

Jill Worrall Tours April 2025 Newsletter

April Newsletter

Hi Everyone

Less than two weeks ago I was cooling off in a swimming pool in southern Sri Lanka. Today I'm at home in Leeston and just around the corner I can see fresh snow on the foothills of the Southern Alps. I'll still be experiencing near-freezing early mornings when I set off in a couple of weeks with my second tour of the year. We're off to late spring in Turkey.

There's a report on my Sri Lankan tour below along with updates on other 2025 and 2026 tours.

2025 Tours

Bookings have now closed for my Scotland; Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes and Central Asian tours.

A Rail Adventure in Java (Sept 24 – Oct 11, 2025)



We are close to making this tour a confirmed departure. If you've been thinking that you need to be a railway enthusiast to enjoy this tour, do reconsider!

We're using trains where possible because they are fun, comfortable and environmentally better than using road transport everywhere but there's much more to this tour than trains!

Java, which is relatively close to home for us, is an up-and-coming destination, which means now is a good time to go before the rest of the world catches on!

It offers a long, fascinating human history and religious heritage that reflects Hindu, Buddhist, Islamic and Christian influences and, rather surprisingly, considering the size of cities such as Jakarta, a lush, beautiful interior featuring volcanoes, padi fields, forests and World Heritage-listed ruins and towns.

I've got some stunning heritage hotels lined up for us, along with fantastic included Indonesian meals and entertainment including music and dance.

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For women travellers, I have one regular traveller who is looking to share a room on this tour so, if you're keen on coming with me to Java but would prefer a twin-share room rather than a single, do get in touch with me or Moray.

Wildlife, wine and the Outback

South Australia with Jill (Nov 6 – Nov 19, 2025)



As November is a very popular time to travel around South Australia, the accommodation providers for this tour are wanting confirmation of tour numbers very soon, so if you're still considering coming with me on an Aussie adventure let me or Moray know soon.

This tour features the rich variety of wildlife on Kangaroo Island, South Australia's famed wine regions, including the Barossa, the weird and wonderful opal mining town of Coober Pedy and a glamping sojourn in the Flinders Ranges.

It's going to be easy and comfortable travel, but with heaps of interest and fun every day and a great way to charge the batteries before the busy Christmas season.

2026 Tour Updates

Saudi Arabia (with an Abu Dhabi stopover) March 20 – April 7

The full itinerary and prices for this tour will be available in the next few weeks. If you're not already on the mailing list for the itinerary do let us know and then you'll be among the first to receive the information.

The tour includes four World Heritage sites – historic districts of Jeddah and Riyadh, ancient petroglyphs and the Nabatean city ruins of Hegra (better preserved than the Nabatean city of Petra). There's also the world's largest cattle market, lunch with a local family and much more!

Dress code: Although women will be required to dress modestly with legs and arms covered with loose-fitting clothing, there is no requirement - other than during our brief visit to Medina - to cover our heads during this tour. Men, you will have to leave your shorts at home!

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Weather: March into April is spring on the Arabian Peninsula with temperatures ranging up to the early 30s in the daytime and down to about 20C overnight in some places, with the possibility of some rain. It is considered a good time to visit, as it is also slightly off peak (December-January) and avoids Ramadan (February).

The Gardens of Southern England June 2026

The gardens I have lined up for you are absolutely some of the world's most stunning embracing counties from Kent and Sussex across to Wiltshire, Gloucestershire (the Cotswolds) to the far west in Cornwall. Although this list is still subject to change it includes: RHS Wisley, Hever Castle, Sissinghurst, Great Dixter, Nymans, Snowhill, Hidcote, Stourhead, the Eden Project and the Lost Gardens of Heligan. That's just a few of what I have planned.

It's not all about gardens either – we're going to ride the Cotswold Steam Railway, visit Salisbury Cathedral and Bath.

We will be based in country hotels for multi-night stays, ensuring a relaxed pace and less packing and unpacking!

Rwanda, Uganda and Kenya; Cape York Australia and the Greek Islands (cruise and Crete)

The itineraries for these tours are being finalised now. It's not too soon to go on the mailing list for more information, especially as there is already strong interest in six of the 12 cabins available on the Greek tour (scheduled for Sept-Oct 2026).

Sri Lanka – the Island of Serendip - March 17 – April 2



Thirteen travellers joined me on what was my fifth trip to Sri Lanka. We started our tour beside a tropical beach at Negombo just north of Colombo and straightaway were plunged into local life at the seaside fish market!

It was slightly cooler in the hill country of Kandy and Nuwara Eliya where we visited a spice garden (where everyone got a free head and shoulders massage!) and a tea plantation.

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While some tour members went walking on the Horton Plains on our free day in the hills, others chilled out at the heritage Grand Hotel and indulged in high tea overlooking the hotel's stunning gardens.



We then moved inland to the Unesco World Heritage sites that included ruins of Sri Lanka's ancient capitals, the rock fortress and sky palace of Sigiriya and the cave temples of Dambulla. This was very warm and sweaty travel at times but our lovely hotels in this area featured wonderful swimming pools for cooling off at the end of the day.

We then spent a day in Yala National Park. Although we didn't see any of the park's famed leopards, some of us did see the rare sloth bear, and we all saw langur monkeys, elephants, crocodiles, mongoose and a plethora of very beautiful birds.



The tour ended in Galle where we were among the few travellers to be able to stay inside the World Heritage-listed historic fortress. Along the way we savoured some great Sri Lankan food, from hoppers for breakfast to curries and freshly cooked seafood for dinner, and best of all met the super friendly and kind local people, especially our expert local guide Prabha.

The scenery ranged from mist-covered forested hills, emerald green padi fields, palm-fringed tropical beaches, made all the more dramatic at times by some spectacular, but brief, thunderstorms.



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What a tour member had to say: “Thank you so very much for another amazing, fascinating and fun trip. You have, amongst very many other talents, an ability to gather together just the most fabulous people.” Thanks Marilyn!

On the home front:

Derek is fit and well and helping to plan one of his daughter’s trip to the UK next year; he’s also come through cataract surgery with much improved eyesight (no excuse for dodgy washing up now!!!).

Rach and Atkins are about to celebrate their 9th wedding anniversary; Natey has scored his first try at touch rugby and is doing well in his second year at school. while Zoe is enjoying junior gym with me each week and is now questioning most directives from her parents (her middle name in Bemba means determined so ...)

My newest granddaughter Jessica is smiling broadly now and her sister Georgia (2-1/2) will soon be off to three days a week of preschool. Their parents, Em and Jono, are hanging in there!

I’m thinking about some tweaks to the garden in between tours (don’t tell Derek...)

And that’s it for this month. Don’t forget that if you’re not a Facebook subscriber you can still follow my tours through my website. Just go to the news page and click on Follow My Latest Tour Here.

Very best wishes

Jill