



Jill Worrall Tours April 2020 Newsletter

Hi Everyone

My first, and hopefully, only newsletter written and dispatched during lockdown! I hope you are all staying well and not developing too much cabin fever. It is a strange and somewhat surreal time and most of us will be feeling anxious about someone or something at this time. But, just for a few minutes, read on for some positive news.

This newsletter will be a slightly different format to usual, simply because these are rather unusual circumstances, so first up some reassurance and updates about Jill Worrall Tours.

- 1) Jill Worrall Tours and House of Travel Riccarton are both still definitely in business and are working hard towards future tours. Just to clarify for you - I work in partnership with the owner James Greer, with Moray whom many of you know well after meeting her in person, email or phone, employed by James as the consultant dedicated to work on my tour. House of Travel Riccarton is in a stable and secure financial position.

Here's a word or two from James

"Jill Worrall Tours has been a very successful addition to our business and as such is an important component of our future plans. Like everyone else at this time we don't know the timeframe for when overseas travel will resume or in exactly what form, but we absolutely plan to be ready to help you resume your overseas adventures with Jill."

I just want to say that despite what clearly has been a distressing time to be in the travel industry with so many unknowns and tours that have taken months, if not years to bring to fruition, having to go on hold, I am determined to keep going, because organising, operating and managing tours is what I love to do. Taking you to some of the more far-flung and least-visited part of the globe and seeing you enjoy yourselves and make lifetime memories is an amazing thing to be able to achieve and I feel very privileged to be able to do this. I have no plans to stop now despite this major bump in the road!

- 2) We believe that the incredible efforts that people like James have made to get clients home (and sometimes people who are not even HOT Riccarton clients) after the world lockdowns started absolutely confirm the value of a Jill Worrall tour. When you travel with me there is an amazing team of highly experienced consultants with exceptional contacts who are always there to support me while I'm away with you, no matter where we are.

I saw this for myself when James worked solidly for nearly 24 hours to get my stepdaughter Kirsten, her husband and two teenage children home from Sri Lanka as the lockdowns began. The family weren't even his clients, but James did a wonderful job getting them out where others had failed, and he even stayed up all night in case they had any problems at check-in in Colombo and in transit in Melbourne. Now that's dedication and I know he and his team, especially Moray, would do the same for me and my tour members.



What we plan to do for 2020

Well, we don't exactly know yet how the rest of this year is going to pan out but here's the current state of play.

The May tour to Romania and the Balkans is being postponed (**NOT** cancelled) until approximately the same departure date next year – i.e. about May 4, 2021.

The Pamir Highway has also been postponed to July 2021.

Wildlife of Brazil, Greek Island Hopping and Ethiopia tours: We are monitoring the situation both at home and in these destinations daily and will make decisions on them in date order once the situation becomes clearer.

In short, our basic plan is that those tours that were already confirmed departures will either run this year as planned OR be postponed and run at approximately the same dates in 2021. All these tours will be available for new bookings too – so, if you've missed out on other travel, do ask for more details about my tours as the year progresses.

If you are booked on any of these tours, we will be in contact with you in person as decisions are made.

Please feel free to call or email me at any time if you want to talk about your tour plans. I'm really happy to talk to you and it's great to stay in touch in person!

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Once we know which tours, if any, we can run this year we will then reorganise our original 2021 programme which will then be a mix of postponed 2020 tours and some of the originally scheduled 2021 tours.

Jill Worrall Tours Close to Home!

As many of you know, I'm a proud South Islander who has both travelled in and written extensively over many years about the Mainland. So, I thought, while the complex issues surrounding future international travel sort themselves out, why don't I run some South Island tours?

So, next month we will be releasing more details of three NZ tour for this coming summer. Not only will you get to explore some parts of NZ you might not have visited before but there will be the usual fun and camaraderie of travelling with me; and that also means you don't have to do anything other than have a really good time. This would be a great way to meet up with past travelling companions who you might not have seen for a while thanks to all the travel restrictions!



The Deep South: this tour will begin and end in Christchurch and I plan to include Oamaru, Dunedin, the Catlins, Stewart Island, Fiordland and Lake Pukaki/Aoraki. . There'll be some special meals along the way, along with bush walks, a chance to spot kiwis and other rare native birds, and opportunities to experience two tourist hotspots without the crowds - Milford and the Mt Cook area.

Top of the South: this tour will also begin and end in Christchurch and will include Westport and Karamea on the West Coast, the Nelson Lakes, Golden Bay and Abel Tasman National Park, Marlborough Sounds and Kaikoura. There will be stunning scenery, some special meals, wildlife including, hopefully, seals and whales, and a chance to enjoy places a little off the beaten track such as the Oparara Arches and Westhaven Inlet.

The above two tours will be two-week tours, approx.

The Chatham Islands: Very few New Zealanders have visited the Chathams. I've been lucky enough to have spent many days there writing about island life - I arrived after a three-night freighter journey from NZ but we'll be flying there! It's a fascinating place and the coastal scenery in particular is spectacular (as are the crayfish dinners...). This will be a shorter tour of about five or six nights.

All these tours will be designed for smaller group of up to about 15 people. As always, all transport, any applicable entry fees, accommodation, breakfasts and a number of other meals will be included in the tour price. Jill's Journey Club discounts will apply for these tours. I will be with you all the way, both as guide and tour manager. We plan to run them between early December this year through into February 2021. If you'd like to go on the list for information about these tours as we finalise them, do please let Moray know.

Geography Photo Competition

If you haven't already spotted this on the Jill Worrall Tours Facebook page, then do have a look. Remember you don't have to be a registered Facebook user to look at my page and it's not too late to join in. There is a small prize at stake along, of course, with the honour and glory of winning!

What's Happening in the Worrall/Burrows Bubble

While some people are having a very quiet time of it in their bubble, the same cannot be said of us (surprise, surprise!). Derek and I have Emily (my son Jono's partner), my daughter Rachel and her toddler Nate, living with us. Jono and Rachel's husband Atkins are living together in town as both are in essential services (Jono, the paramedic, mostly in the emergency services hub in Christchurch and Atkins in logistics at the Foodstuff distribution centre). Both young men are working extremely long hours and we all decided that it was not safe for us all to be in the same bubble. It's hard for both couples (and for Flynn the cat who is madly attached to Jono! But we're all doing well - lots of walks, online yoga and workouts and baking (hence the amount of exercise we're all doing!). Natey has learned a lot of new skills in the last two weeks – we reckon he's up to jogging speed on walks, helps

Derek use the automatic door opener and pick raspberries (admittedly he also eats all of them!) He has breakfast in bed with us each morning (and I do mean breakfast IN the bed).



Natey playing with a new wooden toy made for him specially for the lockdown by my brother. Natey's Great Uncle Richard makes amazing wooden toys for NZ pre-schools (and families!).

My tour operator and guide friends from around the world are staying in touch during the world-wide lockdown!

Xavier from Ecuador, taking his horse for a last ride before he became confined to his apartment in Quito. Those of you who travelled with me in Brazil and Colombia will recognise him.

Not so easy to recognise is Martin who was our tour manager on the memorable tour to North Korea and who also met some of my travellers when we were in Prague on our Winter tour in Europe. He was biking through Prague during lockdown and appreciating the total lack of visitors!



And now for something completely different

There's no tour report or featured tour section this month – instead a Jill travel story that I don't think most of you know!

Nearly Murder on the Nile

A guard of honour at the airport, archways festooned with flowers, bands and singers performing from the back of trucks – it was nice of Luxor to have gone to so much trouble on our arrival.

But we were just two more among the millions of tourists who come to this town on the Nile each year. The cause of the celebrations was Luxor had been declared a province meaning more prestige and, we were told, more revenue.

It seems to do pretty well from tourists even without adding another level of local government. Luxor entices visitors with two wonderful temples and just across the river the legendary Valley of the Kings, Valley of the Queens and the Temple of Hatshepsut. But the locals also know just how to extract the last Egyptian pound in your wallet after you've finished with the main sites.

Although our hotel was a modest three-star, there was a Nile view from our rooms and through the palm trees along its banks I could see the temple cut into the hillside beyond the far shore. It wasn't quite as elegant, however, as the Winter Palace Hotel just down the road. Agatha Christie and Noel Coward stayed here, and the lush gardens proved a perfect haven from the touts that lurk along the corniche outside.

Moored along the Luxor bank were cruise boats, sometimes three-deep and alongside them flotillas of feluccas and motorboats. A sail on a felucca at sunset was on my must-do list and Harbi, my Arabic-speaking Jordanian friend, valiantly began negotiations with one of the touts. I pointed out there wasn't much wind, but we were assured further out in the main channel there would be quite enough breeze for a sail.



After an explosion of disgust at the first price offered, I'd been marched down the street, the tout in hot pursuit. After agreeing on a price slightly less than extortionate we were taken along the floating pontoon and told to board the African Queen. Having seen the disasters that befell Bogart and Hepburn on her namesake I thought this was a little ominous. I was correct.

It was only when we'd been untied from the jetty and manoeuvred away from the other boats that Harbi reported that the skipper was now trying to flag down passing motorboats to give us a tow. There wasn't even a hint of a breeze.

"I'm not being towed up the Nile behind a motorboat full of other tourists," I said, trying without complete success to not sound petulant.

Meanwhile, Harbi was also being badgered by our captain who was telling him that he would now also need to pay the skipper of the towboat. The colour was rising in Harbi's face. Although the rest of the debate, which rapidly turned into a conflagration, was all in Arabic I got the gist.

"You said we would be sailing, we paid to sail, we do not want a tow, so we want to get off."

"But the other boat is coming now, and I need more money." The skipper then ordered his assistant to throw the rope aboard – we were now marooned about three metres from the pontoon, adrift like the Ancient Mariner.

"Well you're not getting more, and we are now going to get off."

The gap was too large to jump, however, and I'd been warned about the perils of swimming in the Nile. The skipper was now clearly ahead on points.

But Harbi was not beaten yet. Raising his voice several notches he blasted the skipper with a stream of Arabic that so far had not been covered on my "Let's Learn Arabic" course. A small crowd of boat-owners was now gathered on the shore and the sightseeing boat was puttering on our other side, its tourists fascinated. I tried to hide behind the mast, which was not entirely successful.

"I will shout for the tourist police," Harbi said to me in a quick aside in English. I suspected that would not be necessary. All of Luxor must have heard by now. "I have also told him that to do this to a fellow Arab is the thing that hurts me most."

This was shrugged off by the skipper who was looking increasingly menacing. The torrent of Arabic resumed...it can be a mellifluous, poetic language but when the speakers are fuming, the words twang and spit.

"If we have to, we will stay out here all night," Harbi stated. I wondered if we could order dinner from one of the riverside restaurants.



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The pair were now just a metre or so apart and I was assessing how soon I'd need to leap between them. It sounded good in theory, but I knew it would probably end with me losing my balance and tipping into the Nile. While a crocodile was unlikely to be lurking nearby, bilharzia, the parasitic worm that causes a particularly nasty skin disease euphemistically known as swimmer's itch, could well be.

Suddenly, arms waving towards heaven in exasperation, the skipper hurled the rope back to the pontoon and we were hauled ignominiously in. Meanwhile the skipper on the motorboat was haranguing all of us for wasting his time.

When we were about half a metre from the pontoon Harbi nudged me into a jump ashore then hurried me up the narrow path through a crowd of skippers and touts who were clearly taking the local's side.

"When I go tomorrow you must on no account go out on a boat," Harbi said once we had reached the safety of the corniche. "I am scared they will recognise you and throw you overboard."

Next evening, a steady breeze was wafting feluccas up and down the Nile, their triangular sails silhouetted against a deep orange sky. I leaned on the railings overlooking the river and watched, my head swathed in a shawl as a cunning disguise to deter murderous skippers.

Best Wishes,

Jill