



## **Hi Everyone**

Welcome to the last newsletter of 2025. The year seems to have whizzed by. In my case it's probably not surprising as between March and October I've taken more than 80 travellers to Sri Lanka, Turkey, Scotland, The Faroe Islands, Iceland, Greenland, Tajikistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Indonesia.

Once I got home from Java in October it took a number of weeks for me to realise that, with months ahead at home I didn't need to cram my 'to do' list into a few days!

I still absolutely love what I do as I adore seeing people enjoying themselves on tour and creating memories that hopefully, will last a lifetime. Here's a small selection of feedback from this year's tours. Hopefully, if you haven't yet joined me on a tour, this might be extra incentive to book one for 2026 or 2027!

**Sri Lanka:** "Thanks again for everything you did to make the Sri Lankan tour all happen so brilliantly well"

**Turkey:** "fantastic tour" "It was a great trip with many wonderful memories. Thank you!"

**The Outer Islands of Scotland:** "It was magic- from puffins to peat to the prehistoric sites!"

**Greenland, Iceland and the Faroes:** "Another wonderful Jill Worrall tour"

**Central Asia:** "wonderful trip to the Stans. It was a fascinating experience and of course made all the better due to your exceptional leadership and care of the group.

**Java by Rail:** "superb... It was a really great trip, with some very remarkable and memorable moments!

But there is no resting on any laurels, out here in Leeston. I'm now hard at work on final preparations for my 2026 tours and also planning for 2027. Here's a summary of what's happening"

## **Tours for 2026 and 2027**

### **2026**

**Saudi Arabia uncovered (March 20 to April 7)** This tour is a confirmed departure and there is a possibility we may still be able to accommodate a late booking. This tour is a definite one-off and I know it's going to be super memorable and fascinating, so if you'd like to join me, do get in touch! I have lost count of the number of travellers who have said to me "I wish I'd gone with you now!"

**The Great Gardens of Southern England (June 2 – June 21)** – It would be wonderful to have a few more people join me on this trip, the itinerary is packed with gardens most gardeners dream of visiting and the pace is relaxed.

**Explore Mongolia (July 23 – Aug 8)** – the itinerary for this tour is now available and it's this month's feature tour – see below.

**The Greek Islands by land and sea (Sept 18 – Oct 12)** – this is a confirmed departure and we currently have a waiting list.

**Japan in Autumn (Nov 21 – Dec 8)** – the itinerary is now complete and will be released early in 2026 once we are able to confirm flights. If you would like to go on the priority mailing list for this tour, please let me or Moray know.

Short-haul tour – there may be an extra shorter tour, closer to home. to be added early next year – somewhere warm and only a short flight away! Watch this space!



**2027 Provisional plan** (subject to change and additions)

**Northern India (March 1 – March 25 approx)** - this tour starts in Kolkata and, provisionally, will include Sikkim, Darjeeling, Varanasi, Amritsar, Dharmasala, Manali, Haridwar, Shimla and the Jim Corbett National Park, Please note: I've had to omit Bangladesh due to current NZ Government travel advisory warnings. The itinerary and costings will be released in May-June (approx.) in 2026, once we have confirmed prices and flight details.

**The Microstates of Europe and Magical Mystery Stops ( June )** – planning is underway for this tour that will start in Malta, then head through Spain to Andorra, through France to Monaco, through Italy to the Vatican City and San Marino and then through Switzerland to Liechtenstein and end in Luxembourg. There will be about three mystery two-night stopovers en route. Technically, Luxembourg is not a microstate but we're going to go anyway. Gibraltar is not included because strictly speaking it's a British Overseas Territory.

**Rwanda and Uganda (July 7 to July 20 approx)** – this is rescheduled from 2026. One of the issues this year was the requirement from many lodges for super-early booking confirmation.

Africa is NOT a cheap destination, and the cost of gorilla trekking is very high. However, it is one of the most amazing experiences you will ever have in your life and worth every cent.

I want to do all that I can to make this trip of a lifetime available to as many people as possible. And to do that I have decided to omit Kenya (which was going to add considerable expense to the tour) and concentrate on Rwanda and Uganda. This means that we will not see the great migration in Kenya BUT have more time in Rwanda to check out one of their national parks and visit two remarkable community projects.

Rwanda is doing an amazing job with community involvement in conserving its wildlife and culture and is hugely welcoming to visitors. I am sure having a few more days here will be extremely worthwhile and fascinating.

Note: I was originally unsure about visiting the gorillas but articles such as this one have changed my mind about this, do check it out!

<https://www.theguardian.com/environment/2025/sep/27/wildlife-endangered-mountain-gorillas-conservation-habitat-national-parks-virunga-uganda-rwanda-drc-aoe>

**Mexico – the Grand Tour (Nov, approx)** - this tour will encompass Mexico’s ancient history, including the fabulous Mayan ruins of Chichen Itza, its Spanish colonial heritage including the historic hearts of Mexico City, Oaxaca and Guanajuato, the Mexican highlands, Sumidero Canyon and possibly some travel on the new Mayan Train. We will probably be travelling to and from Mexico via Vancouver, Canada.

**Short-haul tour** – there may be another tour to somewhere warm to break up the 2027 early spring- only a short flight away! Watch this space!

### This Month’s Feature Tour

**Explore Mongolia with Jill - Steppes, deserts and unique cultures (July 23 – August 11, 2026)**



Mongolia - even the name conjured up images of wilderness, remoteness, vast empires and mystery. This a tour designed for adventurous travellers who want to experience the fast- disappearing world of the Mongolian nomads, along with contemporary Mongolian life; the endless skies of the Asian steppes and follow in the hoof prints of Genghis Khan and Kubla Khan, who with their armies on horseback carved out huge empires and left indelible marks on world history

Very few tours explore this region by road (rather than passing through by long-distance train). This is a tailor-made tour offering you a combination of sights and experiences that you will be very unlikely to find with any other programme. My operator has been working in this region for decades and is an acknowledged specialist who provides excellent accommodation and most importantly great services and quality guides. As we travel, we will encounter expert horse riders, throat singers, stay in a nomadic ger camp and ride Bactrian camels.

I took my first tour here in 2019 and as most of you know, I rarely repeat a destination. Mongolia is one of those exceptions because it is such a stunning country and my first group absolutely raved about their trip there.

This was the feedback from two of my first Mongolian travellers: “It was a fabulous tour...it was a delight”.

Mongolia has become increasingly popular since then and is changing fast, whereas once almost 90 per cent of the population were nomads, nearly half of the country's people now live in Ulaanbaatar. Now is the time to be going before this country changes any further.

This is a highly inclusive tour – all tipping is included and, with the exception of one lunch and two dinners, all meals are included, even bottled water with meals and on our bus journeys. So, other than any spending of a personal nature, there is almost nothing extra you will need to spend.

Explore Mongolia is a small group tour that will offer you an amazing, exclusive and highly bespoke experience in one of the world's most remote and least-visited countries. This is truly a once-in-a-lifetime journey

My itinerary is packed with highlights including sightseeing in the capital of Ulaanbaatar, Mongolia's famous dinosaur fossils, the massive Chinggis Khan statue; three nights in the far west of Mongolia based in Ulgii where we will visit a fascinating local bazaar and the new Eagle Hunter Culture Centre and spend a day with the Kazakh eagle hunters.

We will get to see the traditional Mongolia arts of wrestling, archery and equestrian skills, search for the world's last remaining breed of truly wild horses and visit a Unesco-tentative-list cave system full of 40,000-year-old cave paintings and make an optional hike into the beautiful Tsambagarav Mountains.

We will head into the south Gobi to see the fabled Flaming Cliffs, one of the richest palaeontological sites in the world, and ride a Bactrian camel through the Gobi's Moltsoog Els Sand Dunes.

We will see and hear traditional Mongolia folk music and unique throat singing and spend a total of seven nights in beautiful ger (yurt) camps, all but one night of which with en suite bathrooms!

Note: Since my first tour, prices in Mongolia have climbed rapidly and will keep doing so, especially as it continues to become more popular for visitors. I have no control over this but can promise you extremely good value for money!





**A sad note:** A few weeks ago, one of my most frequent, enthusiastic and loyal travellers, Karen Walker died suddenly. We all, at JWTours extend our deepfelt sympathy to Karen's lovely husband Brian. I know many of you have travelled with Karen and enjoyed her hilarious stories and marvelled at her ability to keep soldiering on despite various health issues. Over the years Karen (and Brian) have become very good friends and I've lost count of the times Karen has been there with a hug (or shared a G and T) on tour when various calamities have occurred. Karen's family asked me to write a short eulogy for Karen's funeral. I ended it with two lines from poet James Elroy Flecker:

***Why men were born: but surely we are brave,  
Who take the Golden Road to Samarkand.***

You've been on that Golden Road, Karen, keep travelling it well.

**And now for some important thank you messages:**

Although I am always thankful to these people for helping to make Jill Worrall tours the success they are, Christmas is a perfect time to say it again:

**Moray** – I know all of you who are or have been in regular contact with Moray really appreciate her efficiency, great skill, patience and good humour while doing our sometimes complex travel arrangements. I'm top of the list with appreciating everything she does to make my tours go so smoothly and handle all the demands that organising tours involves. I can't thank you enough, Moray.

**James** – James Greer is the official JWT business partner who is always quietly there in the background for advice and, extremely importantly, is I know always on hand 24/7 if I ever strike major issues while on tour. James' enthusiasm and support for JWT is fantastic and there'd be no tours without him!

**You!** - And there would be absolutely no tours without your ongoing support and keenness to travel with me all over the globe. I never take your booking on my tours for granted and always want to do my very best to make sure you have a wonderful trouble-free time on tour. Thank you so much and I do hope to see you on a future tour (or tours!) before I decide it really is time to stop and that's not too many years away now!

**My family** – Derek, my husband, my grown up children and spouses, Rachel and Ats, Jo and Emily and the four grandchildren Natey, Zoe, Georgie and Jessica, probably do like the extra peace and quiet when I'm away, but equally I'm not always on hand for support when people are sick, overworked or just need the odd Amma visit or home baking! Love them all to bits and one reason for cutting back on tours is so that I'm around a bit more while I'm still 'young' enough to be useful!

***So, that's it for 2025 – I do hope you all have a Very Happy Christmas and a mix of adventure and peace in 2026. The first newsletter for 2026 will be due out at the end of Jan-early February but remember if the travel bug strikes over the holiday season, do get in touch!***

***Very best wishes***

***Jill***





Photo caption: The extended family gathered for my youngest granddaughter Jessica's (at left, being held by my son Jono) first birthday party recently.



Photo caption: At an early Christmas party my brother Hugh took grandchildren Zoe and Nate out in the dinghy my father built for us about 50 years ago. Dad went to night classes to learn woodworking, made a spice rack for Mum and then dived straight into boat-building.