

Hi Everyone

You've probably heard the quote "May you live in interesting times".

It turns out that this is not, as was widely believed, to be an ancient Chinese curse but a 20th century saying. But no matter where it comes from, it certainly is very appropriate at the moment!

Now is, indeed, an interesting time to be running tours! But, with your safety still upmost in my mind, it is still full steam ahead with Jill Worrall Tours.

I know not everyone reads this newsletter each month, but I do want to stress as I did last month that other than having to cancel my Mongolia tour in July this year, it's still very much business as usual. The Saudi Arabia tour that was to have taken place in March is simply postponed to late October this year. So, no cancellation and the tour price is the same as it was for the March tour.

So, read on to find out about this year's tours that are still available and to read about my newly expanded 2027 programme. Yes, I've decided there's no cutting back in 2027. None.

On June 2 I'm off to the UK to explore the Great Gardens of Southern England and in September I'm heading to Greece for my long-awaited Greek Island land and cruise tour (my privately chartered small cruiser, a Turkish gulet, is full...in fact if there had been more cabins I could have filled them. I even checked to see if there was a crew cabin I could use to free up another cabin but apparently the skipper didn't want to share....)

Saudi Arabia and Abu Dhabi (Oct 19 – To Nov 5) – as mentioned above this tour is now up and running again. AND we can take new bookings, but these will be subject to flight availability so if you are interested do contact Moray soon. It's going to be a special tour, to a place few Kiwis get to experience. There are ancient ruins, camel markets, oasis towns, glittering cities and many opportunities to meet the Saudi people.

Japan in Autumn (Nov 21 – to Dec 8) – this tour was launched at about the same time as things literally blew up in Iran. And I do understand that many travellers decided to put any thoughts of travel anywhere on the back burner. But Japan is stable, one flight away from NZ and a long way from any current areas of strife. It's this month's feature tour so see below for some of the tour highlights.

The airline has given us until June 19 to reach our minimum tour numbers and in doing so we avoid any airfare or fuel related increases. We are close to this number but if you are interested in joining this tour you would need to book by this date so we can both confirm the tour departure and ensure there is no change in the tour price.

2027 Programme

So, drum-roll please - here's the expanded tour schedule for 2027!

From the Ganges to the Himalayas (A 24-day tour of Northern India with Jill and Kush (March 2 to March 25)) – I know I've been promising the itinerary for this tour for some time now but the itinerary and tour cost will be sent out to everyone on the priority mailing list in June.

Everyone on that priority mailing list will also be offered an early bird discount, which will be available for a limited time only. Because of the complexities of travel arrangements in India we have to be able to confirm this tour departure as soon as we can. **The earlybird discount will be available until Fri 31 July.**

The tour includes Darjeeling, the mountain state of Sikkim, Amritsar, Varanasi, Dharmasala, Manali, Shimla and a grand finale of the colourful, joyful Indian festival of Holi beside the Ganges River. If you're not already on the priority mailing list it's not too late to join the list, just let Moray or me know soon.

Taiwan by Train (April 2027) – I know how much the group on my Java by Train tour last year enjoyed themselves so I'm now putting the finishing details to a two-week itinerary that will take us right round the beautiful island of Taiwan. The capital, Taipei, is a non-stop flight of about 11 hours aboard Air New Zealand direct from Auckland. Exotic night markets, dramatic coastal Pacific scenery, beautiful mountains, delicious foods and some wonderful hotels, not to mention comfortable, relaxing travel by rail.

The Microstates of Europe (May 2027) - along with Malta, Andorra, Monaco, the Vatican, San Marino and Liechtenstein, this tour will also take us through Spain, France and Italy. There are some mystery stopovers along the way too – the travel equivalent of a 'trust the chef menu'! It's going to be a lot of fun!

Gorillas on the list - A once-in-a-lifetime 17-day tour to Rwanda and Uganda (July 6 - July 22, 2027) -I'm sure some of you saw footage of David Attenborough's remarkable encounter with the gorillas as part of his 100th birthday celebrations. So, if that totally blew him away, imagine the impact it's going to have on us ordinary mortals! This will be a tour with strictly limited numbers and there will be an early booking discount available too as we have to book our gorilla experience a long time in advance as it is super popular.

Canada Coast to Coast (October, 2027) Using trains for most of the journey we'll be crossing Canada (direction still to be confirmed) including Vancouver, the Rocky Mountains, the Canadian Prairies, the cities of Toronto and Montreal right across to Nova Scotia, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland (our visits in the east are aimed to coincide with the wonderful autumnal colours).

Mexico (November 2027) – ancient ruins, Spanish colonial-era towns, music, fantastic food – we will experience it all!

If any of these tours sound like you, do get in touch to go on the mailing list to receive the itineraries (and tour prices) as they become available.

What about a short hop to Melbourne for some world-class entertainment?

Would you be interested in joining me between Nov 12-16 (approx.) for a short trip to Melbourne to see two of the world's best and most favourite theatrical performances – the opera La Boheme by Puccini and the musical My Fair Lady.

In between these two great nights' out will be a relaxed, fun day trip out of Melbourne (wine and food may be involved)

We definitely need expressions of interest for this tour NOW as tickets for both these very popular events are limited and have to be secured as soon as possible. If you are keen to know more, please get in contact with Moray.

This Month's Feature Tour

Japan in Autumn

Japan is still riding the wave of popularity among travellers, but by scheduling this tour in autumn, we're going to miss the huge crowds that now descend on Japan during the spring.



But there will be no less beauty and colour as I've planned this tour to coincide with some of the best times to see Japan's stunning autumn colours at their best. And not just in the daytime too – in autumn, many of Japan's fantastic gardens are illuminated and open at night. That's going to be a very special experience.

However, this tour is much, much more than just about autumn beauty- it's packed with highlights from wonderful temple architecture, historic towns and cities, fantastic food, some hands-on cultural experiences and, of course, some exciting bullet train rides.

It's also one non-stop flight away from home with Air New Zealand (and our tour price is not currently affected by any fuel increases, but you do need to book by June 19 so that we can confirm we have our tour numbers to confirm the departure and avoid any increases)

With more than 2000 years of culture and heritage, but at the same time one of the most technologically advanced societies in the world, Japan truly is a land of contrasts. Ancient traditions coincide with a young population that delights in quirky fashion and lifestyles; the land itself is nearly 70 per cent forested while megacity Tokyo, with a population of about 38 million people, is the world's largest city.

We're going to have four nights in Tokyo to visit, among many highlights, the Sensoji Buddhist temple, the famous shopping areas, the Nezu museum (a hidden gem of Japanese art) and have dinner in one of the city's most famous neighbourhoods, Shinjuku.

We'll also head for Hakone to see Mt Fuji (weather permitting) both by land and on a cruise and visit Kanazawa to walk around one of Japan's top three gardens and, in the Unesco World Heritage mountain village of Gokayama, try making traditional washi paper.

Those iconic arcades of bright red torii gates at the Fushimi Inari Taisha Shrine are on the programme too, as is taking part in a traditional Japanese tea ceremony.



While we're in the wonderful historic city of Kyoto we will walk around the famous the Golden Pavilion in its superb garden setting, stroll through the Arashiyama Bamboo Grove and visit one of the best-known Zen temples in Japan, Nanzenji Temple.

We have a full day in Kyoto where you can opt for classes (at own expense) in traditional arts such as ikebana and origami or simply explore the city on your own.

We will get to explore a legendary Japanese castle in Okayama, tour Hiroshima's Peace Memorial Park and Museum and the Shukkei-en Garden.

One of my favourite excursions from my last tour is the short ferry ride from Hiroshima to Miyajima Island's Itsukushima Shrine and its famous 'floating' tori gate.

New for this year's tour is our journey to the island of Kyushu to see one of Japan's most important Shinto Shrines, Dazaifu Tenmangu Shrine in Fukuoka and eat out at the city's famous night food stalls.

Kyushu's hidden jewel, the Akizuki Castle Town ruins and autumn foliage are on the itinerary as is a cruise along the city of Yanagawa's picturesque moat canals and a visit to the Arita area, famed for its production of superb Japanese pottery/porcelain.

While we're on Kyushu island, we'll also tour one of Japan's most special castles, Kumamoto, and the nearby exceptional Suizenji Seishuen garden.

The tour includes all breakfasts, three quality lunches, five excellent dinners and all tipping with top guides throughout and me with you all the way as tour manager.

On the home front

It's been a long time since I've been at home continuously for so long! So, along with on-going tour work, I've renovated the pond, the garden paths and edging, applied advent calendars and Christmas stockings, driven Derek mad with lists of things we can do around the house, had a great time with the grandchildren AND spent two days celebrating the opening of the new stadium in Christchurch. I joined my son Jono for four rugby games in Te Kaha – for me this was as much about seeing the last of the major post-earthquake projects completed as it was for the rugby and we had a great time!

So, definitely time for me to be on the road again!

Best wishes

Jill



Jono and me in Te Kaha for the Super Rugby weekend



Natey and Zoe in the fairy forest



My favourite autumn tree – a black tupelo.