



Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter – April 2021

By the time you are reading this I will be on the road again with a full small-group tour around the wineries and scenic delights of Marlborough and Martinborough. I am sure everyone is in for a fun, relaxed break away – a good way to be set up for the colder months ahead.

BUT, the big news is that we now do have a Trans-Tasman quarantine-free bubble, so it's full steam ahead at Jill Worrall Tours right now, with Moray and I working hard to finalise five Australian tours. I've been working on the itineraries for months but it's only now that we have flight schedules that Moray has been able to sort out flights! The result though, is that we're absolutely ready to go.

Already demand for accommodation, flights and even train travel is high so if you are not already on our list as being interested in any of these tours, I strongly advise you to contact me or Moray soon. For example, Lord Howe Island is basically full from now until well into next year and accommodation, even for a relatively small group in Port Douglas, Queensland, over our winter period is already extremely difficult to find!

Now to the big Kangaroo in the Room – what happens if, when you are on a JWTour in Australia, there is a community case of Covid-19? There's a link here <https://covid19.govt.nz/travel-and-the-border/quarantine-free-travel/quarantine-free-travel-with-australia/how-a-covid-19-case-in-australia-would-be-managed-quarantine-free-travel/> to the New Zealand Government's website that covers this issue in great detail but in short the policy is one of Continue, Pause or Suspend.

My plan to open my Australian tours for bookings is based primarily on official health advice, both here and in Australia - that as the current levels of community transmission (or lack of it) in both countries are similarly low and as vaccination programmes are underway, the likelihood of a full, lengthy lockdown (Suspend) is extremely low. Thus, the risk of being caught up in one of these while in Australia is little different to being caught up in one if one was travelling around NZ.

What about a Pause in travel, meaning an up to 72-hour suspension of travel plans? There is no travel insurance that will cover travellers for this BUT, should a JWTour be caught up in a 72-hour suspension in travel we will undertake to do the following:

- * JWTours will handle all tour rearrangements, including any necessary rescheduling of flights (as long as your entire tour including flights is booked through us). This will not cost you anything.
- * We will book any necessary new accommodation at the most competitive price we can find and rearrange all other tour details as necessary, plus help you rearrange any after-tour travelling that you have organised through JWTours.
- * I will be on hand to take care of all day-to-day practicalities.

We can't bear the cost of these extra days of accommodation and living expenses, but we will do everything we can to mitigate the extra expense.

I think this also perfectly illustrates why group travel, especially in this current situation, has huge advantages over organising everything yourself. In a situation like this ALL the rearranging will be done for you by us.

My Australian Tours

Tropical North Queensland

An 11-day tour from Brisbane to Cooktown

July 10 – July 21, 2021

This is brand new tour – I’ve decided that even though this is relatively well-known region for Kiwis, the lure of a tropical climate, warm seas and rainforest to escape to during our winter is too good to resist!

My tour begins in Brisbane with a river lunch cruise, an Australian Outback spectacular show and dinner before we fly to Cairns. Up here in the tropical north we’ll be taking the fantastic train ride to Kuranda, returning to sea level on the Skyrail Rainforest Cableway and taking a day trip to the Atherton Tablelands with its lakes, forests and abundant birdlife, not to mention historic towns such as Herberton and Yungaburra. We will also visit one of Queensland’s premier attractions, the historic and beautiful Paronella Park. We then head north to Cape Tribulation via Mossman Gorge and a cruise on the Daintree River. Accommodation for a night in the Cape Trib area is in the heart of the rainforest.



The next day we head further north along the 4WD-only Bloomfield Track, through World Heritage-listed rainforest to the frontier settlement of Cooktown. We then head south again to Port Douglas through the Queensland outback. We’ve timed our visit to Port Douglas to coincide with its famed Sunday Markets and we’ll also be heading out on a cruise to the Low Isles, where there will be a chance to snorkel on one of the most accessible parts of the Great Barrier Reef system or keep your feet dry viewing the coral and fish on a glass-bottomed boat trip. All breakfasts, five lunches and eight dinners are included in this tour which ends with a transfer to Cairns and a direct flight home to NZ. It is possible to extend your stay in either Port Douglas or Cairns.

With flights and accommodation for this region in heavy demand over our winter months we only have a matter of weeks to confirm our room allocation so if you're looking for a break in the stunning beauty and warmth of the Australian tropics do book soon!

The Top End

A 12-day tour to Australia's Northern Territory

July 24 – Aug 05, 2021

If there's somewhere well worth seeing in the Top End I reckon it's on my itinerary! Being another of Australia's tropical regions, it's also a perfect way to escape the cold of a NZ winter!

My tour begins in Darwin, including visits to the aviation heritage centre, World War II sites, the Flying Doctor service, the Cyclone Tracy Gallery 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 Guluyambi Cultural Cruise, see world-renowned Aboriginal rock art, the Nitmiluk (formerly Katherine) Gorge, 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'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 (especially some spectacular rock artwork) using Aboriginal guides to tell the story of their own peoples.

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



The Great South-Western Edge – Western Australia

A 14-day coastal and outback adventure

October 02 to Oct 16, 2021



Western Australia is the country's largest state; it's so huge that if it was a nation of its own it would be among the top 10 countries by size in the world. Its capital, Perth, is one of the most isolated cities on the planet – it's closer to Indonesia and Singapore than it is to Australia's own capital of Canberra. It's steeped in history, from Aboriginal through to European, and is famed for producing some of the best wines in the world.

This is a hugely diverse region – with 1000km of coastline, forests, national parks and outback - and we're going to do a loop right around its south-western coastal edge as far as Esperance and then back to Fremantle/Perth via the outback. This entire region is little explored by international travellers and little known even to most Australians. The landscapes are stunning and the human history of the region is fascinating.

We will visit a Margaret River winery, go on a whale -watching cruise, look for wildflowers, visit the National Anzac Centre, explore Fitzgerald River and Porongurup National Parks, see the legendary karri trees (the tallest trees in Australia), cruise the Recherche Archipelago on a wildlife cruise, check out Wave Rock and cruise the Swan River back in Perth to stay overnight in historic Fremantle.

I will be with you the whole journey, plus we will have with us as well a local with expert knowledge. With all breakfasts, six lunches, and six dinners included and heaps of included activities this all combines to being a relaxing and fun tour packed with interest.

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The tour has been scheduled to allow anyone who wishes to return to either Adelaide or Sydney on the Indian Pacific train. This is one of the world's longest and greatest train journeys, from one major ocean to the other.

Tasmania -The Grand Circuit

October 24 – Nov 07, 2021

A comprehensive 15-day tour

I've travelled extensively around Australia (many times as a guest travel writer for various state tourism organisations, as well as to Darwin with the New Zealand Defence Force en route for East Timor) but I've never managed to get to Tasmania!

So now is the time to discover this island, which is about the same size as Ireland and Sri Lanka and is the 26th largest island in the world. With about half of the island being protected as World Heritage, National Park or reserves, it's a place of outstanding natural beauty but also a land of history, great yarns and superb natural produce.

My tour is not an "off-the-peg" journey but an itinerary carefully prepared by me in conjunction with expert Tasmanian tour operators. This tour will be fully escorted to and from NZ by me and I'll be tour manager throughout, assisted by local guides during the tour. The tour includes a well-thought-out mix of included and independent meals as well as options for people wanting to be active and those wanting to take things at a gentler pace.

On my itinerary are: Hobart, Bruny Island and wilderness cruise, historic farm estates, the West Coast Wilderness Railway, Gordon River cruise, a stay at the luxury Cradle Mountain Lodge, Launceston, food and wine tastings, Tamar, Freycinet Peninsula and Port Arthur.



Lord Howe Island, the Snowy Mountains and Canberra

A 12-day tour to one of Australia's well-kept secrets!

February 18 – March 01, 2022

All of Lord Howe Island is a Unesco-listed site, it has a visitor number cap of 400 people at any one time and David Attenborough described it 'so extraordinary, it's almost unbelievable'.

Australia's Lord Howe is just a two-hour flight over the Tasman Sea from Sydney but is still something of a well-kept secret both in Australian and overseas. What with the visitor number cap and restrictions on travelling further afield for a while, the chances are that anyone trying to secure rooms for the next nine months or so will be out of luck, so this really is your opportunity to come to this amazing island. The combination of spectacular volcanic geography, rare endemic species, the world's 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.



Sir David Attenborough described Lord Howe Island like this "so extraordinary, it's almost unbelievable...few islands surely can be so accessible, so remarkable, yet so unspoilt". The island was discovered in 1788 (this was, to the best of historians' knowledge, a true first discovery) and settled from 1833. Many of the island's permanent inhabitants are descended from these first arrivals.

The whole island is a superb example of a world class conservation project with 75 per cent of the land in a protected reserve surrounded by a marine reserve. This truly is a must-visit island for anyone interested in conservation and sustainable tourism – the island has no air-conditioning units, cars are only used by locals for essential services, about 86 per cent of biodegradable waste is turned into compost for the islanders' use and the elected local board must give permission to cut down a tree.

After five nights on Lord Howe we return to mainland Australia to spend three nights in the Snowy Mountains including the Kosciuszko National Park, learn about the legendary Snowy Mountain Hydro Scheme, explore the historic village of Nimmitabel. Once in Australia's capital, Canberra, there's a city tour and we'll visit the Australian War Memorial and Parliament. Along the way there

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will be wine, beer and even schnapps tastings along with all breakfasts, four lunches and nine dinners. We fly back to NZ via Sydney.

There has been a lot of interest in this tour already and space is limited to only 14 people (single room capacity is especially limited).

We have full itineraries and prices for all these tours ready now and with expressions of interest for several of them already surpassing the 15-person mark, some are going to fill up fast so do get in touch soon.

A Christchurch Get-Together

There will be more details in the May newsletter but an early heads-up if you're in the Canterbury region. I'm going to be holding an Australia information evening, a general catch-up with refreshments and a chance for you to tell me where in the wide world you might like to travel to in years to come, on the evening of **Wednesday 19 May** in central Christchurch.

On the home front

While all this feverish planning has been going on I've also been hard at work at my son Jono and his partner, Emily's new garden after an epic week in which they moved out of our house. They've been living with us for more than 18 months and we were really sad to see them leave, but equally excited to watch them settle into their first home. I spent a couple of days helping Jono haul several tons of soil conditioner and then bark chips on to site and then a few days ago we had the first of what will probably be several planting days! Meanwhile, Natey is now exhibiting the signs of having not one, but four journalists in his family – "What's This?" is now his favourite saying!



Jono and Em were very popular with their nephew Natey when they let him sit in the removal truck they hired when they moved out of our house.

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I spend a number of days helping shift soil and bark chips and then planting out on Jono and Em's new property.

That's all for now. I'm just so delighted that we might be on the move further afield so, here's cheers to the Bubble!

Jill

Photo credit: Tourism Australia