



Jill Worrall Tours July 2023 Newsletter

Hi Everyone

July is obviously not a healthy month for the Worrall/Burrows et al households. This time last year we were hit by Covid, this time it's 'just' a regular cough and cold virus. It's been working its way through the extended family, with Derek the latest victim, so three of us are now a revoltingly rattling chorus of coughs.

So, it's definitely time to think ahead to sunnier climes and a look back at some very warm days in Ireland!

Tour Update

Good news all around here:

Spain and Portugal in September, **Egypt and Jordan** in November, **Scandinavia and the Northern Lights** in Jan-Feb 2024 and **Vietnam and Cambodia** in March-April 2024 are all confirmed departures.

Although the first two of these tours are now full however we may possibly be able to secure an extra room on the Scandinavia tour. On the Vietnam and Cambodia tour, we are looking for a woman who would like to twin share, we also have this option on the Scandinavia tour. On each of these tours we have someone keen to travel but wanting a twin-share.

Both these tours are unlikely to be repeated over the next few years and there's no sign of prices for overseas travel decreasing any time soon either. So, if you're even slightly tempted by either the wonders of Scandinavia in winter or a journey through South-East Asia including a luxury cruise on the Mekong River, do get in touch with me or Moray.

Updates on more 2024 tours:

The itinerary for my May 2024, **Central America tour to Costa Rica, Guatemala and Panama** will be ready to send out in the next few weeks. If you are not already on the priority mailing list for this tour do get in touch with me or Moray soon as we do have limited places available. There is more information about this trip below in the Feature Tour section.

The itinerary for **Epic Eastern Canada – featuring Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island, New Foundland, Labrador** in June 2024 is also close to being finalised. This tour includes picturesque and historic towns, national parks, stunning coastal scenery, great opportunities to see whales and even icebergs. This would be a complex tour to organise on your own with ferry crossings, limited accommodation in some places and other logistical issues. Come with me and all you have to do is enjoy this fascinating region which is definitely a part of Canada little visited by New Zealanders.

We are also fine-tuning my September 2024 tour to **Zambia, Botswana and Namibia** so watch this space for updates on that tour.

This Month's Feature Tour

Central America – Costa Rica, Guatemala and Panama

April 30 – May 20, 2024

This will be my third tour to Central America; it's a region I love for its cultural, historical and geographical diversity, its wildlife and its scenic beauty. It's the first place I encountered wonderful sloths, toucans and macaws and also where I first met my very good friend German Rojas who will be our guide in Costa Rica. German should probably be a Costa Rican national treasure – a fantastic spotter and photographer of wildlife, but also just a downright great human being.

We start our tour with German in Costa Rica's capital San Jose, before moving to the Caribbean coast and a riverside lodge reached by boat. This area teems with birds and other wildlife. We then move into the Costa Rican cloud forest, a unique ecosystem of lush tropical forest which is home to colourful birds and beautiful butterflies. We will also see Arenal, one of Costa Rica's volcanoes and stay in lodges in some of the world's most outstanding wildlife sanctuaries or reserves. There will be opportunities to go bird watching just metres from your hotel rooms and to go wildlife spotting at night, take a canopy walk through the cloud forest and even try a zipline the above the trees.



It's on to Guatemala next and the Unesco World Heritage listed town of Antigua with its Spanish-colonial era architecture cobblestoned streets where we will be staying in a historic hotel right in the town's centre. We will get to visit the famous Chichicastenango market and cruise by boat to villages on the shore of high-altitude Lake Atitlan. These villages are home to local tribes famed for handcrafts, textiles and farming.

An undoubted highlight of this part of the tour will be our time in the Mayan ruins of Tikal, one of the greatest of all the Mayan sites in Central America-Mexico. The sight of these stone pyramids rising out of the tropical jungle is one you will never forget.

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The tour ends with a visit to Panama and what is known as a partial transit cruise through the two great lock systems on the Pacific side of the famous canal, then on by bus to the Caribbean end of the canal.

The tour includes all breakfasts, 10 lunches and 15 dinners from our arrival in Costa Rica until our departure from Panama along with all group tipping and quality hotels.

And the plan for 2025 is.....

I know many of you have been waiting to know what I have planned for 2025 so here it is! Please keep in mind that at this point this is subject to change, but I plan to release more information on these tours as the year progresses. It would be great if one (or even more!) of these tours grabs you, and you can let me or Moray know. It just helps me with my planning. So, without further ado:

March 2025 : Sri Lanka and the Seychelles

May: A comprehensive tour of Turkey

June: Shetland Orkney and the Outer Hebrides

July-August: Greenland, Iceland and the Faroe Islands

September: Pamir Highway and Uzbekistan

Oct: Java by Rail (especially designed for travellers looking for a short haul destination)

Tour Report

Walking Ireland's Pilgrim Paths

June 10 – June 28, 2024



Not for the first, time Ireland's weather surprised me. This time, for most of our days on tour, we had very warm, humid conditions, not what one associates with Ireland at all! While it did mean most of us never unpacked our merino layers, hats, gloves or even raincoats, it also meant some beautiful days of walking under blue skies.

I was joined by 12 tour members and the inimitable Frank from Co. Kerry who I've worked with in Ireland at least six times. I know many of you have walked with Frank and will understand why many of this tour's participants rated him as one of the tour highlights!

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Some of my highlights were the visit to St Finbarr's church and lake in West Cork, a place of unexpected tranquillity and beauty; the sparkling, perfect day for our walk around Slea Head on the Dingle Peninsula and our trip out to Skellig St Michael. That trip started off grey and misty but that only added to the mystery and the beauty of this island, which was absolutely teeming with puffins. I've never seen so many there.



After visiting on a previous tour, I'd opted to divert slightly from the pilgrim paths (we walked sections of St Declan's St Finbarr's, St Kevin's and St Columbkille's paths among others) to return to the island of Inishbofin off the coast of Co. Galway for two nights. I think we all decided that if there is to be a next time, I need to add on at least another night – in fact, some of us even discussed whether we should club together and buy a cottage there! We stayed in a wonderful small country hotel there where pre and after dinner drinks could be enjoyed al fresco just metres from the beach. We also had a glorious day walking in the Glenveagh National Park in Co. Donegal.

Along the way we met dozens of genuinely friendly, hospitable Irishwomen and men, truly the icing on the cake, or maybe more aptly, the froth on the Guinness.



On the Home Front

Just a few days ago we celebrated Georgia Rata's first birthday. I volunteered to make the cake for Jono and his partner Emily's wee girl, which also involved a 6.30am start to fill and ice the three-tier ocean-themed creation. It was ever so slightly stressful as was the 25-minute drive to their house with completed cake on my lap and Derek under strict instructions not to brake suddenly. Georgie and our extended family had a great afternoon and the cake was a success. I'm not planning to volunteer to do another one any time soon though!

Zoe who is now 18 months old has finally decided that walking is more convenient than zipping around on her knees. She's simultaneously started to talk....loudly and at length. No-one can work out who she takes after. Natey (4) has started playing football (i.e., soccer) – we're all enjoying watching him on the field although after about a month he is still yet to make contact with the ball.



Natey, Zoe and Georgia



From Left - Derek, Em, Jono/Georgia, Rachel/Zoe , Atkins, Natey front

And that's it for another month. But don't forget, if you want updates on tour progress on any of the above tours before the next newsletter do email me at any time.

Very best wishes

Jill