



Jill Worrall Tours April-May 2023 Newsletter

Hi Everyone

I'm just back from my Japan tour and in two weeks will be heading for back-to-back tours in Croatia and Ireland. As I won't be back from those tours until the end of June, this newsletter is a April-May edition!

Firstly, in relation to that, it has been so good to have full or almost full tours for the rest of the year and great interest in the first tour for 2024 as well. The only casualty has been Ecuador and Galapagos, which was scheduled for July, as I didn't get sufficient numbers to make it work. That was a bit puzzling, so if you had even briefly thought about that tour and decided not to inquire or book, I would genuinely be interested in knowing what stopped you. Maybe you've been there, done that? Does South America still feel a step too far after the pandemic? Did the altitude in Quito worry you? It's always good for me to know.

Anyway, a quick update on a few tours

Walking Ireland's Pilgrim Trails (June 10 – June 27, 2023): We still have room for one person on this tour. I know it's very short notice but if you're feeling impulsive and want to get away during the first month of winter in NZ, this is ideal! The tour is a combination of half and full day walks and takes in the very best of Ireland's west coast landscapes, from Dingle Peninsula right up to Donegal. There are three island visits too, including Skellig St Michael (which will be covered in puffins when we visit!), Inish Mor in the Aran Islands and Inishbofin, where we stay for two nights. I absolutely love Ireland, this will be about my eighth trip there. Kiwis seem to have a natural rapport with the Irish and that, combined with the scenery, history and music, make it a perfect holiday destination.

Scandinavia and the Northern Lights (January 28 – February 17, 2024): This tour through Finland, Sweden and Norway, including a four-night cruise south along Norway's fjords, an ice hotel, ice fishing, sleigh rides, reindeer and Father Christmas, is proving very popular. I'm limited in how many people I can take on this trip because of the number of cabins we can get on the cruise section and the cabins are filling up quickly.

This Month's Feature Tour

Vietnam and Cambodia, March 2024

Includes a seven-night luxury Mekong River Cruise

The reality of overseas travel now, especially related to hotels and cruises, is that we are increasingly being faced with having to confirm and pay non-refundable deposits far earlier than pre-pandemic times. This is definitely the case with my planned Vietnam and Cambodia tour for March next year.

So, before I commit to this tour (at which point we're then given just over a month to make it a confirmed departure!) I am asking for expressions of interest from you. This DOES NOT commit you to anything but will just give Moray and me a guide as to whether to take our planning to the next step. And March 2024 is less than a year away; by Christmas-time this year you could be thinking about what to pack!

Jill Worrall Tours April-May 2023 Newsletter

Here are some of the tour highlights of what will be an approx. 18-day tour:



A luxury seven-night cruise along the Mekong River from Ho Chi Minh City in Vietnam to Siem Reap in Cambodia on a vessel with a total of just 14 suites. The cruise includes daily excursions by sampan, small boat, trishaw or cyclo-taxi. There will be visits to homes, farms and artisans producing everything from hats to scarves, embroidery to flowers. There are onboard lectures, entertainment by local musicians and dancers, a city tour of Cambodia's capital Phnom Penh and a visit to the memorial and museum related to the infamous killing fields of the Khmer Rouge regime.

The cruise component includes all meals (the ship has onboard chefs specialising in the best local cuisines) and complimentary beverages.



The cruise is bookended-by sightseeing in Ho Chi Minh City and a guided tour to one of the greatest archaeological sites in all of Asia, Angkor Wat. Built in the 12th century it's the largest religious building in the world.

We will also travel to north Vietnam, tour the capital city of Hanoi where French colonial architecture contrasts with a frenetic, lively modern Asian metropolis, and cruise the stunning islands of Halong Bay, a World Heritage area with thousands of limestone islets topped with forest.

Jill Worrall Tours April-May 2023 Newsletter

Another bonus of this tour is our flights from NZ are short haul, flying to Singapore with Singapore Air (less than 11 hours) and then on to Vietnam (no more than 3 ½ hours depending on whether our tour starts in Hanoi or Ho Chi Minh City).

If this tour sounds like you, please get in touch with Moray as soon as you can. Again, this doesn't commit you to anything but will help us decide on our next step. As always when we have a cruise component, cabins - especially single-occupancy ones - will be in high demand.

Tour report

Cherry Blossom Time in Japan April 4 – April 18



Eighteen people joined me on this tour to Japan, timed to enjoy the country in spring. We were so fortunate that, despite the cherry trees blossoming early this year, one of Tokyo's favourite blossom-filled parks was in full bloom – it was a great start to the tour, as was our welcome dinner cruising around Tokyo Bay.

The gardens were stunning but so was the sight our first bullet train (Shinkansen) gliding into Tokyo station. I chose to use trains as much as possible on this trip and was so glad I did – they were super-fast (even the non-bullet trains were relatively speedy compared to NZ!), on time and extremely comfortable (even the train toilet seats were heated!).

It's hard to pick out all the highlights in what were an action-packed two weeks. But several spectacularly beautiful gardens, pagodas, temples, shrines (in several cases complete with tame sika deer!) and perfect views of Mt Fuji certainly were among them.

Kyoto was wonderful, especially the torii gate 'tunnels' and the much less well-known historic quarter of Kurashiki with its willow-lined canals. We also visited the island of Shikoku and the Iya Valley with its beautiful forests in vibrant early -spring leaf and the overwater shrine complex on Miyajima Island near Hiroshima. The latter was a sobering reminder of the devastation caused by the 1945 atomic bomb but the counterpoint to this was the superb Shukkeien Gardens with its blazing displays of azaleas.

Jill Worrall Tours April-May 2023 Newsletter

Along the way I was so impressed with the way everyone tackled some often very unfamiliar foods (there were occasions when I, at least, had no idea what I was eating!

Even so, most of the mystery foods were delicious!), coped sleeping on futons on the floors in a traditional inn and became so adept about threading through often incredibly crowded railway stations to board our trains. We had a couple of days of heavy rain too and again, people just soldiered on.

We all loved our guide for the last week of the tour, Ted, who endeared himself to us with his sense of humour, his cherry blossom flag and Ted backpack!

Japan in autumn anyone???



On the Home Front

Derek and his grandson-in-law Josh (a graphic designer) are about to launch Derek's book, a project that has been in the making for many years!

Entitled **Midweek Ramblings** it's a selection of my husband Derek's very popular Wednesday newspaper columns that were published over three decades. The book also includes a range of Derek's 'saves' during his time as a chief sub-editor and news editor – hilarious bloopers written by journalists, mercifully caught by Derek before they went to print (and no, there is none of mine in the collection!).



Jill Worrall Tours April-May 2023 Newsletter

There's a very limited print run but as I know many of you did follow Derek's columns, especially when they were on-line, this is a chance for you to order a copy at \$50, including postage and packaging. Just email me at jill.worrall@xtra.co.nz

Meanwhile, my daughter Rachel, husband Atkins and their two children Natey (4) and Zoe (1) are now in Zambia. This is the first time Atkins' large extended family (the kids have 22 cousins) have got to meet Natey and Zoe and the first time Atkins has been home for six years. The journey to Zambia involved about 23 hours' flying and seven hours of transit stops. Everyone coped very well, much to Rachel's relief. They are currently at Atkins' parents' farm in northern Zambia where Natey, especially, is having a ball playing with his cousins. They've already been to an elephant orphanage (Natey fascinated, Zoe totally bewildered!) and shortly are going on three-day safari. I miss them all like crazy!

It's time now to whip the garden into shape before I head to Croatia and Ireland. The next newsletter will appear in early July but in the meantime do check out the Jill Worrall Tours Facebook page as that always has usually daily posts when I'm on tour (you don't need to be signed up to Facebook to see the photos, only if you want to post a comment or reaction). If you're on tour with me the Facebook page is a great way for your family and friends to see what you're getting up to!

Best wishes, Jill

