

[00:00:01.530] - Speaker 1

Welcome to the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Your host is the founder of the UK travel planning website, Tracy Collins. In this podcast, Tracy shares destination guides, travel tips and Itinerary ideas, as well as interviews with a variety of guests who share their knowledge and experience of UK travel to help you plan your perfect UK vacation. Join us as we explore the UK, from cosmopolitan cities to quaint villages, from historic castles to beautiful islands. And from the picturesque countryside to seaside towns.

[00:00:37.610] - Tracy

Hi, and welcome to episode thirty of the UK Travel Planner podcast. This week, I'm joined by Doug, who's also come to talk about a very exciting road trip that we took in 2022.

[00:00:49.300] - Doug

Yes, it was absolutely marvellous.

[00:00:51.210] - Tracy

We had a fantastic time. So, as road trips go, one destination you can be sure of as an epic road trip is Scotland. In this episode of the podcast, we're going to talk through our Scotland Road Trip Itinerary, which included our favourite destinations across the country. So we did this road trip in 2022 and May 2022, and we did it over 18 days. So for those of you who are interested in planning your trip to Scotland this year by road, there is actually a copy of this Itinerary on the website and I will put a link to that in the show notes. So basically, you can use the itinerary as is off the peg. It's 18 days, but you can adapt it for ten or 14 days. So in this episode, we're going to talk through our itinerary and also just kind of share some of the things that we really enjoyed and we recommend that you do, but also some of the things that we learnt from this trip. So I think we'll should we give a quick brief outline of the itinerary. Yes, but yeah, okay. So, as I say, it was 18 days.

[00:01:55.380] - Tracy

So we started off in Edinburgh, we got the train up to Edinburgh, so we actually picked up the car in Edinburgh. So we went on then to Calendar, over to Oban and then over to the island. So Islands of Staffa Ullapool, Mull and Iona. I took that trip to didn't. He took a road trip on that day. We then went up to Fort William, over to the Isle of Skye, then we joined the north coast 500 at Ullapool, went to Durness, Tongue, Skail again on the north coast 500, over to the Orkney Islands, which was actually a late addition to itinerary, back over from Orkney to John the O'Grotes down to Inverness, and then back down to Edinburgh. So it was a pretty it was pretty epic road trip, actually.

[00:02:38.390] - Doug

It was, yes. But we planned to the nth degree before we started, really. But no matter how much we planned it, we still changed things on the day.

[00:02:47.000] - Tracy

Absolutely, yeah. And I think there were still things that we kind of thought afterwards we would have changed. So obviously we reflected that in the itinerary on the website. But yeah, so we thought, because we know there's a lot of questions in our Facebook group at the moment, there's a lot of people considering planning a road trip around Scotland. And I know people kind of bit like don't know where to start. I also will just say, for those of you who prefer to travel by public transport, we've actually also just published a Best of Scotland by Rail. Itinerary so you can catch a train, basically, in a loop round. The only part you can't do is sky. You have to catch a bus and then maybe hire a car on sky or take a tour or public transport and then get yourself back to the Carolina coast to catch the train. But it's all in that article which Doug wrote, we just published in the last few days. Right. So let's talk about the first. So we've decided to stop in Edinburgh for the first few days. Now, we've been there multiple times before, and I will actually do a podcast very soon about things to do and see in Edinburgh, because I know it's a very popular destination, but we still spent three nights there, didn't we?

[00:03:49.420] - Doug

We did. And we stayed in the same place. We stayed in numerous towns before I managed to walk up

off the seat, which was fantastic.

[00:03:57.050] - Tracy

Yes, that's something that you really want to do. So if you haven't been to Edinburgh before, we'd recommend, really, that you spend at least two to three days there just to get really a taste of the city. I'm not going to spend too much time talking about Edinburgh because we have got extensive resources about Edinburgh on the website. And I will come back and talk in another podcast, actually, about tips for anybody who plan a trip to Edinburgh for the first time. So, basically, after the three days in Edinburgh, we did pick up a hire car. So we hired a car from Edinburgh and picked it up. So now, one thing that we did do, which I would advise as well, is, first of all, we had an SUV because we were going to be driving the North Coast 500, so quite steep inclines. We did Apple Cross, for example, which is pretty notorious drive. And we also had a second driver. So Doug and I both shared the driving, which I think is important.

[00:04:47.790] - Doug

It is very important. And we sort of work an hour, an hour and a half drive each. Sometimes we chose the route times. I'll be honest, I get a little bit travel sick. So we chose a route where if it was a bit more windy, twisted I drove that part. Didn't time.

[00:05:02.930] - Tracy

That's right, yeah, you did. Up across you drove while I silently screamed. Yeah.

[00:05:07.510] - Doug

That's for a different reason.

[00:05:11.330] - Tracy

Yeah, it was a bit scary. So from there, we decided to go we drove via Falkirk to see the Kelpies and the Falkirk Wheel.

[00:05:22.380] - Doug

Yes.

[00:05:23.590] - Tracy

And also via Sterling to see the castle. So that was a one day trip that we did, basically to get ourselves to Calendar. So that was our destination. No, I hadn't been to Calendar before, but it was somewhere that you'd been to?

[00:05:37.320] - Doug

Yes, I've got some family not too far from there. So it's a very good central location. Tiny little town. I think it's more of a town, yeah. And it worked out really well, didn't that? It was just enough. We didn't want to overstress ourselves at that first day in summer, it was light into the evening, but we wanted to get to the accommodation, didn't we? And good time.

[00:05:57.940] - Tracy

So the thing is, for that day, that was an hour's drive. So if you plan to go from Edinburgh to Calendar, that will only take you an hour, but obviously, because we recommend that you stop off at the Kelpies. So if you're not sure what the Kelpies are, they are the massive horsehead sculptures. They're 30 metre tires are two of them. They're fabulous to see. Also the Falcoat Wheel, which is something, it's basically how they move boats up onto the Caledonian Canal between two canals. Yeah. And it's incredible to watch that. And obviously Sterling Castle is worth stopping office, so that's still going to be a full day, even though it's only an hour to get to Calendar.

[00:06:34.580] - Doug

There's other things to see is the Panic Bone Monument is off of the.

[00:06:37.420] - Tracy

Battle and National Wallace Monument as well. So there's quite a few things you can add into that day

trip. So basically, that put us a nice ease yourself into the drive to get yourself basically up to Calendar. So the next day we went from Calendar and we did it basically a loop drive to Killing, then on to Kenmore Aberfeldy Pit Locker and then back to Calendar via Camry Creek on the a nine and A eight two. Two. So now all the information about these distances and drives are on, will be in the show notes and we have got, as I say, the Itinerary outfit. So the highlights of that day, I mean, the Falls of Dockets were absolutely fabulous, have been quite a lot of rain, so they really were full and really lovely. So I've got some pictures of that. I will share those as well, and also with that drive as well over Kenmore.

[00:07:32.510] - Doug

Which is about the second or third highest peak Scotland.

[00:07:34.890] - Tracy

Yeah. So that was pretty epic as well. So if you really want views and we were very lucky, actually, because the weather was beautiful that day. So if you want good views, that is a really good drive to take. And then stop off in Pitlochry and visit the Fish Ladder, which it is very famous for. Pitlochry is also a very pretty little Scottish town, so that's worth popping into. So that's actually a whole day trip. Also a good little tip here, because I know others often we often get asked about Highland cows, is that you can see, or you could hopefully they're still there is you can see Highland cows in a field on the right hand side of the road as you drive north out of Calendar. Fingers crossed that they're still there. But there were a couple of Highland cows in that field. I think it's pretty well known because.

[00:08:19.440] - Doug

Some of the tourists stopping off.

[00:08:20.930] - Tracy

Yeah, we did see a few tours there. So that's the next day. So Calendar really pretty place to visit. Yeah.

[00:08:29.350] - Doug

And there's a supermarket there, one of the larger places in that area, so it gives you a good chance to stock up.

[00:08:35.910] - Tracy

And yeah, pubs as well as some mass pubs down. I remember we got fish and chips. So the next day we drove to Oban. So on that day, we went fire the Trostic National Park. Loch Lomond and loch Katrine. So that drive that day, we drove basically from Calendar to I can never pronounce it, on Loch Lomond, which was a 45 kilometre drive before then driving to Oban on the A 82, which was a 74 miles drive. And we went via Inverary Castle, which again, is very famous, Scottish Castle. If you saw a photo of it, you'd recognise it. That was a lovely day. The weather had turned, though. Remember, this is made so the views on Loch Lomond weren't brilliant. It was quite low cloud.

[00:09:26.130] - Doug

It was a bit chilly, it was.

[00:09:27.430] - Tracy

A bit chilly, it was a bit cold. And also when we got to Inverary Castle, it was heavy rain. So we drove in, had a little look and then left. But you do have enough time that day. Again, one of the things I think we've learned is that you just have to be adaptive to the weather. It's the UK, you can't necessarily predict the weather. We didn't have the best weather.

[00:09:49.370] - Doug

What we found is not to get too downhearted and fondant, because you make all these plans exactly. And the weather sort of intervenes. So we just took it on a stride and move on.

[00:10:01.090] - Tracy

Yeah, we stayed in Oban for a couple of nights. The reason we went to Oban was that I really wanted

to go over to Mull Iona and Staffa and see Fingal's Cave. So I took a ten hour I think it was a ten hour trip, boat trip, that next day from Oban Duoung, you get a bit seaBallachulishDunst sick you so didn't do that.

[00:10:22.710] - Doug

I took the A828 coastal road, and it comes out of Oban and you follow the coast all the way up to Balakhulish and Glencoe. But on the way you've got the Dunstabegh castle. Castle stalker. And the views are just stunning and bit old fashioned. I took a packed lunch with me and I sat looking at the views. Of course, and it was really, really nice. A beautiful day.

[00:10:48.030] - Tracy

Yeah. And I really enjoyed as well, going over to Mall and Iona and stuff. Again, we had the weather was changeable. One thing I would say to you, if you are planning to do that boat trip, and I would highly recommend it, is just really think carefully about what you're wearing. Make sure that you're kind of prepared for all events weather wise, and that you wear really good shoes with good grip, because and also probably walking boots would be a good idea because we went over onto the island of Staffa. It is quite muddy and I know I'd seen pictures of people who'd been there previous, weeks before we went over, and it was very windy and wet and actually, I kind of ruined my shoes going over there. So really think about carefully about what your footwear is going to be, especially if it's been wet. But that was a fantastic day. So it was absolutely open is a really interesting place to visit. It's supposed to be the is it the seafood?

[00:11:40.440] - Doug

I don't eat seafood. It's the seafood capital of Scotland.

[00:11:44.670] - Tracy

Yeah, I don't eat seafood, so it doesn't affect me, but I know plenty.

[00:11:48.790] - Doug

Of people who do, plenty of restaurants.

[00:11:52.930] - Tracy

So the only thing I guess about Open is that parking is not great. So if we stayed in a bed and breakfast but there's a lot of one way little streets and windy roads, so just make sure that you get accommodation with parking. That I'd highly recommend. And then we actually walked down to the ferry the next morning.

[00:12:17.770] - Doug

And the.

[00:12:18.410] - Tracy

Step straight down, so you really have to consider that for Open. So the next day, we drove to Fort William, and we didn't go on the same route that Doug had taken the day before. We went via the 82, which takes you via Rannoch Moor and Glencoe that way, which is one of my I mean, I've talked about it numerous times, but Glencoe is probably one of my just favourite places in the entire world. There's something about that place that is amazing. So there's lots of viewpoints to stop off along the way. You've got the rank moor viewpoint at the bridge of Rocky.

[00:12:53.790] - Doug

That's right, yeah. I was stunning views across the Ranmore, which is a peat bog.

[00:12:59.490] - Tracy

Yeah. If you catch Caledonian Sleeper as well, you get great views as you cross over Rannoch Moor from the train. And as you're coming into Fort William, look out for Ben Nevis, which is the highest mountain in the UK. And you can't really miss it, to be honest. So we stayed in Inverness for a couple of nights and not Inverness, we stayed in Fort William for a couple of nights, which I'd highly recommend. We were catching the Jacobite train, the Harry Potter train, which is famous from the

movies. It crosses over the Glenfinnan There are Viaduct. It gets booked up incredibly quickly. So if you're planning to do the Harry Potter train this year, you might already have missed out. And if you have, you're probably going to have to book a tour from Edinburgh or Glasgow to get yourself on the Harry Potter train because it is so incredibly popular. There's lots of things to do in Fort William as well, though a surrounding area got Neptune staircase, you got the Glenn Finnan church, the monument. So one tip I would say as well, if you're catching the Harry Potter train, or we did record in the morning, is when you get back in the afternoon, jump in your car and get yourself back to the viaduct and you can actually see the afternoon train as it comes back over the viaduct.

[00:14:12.840] - Tracy

You'll see a lot of people there that are photographers there.

[00:14:15.340] - Doug

Yeah, that's right. Stunning views from wherever you stand.

[00:14:18.320] - Tracy

Yeah. So it's great. So you get to travel in the train in the morning and you get to see it off the vibe up in the afternoon. So you get both highly recommend if you can swing it, to go first class. It was a fabulous experience. You stop off for a few days, a few hours in MalMallaigaig on the way, and again, there's a lovely little Harry Potter shop that's worth popping into. If I would recommend when you get into Mallaig off the train, that you go and get something to eat straight away, because everybody that gets off the train is going to go deep. So make sure you go and get yourself some lunch straight away. So after staying in Fort William for a few days, we then drove over to sky. So you have to go to Malay to catch the ferry.

[00:15:00.010] - Doug

To catch the ferry across from Mallaig it takes about 20 minutes. I think it's very quick. It takes you to Armadale.

[00:15:07.430] - Tracy

Yeah. So if you're driving from Armadale to Portree, it takes you about an hour. But there's so much to see along the way that really it's just an absolutely fantastic drive. A few tips because we have got an itinerary for the Isle of Skye and lots of information about skye on the website. We know it's one of the most popular destinations for tourists to go to sky. We were there May, we had three days. One day fabulous weather and two days of, let's say not fabulous weather.

[00:15:37.140] - Doug

That's great weather.

[00:15:37.970] - Tracy

So, again, you need to be prepared for that. That might happen. And if you know that's going to be a case, try and squeeze as much as you can the day that the weather is really good. There's a lot to see on sky. Highlights for us. I really enjoyed going into Duvegan castle and gardens. They were beautiful.

[00:15:55.710] - Doug

Yeah. It's one thing I will say, people associate skye with just people who want to go walking. We don't do a huge amount of walking. Just appreciate the scenery a little bit, but not, I want to call it myself, serious hiker.

[00:16:09.450] - Tracy

No, but I think that it's worth actually saying because I don't particularly like hiking. I don't make a secret of that. But we went to the ferry pools and it's a bit of a hike to get to them. I was actually quite surprised.

[00:16:23.120] - Doug

And a bit of a shop steep as well.

[00:16:24.970] - Tracy

Yeah, you've got to kind of go down a steep hill and then obviously you've got to climb back up on that again. And it is quite a walk to get to them. They were actually finishing off a few bridges, which will make things a bit easier because when we were there in 2022, you actually had to cross over the river by Stepping Stones, which is fine, but it's going to be so much better now that these bridges have gone in.

[00:16:45.060] - Doug

Make sure you take some water because there's nowhere to buy drinks.

[00:16:47.880] - Tracy

There was no and you've got to get parked as a car park, which is quite far, and you've got to kind of take some money for parking and prepare for a hike to get to the Fairy Pools. Definitely worth it. But they're not just right next to the car park that say that much other places. You went to the ferry, Glenn? I kind of gave up that day because the heavens opened and we had like a massive little squirrely storm. I went back to the car.

[00:17:14.220] - Doug

Yes, it was almost biblical storms. It was quite hair raising, but it added to the moment.

[00:17:22.270] - Tracy

So after skye, we headed over to join the North Coast 500. So we crossed over, we we went to first of all crossed over the Sky Bridge to the Kyle of Lochalsh and then we went to Eilean Donan Castle for some pictures.

[00:17:37.050] - Doug

Yeah, the views of the loch there and the castle are stunning. We probably enjoyed the views more than the actual venue itself.

[00:17:47.540] - Tracy

Yeah, I think so. Yeah, it was nice. And we spent a little bit of time there. Probably enough time, and that was fine. And then we popped in at Manuela's Wee Bakery for a bite to eat, which is not too far from it's kind of between Eilean Donan and the Kyle of Lochalsh. And it's brilliant. It's a lovely little bakery. So if you get a chance, pop in there to pick up some snacks. And then we drove 3 hours up on the A 890 and a eight three. 2120 miles now on the famous North Coast 500 route up to Olipool. Now, this is the day that we drove the Double Cross.

[00:18:29.500] - Doug

Yeah, it's quite hair raising. I'm a slow driver and we gladly did it, though we don't want to fancy doing the caravan behind or motorhome.

[00:18:41.260] - Tracy

No, I think one thing, if you're going to drive in Scotland, you need to be really aware of that. Some of the roads are particularly narrow. Like, there's just one just enough for one car. There's lots of passing places, so you pull over and you let the cars pass you or kind of go whichever way. If they're coming towards you, obviously pull over and let them pass. But if there's somebody going there a little bit faster than you can pull in and let them pass.

[00:19:05.780] - Doug

Yeah, I think you need sort of a combination of patience and confidence.

[00:19:10.390] - Tracy

Yeah, I just got plasma as well. You were also there may so a lot of lambs and sheep around, so you have to be really careful, really pay attention. And also at one point we had deer in the road as well, so stags deer sheets, just a huge amount of livestock. So you really have to pay attention and be careful. That famous. I can't pronounce it. And that if you put that into your itinerary fair place here, I wouldn't miss it out. You can't do that in winter because that road is short. But really prepare yourself, maybe

watching videos about that route.

[00:19:57.610] - Doug

It is, and I think it took us longer than the actual route map, I think so, because obviously it's not going to take into account the amount of times you have to stop for the past.

[00:20:08.520] - Tracy

Yeah, that's true. And you have to go slow because obviously all the livestock, you have to be really careful because there's labs and also because the scenery is just stunning. So this western coast of Scotland is pretty awe inspiring. It really is. It takes your breath away at some points. I just thought I was an alternative universe. I actually wasn't in the UK. It really is. So do give yourself time to enjoy that scenery. So don't be racing from here to here. And I think that was one of the things that we said we would add extra days in.

[00:20:46.720] - Doug

Yeah, we want to enjoy it because when you're driving along, unfortunately, it's going to be impatient people who are obviously against the clock and they just want to move on as quickly as they can. And again, it's all part of having the patience to be able to take it all in and enjoy it.

[00:21:02.920] - Tracy

Yeah, absolutely. So we stayed in UllaUllapoolpool for an evening, so we actually went to a really nice restaurant. I'm going to see if I can actually find the name of it, but it was lovely. Now I have to try and find it and put it into the show notes. But we did have some lovely scallops with black pudding, which was really nice in this restaurant in Olapool. So the next day then we headed off to Dunes and Tong. So this was a beautiful again, another very scenic part of the route. So took about 2 hours for the first part to Durness and then about another hour or so to Tongue. So again, don't get because we kind of looked at the distances and thought far, but actually it takes longer, so give yourself plenty of time. And we stayed in fantastic accommodation. We stayed in a glamping pod.

[00:21:56.250] - Doug

It was fantastic. Yeah. We didn't know what to expect for that day.

[00:21:59.080] - Tracy

Fabulous. I think it was one of the favourite places that we stayed. I know we talked about it a previous episode of Top Ten things that we did when we were in the UK and staying in, that was just amazing. Again, we're surrounded by herds of deer, which is fabulous. And what was really good is we had a WiFi device that we used so we could both hotspot off that. And that worked even up there, even in the far north of Scotland. So some good places to stop off that. We stopped off at Smooth Cave. I didn't walk down to the caves to have a look what you did.

[00:22:29.840] - Doug

I did a walk down and took it off, took some photos and it was magical. Actually.

[00:22:35.810] - Tracy

There's some lovely beaches as well along that part of the route. We did want to go on the Golden Eagle zipline, but unfortunately it was too windy. It was shut the day that we were there anyway, so we couldn't do that. But again, it's just wild scenery and beautiful kind of coastline scene.

[00:22:53.810] - Doug

It changes scenery as well as driving around it. Some places of mountainous and there's greenness.

[00:23:00.790] - Tracy

Was it just all rocks everywhere? Yeah, it really is something. Amazing. So what we did on the next day of our itinerary is we decided at the last minute, really, I think a couple of weeks before we went, because we'd spoken I think it's episode ten with our friend who had actually done the North Coast 500, and they'd included a trip on to Orkney Islands. Now, it was somewhere that we both wanted to go to, so we decided to see if we could do that. Now, it was pretty expensive for the ferry. It was

thinking about 150 pound return, but we decided, no, we really want to do it and we are so glad that we did. It meant an early start the next morning because it was quite a drive. I think it was about how much? 60 miles or something. I can't remember the exact mileage we had to do, but we had to leave fairly early in the morning and avoid the deer. Yes. And there was a lot of wildlife, a lot of herd, the deer on the road. And a cow. Cow, which wouldn't give yourself plenty of time. So we had to get to Gills Bay to catch the ferry.

[00:24:01.070] - Doug

On the way there, we stopped off at Duncannan Head yes. Which is the most northerly point on mainland Britain.

[00:24:07.230] - Tracy

Mainland Britain. Yeah. So got some fantastic pictures. That's a highly recommend that you do that. We did have time to do that on the way and still get to the ferry in time. Ferry port at Gills Bay. Now, the ferry takes you over to mainland Orkney, which is the name of the main island on Orkney. Over to a place called St Margaret's Hope.

[00:24:28.460] - Doug

Which is at the northern part.

[00:24:34.790] - Tracy

So obviously, drive your car into the ferry, leave the car, go and sit on the deck. It's covered. It was really nice. And we had a bacon sandwich and some drinks and tea.

[00:24:44.250] - Doug

And so, luckily, it was very, very smooth crossing for me.

[00:24:46.810] - Tracy

Yeah, because I know you were a bit worried.

[00:24:48.400] - Doug

I don't like it.

[00:24:49.130] - Tracy

No. And then so then we spent we literally got over to sort of late morning, and we were over there until the following afternoon, where we caught the trade, caught the ferry back over to mainland and Scotland. So I would highly recommend it, if you can, to fit in a couple of days in Orkney. You probably don't need more than a couple of days, but it was amazing. Absolutely fantastic. So, highlights on Orkney? Skara Brae, absolutely.

[00:25:18.500] - Doug

Maeshowe

[00:25:18.900] - Tracy

Yeah, Maeshowe, the Italian chapel is fantastic. The ring of Brodgar, the stones of Stenness. Honestly, this is a place where you step back in time, and we're talking.

[00:25:32.040] - Doug

A long time and there's a rude word, name of a little village.

[00:25:37.930] - Tracy

Yes, that's true. There's lots of hats and mugs we can get with our own there, so we couldn't find the sign for it. I wonder if I'd be a nick. But anyway, yeah, it was cold. Orkney was freezing cold. Apparently, it was one of the coldest maids that had for a long time, and we actually had to buy hats and it was very, very cold. So, again, you need to really prepare if you're planning to do a road trip in Scotland at that time of year.

[00:26:02.440] - Doug

We had quite a bit of soup, didn't we? And teeth keep warm.

[00:26:05.970] - Tracy

Yeah, absolutely. So then after the next day, we caught the ferry back to Gillsby and then drove to John O'Groats, because you've got to have a picture at John Oates because we were going to be at Land's End a few weeks after that, so we really wanted to have a picture at each end of the country. And then we drove back by John O'Groats, back down to Inverness, which again was a nice drive, and we were actually passed to Castle on the way. And I can't remember the name of the castle now. It's a really famous one as well, and I can't think I think it was shut by the time we got there, because we were late on in the day, it was shot up. So we continued on and we did pass some Highland cattle as well on that route down to Inverness, which was nice. So we stayed in Inverness for a couple of nights. There's a lot to do in Inverness and again, a very famous place to stop off. Very populous place to stop off Culloden battlefield. Go to Loch Ness, take Cruise Castle Urquhart absolutely fabulous place to visit.

[00:27:03.590] - Tracy

Trying to think of Clava Cairns again for stones. There's a lots of stones in Scotland. I did keep touching them, but nothing happened. I didn't seem to go into the past and meet Jamie for your outlander fans. I did try numerous times, but nothing happened. But yes, Clava cairns another good great trip to take from Inverness. So the next day was our last day and we drove down So now day 18, leave Inverness again, actually. Lots of lovely places to see inverness.

[00:27:33.430] - Doug

There was a lot quite a bit of traffic congestion around there, as remember as well. So you got to plan your route out.

[00:27:38.640] - Tracy

Yeah. And we had a nice meal there as well. Or just when I think about meals, actually, I forgot to mention this. On the island sky, one thing that's worth doing is popping into things in Morrison Supermarket in Fort William and just stocking up on drinks and snacks. Get yourself a cool bag, shove it in the car, because there's only the co op on sky. What's the capital? Portree. So you're better off kind of stocking up there. And also when you're doing that out, the kind of North Coast 500, having plenty of kind of snacks and stuff to eat in your car as well, so you're kind of prepared plenty of places to get petrol. We didn't really struggle with that, but on sky, make sure that you book for meals, because we struggled with that.

[00:28:24.900] - Doug

We did. We end up going to a fish and chip shop, I think.

[00:28:28.310] - Tracy

Yeah. Importantly, which was lovely.

[00:28:29.990] - Doug

And it wasn't a standard fish and chip shop because you had to wait for different sittings.

[00:28:35.070] - Tracy

Yeah, it was very busy and that was me. It was incredibly busy, incredibly difficult to get in to eat anywhere. So you need to really book ahead if that's what you're going to do, unless you're going to take your own food or stay in an airbnb. The name of the castle that we drove past on the way to from John Groats was Dunrobin, which was beautiful. But unfortunately by the time it got, I think it was about 04:00 and I think it was closing at that point. So, again, if you wanted to do that kind of coast route a bit more probably maybe get the ferry over and stay in John O'Groats. Not a huge amount in John O'Groats, but you could do a bit more exploration that area and then stay in John O'Groats and then get up earlier the next day and do that kind of route back down to Inverness. You could add an extra day in. Like I say this, itinerary is really flexible with what you do. So then we arrived back in Edinburgh by how did we drive that way back? I can't remember did we go through the Kengles?

[00:29:31.450] - Doug

We did. We sort of put it in a Cairngorms National park. We allowed ourselves plenty of time, again.

[00:29:37.440] - Tracy

Yes. Because we were catching a train down to York actually, that day. So we needed to get back into Edinburgh for 01:00. Yeah. So I'm just thinking about some of the tips that what would we do differently if we're going to do this? So this is just, again, just giving you some tips. Those of you who are thinking about doing this trip this year, if you're going to do the North Coast 500, give yourself plenty of time. We did not have enough time. We really didn't. And I think we could have added another three days.

[00:30:05.220] - Doug

I think that's always going to be the case. So much to say for everyone, that you're always going to want more time. And because the weather is so unpredictable, even in may time.

[00:30:14.600] - Tracy

Yeah, well, yeah, I didn't expect to be as cold as it was. So, again, that the weather is a big thing, so make sure you take layers. You've got waterproof coat on? I took ahead of my waterproof jacket footwear. Think about walking boots, things that are comfortable on your feet as well. Don't underestimate the cost of that, because it's been a couple of years since we've been back to the UK and we were a bit surprised just how expensive, like, petrol it was. Very expensive.

[00:30:41.110] - Doug

Yeah. I mean, there's a lot going on in the world, sort of thing, where the cost of petrol was on the increase. But when we knew the price of food had gone up, it was a bit of a shock towards the Zack.

[00:30:51.950] - Tracy

And then I think, like I said, things like, think about putting yourself a cool bag in the car, filling it up. Morrison's in Fort William. Good place to go. Get yourself some meal deals, sandwiches, crisps drinks whatever. So you've got those with you. Again, just being flexible. If the weather is not great, just trying to plan. Don't have such a strict itinerary that you can't like, for example, the three days on sky, we had to shift things around because the weather was not brilliant. Two of the three days. So we did things like the gardens and obviously it's a lot outdoors, but we could do a bit more driving on some of the days where it wasn't so brilliant for walking. And then I think the other thing, one thing we also want to say, and I think I'm particularly bad at this, is I spend too much time looking through my phone or looking through my video device is actually missing things because you're not taking in the scenery around you. And there are a couple of times where I was trying to find my phone when we literally drove around the corner and there was an Apple Cross.

[00:31:53.430] - Tracy

No, it wasn't, because it was when we're leaving the Glamping Pod when we're catching the one. Yeah, there was one at Apple Cross as well. So it was twice it was twice where we had stags or deer in the middle of the road and I was too busy pfafter trying to get my phone or trying to take the video that I actually missed them. So I think that's just keep your eyes open, enjoy the scenery, take turns with driving so that you can both enjoy the scenery. Most definitely, yeah, I think that's it. Is there anything else that you can suggest?

[00:32:21.290] - Doug

No. One thing I'm glad we did consider this was make sure that where you stay in has parking, adequate parking, because there's a couple of times, because it was a summer month, we were using the whole day.

[00:32:35.810] - Tracy

Yes, absolutely.

[00:32:37.090] - Doug

Good. By the time we arrived at some accommodation, a lot of the parking spaces had disappeared and been used. So a couple of places calendar comes to mind, is that we had to search around a bit for somewhere to park the car.

[00:32:49.910] - Tracy

Yeah, that's true. That's true. I think if you're going in summer as well, do bear in mind, if you're not used to it, it's light. Obviously, the further north that you go, the lighter it is. And it was did we see any darkness when we're on?

[00:33:03.100] - Doug

Not total darkness. By 11:00, you maybe needed your lights on your car.

[00:33:07.440] - Tracy

Yeah, it was amazing. So that's basically a quick rundown of our Itinerary. Some quick tips, things that we're thinking about. If you are planning your own Scottish road trip this year. Again, there's lots and lots of resources for this on our website. We have also got a Facebook group which you can join and ask questions, and we're available in that sometimes we go on there, do Facebook Live, we do question answer sessions, so there's loads and loads of information that you can ask from us, from other members of the group. So, yeah, I mean, leave us some feedback if there's other things that you want to know. Otherwise, I think that's a fairly good rundown of the Itinerary. Again. The itinerary. And all this information will be on the show notes, as well as links to the actual full itinerary, which you can download, which has got recommendations as well, places to stay for hours on. We could absolutely. So we're planning to do similar talk about we did a road trip around Cornwall as well, so we're coming on to a podcast later to talk about that. But in the meantime, really, I just want to say thanks for listening this week.

[00:34:09.790] - Tracy

Wand really appreciate everybody who each who downloads, who listens to the podcast. We're just so happy that so many people are enjoying it and we get some fantastic feedback. Until next week from myself and Doug, we just want to say Happy UK Travel Planning. Thank you.