



May 2020

How are you?

Welcome to this special newsletter for 2020!

I just confirmed with the girls that it was before Christmas that we did our last newsletter. We are now into May and I know that I am not alone in wishing it was Christmas 2020 already! Actually to fast track to December we have a few random Christmas Carols on our current music play list in the office.

The fires that we experienced in Australia in December and January were devastating for so many people and before there was time for recover the whole world has been hit with the COVID-19 Pandemic. Over the 35+ years I have had in the Travel Industry I have never experienced anything like what we are dealing with at the moment and I am going to give you a little insight of how we are dealing with things in the office as the media in Australia certainly have been providing a very one sided view on this.

While International Travel is 90% of our business I do want to remind everyone that we do book domestic travel and when the borders open we would LOVE to help you with any of your travel needs.

We know you can 'CLICK' online and make your own arrangements, but we actually have access to some amazing package rates in Australia that quite often you cannot even get direct. So please do not forget to call us and see if we can help, this will certainly help us to get through the tough times until we are able to Travel Internationally again.

As being reported I believe that New Zealand and some of the Pacific Islands will be the first to open up to International Travel, and then in time other parts of the world. The demand is going to be huge when we can travel again and I know that I for one cannot wait to get either in the car or on a plane and go explore somewhere, anywhere!

It is time to start thinking about where you would like to explore and if it is Australia it really might be time to start booking, all those people that used to take families to Bali, Thailand and Vietnam will be rushing to places like the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and North Queensland.

Call us with any of your enquires we are here to help.

Jacqui, Mel, Ange, Kirt, Ky, Blaise & Rebecca



Keep smiling, because life is a beautiful thing and there's so much to smile about.

- Marilyn Monroe

QuotesEverlasting.com

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ANTARCTICA GROUP JANUARY 2020



BUCKET LIST— Antarctica ✓

In January this year Jeff & myself headed off to the Antarctica with 18 other adventure seekers to explore one of the most beautiful and remote continents of the world. What a fabulous time we all had. The group photo is missing a couple who were unfortunately not feeling the best at the time we took this.

I really haven't had a chance to reflect back much on this trip since returning home early February, as I found on my return to work the "Corona Virus" as it was known then had started to have an impact on some of our clients planning cruises to Asia. From that time I have been totally committed to dealing with current issues so this is giving me a chance now to look back on what we actually did do on the trip of a lifetime.

We flew Air New Zealand into Buenos Aires for one night before heading to Ushuaia for one night, then onto the beautiful MV Hondius for an 11 night cruise to Antarctica. I have been lucky enough to travel to both Buenos Aires and Ushuaia before but this was my first time actually to Antarctica and I actually hope that I get a chance to do this again and maybe explore some of the other Islands of South Georgia and the Falkland Islands.

As a general rule they allow 3 days for the trip down and then 3 days for the trip back to/from Ushuaia, crossing the Drake Passage I must admit I was little anxious as to whether we would experience the "Drake Shake or the Drake Straight". I think that we might have been on the lucky side and had the Drake Straight. The MV Hondius is one of the new ships purpose built for these conditions and you could certainly tell when the Captain had the stabilisers out.

I felt a little like I was on Noah's Ark watching out for the birds and the first sight of land, it certainly didn't disappoint. Nothing really prepares you for what the scenery is like. Spectacular, mind blowing, unbelievable, amazing, none of these really describe this piece of paradise and if you ever get the chance and have a passion to travel to Antarctica you need to find a way to do it. I think one way to explain it would be like travelling to another planet, from the scenery to the wildlife to the sun rise to the sunset you will be amazed and it is not until you get home and look back on your photos and think of what you have experienced do you get the full impact of where you have been and what you have seen.

Ships with under 200 passengers have the advantage of being able to do two landings a day (weather permitting) to get you even closer to the wildlife and actually onto the land. A normal day began with a nice loud wake up call from the hotel manager, followed by breakfast and then back to the cabin to suit up to hit the Zodiacs. On our trip the first group would head off to the "Ice" as we called it when you are doing a landing and the others headed out on a zodiac ride exploring the amazing wildlife and glaciers. You then do a swap before back to the ship for lunch, and then you would do it all again in the afternoon in a different magical location.

On board there was plenty of time to listen to the knowledgeable crew who gave very informative talks in the mornings, afternoon and evenings covering everything from first explorers, wildlife, climate and tides to just name a few. This gave you the opportunity to learn more about where you were going and what you were seeing. There is so much more to this incredible continent than just Ice and Whales.

You can be quite adventurous and do canoeing if you prefer or even camp on the Ice. I personally didn't do canoeing but I did CAMP on the ice...this was an experience I will never forget. We didn't have tents like I thought we would, we had to dig a hole, or maybe be indebted to someone and have them dig you the hole and we had a swag of sorts that went into the hole that we got into with two sleeping bags and that was that for the night. There were about 30 of us that shared this experience together and spaced well apart you certainly did feel like this was an experience that you would never have the opportunity to do again. Watching the ship pull away from us was something that I also did not expect but once again added to the whole experience of truly feeling like a true explorer yourself.

If you have even a slight passion for photography I do not think you could find a better place to try and get that perfect shot and I cannot wait to bore my friends with some of my photos when we are passed this crazy COVID-19 situation.

Thanks so much for those that shared this amazing, incredible experience with Jeff and myself and I look forward to helping others enjoy what we experienced on this fabulous holiday.

Jacqui.

WHERE TO NEXT?

What about exploring the Kimberley? Looking at the Bungle Bungles, Ayers Rock, Kakadu or The Great Barrier Reef.

Australia has some of the most amazing places to visit and maybe now is the time to put those plans into action.

WEEKEND'S AWAY

Locally we have some incredible places that you can get in the car and drive to.

The beautiful Gippsland Lakes, Dargo, Loch Sport, Seaspray and Mal-lacoota.

There are so many local wineries and some of the best Restaurants right on our door step.

Let's explore some of these amazing places and help those that have not only been effected by the Pandemic but also the Bush Fires.

Its time to support as many local businesses that you can. Supporting local business keeps people in jobs and we all know that the benefits are then felt through the whole community.

OUR STORY

I thought it might be a good idea to share with you about what we have been doing since mid February since the travel industry has been impacted by what was originally called "Corona Virus" to what is now known as the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We first felt the impact when the ports in Asia started turning away cruise ships. This lead to an immediate impact on what we did in our day to day job. As cruising had become the biggest growing industry in the travel world, we had a few people that had been impacted by cancelled cruises, this also meant that flights, accommodation and additional arrangements that had been booked had to be cancelled too. The cruise lines were quick to arrange for cruises to be redeployed to Australia for new options for people wanting to take advantage of some very last minute deals. Even at this time the full impact of what was coming our way was the furthest thing from our minds. There is no way we would have ever dreamed of what we were going to have to deal with. I know we are not alone in this and the whole world and every industry is feeling the impact of this Pandemic. What I would like to do is explain the impact on the Travel Industry from my point of view as I think it is important for people to understand as there has been a lot of very one sided media about our Industry.

For everyone who has booked a holiday before with us I am sure you appreciate the work that we put in to making your booking an experience that you will never forget and give you some very special memories to reflect back on for many years.

In some cases people book 12 months or more in advance depending on what they are doing. As Australian's we are such intrepid travellers it is most unusual for all components of your holiday to be booked with one operator. Most holidays that we put together for people, especially for Europe involve Airlines, hotels - often numerous different hotels booked through different companies to ensure you get the best deal possible, transfer companies, cruise operators, coach tour companies and day tours.

To put these holidays together we take many hours and a lot of thought and care goes into making sure that everything is going to be amazing on your trip and exactly as you want it to be.

Our normal job of doing this all changed once the Government put a stop to all travel. What that meant for us is that we needed to start looking at every booking we had in date order to see what we could do for our clients.

Every airline had and has a different policy in place and these are still changing although now it is mostly weekly instead of daily and sometimes even more than once a day... it meant we had to make sure we were doing the right thing by our clients to ensure their hard earned money was protected in the best way possible. That was just the airlines. We then had to deal with every hotel we had booked and see if they were offering a refund or a credit or if we were too early and needed to wait until they had a policy in place.

Cruise Lines, coach companies and tour operators were also bringing out policies based on date order, sometimes a credit, sometimes a refund, sometimes a bit of both.

All of these policies are totally beyond our control and we have to provide the information we get and pass it onto our clients.

We also operate a Trust account which means money you pay us needs to be passed onto the Tour operators and in turn any refunds we have to wait for from the companies to return to us - the Travel agent, in order for us to pass it back onto you.

With so many bookings effected around the world we are finding that the normal waiting processing times of 6 - 8 weeks is now going to be 3 – 6 months. Be assured when we receive the funds we pay the funds back to our clients. There are going to be delays and unfortunately this is also beyond our control.

We are also doing our best to avoid as many cancellation fees as possible and are doing our best to ensure we look after our clients. We want you to tell people how good we are and how helpful we are and we also want your business back. This is why we have these policies in place.

To draw a very simple comparison I use the following:

A builder has planned your new house with you, paid his crew to build your house, arranged for the plumber, the painter, the tiler, the electrician, the drapes, the electrical appliances (purchased from different stores), the windows just to name a few. His work is completed and he has paid his staff and everyone else to make your dream home. Then the council says..."Take it down"...the builder then starts taking the building down at his expense and then asks all of the other tradies and business he has used to build you house if they will give you a refund or will you have to take a credit. Once its is all pulled down and staked away, that's great and when the council says its OK the builder will rebuild the house again, most of the materials will be there for him to use but he will still pay his chippies at the normal rate when he rebuilds the house again and he may have to make some adjustments because materials have changed but he will rebuild it because he takes in pride in what he does and he wants you to have your dream house.

We just need to be patient and positive at the moment to ensure that we can rebuild that house and keep making our beautiful memories.

I hope this gives you a better understanding of what we are doing and why we have to work in date order for cancellations.





SOME IDEAS:-

If you've never visited New Zealand then you're missing out; it's a little piece of paradise, just across the Tasman, where humans make up only 5% of the living population. You're never more than 130km from the coast. and a staggering *one third of the country* is a protected land or marine area, making it the perfect option for any traveller looking to add a little 'social distance' between themselves and the hustle & bustle of modern life.

TROPICAL HOLIDAY

If you've ever had THAT picture of a tropical island as your desktop wallpaper (you know the one we're talking about - a white sandy beach, azure blue waters and swaying palm trees) chances are it was taken on one of the many tiny islands scattered across the South Pacific.

Despite these picture perfect scenes making it onto computer screens worldwide, the location of the islands (much closer to the Australian east coast than the Maldives, Mauritius or even Bali) means they receive relatively little tourist traffic from outside of Australasia. Did you know, for example, that Tahiti receives less visitors in a year than Hawaii does in a day?

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I hope that you have enjoyed our slightly different newsletter and we look forward to helping play those dream holidays on your behalf.

2020 is certainly going to be a year we all remember for many different reasons. It may be frustrating at times but we must look forward and focus on the positives, and on both counts that means we should be looking to 2021, because we have an opportunity (that will likely never be repeated) to make next year **THE BEST TRAVEL YEAR EVER.**

Early bird land & cruise offers are still some way away, and airlines will be chomping at the bit to fill seats as soon as they get back up in the air; all this adds up to one thing - BARGAINS - that you will be able to take full advantage of IF you act quickly & decisively.

That process starts now, with you, whilst you're isolated at home. We encourage all of you to get online, watch some videos, chat to some friends on Facebook, and figure out a rough idea of where you'd like to go and when in 2021.

Then contact us and we can make it happen!