

Dear Everyone

Spring has definitely sprung in Leeston and one of the few upsides to not being able to use my airports for travel-related things is that Mitre 10 is letting me use them for garden purchases, a perfect solution to a rather tight cashflow situation at present! So now even I have to admit there is no room for any more roses (just a gap for one ordered for next winter) or anything else for that matter. I've even had time to grow things from seed, something I never have time to do normally.

Tour-wise I'm really excited and very heartened to report that we now have three confirmed departures for NZ tours in November and December.

- **The Chatham Islands tour ex Auckland is now full.**
- **The Chatham Islands tour ex Christchurch (Nov 12 – Nov 19) is a confirmed departure** but, subject to available of seats on the flights, we may have room for a few more people.
- **The Deep South tour (Nov 26- Dec 8)** is also a confirmed departure and again, we might be able to fit in a few more travellers.

If you are interested in joining me on either of these tours please do contact Moray or me as soon as possible as seats on Chathams' flights are in very short supply and we can't hold accommodation options on the Deep South tour for much longer.

On the home front



Apart from my garden, which is truly a sanity saver at present, life in our busy household continues. We think the builders are about to start pouring the foundations for Em and Jono's new house but in the meantime the shrubs and trees they have been accumulating have happily taken over a quarter of my vegetable garden. Rachel and Atkins are also about to start house hunting, so I'm expecting the rest of the vege garden to be taken up by Rachel's garden treasures now growing in their current property.

Gardening is clearly in the family genes as Natey likes nothing better than digging and watering. There have been a few minor plant casualties as a result of this but I don't want to dampen his enthusiasm. He scorns children's plastic gardening tools though and lugs around a small camping shovel and insists on using my wheelbarrow as well. I'm now trying to find him a child's size one!

It was okay to dig that plant up wasn't it?

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Uncle Jono on driving duty!



My two lovely girls at Rachel's birthday party which included making floral crowns! Emily (left) and Rachel.



A special birthday

I want to wish one of my most loyal and enthusiastic tour members a special Big O birthday congratulations this month. Brian Walker (together with Karen, his wife) have travelled with me, we think, more than a dozen times over the years and we were with me on the only tour I got on the road this year, Colombia, and were due to go with me to Ethiopia later this year too. Brian is not only been a great tour member but as a retired pharmacist has always been on hand to help out with various medical emergencies, accompanied me to many an overseas pharmacy (we've navigated pharmaceuticals in Persian, Arabic and Russian) and most crucially, they were both there for me after I was unfortunately the sole witness to a very tragic suicide (NOT a tour member) when we were on tour in Estonia. Friends indeed and again, happy birthday.

Nelson Get Together

Derek and I travelled to Nelson earlier this month so that I could meet up with some regular and first-time tour members. We had a great dinner with about 12 people and then over the rest of the weekend I met up with half a dozen more travellers. It was really lovely to talk travel and just generally spend time with so many people who have become good friends over many years of travel. Made me realise just how much I miss that whole social aspect of touring and how not seeing so many of my favourite people has got me down from time to time over the past few months. It was a great boost!

Tour updates

By the time you are reading this everyone outside of Auckland should still be at Covid Level 1 and Auckland close to being so. This is great news for all of us wanting to travel freely around NZ. Of course, we don't know what lies ahead but as you've seen already I, together with Moray and James, have been really flexible and fast-moving when it comes to trying to create safe travel options for you. I plan to keep doing this, even though at times, trying to adapt to issues totally out of our control and with so many unknowns, is not easy. But we ARE here for the long haul.

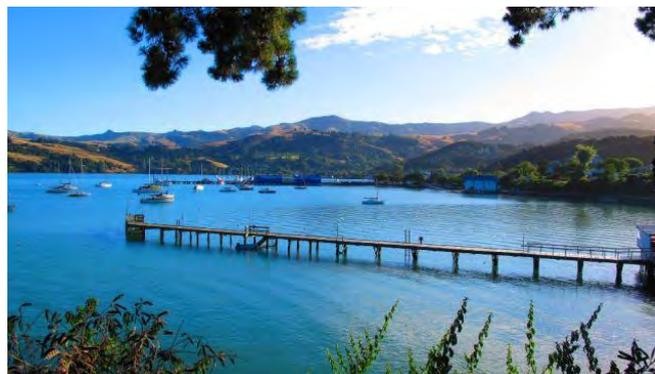
New Zealand Tours

I have two new short break tours and one longer adventure ready to launch.

Banks Peninsula Short Break

This tour, from **Wed, Oct 14 to Fri, Oct 16** is probably especially suited to people in Canterbury but of course open to everyone!

It's fully escorted by me from Christchurch and will include two gardens officially rated Gardens of International Significance (Ohinetahi and the Giant's House), along with another Banks Peninsula hill garden, a Akaroa Harbour cruise, walking tour of Akaroa, the Evans Bay Cheese factory, and special lunches at the Giant's House with its amazing mosaics and French Farm. Accommodation for two nights is in a luxury, historic bed and breakfast in the heart of Akaroa. With two breakfasts, two lunches and a dinner included, along with all the above this is a great break away at \$939 per person, twin share.





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North Otago Food and Fun

There is so much to see and do in this region, quite apart from it being home to some of the best restaurants in the South Island. This three-day tour, from **Friday, Oct 30 to Sun, Nov 1**, includes a night in Oamaru and one at Naseby/Ranfurlly and included meals at Bevan Smith's Riverstone Kitchen at Waitaki, Cucina in Oamaru and Fleur's Place in Moeraki (the one restaurant Rick Stein wanted to visit when he came to NZ!). We will also tour Dot Smith's Castle at Riverstone, try curling at the Naseby Curling Rink, visit the historic Dansey's Pass Coaching Inn, see the little blue penguins at Oamaru and have plenty of time to explore the fascinating historic precinct in Oamaru, including the wonderfully bizarre Steam punk Museum.

Central Otago and the West Coast

These are parts of NZ I know exceptionally well, especially the West Coast where many of my ancestors lived, worked and in one case drowned (under suspicious circumstances...). I can't believe quite how much I've packed into this two-week tour (and neither can Moray who had to book it all!). The full itinerary for this tour, scheduled to coincide with Hokitika's Wild Food Festival, **(05 -18 March)** will be available soon so if you want to be on the mailing list for this tour, which will be for limited numbers, do contact me or Moray.

The itinerary includes St Bathans and the famous Vulcan Hotel, curling in Naseby, a 4WD tour of the Old Man Range or a day on the Central Otago Rail Trail; two nights in Glenorchy at the head of Lake Wakitipu, including the Dart River Jet Boat trip; Haast and the Waitototo River Safari; Lake Matheson, Franz Josef and a guided glacial valley walk; the Hokitika Wild Foods Festival, Punakaiki, Denniston plateau; Karamea and the Oparara Arches and the Heaphy track; Reefton and a visit to the Bearded Miners!).

This is going to be an absolute cracker of a tour with great accommodation, many included meals and everything has been planned by me from scratch and implemented by Moray.

Australia

I will be giving you an update on the Australian travel situation in my next newsletter.

In the meantime, stay healthy, enjoy springtime and I will be looking forward to seeing many of you over the next few months and hopefully even many more next year!

Very best wishes

Jill