



Hi from Jill and Happy New Year

I hope you have had a restful and promising start to 2019.

I think only now am I starting to recover from one of the busiest festive seasons ever. I got stuck into the unpacking at our new house in Leeston (about 30 minutes outside Christchurch if you're unfamiliar with its whereabouts!) just an hour after flying in from my Antarctic research trip. Derek and family had already done an amazing job with the actual shift but there was still a lot to do...not to mention finding homes for the more than 70 plants I brought from Timaru! Then on top of that there were two big family "dos" just before Christmas and on the day itself.

We are loving being in Leeston and being close to so many family members and friends and it's great being so much closer to the House of Travel Riccarton office.

But now it's full throttle on preparations for my 2019 tours and also getting up to speed with my plants for 2020 (more about that below!).

Where have I been?

My last trip was a solo journey to Buenos Aires and then a flight to Ushuaia in Argentina's Patagonia region. From there I boarded the Sea Spirit (the same ship on which my group sailed to Franz Josef Land in the Arctic last year) for a 12-day cruise to the Antarctic Peninsula.



It was a truly wonderful experience, not to mention rather a landmark for me as this was my seventh continent. I always think you need to have slept in a place to claim you have actually visited it so I did spend a night actually on the continent. About 40 of us were transported by Zodiac to a tiny snow-covered island where we dug individual sleeping pits and then snuggled down for the night in our bivvy bags but no tents. I was one of the few who actually got some sleep despite the noise of the nearby glaciers creaking and crashing. I can honestly say I wasn't cold – although my nose was a little chilly in the morning as it had started to snow on us!

Other highlights were walking through colonies of gentoo and chinstrap penguins and a truly incredible evening when we watched literally dozens of humpback whales feeding. The scenery was stunning too. Amazingly many of the crew and even the ship's officers remembered me from last year which made the trip extra special.



I am hoping to be able to take a group on the same cruise, along with a short tour in Patagonia, in November 2020 so if you're interested in this do let me know as soon as possible. These cruises fill up so fast...in fact some of the Sea Spirit's expeditions in 2020 and 2021 are already sold out.

My Facebook Page

Some of you have told me that you can no longer follow my tours on the Jill Worrall Tours Facebook page if you are not already registered as a Facebook member. I've checked this out and you can still follow my posts...when you search for Jill Worrall Tours on Facebook simply ignore the box that asks you to register or sign up and keep scrolling down. All the posts will be there.

Jill's Journey Club

We've had some inquiries recently about if JJC members are eligible for the Club discount on tour extensions. The answer is no. The discount applies only to the main tour and not to any of the extensions (which are not a group tour with me as manager)– whether they are ones we have organised for you or ones you organise with Moray.

This month's feature tours

Croatia Odyssey – only 2 cabins left

Departing 06 May 2019 with cost from \$15,550 per person share twin.

We still have two cabins available on this wonderful journey on the Croatian Adriatic along with visits to mainland stunners such as Split and Dubrovnik.

We have both main (twin beds) and lower deck (double or twin) cabins available. We're not planning to repeat this tour so this will be your last chance to enjoy cruising on our luxury small ship which has just eight cabins, an open bar and an on-board chef.

If you've seen Mamma Mia: Here We Go Again and enjoyed the scenery you will have had an early taste of Croatia's Adriatic as the film was shot not in Greece but largely on the island of Vis which is on our itinerary.





Mongolia in depth

Departing 04 June 2019 with cost from \$23,495 per person share twin.

Originally, we'd launched this tour including Siberia but as this area is so remote and so off the tourist track it proved a rather expensive combination!

So, we've gone back to our operator to make some modifications. The result is Mongolia in Depth. We have bookings already including a lady who would love to find a fellow woman adventurer who would like to share a room.

This is a tour designed for adventurous travellers who want to experience the fast-disappearing world of the Mongolian nomads along with contemporary Mongolian life.

Very few tours explore this region by road (rather than passing through by long-distance train). This is a tailor-made tour offering you a combination of sights and experiences that you will be very unlikely to find with any other programme. My operator has been working in this region for decades and is an acknowledged specialist who provides the very best available in accommodation and most importantly in services and quality guides.

As we travel we will encounter Mongolian wrestlers, expert horse riders, throat singers, stay in a nomadic ger camp and ride Bactrian camels. An unforgettable highlight will be the mini Naadam being staged just for my group.

Mongolia is changing fast, whereas once almost 90 per cent of the population were nomads, nearly half of the country's people now live in Ulaanbaatar. Now is the time to be going before this country changes any further.





Zambia and the Zambezi

Departing 31 August 2019 with cost from \$24,965 per person share twin.

Just a few months ago this tour was full but owing to various circumstances including illness, three couples have had to pull out. This means we have plenty of room for new bookings. Again, like Mongolia this is an exclusive small group tour (we will be going with just eight people and a maximum of 10).

Tour members who came with me on the first Zambia and Zambezi tour in 2017 absolutely loved it and the array of wildlife we encountered was truly amazing - from four cheetah siblings out hunting, a leopard with a cub, sleepy lions, a pack of incredibly rare wild dogs along with giraffe, zebra, wart hogs, buffalo, antelope, hyena and some stunning birds.

We will use small luxury tented safari camps (all with en suite bathrooms) and top guides. The tour covers both Zambia and Zimbabwe and features a two-night stay at Victoria Falls and a unique opportunity to meet a Zambian family and experience African life away from the tourist centres when we stay in a small town that his home to the extended family of my son-in-law, Atkins.

If you have always dreamed about a safari this is absolutely the way to achieve that dream. The parks on this itinerary are not nearly as crowded as those in Tanzania but the wildlife encounters are just if not more thrilling and special. And there is nothing like camping in Africa. It's safe but wonderfully exhilarating.



An Extra Tour for 2019 - Cuba

Those of you who have been with me to Cuba in recent years will know Victor Fernandez my very good friend and tour guide. Victor had moved to Mexico with his wife about 18 months ago and was unable to keep working in Cuba.

But Victor's work situation has changed and he is now able to work with me again in Cuba. So, we are hoping to offer a tour to Cuba this November! The itinerary is being finalised but will include



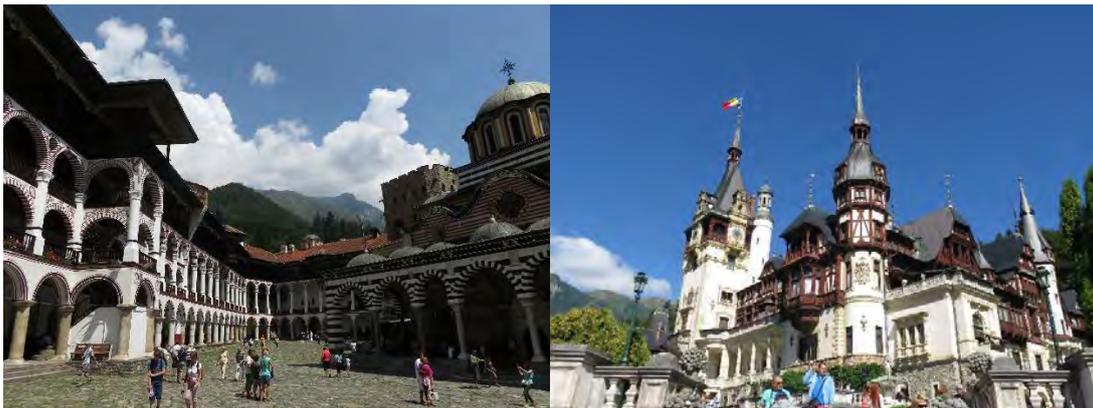
Havana, Vinales, Cienfuegos, Santa Clara, Santiago de Cuba, Trinidad and Baracoa. This will be a small group of about 14 people maximum and we will use private bed and breakfasts and private transport as for my last tours. This is definitely the way to go in Cuba and means plenty of interaction with locals and a chance to stay in some amazing properties, some of them historic homes. Victor is a superb guide too...there is none better.

If you would like to know more when we have the itinerary prepared and costed do get in touch with Moray as soon as possible. Previous tours have all sold out quickly.



What's coming up for 2020?

This is the provisional plan for 2020 - dates and final itineraries will become available in months to come. It's not too early to get in touch with Moray to have your name added to our priority mailing list for any of these proposed 2020 tours. Some of them have strictly limited numbers so once a tour is launched officially you can reserve your place before the tour is more widely advertised.



Feb-March – Colombia: culture, history and wildlife

April - Iran: Western, Central and Eastern Iran with Jill and Reza

May - Romania and the Balkans: travel through six countries: Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Kosovo, Macedonia and Albania.

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July - the Pamir Highway: Kyrgyzstan and Tajikistan. A journey for the truly intrepid!

August – Greenland and Canada: (Labrador, Newfoundland Island, Nova Scotia, Quebec and Montreal)

September – Jill’s Big Birthday Greek Island Extravaganza. This is not a cruise but an island-hopping jaunt, using ferries, including Crete, Mykonos, Santorini and Rhodes. There will be a belated birthday party for Jill in true Greek-style and a special evening for everyone else on tour who is celebrating a special birthday or anniversary in 2020. Jill’s Journey Club members will be offered priority booking on this tour.

Oct-Nov: Ethiopia: including the rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, Aksum, Simien Mountains National Park and the lakes of the Rift Valley.



Late Nov – early December: Antarctic Peninsula expedition cruise and highlights of Patagonia.

That should keep me (and hopefully some of you) out of mischief for at least part of 2020!

Best wishes

Jill

PS As of time of writing Baby Chishimba-Meadowcroft has not arrived. Watch this space and both my personal and Jill Worrall Tour Facebook page. Will be any day now!