



Jill Worrall Tours August 2022 Newsletter

Hi Everyone

I'm writing this after returning home from my first overseas tour in two and a half years! There's more about my tour to Australia's Northern Territory later in this newsletter but firstly I do want to say how wonderful it was to be back taking my tours, to see people relish some new sights and experiences and to simply relax and enjoy a holiday in the warmth and sunshine.

What I was also very pleased about was how straightforward our travels were, Covid-wise. As required, we wore masks on flights and in airports but those were the only times they were required. The only extra requirement we needed was the NZ passenger declaration on the way home, and in my case, no-one even asked to see that.

We did have a flight delay leaving Darwin but this had nothing to do with Covid. Darwin was hosting a major multi-national air force exercise and the military shares the same runways as commercial aircraft. So, we had to wait our turn behind F16 jet fighters and other military aircraft before we could take off!

No-one caught Covid on our tour, no luggage was lost and I am sure it restored not only our confidence in overseas travel but our enjoyment of being out and about again! Nearly half the group had booked another tour with me before we even got home.

So, if you've been thinking about travelling overseas with me this year but have been unsure about taking the plunge after so long at home, take the gloom and doom travel stories with a grain of salt and get going again. After all, by the end of this year, that will be three years of no overseas adventures and three years of nothing ticked off your bucket list!!

More confirmed departures

In about five weeks' time I'm off again, this time to **Western Australia** and then to **Tasmania** on two more confirmed Jill Worrall Tours departures. There may be a few extra places available on these tours but, especially for WA, time to book is fast running out. Please check with Moray if you'd like to join me.

And, most excitingly for 2022, in November about 12 travellers plus me are off to **Oman and the UAE** – my first long-haul tour since Covid hit. So, yes, my Oman and UAE is now a confirmed departure but we do have a few spaces for a few more people if you'd like to join me on an adventure to the Arabian Peninsula.

My **Lord Howe Island and Snowy Mountains** tour in February 2023 is also a confirmed departure. We have just one room left on that tour, which is definitely a one-off, so do get in touch with Moray soon if you'd like to join me. Traveller numbers to Lord Howe Island are strictly limited and at present it's almost impossible to get seats on flights or accommodation on the island so this really is your chance.

2023 Tour updates

Croatia Odyssey – this is proving to be a popular tour for our small group departure in May and includes a two-week charter cruise around the Adriatic. For those who have already expressed interest in this tour we hope to have costs available in September. Your cabin preferences have been noted!



Walking Ireland's Pilgrim Trails (June) and Ecuador and Galapagos (July) – the full itinerary and tour prices for these two tours should be ready to release in September.



Spain and Portugal (September) and Egypt and Jordan (November) – one of the few remaining impacts the Covid pandemic is having on my tours is that it is taking longer to get responses from overseas operators and airlines (largely due to staff shortages). However, we do hope to have full information about these two tours ready for you over the next few months.



This Month's Feature Tour

Cherry Blossom Time in Japan: April 4 – April 18, 2023

I featured this tour in last month's newsletter and there's been excellent early interest in joining me in what will be a wonderful journey through this endlessly fascinating country.



The reason I'm featuring it again is that recently there have been various stories in the media about Japan still being closed to some travellers - and the complications for those who do go. It grieves me to say as a former journalist and a still current travel writer that not all of this information is correct.

First of all, Japan is definitely open for overseas travellers at the time of my tour, I wouldn't be organising it if it wasn't it!

The Government of Japan has stipulated, however, that only people travelling as a group with an official guide are permitted to enter. This requirement has often been reported as a bad thing! That's not how I see it, nor how many of the people who are planning to come with me see it!

Here are some of the benefits of this approach:

- 1) Cherry blossom time in Japan has always been a very popular time for overseas travellers to visit but even with groups allowed in next April numbers are very unlikely to be at pre-Covid levels. There might never be another chance to travel around Japan with such low numbers of tourists.
- 2) While independent travel suits many travellers, visiting a country like Japan where English is not necessarily widely spoken, especially among older people, without a guide, can be hard work and frustrating because it makes it hard to learn anything about the country's people, culture and history. An excellent local guide (which we will have) opens the doors to all these facets of Japanese life – she or he will be our vital link to the Japanese people.
- 3) Group travel with me does not mean a huge bus full of people. I expect to have between 10 and 15 people on this tour. Although we have an action-packed itinerary, this size group means we do have some flexibility to take in a few extra experiences or help group members do the odd extra side visit on their own.

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- 4) My groups are not glued at the hip! On this tour there are a number of independent meals where you can take time out from the group and do your own thing but equally there will always be options for people who prefer to eat out with others.
- 5) Perhaps most importantly, as international travel does get back up to speed, being with me means that if there are any travel-related issues such as delayed flights I'm there to sort things out for you with the hugely important back-up team of Moray and James as well. As an example – after our Darwin to Sydney flight was delayed, meaning we missed our connecting to Auckland, Moray had sorted out domestic flights and even accommodation changes while we were still in the air!

And, by the way, this will almost certainly be my one and only trip to Japan. There are so many trips that had to be cancelled due to Covid, along with destinations I had in the planning stages that I want to get up and away first and that's going to take several years!

Just as a reminder, my two-week tour to Japan includes Tokyo, Mt Fuji, Kyoto, famous gardens, Shikoku Island, Hiroshima, bullet train journeys, World Heritage-listed towns and villages, pagodas, ancient temples traditional Japanese cuisine and other unique Japanese cultural experiences.



Tour Report – The Top End (Australia's Northern Territory)



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This was the third attempt for my group of 10 (plus me) to explore this remote region of Australia but finally we got there and the reward was 10 days of cloudless blue skies, sunshine and warmth.

First of all, I do want to acknowledge my tour members for sticking with me through all the Covid-related delays and having the confidence to head overseas again.

I think the only time any of us donned a second layer was during our camp oven dinner under the stars during our night out near Katherine. That was great fun – I recommend lemon myrtle damper bread by the way!

While in Darwin we cruised the harbour for our farewell dinner, checked out one of Australia's best aviation museums which houses the southern hemisphere's only B52 bomber, while fighter jets from 10 air forces roared overhead during a military exercise (took me a long time to organise that...). We saw superb Aboriginal artwork and worked our way through dozens of international food stalls at the famous Sunday night market.



Once in the outback we swam in billabongs under waterfalls in Litchfield and Katherine national parks and cruised the beautiful Katherine Gorge. In Kakadu we were also on the water on a memorable Yellow River sunset cruise and watched a rather small crocodile trying to take on a very large water buffalo! We watched enormous crocodiles leaping out of the water on the Adelaide River and learned about Aboriginal stories, culture and life as we cruised along the boundary of Arnhem Land with the locals.

I know we all could have stayed longer at the Warradjan Cultural Centre near Kakadu where an extended family introduced us to Aboriginal hunting techniques and music and showed us how the Australian bush is their larder and pharmacy.

As I look out my office window now on a frost-covered lawn I'd happily be back swimming in a billabong right now!



On the Home Front



The Leeston garden is starting to feel more springlike but after all the rain we've had, some of it looks more suitable for a crop of rice than anything else. I know we got off lightly though in comparison with regions such as Nelson. I hope to get out there soon though, in between tour planning and grandchildren!

The newest member of the family, Georgia, is doing really well, after her early arrival. I'm happy to be home for more than a month now so that I can help Em out as needed when Jono goes back to work. He was promoted to senior clinical station officer while on leave so that's going to be a bit of a shock to the system!

Natey is now full of questions and is also a very vocal backseat driver ("Amma why didn't you stop at that orange light?") and Zoe at six months' old is also very adept at telling us all what she wants and usually gets it because she has a smile that breaks down all resistance. Rachel and Atkins are planning to take both children to meet their Zambian family this time next year.

The entire extended family has now had Covid and Derek is claiming the title as the quickest to recover. The rest of us have pointed out that as he was the only one who had had his second booster (the rest of us had not been eligible when we succumbed) and was also entitled to antivirals he had serious advantages but he's ignoring all that!!

And that's all from me for this month. I do enjoy hearing from you between newsletters so do please stay in touch and I'll look forward to seeing you all somewhere exotic in the months to come!

Very best wishes

Jill