



# Travel News

It has been a busy 12 months for us all at Gippsland Travel – just the way we like it! I hope the year has treated you well too and you've enjoyed some travels near to home or afar.

In this edition we have two great reports in Postcards, one from Patty Shaw, who toured with me to Poland and Southern France, and from our Office Manager Jacinta Anderson, who undertook an educational tour to Belgium and Flanders Fields.

Due to the high level of interest in our escorted tours to the Kimberleys and New Zealand next year, we are scheduling a number of other fully escorted tours to destinations in our own region – details over page.

I still have a few places available on three fantastic tours I shall be escorting next year. Please contact me if you would like to discuss any of these fabulous itineraries:

## East Coast USA & Canada

I'm delighted to be escorting another tour of Eastern USA and Canada in May. With vibrant cities, historic sites and stunning natural scenery, the itinerary encompasses the region's most memorable attractions. Highlights include Washington D.C, home of the White House and Smithsonian Museum, bustling New York, with the world-famous Empire State Building, Times Square and Central Park and historic Boston and Philadelphia. We will experience the power of Niagara Falls with a thrilling boat ride, explore the coastline of Nova Scotia, rich with maritime history, and journey through the lush countryside of New England.



In Lancaster County we will learn about local Amish and Mennonite communities. Cosmopolitan Toronto and the former French colonies of Quebec and Montreal form part of our Canadian itinerary. Tour includes a 7-night Canada and New England Discovery Cruise.



## Corsica, Sardinia & Sicily

The prospect of exploring the magical Mediterranean islands on this new tour is proving very popular indeed! After flying into Nice we will head to enchanting Bastia in Corsica. Our Corsican itinerary encompasses tours of Cap Corse, Ajaccio, Scandola Nature Reserve and a visit to the Palais Fesch, home to an extraordinary Italian art collection and the Bonaparte family tombs. Sardinia's highlights include cruising the azure waters of the Maddalena archipelago, Costa Smeralda's spectacular coastline, visiting prehistoric sites in Arzachena and Porto Cervo and rambling through medieval Alghero and historic Cagliari. While in Sicily we will explore Palermo's ornate Norman Palace. We will also see a traditional puppet show, take in archaeological wonders such as Agrigento's Valley of the Temples and be awed by towering Mount Etna volcano. This tour departs in September.

## Sri Lanka

In November, why not join me on our first trip to the vibrant island of Sri Lanka, a country rich in cultural heritage, breath-taking scenery, exotic wildlife, palm-fringed beaches and mouth-watering cuisine. Itinerary highlights include the medieval capital of Polonnaruwa, with its ancient palace ruins, and the UNESCO listed Dambulla Rock Cave Temple, famed for its Buddhist paintings.

We will enjoy a scenic train ride to Hatton, passing through verdant tea plantations. Teeming with birds, Yala National Park is a tropical paradise where we will take a game drive, looking out for leopards, elephants and sloth bears. In cultural capital Kandy we visit the sacred Temple of the Tooth, while in Galle we will wander around atmospheric fortifications. A boat ride to Mirissa offers whale and dolphin watching opportunities. There will be a walking tour of Peradeniya's Royal Botanical Gardens and in Colombo we will discover colonial architecture, historic monuments and the bustling Pettah Bazaar.



## Staff News

Congratulations to our Senior Consultant Claire Brown and her husband Gordon on the birth of their daughter Eloise, a little sister for Ethan.

## Best Wishes for the Festive Season

All of us at Gippsland Travel wish you a very Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year. We look forward to seeing you in 2018!

Until then, Jacquey and the team. *Jacquey*



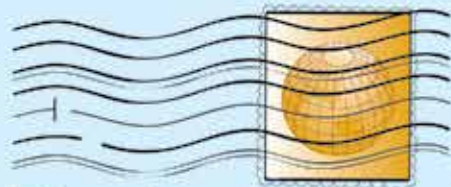
## TOUR LAUNCHES



**Egypt & East Africa 2019**  
Wednesday 28 Feb 2018



**Canada & Alaska 2019**  
Wednesday 27 Jun 2018



# Postcards



## Poland & Southern France

By Tour Group Member *Patty Shaw*

Jacquey's tours are about experiences – of a country, its history, geography, lifestyle, food, culture, environment, its people – and our tour of Poland and the South of France was no exception.

The variety of our activities was one surprising aspect of Poland. Travelling by coach and by train through the rolling, fertile countryside we visited major cities and small towns, were awed by richly furnished palaces and ornate baroque churches, strolled in serene, green gardens and vibrant city squares, toured medieval castles and a deer farm. Our itinerary was full, we were busy and we loved it. Everyone comes home with different travel tales: these are some of mine.

During our sojourn in Poland we rafted along a scenic river between steep limestone cliffs while laughing at the banter between crewmembers dressed in traditional outfits. We rode a cable car up Tatra Mountains

and stood astride the Slovakian border. Walking through a former rock salt mine, we discovered huge chambers, a concert hall, chandeliers made of salt crystals and carved statues.

Strolling around the ornate 17th-century Lancut Castle we found stables housing an impressive collection of horse-drawn carriages, the finest belonging to Frederic Chopin. Later we were treated to a private recital of his music at the Krakow Conservatorium. In a village church we enjoyed another recital on a bizarre, baroque pipe organ with moving statues, bell-ringing angels, spinning stars and a bowing Archangel Gabriel.

Poland's recent history is dominated by the events of WW2. Much of Warsaw, Wroclaw and Gdansk was flattened by bombs but has since been impressively rebuilt in their old style. We saw affecting memorials to the Jewish people in Krakow and Warsaw, and some public art installations. The most heart-wrenching experience was our visit to Auschwitz.

While in Wroclaw we hunted for quirky bronze gnomes that appear all over the old city. Motoring across the north of Poland we spotted huge storks' nests atop chimneys. In Gdansk we frocked-up for dinner at a restaurant whose speciality is goldwasser, a liqueur containing flecks of gold. Sipping wine on a boat cruise, we watched the sun set over sparkling water. One night we stayed in a picturesque castle set in a forest, where a narrow staircase tested our fitness and cemented our resolve to eat less!

In France, our cruise along the Rhone River was equally varied and enjoyable.

Prior to boarding we toured 'new' Lyon, previously an industrial area, it now boasts architect-designed apartments and creative

hubs in converted warehouses. Another day we explored the cobbled alleyways of 'old' Lyon, where the once famous silk industry thrived. We wandered through the winding streets of medieval towns such as Beaune and Viviers, where we were graciously offered refreshments at a private house. Later, a few of us agreed to a challenge by locals to a game of petanque – they were indeed experts but we had lots of fun!

The boat trip down the Rhone River was a 'gourmet cruise', featuring delicious French delicacies and local wines. We browsed produce markets, learned to cook crepes and took a chocolate appreciation course. We also learned about truffle farming from an entertaining farmer and his talented hunting dog, Emilie.

Our first glimpse of the famous Pont d'Avignon had us delving into our school day French for the words of the song and after a short coach ride we reached the stunning Pont du Gard, an impressive stone aqueduct from Roman times. Our final outing was to the town of Arles. Briefly the home of Vincent van Gogh, it has an intact Roman amphitheatre and vast outdoor market where we indulged our desire for a last taste of French produce and shopping.

Thank you Jacquey for this fascinating trip through Poland and Southern France!



## Feel like touring a little closer to home?

At Gippsland Travel we offer escorted tours to some of Australia's most iconic regions and our near neighbours.

If you would like us to take you on a tour within Australia or elsewhere in our region, just let us know. Here are some examples of our upcoming tours.

While these 2018 tours are fully booked, we would be pleased to arrange other tours in our region for next year, if there is sufficient interest. Places are available on our 2019 tour to Birdsville, Longreach and Winton so please contact the office for further details.

## Norfolk Island

– escorted by Jacinta Anderson

Departing in March 2018, this tour has been put together for the Warragul Probus Club.

Captain James Cook was the first to officially discover Norfolk Island, describing it as "paradise". Later, this paradise became a harsh penal colony and home to hapless convicts. Today, it is home to the descendants of the Bounty Mutineers whose barefoot manners, warmth and hospitality have been woven into the island's unique and timeless rhythm – a special charm that draws visitors back time and time again.



## Belgium & Flanders Fields

By Jacinta Anderson

In late May I was privileged to join a group of travel agents on a tour of Belgium, exploring Flanders and the beautiful canal cities of Bruges and Ghent. Coinciding with the 100-year anniversary of a major WW1 battle in the area, it was hugely emotional learning about this history, especially because my Great Grandfather fought in Flanders Fields and the northern region of France during WW1. I also represented the family of one of my best friends, placing a poppy and cross at Menin Gate, where her great uncle's name is commemorated along with those many Australians who lost their lives in battle.

We began our trip in Belgium's capital, Brussels, where I was introduced to Belgian beer, chocolates and pastry. It was a delicious start - what more can I say! From there we headed to Europe's best-preserved medieval city Bruges. A beautiful canal city and UNESCO World Heritage site, its every corner offers a new picture postcard moment. Characterised by cobbled streets and winding canals, a walking tour incorporating a canal cruise is a 'must do' in Bruges. During our walking tour we visited the Onze-Lieve-Vrouwekerk (Museum of our Lady), which houses a valuable art collection including Michelangelo's world-famous Madonna and Child.

After our stay in Bruges we headed south to the Flanders Fields region and the small city of Ypres (Ieper). Enroute we made a quick visit to Poperinge to visit Talbot House, and later, the Lijssenthoek Military Cemetery.

Reduced to a pile of rubble during the war, the charming city of Ypres has been faithfully rebuilt and restored to its former glory.

Here we visited the In Flanders Fields Museum, a modern, interactive venue which tells the stories of ordinary people caught up in the war. We also attended the moving Last Post ceremony at Menin Gate, held every night since 1928.

During our stay we followed in the footsteps of the Anzacs. We visited Hill 60, the town of Messines, Christmas Truce Memorial and Toronto Avenue Cemetery - the only all-Australian cemetery in Belgium. We also visited the Memorial Museum in historic Passchendaele, Polygon Wood and Tyne Cot Cemetery, both home to memorials dedicated to Australian soldiers.

Saying goodbye to Flanders, we headed northeast to Ghent, often regarded as Europe's best-kept secret. Another gorgeous, medieval canal city, it is dominated by the 12th-century Gravensteen Castle. Ghent's museum boasts well-known artworks including the most stolen piece of art in Europe, the Ghent Altarpiece, depicted in the movie *The Monuments Men* starring George Clooney and Matt Damon. From Ghent I headed back to Brussels by rail, continuing on to Amsterdam, where I caught my flight home.

I would heartily recommend a visit to Belgium, especially if your family has ties to WW1. It's easy to get around by rail or car, the countryside is beautiful, the cities are enchanting and people are warm and friendly. All this plus mouth-watering chocolates - Belgium is an inviting destination in so many ways!



## Kimberley Cruise - escorted by Linda Owen

Cruising the Kimberley coastline in April 2018 will provide an experience to treasure for a lifetime. The coastline is inaccessible by any other means and will take passengers to a land untouched for centuries. It remains one of the world's truly unique cruising regions.

## Ultimate New Zealand Experience - escorted by Jacinta Anderson

This luxury New Zealand experience, departing in October next year, includes both the North and South Islands from Auckland, Bay of Islands, Rotorua and Wellington to Christchurch, Arthurs Pass, Fox Glacier, Queenstown, an overnight cruise across Doubtful Sound, Te Anau, and Dunedin. Passengers will enjoy the highest level of comfort, service and quality on a GPT Ultimate Coach.

## Birdsville, Longreach, Winton - escorted by Linda Owen

*Expressions of interest are sought for this proposed tour departing in September 2019.*

Linda toured the area in 2015 and found it a truly fascinating region. This 14-day round trip will take in the spectacular landscapes, iconic landmarks and fascinating historical sites. You will stay at the famous Birdsville Hotel, toast the outback sunset atop Big Red, see where the country meets the desert and visit the top dinosaur attractions in Winton before returning to Brisbane by an overnight rail journey on the Spirit of the Outback.



# Personally Escorted Tours

with Jacquie Turner

## TOURS SCHEDULED FOR 2018

There are a number of places still available on our May and November tours for next year and one room still available on our September tour. Please contact the office if you would like to learn more about these great destinations.



### MAY: EAST COAST USA & CANADA

This 4-week tour will include the cities of the American east coast including Washington, New York and Boston along with the maritime landscapes of Nova Scotia and the French-inspired cities of Quebec and Montreal. The magnificent sight of Niagara Falls will complement the quaint fishing villages and rugged coastlines we shall encounter along the way. *Limited spaces available.*



### SEP: CORSICA, SARDINIA & SICILY

These three islands sit off the west coast of Italy as jewels in the Mediterranean. Although quite close to each other geographically, each island is very different historically and culturally. Our tour will take us from the lush mountains of Corsica and the sandy coastline and azure waters of Sardinia to Sicily, the largest of the Mediterranean islands and a crossroad of cultures, with a history reflected in its diverse architecture, cuisine and ancient ruins. *One room available.*



### NOV: SRI LANKA

Our 14-day tour of Sri Lanka will explore the island nation's rainforests, diverse wildlife and endless beaches. We will visit its famed ancient Buddhist ruins, including the 5th-century citadel Sigiriya, with its palace and frescoes, and the sacred city of Anuradhapura. Its flavorful cuisine reflects its history as a maritime hub and cultural melting pot. *Limited spaces available.*

## TOURS SCHEDULED FOR 2019

Please contact the office if you would like to leave an expression of interest in any of these tours.



### FEB: EGYPT & EAST AFRICA with VICTORIA FALLS OPTION

One of our all-time favourite tours, our itinerary incorporates an extensive tour of Egypt, including a first-class Nile cruise, a 3-night stopover in Dubai and a wildlife safari of Kenya and Tanzania that combines breathtaking game viewing with world-class lodges and hotels in unique locations. Also included is the option to visit Victoria Falls. *Tour will be launched on Wednesday, 28 February 2018.*



### JUN/JUL: GRAND TOUR OF CANADA & ALASKA

This spectacular journey includes travelling through the fabulous Rockies on the Rocky Mountaineer Railway as well as coach, plus a couple of days in Vancouver. We then have a relaxing 7-night cruise through the inside passage of Alaska visiting quaint towns and enjoying magnificent views of breath-taking glaciers. *Tour will be launched on Wednesday 27 June 2018.*



### SEP: NATIONAL PARKS OF WESTERN AMERICA & MISSISSIPPI CRUISE

Our inaugural tour of this spectacular part of the USA will feature the best of the region's national parks: The Grand Canyon, Zion National Park, Yellowstone, Grand Tetons, Mt Rushmore and much more! After the grandeur of these amazing natural environs, we will enjoy some time in the South relaxing on a Mississippi cruise as we visit some well-known musical hot spots.



### NOV: INCREDIBLE INDIA

This highly memorable tour will feature a Ganges River Cruise, a trip on board the luxury train, the Deccan Odyssey, and includes such highlights as the Taj Mahal and Varanasi.

## TOURS SCHEDULED FOR 2020



### MAY: EXPERIENCE CHINA & HONG KONG

On mainland China our itinerary will include Shanghai, Guilin, Xi'an and the Terra Cotta Warriors, plus Beijing, as well as a Yangtze River Cruise visiting the Three Gorges. Stunning Hong Kong is one of Asia's most attractive and exciting cities, with a spectacular skyline, beautiful harbours and beaches, superb restaurants, bustling markets and much more.



### JUL: CENTRAL AMERICA & CUBA

This is a region famous for its fabulous landscapes, wonderful wildlife and rich and diverse cultures. The tour will include colourful Mexico with its Mayan history, Cuba's colonial architecture, music, food, colourful old cars and beautiful white beaches, as well as the smouldering volcanoes and steamy jungles of Guatemala, Nicaragua, Panama and Costa Rica. You'll find this region is a treat for all the senses.



### SEP: SPAIN & PORTUGAL

These two countries have rich histories and distinct cultures. Our tour incorporates a 7-day river cruise through the UNESCO designated Duoro Valley and the vibrant cities of Madrid, Lisbon and Barcelona, along with the enchanted towns and celebrated wineries of Portugal. From cosmopolitan cities and inspiring architecture to beautiful beaches and charming local villages, discover the delights of Spain and Portugal with us.

**We recommend you register your interest in any of our escorted tours with a \$250 holding deposit which is fully refundable, should you change your mind.**



MEMBER

ACCREDITED

# Country Farm Perennials GARDEN HOLIDAYS 2018



## 'SPRING IN JAPAN'

7th April to 24th April 2018

Our aim is to catch the cherry blossom in the north, see the spectacular Alpine regions, and then further south, to visit gardens in a blaze of colour with spring bulbs and flowers. We explore scenic beauty, culture, history, art, and all that makes Japan so unique.

**DOUBLE / TWIN ROOMS AVAILABLE**



## THE ROAD LESS TRAVELLED

'ACROSS THE PYRENEES'

29th May to 13th June 2018

A short break in the Basque regions of France and Spain, to discover the food, culture & history of this picturesque area. We will be exploring some of the prettiest villages on both sides of the border, as well as in the spectacular Pyrenees.

**DOUBLE / TWIN ROOMS AVAILABLE**

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