

## Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025

### **Hi Everyone**

*Firstly, welcome to the number of new people who have signed up to receive my newsletter. I hope you enjoy reading it and maybe feel inspired to join me on a tour soon.*

*I'm now getting ready to launch into my touring year, beginning on March 17 when I fly off to Sri Lanka with 13 keen travellers.*

*Then, after that it's time to head for Turkey and then after just a couple of weeks at home, I will be flying to Scotland to explore its wonderful islands. Then there is a bit of time to do some essential winter garden redesigning before the rest of the year's tours!*

### **Tour updates**

As mentioned above it's all systems go with **Sri Lanka, Turkey, Scotland and Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes** which departs in July, is now also a confirmed departure, which is great.

If you are interested in either the Scotland or Greenland, Iceland and Faroes tour it is possible we might still be able to fit you in, so do get in touch with Moray as soon as possible if you are interested. These tours will not be repeating so this is your big chance!

### **Journey Through the "Stans" with Jill is now a confirmed departure!**



This tour to Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan, Aug 18 – Sept 11, 2025 is now confirmed and there is definitely room for more travellers. This is going to be a tour with everything - culture, history on an epic scale, a little soft adventure when we stay in yurts for three nights on the Central Asian steppes, great bazaars, even some golden eagles and equestrian sports.

## **Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025**

If you would like a copy of the itinerary for this tour or you have one already and want to book, do get in contact soon as we do have an early April deadline to confirm our tour numbers.

### **A Rail Adventure in Java Sept 24-Oct 11, 2025**



Bookings are coming in for this tour but we certainly need more keen travellers to join me before this tour is on the rails!

I've discovered over the years of devising tours and finding new places to take you, that I can get rather ahead of the crowds. For example I took a very small group to Mongolia some years ago and now tourists are flocking there!

It's possible it's the same situation with Java – because it's not a major destination for Kiwis, people are unsure about whether to go and what's there! So, although the presenter is not necessarily my favourite travel personality, do try to check out Great Asian Train Journeys - a BBC documentary series with Michael Portillo.

There are two episodes that cover many of the destinations on my tour – I think you will be amazed at how beautiful the countryside is and how much there is to see!

My itinerary includes some wonderful hotels, special meals and a relaxed pace and all relatively close to home. The itinerary is available now!

### **Feature Tour**

#### **South Australia's Wildlife, Wine and the Outback with Jill Nov 6 – Nov 19, 2025**

Especially since our Covid isolation period, a number of my regular travellers have told me that they don't want to do long haul travel anymore but still enjoy a break away from home, with new sights, a chance to socialise and absolutely no organisation needed – I'm there to look after that!

## Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025

So, that's a prime reason why I have organised this tour, just a quick hop across The Ditch, direct to Adelaide. I've been to SA many times and love the contrasting landscapes from the ocean to the mountains.



Those experiences have enabled me to design this tour to include all the very best that South Australia has to offer. So there's plenty to see and do but also time to simply relax, soak in some beautiful scenery and for those who are inclined taste the occasional top South Australia wine or two! It will be a great way to unwind towards the end of the year and/or recharge your batteries before the busy Christmas season.

The tour starts in Adelaide where we will cruise the Torrens River, check out some cricket history at the famous Adelaide Cricket Oval and then head out to McLaren Vale for some wine-tasting and then spend a night on the Fleurieu Peninsula.

There's two nights on Kangaroo Island, with our hotel being right across the road from the beach. We'll get to meet the kangaroos, along with koalas and watch a bird of prey demonstration, walk through a seal colony and see how the island has recovered after devastating bush fires.

Back on the mainland we head north through the Clare Valley, visit the historic Martindale Hall and a vast outback station, along with a Wadlata Outback Centre and the spectacular Australia Arid Lands Botanical Gardens.

Coober Pedy is bound to be a highlight as we visit underground homes and a church and learn about the unique industry that is opal mining.

I've also added two nights glamping (luxury tents with ensuite bathrooms) in the Flinders Ranges where a local station owner will be our guide on a tour of the region.

The tour ends with a wine tour of the Barossa Valley and a farewell winery lunch. In total all breakfasts, four lunches and eight dinners are included in the tour.

Sounds a good two weeks away to me so why not join me?

## Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025

### And now for the news on 2026

Work is already well advanced on several of the tours I'm planning for next year. I've thought long and hard about mentioning this but 2026 will almost certainly be my last full year of touring i.e. in 2027 there might be only two or three tours on offer. So....

Itineraries will start becoming available over the next few months so if you would like to receive these at the earliest possible moment do let me or Moray know.

### Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi - Late March – early April

The focus of this tour is on Saudi Arabia but we'll have a few days in Abu Dhabi to visit two spectacular museums and cruise through a unique marine national park before flying into Riyadh. The tour includes the oasis town of Ushaiger, possibly the largest camel market in the world, the Salma Mountains and the Hutaymah Crater, two World Heritage Sites, the wonders of the Al Ula archaeological area and Madain Saleh. The latter is a Nabatean city similar to Petra, but hardly known outside the Arabian Peninsula, and although smaller than Petra, much is much better preserved. We also get to visit Medina to view the Prophet's Tomb and end the tour in the seaport of Jeddah.



Photo credit Michel Behar

### Two Possibilities for June!

There are two possibilities here, as the Caucasus tour is heavily dependent on the region's stability over the next few months. It would also be great to get your expressions of interest in these tours please which will help in my decision-making.

**The Caucasus – Azerbaijan, Georgia and Armenia** – a three-country tour taking in the oil-rich Moslem nation of Azerbaijan on the shores of the Caspian Sea; the unique churches, celebrated wine and food, mountains and monasteries of Georgia and the landlocked, culturally rich country of Armenia where Mt Ararat dominates the skyline.

## Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025



**OR**

**The Gardens of England** – for many years I was a writer for the NZ Gardener and also visited many British gardens as a guest of the British Tourist Authority. This tour will be organised with an award-winning garden tour company which has special access to famous gardens and can also enable us to visit gardens never opened to the general public. Some of the gardens that are on my list include Wisley, Sissinghurst, Hidcote, Great Dixter, the Eden Project and Highgrove.

### **Uganda, Rwanda and Kenya - Late July-early August**



Mountain gorillas, chimpanzees, tree-climbing lions, classic African safaris, cultural experiences. This tour is still a work in progress but there will be an opportunity to trek in to see the mountain gorillas, encounter chimpanzees and visit Rwanda. Kenya's Masai Mara to experience the Great Migration, one of the world's most spectacular wildlife spectacles is also in the itinerary.

**Please note:** Numbers on this tour will be strictly limited so it's not too early to register your interest in this tour. Places on this tour will be allocated on a strictly first come, first served basis.

### **August - A Cape York Adventure**

My 2026 Close to Home tour will be a two-week (approx) soft adventure (i.e. very comfortable!) tour along the Cape York peninsula in northern Queensland, Australia.

## Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025

This is the largest wilderness area in northern Australia and my tour is going to take us to the most northerly tip of Australia and then even further north to the Torres Island archipelago.

Some of the places we will visit are virtually untouched and only a very few travellers get to visit each year.

The Cape is a fascinating mix of pristine tropical rainforest, savannah grasslands, vast cattle stations and glorious coastlines. It is also home to many Australian Aboriginal tribes and to the unique community of Torres Islanders. We will learn about their lives and cultures, check out a cattle station and an Aussie outback pub or two, WWII history, see the Gulf of Carpentaria, walk in the rainforest and much more!

### **The Greek Islands!**

#### **Late September – early October**

Yes, after Covid sank the Greek Islands 1, I've managed to refloat it! This tour begins in Athens, then we take a ferry to Naxos and then Santorini before spending about a week touring Crete by road. There will UNESCO World Heritage sites such as Heraklion and Knossos, Second World War history with special interest to Kiwis, wine, olives and a two-night stay in the mountains of Crete and **THEN**: A week-long cruise around the Dodecanese Islands (the Greek island archipelago close to the Turkish coast). We will be cruising on a privately-chartered Turkish style gulet (traditional wooden sailing-motor vessel chartered just for my group) with an on-board chef and of course an expert guide throughout the tour.



**Please note:** Numbers on this tour will be strictly limited so it's not too early to register your interest in this tour. Places on this tour will be allocated on a strictly first come, first served basis as there are only 12 cabins available and only a few of these (yet to be determined) for single travellers.

## Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025

### Japan in Autumn - November



A number of people on my Japan in Spring tour in 2023 were keen on the idea of returning to Japan in autumn. So here we are! Of course, the tour is also designed to appeal to people who have not been to Japan before and to include some destinations for those who have travelled with me before - so, as well as visiting cities such as Tokyo, Kyoto and Hiroshima, we will also be going to the island of Kyushu.

We'll be visiting some of the best places to see Japan's spectacular autumn colours, including in two of Japan's top three gardens, but also in the countryside and city streets. I am also planning to offer everyone the chance to experience more of Japan's unique culture by taking part in activities such as ikebana, papercrafts and so on.

#### **Before you travel**

Recently I've been listening to [Dan Snow's History Hit](#) podcasts every time I'm driving for more than a few minutes. If you haven't discovered these already, I highly recommend them, especially as there are so many episodes that relate directly to many of the places I will be taking tours to. For example, if you're coming with me to **Turkey** in April-May there are episodes on Istanbul and the fall of Constantinople; Flying with me to **Scotland?** There are episodes on some of the great Scottish estates but also on many of the archaeological sites we will be visiting. There's even one on why Greenland is so strategically important!

#### **Website**

By the time you read this my website should have been revamped and relaunched. From now on you will be able to follow my tours by clicking on the News at the top of the homepage. There are links there to check previous newsletters and to follow my current tours.

This will make it much easier for people who don't subscribe to Facebook to enjoy photos from current tours. Other features include easy ways to sign up for the newsletters and request itineraries.

## Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025

### Some sad news

Many of you, over the years will have travelled with the one and only Cliff Hassall of Whataroa on the West Coast.

Cliff and I have become good mates over the years, partly because of our love of travel but also because his family farm was once part of my late mother's grandparents' farm!

And because we go 'way back' as they say, I was very moved that he felt able to call me just a few days ago to tell me that he has terminal cancer and not long to live.



He especially asked me to include a note about him in my next newsletter, not because he wants anyone's sympathy but, in typical Cliff fashion, he wanted me to thank everyone who has travelled with him over these many years.

"I want to thank everyone for their help, their company and all the great memories."

I am so happy to be able to do this for Cliff and I want to add a few thoughts of my own - and I intend to share these with him before I leave for Sri Lanka.

Cliff - you are a one-off, a real diamond in the rough who has enlivened every tour I've ever taken you on. I always knew when you were telling one of your many great yarns because of the sound of laughter from the back of the bus (where you always choose to sit) or somewhere along the dinner table.

I also knew that by the time I got to breakfast on any tour day you'd already have been out for several hours sussing out the neighborhood and had chatted with numerous locals en route.

While in Brazil at a lodge whose grounds were occasionally frequented by a very elusive puma that even the owners rarely saw, Cliff calmly recounted at breakfast that he'd seen the puma while on his early morning walks. Expert guides 0, Cliff 1.

## Jill Worrall Tours Newsletter March 2025

And then there's your tea... never have I had a tour member more dedicated to a good cuppa than you Cliff! Best memory on the tea front was watching you produce your tea bags on flights around Central America where only coffee or water was on offer and watching the stewardesses transform from being slightly confused at your request for hot water so you could make your own drink to giggling helpfulness.

Then there are the countless times that immigration and/or security staff would hunt me down to ask if you'd left your hand luggage behind. I had to explain to them, until more recently, that you didn't actually have any hand luggage. Passport in one pocket, wallet in another. Done. It was an epic moment when you turned up at the airport with a small drawstring bag for your passport. It was the equivalent of most of us turning up with a ship's trunk.

Derek, my husband, has travelled with Cliff several times and wanted to add this:

"I will particularly miss Cliff's good humour and the opportunity to share cricket news and reminiscences. So sad that within such a short time your travel and those of your great mate Allan, have come to an end."

Jill again here: I feel so privileged to have been able to travel with you for so long. Your wealth of travel experience, your unfailing kindness to local people and those stories. Never to be forgotten, Cliff. Love from Jill.



And that's more than enough from me for this month!

**Best wishes,**

**Jill**