call them the 4WD's of the sea because of their unequalled sea-keeping abilities," says Pennicott. "Everyone in our business - from skippers to café staff - are committed to true respect and care for the environment."

That philosophy runs deep in the business. Robert Pennicott, his wife, artist Michaye Boulter, and their two children Mia and Noah, live on Bruny Island, and the flow-on effects of their business ripple far and wide across the island.

The business prioritizes local businesses as their main source of goods and services, and provides support to the local community by sharing their profits through donation of cash and services, fundraising support and conservation.

In 2007, the company founded the [Tasmanian Coast Conservation Fund](#) in partnership with [WILDCARE Tasmania](#) and to date has donated \$65,000 towards important work carried out by the Tasmanian Parks & Wildlife . These conservation and sustainability efforts were recognized in 2008, when the company won the Australian Telstra Sensis Social Responsibility Award. The following year, Pennicott Wilderness Journeys went on to win the 2009 Tasmanian Qantas Award for excellence in Sustainability . The company is 100% carbon offset with Greening Australia, with the money going towards local planting projects.

It's a business created by a passion for the ocean and a love of wilderness, and it supports not only a family and an island community, but offers transformational experiences to tourists, many of whom experience the power and majesty of the ocean for the first time.

We don't just say we want people to have the best day of their lives, we set about making sure in every way that this is the experience they have," says Pennicott. "Unless people have experienced nature it can be hard for them to understand why it's worth protecting and defending."

For more information [www.pennicottjourneys.com.au](http://www.pennicottjourneys.com.au)