

## My last trip won't be plain cruising

Am I imagining it or is there a lot of advertising of ship cruises these days?

I've just read one about a world traverse lasting more than 100 nights – that's approaching a third of a year – and taking you to nearly 50 destinations on six continents (must include Antarctica).

For something called a state room with a view on the outside (presumably above sea level) you'd pay nearly \$40,000 to share with someone else, who would also be paying that amount of money. You'd want to know beforehand that you're going to see eye-to-eye.

Some \$2000 of that payment comes back to you as "credit". If that means for champagne, you could probably blow it in a couple of weeks, so the shipping line may be counting on you needing to top that up a fair bit during such a long time at sea.

It all sounds a good way to leave behind life's pressures, but I wonder how long it would take to get bored by on-board shows, persistent new friends and onshore package tours.

And would you go if you're prone to sea-sickness? I am, so while I figure modern mega-cruise ships have stabilisers to keep an even keel, I'm not sure I'd want to take my chances.

Lin would be okay. She doesn't get seasick. When we had a boat in Auckland, she could go below and cook bacon and eggs in a storm and not get the slightest bit nauseous. I was kind of okay if I hung on to the wheel up in the cockpit, but I doubt a cruise-liner's insurance company would allow me that remedy. Not for more than five minutes.

I recall getting interested in the travel industry when I was news editor of the *NZ Woman's Weekly* back in the early 80s, and marvelling at the endurance of elderly travellers. The magazine promoted its own annual round-world tour and 30 people would be whipped through Europe and the UK on a gruelling schedule that literally killed a few of them.

One old dear lost her dentures in Scotland. She was reunited with them in London – except they were someone else's.

I reckon a river cruise might be a better idea for someone like me. No waves. Just a leisurely journey along some muddy expanse of polluted water looking at castles and cathedrals from a safe distance. Going ashore would seem more optional.

Even better might be to take the Prunella Scales/Timothy West approach and explore old canals in a long boat, playing dodge 'em at tricky locks and feeling the scrape of willow leaves across your bare skull (no need for a hat in sunless Britain).

Lin and I are contemplating what is likely to be our last big trip overseas, a trek back to the "home" countries next year in search of the communities that bred the majority of our ancestors in times when ship voyages didn't offer much in the way of champagne and state room views.

JT col for Nov 9, 2019 – travelling back

These days, we're into writing books about other people's families, a process that's honed Lin's skills in that labyrinthine repository of ancestral tangles, Ancestry.com.

Along the way, she's discovered interesting stuff about our own respective lineages, including the fact early generations from three separate family lines that end up as me lived within spitting distance of each other in the middle of London early last century. Two were unknowingly a mere three streets apart.

We're both made of bits from all four British countries, and it looks like a visit to Scotland and Ireland would be especially rewarding in the sense of seeing what's left of the villages, churches and gravestones from our past.

Dad always reckoned there were 56 bakers in the Tucker lineup, but we dismissed the claim as exaggerated. It wasn't. There were indeed that many, traceable back to the English Midlands. The trade petered out with my generation. None among 20 cousins made any dough of that kind (and not much of the other, either).

My curiosity revolves around where my interest in writing might have originated. Lin thought she'd found a link with Scots bard Robbie Burns, but it was a wrong turn.

I'll just have to settle for Mum's belief that I write like her brother, my Uncle Ted Warner, who – before he died in a trench on Crete in World War II – wrote evocative and grammatically perfect letters back home.

The question is: where did *he* get it from?