



April newsletter

Hi from Jill Worrall Tours HQ!

It's a wet, gloomy morning here in Leeston. That's good in a way because I'm not at all tempted to go outside and work in the garden. I've discovered my garden has a dreaded "clay pan" about half a metre down...wonder who can help "drain the swamp?"

I am however looking forward to taking my group to Croatia early May, we will soon be enjoying our time aboard the motor yacht Luna cruising the Adriatic islands.

## On the home front

Young Nathaniel is a growing delight. Now smiling and gurgling at all of us. He and his Mum and Dad come to stay most weekends when I'm home which has been wonderful. Derek and I are still hard at work in the new garden (see above re the clay pan!). I am now about to start work on a pond...those of you who know Derek will know how much he's looking forward to THAT project!



## Latest news

While I was on the Myanmar and Laos tour bookings on September-October's **Mediterranean Islands** tour reached and passed minimum numbers so we're all go to Malta, Sicily, Sardinia, Corsica and Elba. There are now only about five places left on this tour so if you are still thinking about joining me on this trip, do get in touch with me or Moray soon.

My **Mongolia in Depth** tour in June is also a confirmed departure ...this is a small group departure but we might have room for just a few extra people but you would have to move quickly on this one as we're working on Mongolia visas now.



We're just released my 2019 **Cuba Encompassed** tour departing 31 October 2019...being Cuba this has taken a lot of toing and froing to finalise but it is now ready so if you'd like the full tour itinerary (priced at \$14,995 per person on a share twin basis) do let Moray know and she'll make sure you receive it as soon as possible. We're going to tour Cuba from west all the way to Baracoa at the island's easternmost tip and staying in mostly privately-run bed and breakfasts and small hotels. Cuba has everything – history, stunning architecture, tropical climate, vibrant people, fantastic music and a real buzz these days with exciting new restaurants, cafes and nightlife.

## Where have I been recently?



I have just returned from my Myanmar and Laos tour. We had a fantastic time in a part of South East Asia that I've long wanted to explore properly. There were so many highlights during our three-week tour it's hard to know where to start but here are a few:

- A horse-drawn cart ride around the myriad of temples/stupas in Bagan, Myanmar at sunset. This was one of the most amazing landscapes I've seen anywhere.
- Two days cruising the Irrawaddy River. There were only six other travellers on a beautiful river cruiser so we were really lucky.
- Zipping around Lake Inle on long-tail boats and exploring this watery world of villages and floating gardens.
- Border crossings – even after so many years travelling I still find land borders fascinating – Myanmar to Thailand was rather chaotic and sweaty; Thailand to Laos extremely efficient and we all smiled that the Laotians had imposed a \$1 per person visa surcharge because it was the weekend!
- Our two-day, slow-boat cruise down the Mekong to Luang Prabang. Yes, there's a bit of a boat theme here I know but we had such a great time on our own boat – lovely young couple with very cute baby were our hosts and excellent onboard lunches.



- We took part in an informal ceremony on the banks of the Mekong after the awful event in Christchurch and floated floral boats with candles and incense down the river as a tribute. The hotel housekeepers went to so much trouble to make these tributes so beautiful for us.



- Luang Prabang – could definitely hang out here for longer, especially if I was staying in the great boutique hotel we enjoyed for three nights.
- Myanmar and Laotian food - who knew crispy river weed could be so delicious! But seriously, it really was and the regional cuisine was a revelation – delicious mild curries and fantastic vegetable dishes.
- I think we all loved the gentle, friendly and gracious people of Myanmar and Laos.

Tour feedback: A couple of comments at the end of the tour

“Loved every minute of it”

“Met and exceeded our expectations”.





## This month's Feature Tours

### Colombia

**Feb-Mar 2020**

Not long-ago Colombia was a no-go place for most travellers. However, the situation has changed dramatically recently, and Colombia is poised to become the next must-see South American destination.

I will be one of the first NZ-based tour operators to offer Colombia so if you want to get there before the rush, I do hope you will join me. The full itinerary with confirmed dates and prices will be out very soon and as this will be a tour with very limited places I suggest you contact Moray soon so that you can go on the priority list to receive the tour information as soon as it become available.

We will be spending 17 days in Colombia on a tour that combines cultural and historical sites, with some of the country's best national parks. Bogota's gold museum is on our programme as are the Spanish colonial heritage towns of Villa de Leyva and Cartagena, the latter known as the Queen of the Caribbean Coast. The Unesco World Heritage site at San Agustin is also on my itinerary. This is a series of 5000-year-old stone statues which are considered one of the most important pre-Colombian sites in all of South America.



We will be visiting Los Flamencos sanctuary which is home to thousands of flamingos, El Dorado, one of the best birding places in all of South America which is situated in the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta mountains (the highest coastal mountain range in the world) and home to a significant number of unique plant and animal species. We will also spend time in Tayrona National Park, a beautiful place of palm-fringed beaches and tropical forest on Colombia's Caribbean coastline and spend a day on the coral-fringed Rosario Island.



This will be a highly inclusive tour with most meals and all tipping included. It's going to be a real adventure but with a high level of comfort and quality services. My Brazil tour proved very popular, selling out very quickly so don't miss out on the opportunity to see Colombia now. This tour will be released in the next few weeks, please contact Moray to secure your place.

## **Off the Beaten Track in Nepal**

**Sept 23, 2019 – Oct 15, 2019**

**Price: \$7295 pp, twin-share**

As many of you know I try to include some kind of social development component to my tour schedule whenever possible. This year, at the invitation of the Geraldine-based Forgotten Sherpas of Nepal Trust, I was asked to organise a fund-raising trek into the Damar region of Nepal. This is a remote area, well off the main trekking beaten track so offers an unparalleled opportunity to see rural Nepal and meet local people.

This tour will be managed by my son Jonathan, who is a paramedic and former glacier guide, who grew up in Geraldine and who has travelled with me to the Himalayan kingdom of Bhutan. Weather-permitting, the trek will provide walkers with great views of the Himalayas (including Everest) but will also visit villages working in co-operation with the Trust on health, education and other essential services.

The price is truly excellent and includes a sizeable donation to the Trust's work. It's a wonderful opportunity to enjoy Himalayan trekking that is not too demanding, experience the real Nepal and help with a fantastic local initiative.

