



Martin Wright's July 2010 Newsletter



Introducing two new tours for 2011



Kashmir & Ladakh

Kashmir + Ladakh

15 days departing 29 June 2011

DELHI (2 nights)

KASHMIR

Srinagar

Dal Lake (3 nights)

Gulmarg - Sonamarg

LADAKH

Kargil (1 night)

Lamayuru

Uleytokpo (1 night)

Alchi - Likir

Ley (6 nights)

Thiksey - Shey - Stok

Hemis Tse-Chu Festival

Pangong Lake

Khardung La Pass

(For further details see pages 4 & 5)



Caucasus Horizons

Azerbaijan - Georgia - Armenia

Caucasus Horizons

20 days departing 16 September 2011

AZERBAIJAN

Baku (3 nights)

Surakhani - Qobustan

Shemakha

Sheki (1 night)

GEORGIA

Lagodeki

Gremi

Telavi (1 night)

Kakheti Wine Country

Tbilisi (3 nights)

Mtskheta

Bakuriani (2 nights)

Vardzia

Train to Borjomi

Kutaisi (1 night)

Gori

Uplistsikhe

Georgian Military Highway

Caucasus Mountains

Gudauri (1 night)

Kazbegi

ARMENIA

Lake Sevan (1 night)

Haghartsin

Yerevan (4 nights)

Garni - Geghard

Echmiadzin - Zvartnots

Sardarapat

TURKEY

Ani



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Far Horizons

2-14 George Street (PO Box 96)
Truro, South Australia 5356

Telephone [08] 8564 0255

Reservations 1800 083 141

Facsimile [08] 8564 0065

E-mail info@farhorizons.com.au

Website www.farhorizons.com.au

Travel agents licence no. TTA 164 and 165

Status on forthcoming tours

We are pleased to advise that most of our forthcoming tours have been very well patronised and (with one exception - Patagonia Horizons) we already have sufficient passengers to justify their operation.

The status on the next seven Far Horizons tours is:

Tour	Date	Status	Tour Escort
Madagascar Horizons	21 July	Fully booked	Chrissie Page
Viking Horizons	01 Aug	4 vacancies	Gerry Gibbs
Oberammergau (plus optional six-day extension to the Holy Land)	26 September	5 vacancies	Gerry Gibbs
Panama to Havana	20 October	5 vacancies	Trish Byrne
North African Horizons	06 November	3 vacancies	Nick Deacock
Patagonia Horizons	28 December	Several vacancies	Gerry Gibbs
The Horn of Africa	22 January	7 vacancies	Josie Eckermann

Here are some wonderful opportunities to see some fascinating places in comfort and style - with a caring and experienced tour escort to look after you.

For descriptive brochures complete and return the enclosed Reply-paid Brochure Request Form

Thank you, Far Horizons



Members of our 2010 Central Asian Horizons tour group in Uzbekistan

Our recent Central Asian Horizons tour to Uzbekistan and Tajikistan, escorted by Beant Deacock, received very favourable reviews:

"The tour was wonderful from all points of view. The company was good and well managed. The history and topography and buildings all of great interest as was the impression of life in that part of Central Asia. Not an area well known to many people. Thank you for putting it together"

"A very well organised trip with a good group to a place of spectacular buildings, attractive and interesting countryside with delightful people. The Tajikistan section was more challenging, but worth it to see the mountain scenery and experience the border crossings!"

"A REALLY GOOD TRIP. The trip covered all the historical and architectural aspects of Uzbekistan with plenty of opportunities to interact with the people and made a very memorable fortnight."

"Beant Deacock took excellent care of our needs and handled matters very efficiently within the constraints of some very extreme bureaucracy at the borders"

"Beant was excellent. She managed the group with tact, good humour and efficient understanding"

I am planning to repeat this tour in 2012.

Details will be announced in my next Newsletter

Following the Via Egnatia



A Roman bridge along the Via Egnatia near Elbasani, Albania

I have just returned from a visit to Albania, Macedonia and northern Greece - checking out the remains of the ancient Via Egnatia, the Roman road built in the 3rd century BC connecting Rome with Constantinople to provide a link between the western and eastern parts of the Roman Empire.

I was accompanied by David Willett - ex journalist and Lonely Planet editor - who now specialises in escorting group tours to this area - and who will escort the 22-day "Via Egnatia" tour which departs on 31 March 2011.

It was a fascinating and rewarding journey, with several meetings with local inhabitants whose properties showed visible traces of this remarkable road which was traversed by soldiers, crusaders, preachers, bandits and merchant traders.

For me the highlight was my 3-day stay at the lakeside Hotel Inex Gorica at the Macedonian resort of Ohrid - a delightful town with a superb castle, quaint old streets and a picturesque harbour - famous for its *letnica* and *belvica* trout.

I was also fascinated to see the changes that have taken place in Albania since my last visit 12 years ago. The wonderful fortress at Elbasani - a major junction for two branches of the Via Egnatia - contains a splendid restaurant where we will take lunch on our journey from Tirana to Ohrid.

Please note that there are only a few places left on this exciting new tour, so if you are interested in joining us you should send now for our illustrated brochure.



Ohrid and Tsar Samoil's Fortress



David Willett (right) and our local guide stroll along the Via Egnatia near Bitola (Macedonia)



Via Egnatia at Phillipi



Museum on the Water at Lake Ohrid



Via Egnatia plaque near the Turkish border



Ohrid



Lake Ohrid trout

Back to Kashmir



Houseboats on Dal Lake



The lounge of a Mahjong Houseboat



Far Horizons passengers on our first tour in 1976 enjoying a shikara ride on Dal Lake



Srinagar's Shalimar Gardens

We still have fond memories of our very first Far Horizons tour in 1976 which spent three nights on de-luxe houseboats on the shores of an island in the middle of Dal Lake near Srinagar, the summer capital of Kashmir.

This unique Kashmiri tradition of gracious waterside living originated with the first British residents of Kashmir. In order to prevent them from assuming power, the Maharaja of Kashmir forbade the British to own land. Their ingenious solution was to build their residences on water, the houseboats evolving from modest floating homes to veritable floating palaces, many providing the amenities of a five-star hotel.

On this and several subsequent tours we enjoyed the lavish hospitality provided by our host, Mr Tunda, on his four houseboats - *Dawn*, *Happy Dawn*, *Lucky Dawn* and *Neil Armstrong* . . . the tranquility of the surroundings . . . the opportunity to take rides by private *shikara* (gondola) around the lake to see the floating gardens and then to cross over to the mainland to visit the famous Shalimar Gardens . . . the invitations to join our fellow passengers for cocktails on the verandah of our different houseboats . . . discussions with our houseboat chefs to decide on the menu for our evening meal . . . all memorable occasions sadly cut short by the political dispute over Kashmir's sovereignty.

Now that travellers are returning in numbers to Kashmir, we are delighted to once again include a stay on Dal Lake in our 2011 programme of tours. Sadly Mr Tunda is no longer with us and the Dawn Houseboats have fallen from grace. In their place we have arranged to stay on the excellent Mahjong group of houseboats (www.visitkashmirhouseboats.com/) whose boats include *Mahjong*, *Mumtaz Palace*, *Cherry Ripe*, *Fair Heaven*, *Shabistan*, *Minivet* and *Golden Apple*.

Each of these hand-built vessels is unique with either two or four bedrooms with *en-suite* bathrooms, electricity and modern plumbing. The intricately-carved cedar interiors exemplify the consummate artistry of Kashmir craftsmen. Each boat has its own lounge furnished with embroidered native rugs and fabrics, local *objets d'art*, and solidly comfortable Victorian and Edwardian furniture. Each has a terrace overlooking the lake and a roof-top sun deck with views of the Himalayan peaks.

Dal Lake is a maze of intricate waterways with communities which have lived on the lake for centuries. So complete is their infrastructure that they never have to step on land! Doctors, tailors, bakers can be seen in tiny wooden shops on the lake, with floating vegetable and lotus gardens.

During our stay on the Mahjong houseboats we visit the Mughal Gardens and the famous Himalayan resort of Gulmarg (the "Meadow of Flowers"). Situated at an altitude of 2650m, Gulmarg boasts the world's highest green golf course and is a popular ski resort during the winter months.



Shikaras on Dal Lake

Back to Ladakh



Stupas at Thiksey Monastery

Leaving Srinagar by modern air-conditioned 4WD vehicles (three passengers to a car) we cross the Zoji-La Pass (3,529m) into Ladakh - ("the land of high passes"). This former independent kingdom has always had close cultural and commercial ties with Tibet - and indeed is often known as "Little Tibet". It is now an integral part of India. Our first night in Ladakh is spent at the high mountain township of Kargil where we visit the Mulbekh Chamba, an imposing 9-metre-high sculpture of Maitreya Buddha carved on a hillside in the Suru Valley.

Next morning we drive over the Namika La pass (3,760m) and the Fotu La Pass (4,147m) to visit the 10th century Lamayuru Monastery, the largest and oldest gompa in Ladakh with a population of around 150 permanent resident monks located on a high rocky outcrop overlooking a valley and the village of Lamayuru. Our second night is spent at the new "Ethnic" camp at Uletokpo in picturesque mud huts (with private facilities) set in a 10-hectare orchard, from where we visit the monasteries of Alchi and Likir.

Reaching the capital, Leh, we stay for six nights in de-luxe rooms at the city's first four-star hotel - the Golden Dragon. From here we visit the major attractions of Leh, including the colourful bazaar and the Friday Mosque, and the nearby great monasteries of Thiksey, Shey and Stok.

The highlight of the tour is our full-day participation in the annual *Tse Chu* festival at Hemis Monastery. Located 40km from Leh, Hemis is the wealthiest, best known and biggest Gompa of Ladakh. Hemis was built in 1630 during the reign of Singge Namgyal, an illustrious ruler of Ladakh. It is divided into two, the assembly hall on the right and the main temple on the left. The hall (Dukhang) is also used as "green room" by the dancers during the festival.

Each year Hemis Monastery celebrates Tse-Chu in the form of a two-day festival, of which we will attend the inaugural day when resident Lamas perform sacred masked dances leading to the destruction of the sacrificial offerings. This 200-year-old tradition is a re-enactment of the magical feasts of Padmasambhava, in his services to the cause of Buddhism in his eight different manifestations.

On the following day we drive across the Ladakh mountain range to the shores of Pangong Lake, the world's highest salt-water lake at an altitude of 4,276m. The blue-green waters of this picturesque narrow lake (130km long and only 2-6km wide) reflect the snow-clad mountains of the Changchenmo range. Only one third of the lake is in Ladakh, the remainder being in Tibet.

On the final day in Ladakh we take an excursion to the Khardung La Pass - the world's highest motorable mountain pass - returning to Leh for our farewell dinner and evening cultural show before commencing our homeward journey.



Likir Monastery



Crossing the Zoji-La pass



Kargil: the sculpture of Maitreya Buddha



Uletokpo Ethnic Camp



Hemis Tse-Chu

Gorilla trekking - Parc National des Volcans



Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge



Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge bedroom



Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge bathroom



Gorilla Mountain View Lodge



Gorilla Mountain View Lodge bedroom

A CHOICE OF TWO LODGES AT PARC NATIONAL DES VOLCANS

The highlight of our Gorilla Horizons tour to southern Ethiopia, Uganda and Rwanda departing on 4th July 2011 is a three night stay at the Parc National des Volcans in Rwanda. This is the starting point for a trek to see the endangered Mountain Gorillas in their natural habitat.

The leading lodge - as featured in our brochure - is the Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge, which consists of nine stone cottages with Rwandese terracotta tile roofs. Each cottage features a large sitting area, fireplace, stylish en-suite bathroom finished with Venetian plaster, dressing room and a sheltered veranda. The main lodge building comprises reception, lounge, dining room and library. Three large fireplaces provide warmth and all rooms are finished with a polished wooden floor. Two patio areas afford dramatic views to the Virunga Volcanoes and the surrounding lowland farmlands.

As the Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge does not have sufficient rooms to accommodate all our passengers, we have secured additional accommodation at the nearby Gorilla Mountain View Lodge - a new mid-range lodge just a 15-minute drive from Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge. Commanding fine views of Mt Sabyinyo, the 30 spacious individual cottages are built of stone and thatch. Each provides *en suite* facilities, a small lounge with a fire place and a private veranda. They are well positioned to give them privacy from each other. There is a separate restaurant and bar area where meals are served to the guests.

In view of the limited accommodation in the Parc (and the need to secure the limited number of permits necessary to trek to the Gorillas) we recommend early booking to secure the lodge of your choice.

The inclusive tariffs per person for the complete 21-day tour are:

A Staying at Gorilla Mountain View Lodge

share-twin from Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane	\$19,750.00
share-twin from Perth	\$19,510.00
Single room supplement	\$ 2,650.00

B Staying at Sabyinyo Silverback Lodge

share-twin from Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane	\$21,850.00
share-twin from Perth	\$21,610.00
Single room supplement	\$ 2,950.00

Supplements for Business Class travel on Emirates flights

from Sydney, Melbourne or Brisbane	\$ 4,850.00
from Perth	\$ 4,950.00

Touring the Holy Land



The Old City of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives

Passengers travelling on our 26-day Oberammergau + Balkans tour departing on 8th September have the opportunity to visit the scene of the Passion Play by taking a six-day extension to the Holy Land, escorted by our popular tour escort, Gerry Gibbs.

From Dubrovnik - the final point of the overland tour - we fly to Tel Aviv for an overnight stay at the ocean-front Dan Panorama Hotel before commencing our overland journey with a short drive to the ancient seaport of Jaffa - famous for its oranges and the home of Simon the Tanner. After lunch at the renowned Abu Nassar On The Hill Fish and Seafood Restaurant we drive along the Mediterranean coast to Caesarea to visit the harbour, aqueduct and Roman Theatre.

We continue to Tiberias for a two-night stay at the Galei Kinnereth Hotel, situated on the shores of the Sea of Galilee.

The next morning we drive along the shore of the Sea of Galilee to the Mount of Beatitudes, the Roman ruins at Hammat Gader and the archaeological site of Capernaum before taking a boat ride across the Sea of Galilee back to Tiberias.

We then take an excursion to Nazareth for lunch at the Holyland restaurant before visiting Mary's Well and the Church of the Annunciation.

From Tiberias we drive along the Jordan Valley visiting the Jordan River Baptismal Site en route to Jericho, considered to be the world's oldest continuously-inhabited city. We visit the ruins of the Walls of Jericho, Herod's Palace with its beautiful mosaics, and take a cable car ride to the summit of the Mount of Temptation for a panoramic view of the Jordan Valley and a visit to the Greek Orthodox Monastery.

We then drive to the shores of the Dead Sea (400 metres below sea level and the lowest point on the earth's surface) to visit the ruins of Qumran, where the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered.

Our road then climbs via Bethany to Jerusalem for a stay of three nights at the prestigious American Colony Hotel - a former pasha's palace situated near the Old City, and now a member of *The Leading Hotels of the World*.

During our sightseeing in Jerusalem we visit Mount Zion, the Church of St. Peter in Gallicantu, the Church of St. John the Baptist at Ein Karem, the Mount of Olives, the Garden of Gethsemane, the Church of All Nations, the Church of St. Anne and the Pool of Bethesda. We then walk along the Via Dolorosa (Way of the Cross) to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. At the Dome of the Rock we visit the Western (Wailing) Wall and Al Asqa Mosque.

In New Jerusalem we visit the Shrine of the Book - the museum which contains many of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

In nearby Bethlehem we visit the Shepherd's Fields, the Church of St. Catherine, the Church of the Nativity and Manger Square.

From Jerusalem we drive to Tel Aviv Airport to commence our homeward journey

For a copy of our Oberammergau + Holyland tour please complete and return the enclosed pre-paid Brochure Request Form.



A boat ride on the Sea of Galilee



Jericho: Cable Car to the Mount of Temptation

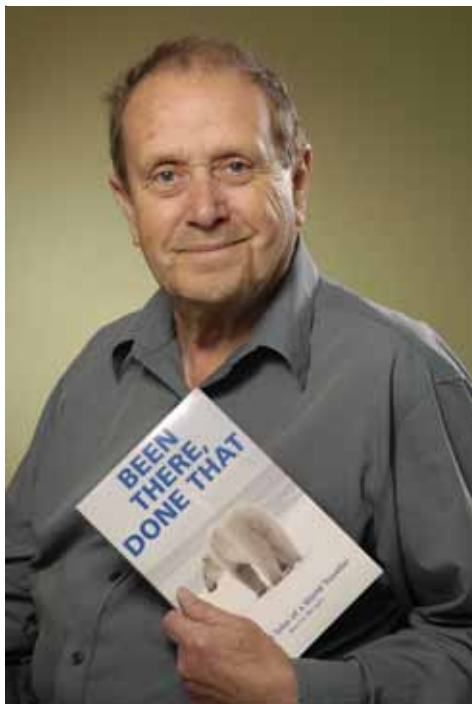


Qumran: The cave where the Dead Sea Scrolls were found in 1947



Jerusalem: The Dome of the Rock

Been There, Done That - Special Offer



I still have some First Edition copies of my book of memoirs *Been There Done That* which I am pleased to offer at a special reduction of 50% (\$12,50 including postage)

The sample chapter (right) is one of the 50 chapters.

Other chapters include:

- * The Thoughts of General Ghadafi
- * River Boat from Timbuctoo
- * The Cargo Plane from Kabul
- * In Search of Noah's Ark
- * Diva in a huff
- * A Korean Comic Opera
- * Christmas in Other Lands
- * Carnival in Cuba
- * In case of fire it pays to be French
- * Caught in a coup
- * My least favourite hotel
- * My two Royal audiences
- * Back to Afghanistan
- * The Great Vietnamese Teapot scam
- * A 21st century highwayman

To obtain a signed copy of my book at this special price, please complete the relevant item on the enclosed Brochure Request Form and return it together with a cheque for \$12.50 made payable to Far Horizons.

Chapter 2

The Fat Flying Food Thief

In the mid 1960s, BUA (British United Airways - known familiarly as 'Fred's Airline' after its charismatic chief, Freddie Laker, who was later to set up and then lose his own airline) was the leading independent airline in England, competing with BEA (British European Airways on the short-haul routes) and BOAC (British Overseas Airways Corporation - known familiarly as 'Better On A Camel') on the intercontinental network, which included the prestigious London-New York run.



It was on the BUA night flight from New York to London that I spent my most uncomfortable flight.'

The aircraft was a Boeing 707. The seating configuration in Economy Class was three seats on either side of the single gangway. I had been fortunate enough to secure a window seat and as the time for departure approached I was pleased to note that the middle seat of the three was unoccupied. The plane appeared to be full and as the last stragglers boarded the aircraft, it seemed that my luck was in. The middle seat was still empty, and I was about to enjoy the additional space thus provided in which to relax and even, hopefully, snatch some sleep.

As the aircraft doors were closed I breathed a sigh of relief. The Steward cleared his throat and began to make his welcoming announcement. I glanced up from my newspaper and my heart sank. Slowly advancing towards me, her wide hips clouting occupants on either side who failed to sway their heads in time, was the widest and most formidable looking female of the species I had ever seen. She paused briefly, her beady eyes peering first at her Boarding Card and then fixing themselves triumphantly on the vacant seat next to mine.

The occupant of the aisle seat in my row, with whom I had a few moments earlier exchanged a conspiratorial, congratulatory smile of satisfaction at the prospect of sharing the vacant seat, leapt up. With much grunting and manoeuvring, she eventually managed to squeeze her gargantuan frame into the limited space provided in Economy Class aircraft seats. Well, not quite all of her, because a portion of her extremities flopped over the narrow arm rest to settle in a quivering mass onto my lap.

As we took off, heading across the Atlantic, I managed to edge myself sideways against the side of the aircraft with my head against the window. Dinner was served. . .the usual plastic tray divided into sections, each section containing a separate course of the meal. I eat very little on aeroplanes and I picked desultorily at my salad and lamb chops, leaving the dish of custard-covered cake untouched. From the corner of my eye I watched my neighbour attack her meal with great gusto, completely clearing the tray within a few minutes, whereupon she reached up a ham like arm and pressed the attendant's call button. The attendant duly appeared. "Can I have another?" requested my neighbour. A second tray was provided and was dealt with in a similar fashion with the same ruthless efficiency. I decided to try to sleep, leaving the remains of my meal tray and settling into the pillow which I had managed to wedge between the window and the side of my headrest. Hardly had I settled into a semi-comfortable position when I felt an elbow nudging my arm.

"Are you going to finish that?" demanded my neighbour, pointing at my three-quarter full plate with its half-eaten lamb chops. "Er, no thanks." "Then can I have it?" "Er, yes, please do." I slept.

Or rather I half-slept. It is not easy trying to sleep in half an economy class seat. I half-heard but did not pay attention to an announcement over the loud-speaker system, and I vaguely remember breakfast trays being placed in front of us, but I had no appetite for breakfast. I half-heard my neighbour grunting with satisfaction as she devoured her breakfast. Then followed a slight pause during which nothing disturbed me except for a strange scraping sound emanating, it seemed, from my breakfast tray. Through half-closed eyelids I saw that my breakfast tray was moving. Slowly, ever so slowly, it was being surreptitiously slipped from my own tray to my neighbour's.

My breakfast had been stolen.



List of forthcoming tours and brochure request form

To receive any of our dedicated tour brochures please tick the appropriate box(es) and fax this form to [08] 8564 0065 or mail to Far Horizons, Reply Paid 96, Truro, S.A. 5356

Mr/Mrs/Ms/Miss

Address

.....Post Code

Viking Horizons 19 days 01 August 2010

Oberammergau + the Balkans 26 days 08 September 2010

Panama to Havana 41 days 20 October 2010

North African Horizons 37 days 06 November 2010

The Horn of Africa 25 days 22 January 2011

Via Egnatia 22 days 01 April 2011

Kashmir & Ladakh 15 days 29 June 2011

Gorilla Horizons 21 days 04 July 2011

France Afloat 21 days 27 July 2011

Sydney to London 20 days 30 August 2011

Caucasus Horizons 20 days 16 September 2011

London to Sydney 21 days 20 September 2011

Palaces & Tigers of India 19 days 05 November 2011

Martin Wright's book *Been There Done That**

(*for this item please enclose a cheque for \$12.50 made payable to Far Horizons)

Please tick this box if you wish to be removed from our mailing list