

Proposal: Overland Track Puffer Pods

Proponent / s

World Expeditions Travel Group Pty Ltd

Location

Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park Overland Track

Description of proposal

The World Expeditions' proposal plans to construct five "Wilderness puffer pods" along the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park Overland Track, adjacent to existing camping grounds.

A Puffer Pod is a specially designed, communal cold weather tent made from state of art down inner fabric, providing comfort for trekkers. They will remain erected throughout the season and be demounted at the conclusion of the season. The pods aim to have minimal impact while maximising the amenity and attraction of the Overland Track to a new niche within the overall global trekking market. This new trekking proposition is pivotal in making these trails accessible for a broader market in that the weight that trekkers will be required to carry will reduce from around 17-18 kgs to just 10 kgs with the pod camp facilities.

Pods would sit adjacent to current Parks and Wildlife (PWS) campsites and provide protection from wet and cold weather, a dining area and kitchen for guides to prepare food in, as well as a storage area. They will allow trekkers to enjoy a higher level of communal comfort facility but also upgraded sleeping arrangements with standing camps that include camp beds, mattress and pillows and a generally roomier sleeping environment.

The company will continue to rely on existing PWS facilities and if required, the amenities will be upgraded or added to in partnership with the PWS and funded by World Expeditions.

The precise positioning of the Pods along the Overland Track is subject to the appropriate approvals process, public consultation and a Reserve Activity Assessment, to ensure the best possible outcomes.

Each communal Pod has a capacity to seat 14 people, made up of 12 clients plus two guides.

Estimated jobs created

World Expeditions currently employs two full time staff in Launceston and over 30 local guides during the season. World Expeditions has advised that it expects to employ up to 15 to 20 additional staff.

Social, cultural and environmental impact

Initial design and build of the Pods will be off-site initially to limit disturbance on the Overland Track. The outer sheet is strengthened canvas, coloured to fit in with the surrounds, with water drain collection and flexible solar panels. The puffer pods gain their name from an innovative down inner fabric lining the outer sheet. Once completed, the Pods can then be transported and assembled onsite – and will be dismantled over the yearly rest period.

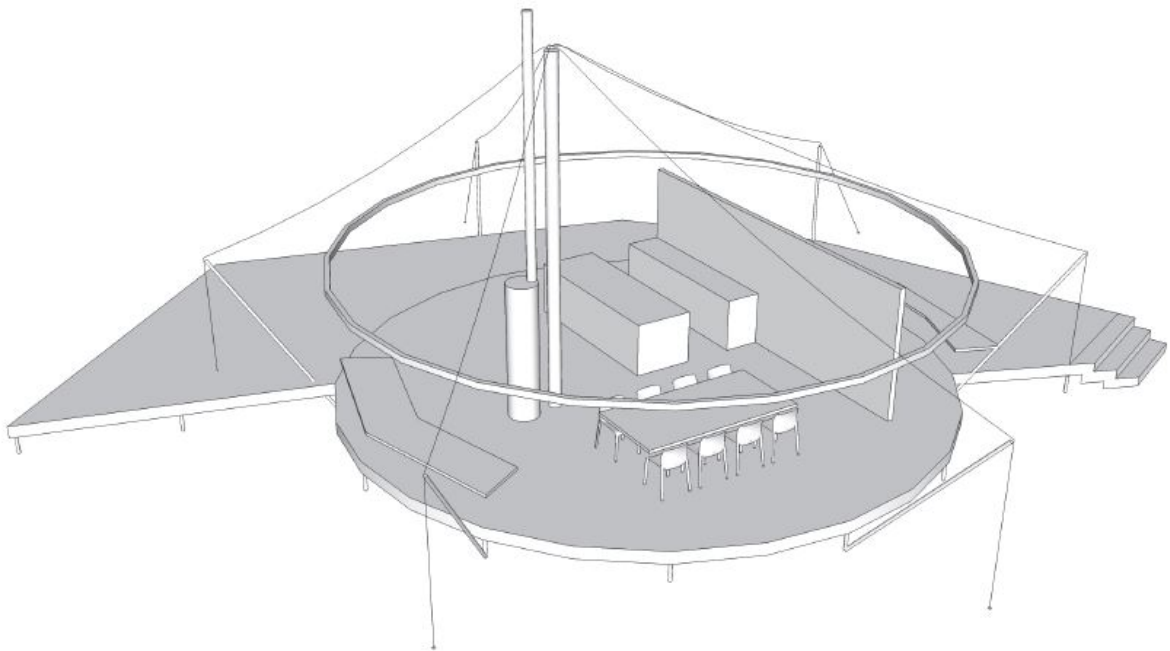


Figure 1 & 2 – Artist's impression of proposed Puffer Pods