

Hi Everyone

Welcome to the first Jill Worrall Tours newsletter for 2026. I do hope you all had a peaceful and happy Christmas and New Year.

I do appreciate that for some people it is a season of very mixed emotions, so I do hope that if that's the case for you, the new year brings brighter times.

We had three Christmas 'dos' over two weeks and since then I've developed a temporary (well, Derek hopes it is temporary) aversion to the kitchen but I'm sure that will wear off, once I'm over catering overload!

Anyway, I'm now back in my office as is Moray so it's full speed ahead for this year's tours along with an increasing amount of planning for 2027 too.

Read on to learn about the latest tour news.

2026 Tour Update

Saudi Arabia in March – bookings have now closed for this tour and I and my tour members are now sorting out lots of loose-fitting, long-sleeved clothes to wear. Fortunately, head scarves are not a necessity other than if we visit a mosque so it's relatively straightforward!

The Great Gardens of Southern England (June 2 to June 21) – I am delighted that this tour is now another confirmed departure but I do have room for a few more people. I realised while talking to a friend and keen gardener who is going to the UK soon for a family visit and who does not drive, how difficult it is to get to most of these gardens without a car. We worked out that it would be extremely time-consuming and surprisingly costly and potentially stressful at times! Coming with me on a tour, means you don't have to do the complex organisation, there's no stress and it is cost effective too!



Exploring Mongolia with Jill (July 23 – Aug 11) I will have an update on progress with bookings on this tour in the next newsletter.

The Greek Islands (Sept 18 – Oct 12) this is another confirmed departure but **we now have one vacancy for a double/twin cabin.** (The cabin capacity for the cruise section of the tour determines how many people we can take on the tour). Unfortunately, we now have no single occupancy rooms/cabins available, but we absolutely want to fill the remaining double/twin accommodation.

So, if you're a couple who have been wondering about this tour and maybe have had a change in circumstances but thought there were no suitable rooms available, or you and a friend would be happy to share a room and cabin, do get in touch with me or Moray.



Japan in Autumn (Nov 21 to Dec 8) - Itinerary and cost will be ready by the end of the month.



2027 Tour Update

There will be more information on my planned **Microstates of Europe, Uganda and Mexico** tours over the next few months but this month I want to tell you more about the first tour I have planned for next year – **Northern India and Sikkim**.

Northern India and Sikkim (Feb 25 - Mar 26 approx)

We have completed the itinerary for this tour but the cost is still to be finalized. Indian hotels are increasingly demanding very early deposits to confirm bookings so we are going to need to ensure we have sufficient interest in this tour much earlier than normal.

So, I can't stress enough, that, especially if you are one of the many people who have asked for another Indian tour, that you let me know you're still keen and to prepare yourself for that early deposit). If we do not get sufficient interest early on, I will have to withdraw the Indian itinerary from my 2027 programme.

So, where are we going to be going?

Prepare yourself for a fantastic list of highlights!

Our tour begins in **Kolkata** – situated on the banks of the Hooghly River, Kolkata is a vibrant city with a rich cultural and fascinating history. I love it. We'll see famous sights such as the Victoria Memorial, the famous Flower Market and Mother Teresa's final resting place.

Kalimpong – a charming hill station in the Himalayan foothills of West Bengal.

The state of Sikkim’s capital Gangtok and environs including Rumtek and Enchey monasteries.

Darjeeling - the Toy train, Himalayan lookout (Mt Everest and Kanchenjunga can be seen from here, weather permitting), Himalayan Mountaineer Institute, Tibetan Refugee Centre, Happy Valley tea estate

Varanasi – Ganges River morning and evening boat trips, Sarnath Buddhist and Hindu temple tours

Amritsar - the Golden Temple, The Retreat ceremony at the Wagah Border crossing with Pakistan.

Dharmasala - former British hill station and home to the Dalai Lama including a Dalai Lama monastery visit, Tibetan museum, Tibetan children’s village, craft centre.

Manali – a Himalayan foothills town and environs

Shimla – the most famous of the British hill stations where we will have a heritage walk

Rishikesh – set on the banks of the Ganges River and famous for its ashrams

Hardiwar – famous pilgrimage site for Hindus and where we will celebrate Holi with the locals.

Jin Corbett National Park – the world’s highest density of tigers (sightings are still not guaranteed, however) and also home to elephants, leopards, sloth bears and fantastic birds, along with Himalayan foothill and river scenery.

Please note: the tour ends in Delhi with flights home. However, if you have not been to India before and want to see the Taj Mahal and Jaipur (the classic Golden Triangle) we can organise a guided tour extension for you.

And finally, something completely different!

A short hop across the Tasman to see Phantom of the Opera this April 2026 (April 19 – April 22)

I know some of you are looking for short haul tours, closer to home, so here’s one that I hope will appeal!



Images courtesy of Opera Australia Productions

This April I’m planning to take a group to Sydney for four days with the prime attraction being a performance of the hugely popular The Phantom of the Opera staged by the legendary Handa Opera.



The venue for this outdoor performance features an overwater stage with the Sydney Opera house and Harbour Bridge as a backdrop. There's a live orchestra hidden under the stage, fireworks and pop-up bars and dining as well! We have premium tickets for this performance which does add significantly to the tour cost - but if we're going to travel across the Tasman to see this we may as well do it properly!

And, as they say, wait there's more – my four-day, three-night tour includes a three-course a la carte lunch cruise on Sydney Harbour and a full day in the Hunter Valley with included lunch and wine tasting. We'll be staying in a beautiful hotel in the centre of Sydney's CBD and there will be some free time to relax, shop or visit other Sydney attractions too.

The itinerary for this short tour is attached with this newsletter.

Due to high demand for the Phantom performance tickets and hotels over this time, there will be limited time to book this trip, if you are interested please let Moray know as soon as possible as we will be closing off bookings for this trip next month to meet supplier deadlines.

And that's all for now. The next newsletter will be sent out in late February and will include a report on my short tour to Auckland in mid-February to see the Edinburgh Tattoo.

Best wishes and looking forward to you joining me on tour during 2026!

Jill