

Jill Worrall Tours November 2020 Newsletter

Hi Everyone

To say it was both a huge relief and really exciting to be on the road again with a group this month would be a major understatement!

As I described it to a few of the 18 people who came with me to the Chathams (we had an Auckland and Christchurch departure of nine people each) I felt like a Labrador let out on the beach after being cooped up in a kennel for a long time (but hopefully with less drooling). Read on to find out what we all got up to on the Chathams!

Meanwhile, I'm still working hard on doing as much planning as I can for next year's tours, given that we're still working around a lot of unknowns. There's more about these plans later in this newsletter.

On the homefront:

Life at home is as busy as ever and it's just as hard as ever to try to keep track of who is home and when! Jono's 12-hour shifts as a St John paramedic means there's a high probability that he's either at work or asleep but Em is also working long hours as an early childhood teacher. And their hours mean we have to time lawn mowing and other noisy chores very carefully! Their new house now has a roof, windows, doors and at time of writing, the brickwork is underway. As they are now starting to accumulate things for the new house, our house is reaching bursting point, but we remain a happy extended family nevertheless! Rachel and Atkins are also on the move, having bought a home just around the corner from their present, much-loved cottage. I've been helping to shift plants and Rachel and I are busy planning her new garden (I've already completed a concept design for Jono and Em's house - Derek's quite relieved I've been diverted from any more garden development on our property...or so he thinks!). We're all looking forward to Natey's second Christmas – current enthusiasms centre on diggers, trucks, gardening and strawberries.



A new Canterbury supporter

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The Chathams



On the road again...first tour in 8 months...lots of happy faces!

As you may have seen on both CNN and elsewhere, the Chathams is one of the few places in the world to be suffering from over-tourism at present. To be honest that's not quite as dire as it might seem as there is only accommodation on the main island for about 140 people at any one time. Venice it is not.

But it would be fair to say that an unexpected influx of visitors, combined with that typical island vibe, presented some challenges for me! We had to work around petrol shortages, transport hitches (that meant sometimes it was me driving the group around!) and of course the vagaries of the weather.

Despite that both groups had a great time. The weather for the first group was rather patchy and we didn't manage to get out to Pitt Island but we did get a second invite out to the wonderful Admiral Garden for afternoon tea, had a personal tour of the Chatham Island's freeze-dried honey enterprise, which recently featured on TV, and saw the rare Moriori rock paintings.



With the rare Moriori dendroglyphs

The second group struck it lucky with the weather to the extent some of us even got sunburnt one day! And we did get to wonderful Pitt Island, rather surprisingly by fishing boat rather than flying. This group also got to meet Rob and Norm Hewitt who were on the island for a series of mental

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health seminars; this meant literally rubbing shoulders with them – the hotel corridor was quite narrow so when you met Rob in a narrow space there was not much room to manoeuvre!



Loo with a view Pitt Island

All of us got to see one of the most remote seal colonies in NZ, beachcomb for paua and fossilised sharks' teeth, encounter a few of the island groups' rare birds. including the Chatham Islands' wood pigeon, tui, oyster catchers and shags and red-crowned parakeets. We spent time in two remarkable gardens, The Croon's Admiral Gardens and Helen Bint's stone cottage, heard some great yarns of island life and were welcomed on to the Moriori marae. During the course of the two tours we covered almost every metre of every road on the island (many of which are on private land which need special permission to access).

Oh, and of course there was crayfish platter night, blue cod and paua.



A little Crayfish anyone?



Lunch at Port Hutt

Here's what some of my tour members had to say about the tour:

"A big thank you for another wonderful adventure."

"I really liked having a thorough look at the island, going on all of the roads and seeing things that one would normally miss...thanks again , you did a super job."

"Another Jill Worrall triumph....thanks for another great trip."

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Where to next?

By the time you are reading this I will be down south with my last tour for 2020, the Deep South. There are 13 people coming with me to explore the Catlins, Stewart Island, Fiordland and the Mackenzie Country. I'll tell you all about it in the December newsletter.

And now for 2021 – Australia!!!

Over the past many months, I've been planning (with Moray's invaluable behind-the-scenes hard work) five tours to Australia for 2021. Don't forget though I also have a Central Otago-West Coast tour planned at home for March.

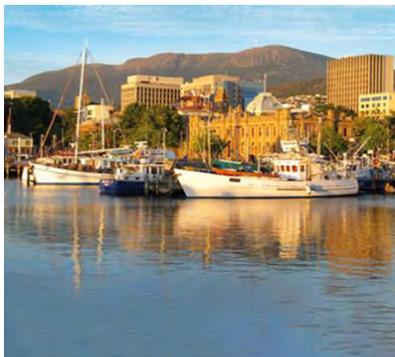
A brief outline of each of the Australia tours is included here, with provisional dates - but please remember that none of these tours will be operated until we get a quarantine-free bubble with Australia.

So, read on and hopefully one or more of these tours will tempt you! If you would like to know more about any of these tours, do contact Moray. We are NOT requiring a deposit of any kind at this stage, but it would help us enormously to get an idea of the level of interest in these tours.

Tasmania – the Grand Circuit

A 15-day tour

April 04 – April 18



We will be making a circuit of the island of Tasmania, taking in a long list of its beautiful scenic routes and locations and its historic highlights ...this really is the very best of Tasmania. We'll have time in Hobart (timed to coincide with the famous Salamanca markets), will cruise Peppermint Bay, taste gourmet food on a wilderness cruise to Bruny Island and board the West Coast Wilderness Railway.

There's an overnight stay in the famous Cradle Mountain Lodge and a cruise through the Gordon River Wilderness Area and we will see Tasmanian devils and echidna in a special sanctuary, taste local wines, encounter local artists and craftspeople, enjoy lunch on a Wineglass Bay cruise, visit historic farm estates and, of course, explore the notorious Port Arthur convict settlement. There are plenty more highlights too – they are all outlined in the full itinerary, so do contact Moray so you can read more!

Lord Howe Island and the Snowy Mountains

A 12-day tour

May 12 – May 23



Just as New Zealand's Chatham Islands have been booked up for months due to our restricted travel options, so too has Australia's Lord Howe Island...but not before I was able to secure some accommodation there in May!

We're going to have five nights on this island, all of which is a Unesco-listed site with a visitor cap of 400 people. Lord Howe has been described by Sir David Attenborough as "so extraordinary, it's almost unbelievable".

The island's combination of spectacular volcanic geography, rare endemic species, the world's most southernmost coral reef, a huge lagoon and an amazing mix of marine life sustained by a mix of warm tropical and cool temperature ocean currents, is unique. It has more species diversity than the Galapagos and is truly an island ark with unique flora and fauna. Feral cats, goats, pigs and even rats were completely eradicated by 2019 and even introduced weeds have nearly been wiped out.

The more you read about Lord Howe, the more remarkable it seems! Because it is so isolated, tourist numbers are limited and as so much of the island's supplies have to be imported, Lord Howe is not a budget destination. We have five nights on the island which will give us ample time to explore it but still keep it affordable.

To add to the highlights of this tour and to make the journey across the Tasman extra worthwhile, the last five days of our tour are going to be a complete contrast as we head back to the Australian mainland up into an autumnal Snowy Mountains, and ending our tour in the nation's capital Canberra, which often gets missed off New Zealanders' Aussie itineraries!

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Queensland's Southern Outback

A 12-day tour

June 27 – July 8



This is a NZ winter getaway with a difference – rather than heading for the usual Queensland coast and islands I'm going to take you inland on an outback adventure! It's a perfect tour for anyone who thinks they've been everywhere, done everything in Australia, plus anyone else who enjoys the idea of getting well off the beaten track. There's a great combination of real dinkum Aussie life on vast stations, artists and all kinds of quirky things in between. For example, have you seen the Northern Hairy-Nosed wombat statue? I'm guessing not! It's a quintessential Aussie outback trip.

The tour starts in Brisbane (with a seafood dinner cruise to kick things off to a great start) before we head inland on the silo art trail, including works of art in Yelarbon and Thallon. There'll be some classic Queensland pubs to check out on the way too, do some wine tasting, visit a cotton farm and a vast family-run sheep and cattle station; we will have a campfire dinner under the stars, spend time in the fascinating town of Thargomindah; see the titansaurus sauropod fossils (the largest dinosaurs ever found in Australia) and meet opal experts and artists. We'll even check out the Cosmos Centre for a tour of a USAAF top secret site and have a night sky experience. There's even a sound and light show at Roma and a visit to a cattle auction at Australia's largest cattle selling centre and we end the tour with a farewell dinner on a 34,000-acre cattle station.

This is going to be so much fun and with almost all meals included (and there's some characters as you can see), it's a highly inclusive tour.



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The Top End

A 11-day tour of Australia's Northern Territory

July 25 – Aug 4



If there's somewhere well worth seeing in the Top End I reckon it's on my itinerary! My tour begins in Darwin, including visits to the aviation heritage centre (I can't wait to see my first B52 bomber close up), World War II sites, the Flying Doctor service, the Cyclone Tracey Museum and even a sunset dinner cruise – one of five cruises on this tour. That's quite a list before we even head out of Darwin to encounter the famous jumping crocodiles on the Adelaide river, learn about local culture on the Gulyyambi Cultural Cruise, see rock art, visit the Katherine thermal hot springs, the Lichfield National Park with its beautiful waterfalls and, of course, the spectacular Kakadu National Park where we will tour Arnhem Land on a cultural and heritage 4WD tour. There's even a stockman's camp oven tucker night.

I first visited Darwin years ago with the NZ Defence Force, of all things, and found Darwin an intriguing place and my brief time out of the city sure whetted my appetite to see more of this territory.

I've put a real emphasis on not just the incredible scenery in this region but on being able to meaningfully learn about local Aboriginal history and culture (including some spectacular art work) using Aboriginal guides to tell the story of their own peoples.

This tour has been timed to fit in with anyone who wishes to take the famous Ghan train to Adelaide via Alice Springs.

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The Great South-West Edge

A 14-day tour of Western Australia

Oct 2- Oct 15



This tour takes us to the far western edge of the Australian continent where we will be setting off on an adventure south of Perth, along its spectacular wildlife-rich coastline then looping back to Perth through the Australian outback. It's also been timed to coincide with excellent times to go whale watching and see some of Western Australia's spectacular array of wildflowers.

WA is Australia's largest state, covering a third of the country's landmass. It's huge so I'm just concentrating on the region south of Perth- the Great South-Western Edge.

We'll be visiting Perth and Fremantle, of course, but then heading south to the famous Busselton Jetty and underwater viewing gallery, taste some of the produce in the Margaret River wine region, taking a whale-watching cruise, go underground into the amazing Ngilgi Caves and visit the Cape Leeuwin heritage precinct.

We will also be riding the rails on the Pemberton historic tram, making a treetop walk through the rare and special Karri trees and visit the award-winning National ANZAC centre.

The Porongurup and Stirling Ranges national parks are on our itinerary as is the Unesco World Heritage Fitzgerald River National Park. We will also have a wildlife cruise around the pristine wilderness of the Recherche Archipelago and for something completely different check out some amazing silo art as we head back to Perth

It's also possible to combine this tour with a journey back to Sydney aboard the famous Indian Pacific railway, one of the world's great train adventures.

So, if like me, your developing a little cabin fever and ready for an adventure offshore do get in touch with Moray for full itineraries of the above tours. As always, they've been planned carefully by me, especially for you. I'd love you to join me! And don't forget, we're not asking for any deposits at this stage, just making sure we're ready to go as soon as NZ and Australia properly open their doors!

Very best wishes
Jill