

Jill Worrall Tours May 2021 Newsletter

Hi Everyone

I'm writing this while waiting for the heavens to open and deluge Canterbury in torrential quantities of rain. At least that is what is forecast...if next month's newsletter is accompanied with a photo of me rowing to the supermarket you will know it was accurate.

Weather notwithstanding I think there is a slight sense among those involved in organising travel that there might be a little glimmer of light in what has been a very long, dark tunnel. There is no way the world is going to open up overnight to all of us travel-starved people, but the signs are good that slowly we'll be able to wield our passports again.

And you can be sure that I'm already well advanced with all kinds of plans for next year, both close to home and further afield and as 2021 progresses I'll be sharing these with you.

In the meantime....the Top End!

Bookings are coming in for my first overseas tour since March 2020, **The Top End (Northern Territory, Australia) from July 25 to August 5**. This is very exciting and we're hoping to be able to let everyone either booked, or considering this tour, know whether we have a confirmed departure in the next week or so. There may be a few places left on this small group tour, so if you're ready to escape the cold (and in our case the wet!) this would be a perfect opportunity. But you will need to contact Moray as soon as possible – the warmer parts of Australia are proving very popular with Australians let alone Kiwis for this winter, so hotels and other operators are not giving us much time at all to confirm our bookings!

In short, my Top End tour includes Darwin, Nitmiluk (Katherine Gorge), Lichfield and Kakadu national parks (including Arnhem Land). It's a carefully designed itinerary with something for everyone – some iconic Australian scenery, wildlife, history and cultural experiences with some of the Aboriginal groups whose stewardship of the land dates back thousands of years.

The Northern Territory has at time of writing and for many weeks now had no community cases of Covid 19, a well-advanced vaccination programme and strict dedicated quarantine facilities for any overseas arrivals.



Fancy a Mid-Winter Break in NZ?

If you're not thinking about heading across the Tasman just yet, what about a mid-winter break in the South Island High Country? The Mackenzie Country is truly spectacular in winter, offering a high proportion of sunny days, stunning night skies and snowy peaks.

We'll be visiting in style too, as the tour includes two nights at the Hermitage at Aoraki/Mt Cook, a night at Peppers Resort in Lake Tekapo and one night at my favourite high country station cottages (many of you stayed here with me last year so know what an amazing location this is, and how beautiful the accommodation is). Excellent dinners are included on all four nights at these places.

The tour leaves **Christchurch on Thursday, July 8 and returns to Christchurch on Monday, July 12**. We'll visit Geraldine en route for Tekapo where there will be free time to stroll around the lake or enjoy the hot pools. The next day we set off on a four-wheel-drive adventure up into an alpine valley before ending the day on Braemar Station where we'll have a home-cooked dinner (with me as maitre'd and sous chef!). Next day it's off to The Hermitage via a visit to see Lake Ohau. We have a full day in Aoraki/Mt Cook National Park where you will have options for walks and scenic flights.



If you've been on one of my South Island tours either earlier this year or last year you will be delighted to know that once again, the excellent, kind and unflappable Alan will be at the wheel of our very comfortable minibus!

Do contact Moray as soon as possible about this tour as it's actually not that far away!

And for the warmer months

I've been holidaying in the Golden Bay region at the top of the South Island since I was about 12 years' old, plus have long hankered after a stay in a remote Marlborough Sounds lodge and, since our borders closed, have been hoping to take a tour there – and the dates are now set!

My 10-day Top of the South tour is scheduled for late spring, Nov 16 – Nov 26 this year, before the area gets too busy over the main summer months. It includes the very best this region has to offer. This is another tour developed from scratch by me.

The tour begins in Nelson city with a drive over the legendary Takaka hill and into Golden Bay, where we will be based at Collingwood for three nights. We'll have a day exploring this region of lush forest, fertile farms and gorgeous beaches that will include visiting NZ's largest freshwater springs, Te Waikoropupu, the famous Bainham Store and free time in arty, delightfully quirky Takaka township. There's also a half-day 4wd adventure along Farewell Spit – a highlight of any Golden Bay visit!

Then it's off to Abel Tasman National Park and a two-night stay at beautiful four-star Awaroa Lodge, which can only be reached either on foot, kayak or water taxi. There is an entire day to swim, walk, kayak, or just enjoy the lodge's gorgeous location set among native forest. From Abel Tasman we then head into the Marlborough Sounds for a three-night stay at remote Furneaux Lodge. We'll have a half day cruise to Ship Cove (a favourite of Captain Cook's) and to predator-free Motuara Island.

The tour concludes (timetable willing) with the train journey from Picton to Christchurch aboard the Coastal Pacific, and an overnight stay in Kaikoura so that we can go whale-watching!

The tour includes all breakfasts, one lunch and four dinners.



The Autumn Among the Vines Tour



In April a full tour of 10 people, plus me, set off from Christchurch somewhat early aboard the Coastal Pacific train to Picton. It was a perfect day with spectacular views over the Kaikoura coast and the autumn colourings of the Marlborough vineyards. After a Queen Charlotte Sound cruise (with a glass of sav included) we stayed overnight in Picton before heading to our luxury accommodation in Blenheim for three nights. We visited the fantastic Omaka Aviation Heritage Museum, went cruising on Pelorus Sound and feasted on wonderful mussels and had a day tour around four vineyards and a chocolate factory! We then crossed over Cook Strait and took a drive out along another spectacular section of NZ's coastline – in the Wairarapa - before settling into our luxury accommodation just outside Martinborough. A day-long food and wine excursion in the region ended our tour.

We all had a ball - drank some memorable wines, ate some delicious food, basked in autumnal sunshine and thoroughly enjoyed plenty of convivial conversation and some hotel luxuries. Feedback afterwards included “wonderful tour; enjoyed it all” and “I enjoyed it enormously”.



My guide to Australia

Over the next month or so do look out for an email/Facebook alert about the release of my new guide to travel to Australia. It's been a major project and takes the form of an eBook which you will be able to access, as well as information about travel in Australia. It will also include links to many travel articles I've written about Australia over the years – something to fill in some cold winter days at the very least! Hopefully, it will also whet your appetite for touring there with me sometime this year or early next year.

I do hope to see you sometime, somewhere soon!

Best wishes and stay warm,

Jill