

[00:00:01.360] - Intro

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.

[00:00:36.970] - Tracy

Hi and welcome to episode 50 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. In this week's episode, I chat with Marissa Barker and her mum, Cindy, all about their trip around the UK in April and May this year, you'll find out lots about how Marissa organised her trip, including how she took into consideration the needs of her travel party. Because there were actually eight of them who travelled over, including her young son and her parents. So, without further ado, let's introduce Marissa and her mum, Cindy. So I'm really happy this episode that we have got Marissa and her mum, Cindy to do their trip report from their recent visit around the UK. So you guys are in England and Scotland and Wales, so you did really good. Loads of Great Britain. So I thought it'd be great for you guys to come on to the podcast and tell us all about your trip. But first things first, would you like to introduce yourselves, please?

[00:01:32.500] - Marissa

Okay. I'm Marissa and then my mom, Cindy, is here with me and we're from Maine in the States and we just did the three weeks in the UK and had a great time.

[00:01:42.320] - Tracy

It was great. It was great following you as well, because you were putting some pictures in our Facebook group and because I know we've been talking for quite a while about your trip, haven't we? So it was really good to kind of follow it as you went along. So who went with you on the trip, Marissa?

[00:01:57.180] - Marissa

We had a group that kind of like bits and pieces of the trip. Myself, my then four year old son, my dad and my brother travelled for the whole, like, 27 days and then my mom joined a weekend and then the family that I work with joined for the first two weeks of it.

[00:02:14.830] - Tracy

Yeah. So it was quite complex because you had quite a few people kind of flying in.

[00:02:20.250] - Marissa

Lots of moving pieces.

[00:02:21.940] - Cindy

Yeah. And it was a lot of fun. Though, especially having the little girl that Marissa nanny's for, while she's not she's 13 now. 13. But she was wonderful with the now, today is Finn's fifth birthday, so she was wonderful with him. They had a great time running and playing together, dinosaur beach and things like that.

[00:02:45.760] - Tracy

Yeah. Well, what was lovely about your trip is that it was multigenerational. So how many altogether were you when you were there all together?

[00:02:52.950] - Marissa

Was it ten, eight, at once. Yeah, eight at once.

[00:02:56.840] - Cindy

And then six.

[00:02:57.780] - Marissa

Yeah, because it was Dad's 70th birthday, like, this year, and so it was kind of a bucket list for him. Get him to travel before it's too late.

[00:03:06.350] - Tracy

Perfect. So can you give us kind of a brief overview of the trip?

[00:03:12.310] - Marissa

Yeah, so we ended up we flew into London and then got transport from Doug what is at Meneage Tours and right down to Cornwall, St Ives, where we did, like, the first four days. Loved it. Gorgeous weather. We got really lucky the whole trip, really. We did a Cornwall tour with him and then we ended up doing a night in Lime Regis before making our way back to London to meet up with mom. She flew in on a Friday and met us at our hotel. And then we took the train up to Edinburgh and did two nights there. Had, like, a full independent day. And then we got picked up by our tour guide at our Airbnb and then driven up through the Highlands, up, stayed in Inverness for night and then went to Skye and then Fort Williams and then a night in Glasgow was a very brief night. It was like just basically a sleep stop. I'll have to go back to that.

[00:04:12.530] - Tracy

Did you get the train from Fort William down to Glasgow?

[00:04:15.010] - Marissa

Yes, we did Fort Williams to Glasgow and then Glasgow to Durham to start our next leg of our tour with a different guide. And then did the Lakes District for two nights, dropped off in Liverpool, and then we took the train from Liverpool to Conwy, did a night there. And then the train, we got picked up with a tour guide again and did some chunks of Wales and England and then ended in London at the end.

[00:04:40.010] - Tracy

Wow. Was it 27 days altogether?

[00:04:43.760] - Marissa

Yeah, I think it was right around there. Not enough time.

[00:04:47.020] - Tracy

Yeah, I know. You said that you did actually cover a lot of ground, actually, in the time you were there.

[00:04:53.090] - Cindy

Fast and Furious. Fast and furious in the UK. This should be a title of a new movie.

[00:05:04.030] - Tracy

You did hit a lot of the kind of. I mean, the fact that you managed to get all the way down to Cornwall and all the way up to the finals, like, sort of to Inverness is amazing, actually, that you start to that point, because those are kind of pretty opposite parts of the country.

[00:05:18.470] - Marissa

The one place that we missed that was an item that our group wanted you was Orkney, but I could not fit Orkney and St Ives. I was like, I cannot do both of them, I'm sorry.

[00:05:30.650] - Tracy

You did an amazing job planning it as it was, honestly. Yes. Orkney is going that little bit further, but you can save that up to next time because I highly recommend it.

[00:05:41.390] - Marissa

Because that's the plan, is doing the islands more next time.

[00:05:44.460] - Tracy

Yeah, Orkney is amazing and you were very lucky, actually, because the weather was really good when you were over as well. It's lovely travelling whatever time of year, but it just makes it that little bit nicer when you've got a little bit of warmth and sunshine.

[00:05:57.980] - Marissa

Our guidance guy said that we were experiencing, like, August weather. He's like, we get like, a week of this in August.

[00:06:05.170] - Tracy

That's brilliant. That's brilliant. Because when we were there last year, we didn't get brilliant weather. We were there for three days and it rained for two. So it wasn't wasn't the best, but it was still a lovely place to go.

[00:06:14.550] - Marissa

That's why I had scheduled this three and a half days in Skye, as I thought we'd get a bad weather day at least.

[00:06:19.750] - Tracy

Yeah, that was actual bonus that you didn't, because I know when we talked about it, and I do say that to people when they go, they plan, like one day in Skye or two, is that you've got to think just in case the weather is not great, plan around that. So, talking about planning, I know that you started planning this quite a long time ago because there was a lot involved in it. So how did you talk through your planning process, Marissa?

[00:06:45.820] - Marissa

Well, probably like 2019, I started kind of looking at it and planning it casually and kind of looking at all the bits and pieces and doing a bunch of rewrites and plans. And then we originally looked at a bus tour and then we changed our minds and we wanted to do self guided and we looked at driving and I was like, no, we're not driving it. I can't do that. So it was a lot of moving pieces and I was just kind of like, casually putting a list together to get it done before my son was in school and my dad was too much older, so it really worked out to be this year. And then I started probably late 2021, early 2022, really, like, planning

really intensely, getting stuff, like, booked and organised. And I found your travel group and it was such a huge help.

[00:07:36.610] - Tracy

I remember when you joined because it seemed a long time in advance that you were planning, which is fine. And I know you kind of had a lot of questions because you were debating about how to get around the country, because you kind of had definite places that you want to go, and also because you were travelling, there was quite a few of you travelling as well. And you also had to think about the fact that, again, that multi generation rational thing about how could you keep the kids happy, and also all the different needs of everybody travelling on the trip. So it was brilliant. And I know you've been a brilliant member of the Facebook group, and I love the fact that you're still part of the group, even though you've returned.

[00:08:12.030] - Marissa

We'll be back. Yeah.

[00:08:13.810] - Tracy

And it's wonderful because you're sharing your experiences and your knowledge and helping out. So I really appreciate that. So I just want to say thanks for that as well.

[00:08:21.950] - Marissa

The group was such a huge resource for me. As soon as I found it and I could search through the group and your website and stuff and find pieces that I was stuck on, I would be like, how do I get from here to here? And it'd be like, oh, look, there's an article about it and figure it out from there, or the link. And then I debated back and forth about doing the Itinerary consult because I was like, I don't know, I don't know. But it was my anxiety. It made it so much easier to meet with you and Doug and go over, like, okay, yes, this looks good here's. My suggestion for this and such really made my life so much easier.

[00:09:04.250] - Tracy

Because we do like I think it's often the reassurance that we can give and often the little tips and little things that we go through that can make things less stressful. When you're planning, especially when it's somewhere you've not been before, you were planning for a lot of people. So that's kind of we feel that responsibility of making sure that it's going to work out. It was great doing the consult with you as well because you did have a good plan. You already knew what you wanted, so helping you tweak it and as you say, just helping you feel more confident about what you planned was really helpful. So, obviously we were just talking before we started recording the podcast, actually, about the fact there's so many places to visit in the UK. So how did you go about initially deciding where you wanted to go?

[00:09:52.750] - Marissa

I probably started a list of places in the UK I want to go when I was, like, probably a kid, just from travel shows. We grew up watching a lot of travel shows and then just kind of like seeing once I figured out who was going with us in our group, asking them what their priorities were and what they wanted to do, and then doing a lot of research and back to your site, like, okay, what do you recommend and how long in each place you had said and kind of what I could fit in and having to subtract some.

[00:10:24.310] - Cindy

I think some of it, too, was she really took into consideration, as you said, the multi generations and the different areas of interest, and likes knowing her dad wanted to go to Wales because he has a lot of family history there. I wanted to go to Scotland because there was a lot of family history.

[00:10:50.270] - Marissa

Finn wanted us to go to the dinosaur beach. He's four.

[00:10:54.610] - Cindy

Activities, doing fun activities like that, knowing that her brother loves history and so doing some of those history.

[00:11:01.780] - Marissa

Hadrian's Wall was his absolute must.

[00:11:04.460] - Cindy

So everybody got to pick something that they really wanted to do. She found a way to incorporate it into the daily agenda, which we lived by, her dad lived by. It was great. Every morning he was checking the agenda.

[00:11:20.230] - Marissa

He had his itinerary.

[00:11:23.290] - Tracy

So once you got all those places from everybody and it's great that everybody had their first choice and their interest, how did you then go about how to put that into an itinerary? So it made sense.

[00:11:39.150] - Marissa

I actually ended up having to flip our itinerary fairly last minute. Not last minute, I guess six months in advance. I had it all planned out and sorted and we were going to fly into London, go up to Scotland and at the end do Cornwall and then fly out from London. But the schedule for the kid I nanny's school was changed, so we had to switch it for her vacation and start with St Ives.

[00:12:01.850] - Tracy

Yeah.

[00:12:02.470] - Marissa

So I kind of looked at the map to see, like, okay, go from London. It's this long to get here and I can do this many days here, and then had it calendared out and then, okay, prioritise doing three days in Skye versus three days somewhere else, do two days here, three days here instead. And kind of like seeing on the map where it would be and how to get there and stuff.

[00:12:25.520] - Tracy

Yeah. I think using a map is really invaluable because I've got that tiny challenge, and in that there's maps in that I always say it's a really good idea to map it out because you might find that some places are closer together than you actually realise and some places are a lot further apart than you sometimes realise. And, like, for example, getting down to Cornwall, getting to St Ives. It's a long way to go. Yes. And often people don't realise. I was talking to Doug the other day about Cornwall, and often people don't realise just how far it is to actually go down to Cornwall. And I think you did it the right way because he picked you up at the airport, so he didn't worry when you arrived. And obviously and you stopped off on places along the way as well. So that becomes like a tour on your first day.

[00:13:11.210] - Marissa

It was a six hour transport, which after we had like, a six-hour flight. So because we're lucky, we get a direct flight and it's not comparable to most people's. So we got off the flight and a lot of us didn't sleep on the flight, so some of us napped on the ride down and we didn't have to think about it because we got the transport and transport ended up being probably less than it would have been for us to all take the train or anything.

[00:13:34.310] - Cindy

That was another thing. I think you did you did a lot of cost comparisons, too, on the best ways to travel, and she looked at so many different bus tours and cost comparisons and places that they went. So that's when she decided to just create her own tour because we couldn't find exactly what we wanted.

[00:13:56.010] - Tracy

Yeah, and the advantage was that because there's quite a few of you, you could do the private tour, you could have the private guides, because you could share the cost out, and that's the advantage of doing that. So you had all of the advantages of having somebody drive you, somebody guide you, but be able to split the cost of that between you, all of you, which is brilliant.

[00:14:19.270] - Marissa

And just having a tour guide, you get such a better viewpoint of everything. You're driving down the road and he's pointing out, like, oh, this is this historical building, which you would have just driven by it and know nothing, or like, oh, this is where these people were from and lived, or the history of things. And I really value that extra part to it, like instead of just driving myself around.

[00:14:42.430] - Tracy

I think that's a really important point because obviously we've got some preferred partners that we work with, with UK Travel Plan and obviously Doug Meneage Tours is one of those. We've got John England down the Southeast of England. Victoria, the Cotswolds and Mark. We've got loads of people now that we work with. Part of the kind of reason that I love working with those people is because of the value that they bring when you go to those areas, because you learn so much more than and it's nice. If you want to do your own driving trip, that's absolutely fine. But I think if you have got the possibility of actually having somebody that knows it, knows the area, can guide you around as well as driving, so you can sit back and relax and enjoy it and not have to worry about the rules of the road and all that sort of stuff. But you're learning at the same time. You can fully take it in, can't you?

[00:15:29.980] - Cindy

Yeah, I think that I would highly recommend, if people are considering visiting the UK, that they do some sort of guided tour the first time, as opposed to self drive, unless you know somebody that's over there. I think, like my son, now that he's done the tour, he's adventurous enough and confident enough that he would do a self drive tour. But it was really a great introduction. And if you have any kind of anxiety about getting places on time and doing things, it was just so nice to be able to be picked up, relaxed. You didn't have to worry about anything other than getting in and out of the vehicle. And you could chitchat with people and just relax and enjoy it, and that's it.

[00:16:17.690] - Marissa

And also for you, Marissa, as well, because obviously you had your son with you and I know what it's like when I used to travel with my daughter, when you've got a little one with you, you're always more preoccupied, kind of thinking, but at least if you're not driving, you can actually spend the time. You could spend the time with them. You didn't have to worry about things every night about what was organised because somebody else was doing it. And you did a really good job of that kind of each part of your holiday when you went from the bit that you did yourself and then you went to the next Driver Guide, so

that worked very well. And obviously you had different people as well, which is a nice way of doing it, I think, as well. Yeah.

[00:16:51.880] - Marissa

And I think starting in St Ives, it really worked out well for us because it gave us, like we were there. Easter Sunday was our first full day. We landed on the Saturday and we had Saturday to drive down. But, like, our full day on Sunday we could kind of just do. I planned it just to kind of be around St. Ives, and we ended up doing St. Ives in the morning and then St. Michael's Mount in the afternoon and just kind of like a more low key day to get used to and get rested and stuff in case anybody had jet lag. Which none of us really had any issues, it seemed. So that was good.

[00:17:24.670] - Tracy

That's good. Did you enjoy St Michael's Mount?

[00:17:27.160] - Marissa

I did. We thankfully brought a carrier for my son and I had my brother carry him because some serious steppage.

[00:17:35.980] - Tracy

Oh, yes. Don't tell anybody, but when we went last year, Doug went up to the house, the test, and I just sat on the grass, enjoying the views.

[00:17:49.510] - Marissa

Yeah, I don't blame you. The views were gorgeous up at the top, but it was quite the hike. Mom would have definitely done the same. She had been with us, she would.

[00:17:58.340] - Cindy

I'd have sat out too.

[00:17:59.770] - Tracy

Yeah, I did it. I enjoyed it. And I sent Doug to take the photographs and I said, you know what, I'm going to sit and enjoy the weather and these beautiful views, because it was stunning. So, obviously you went to London as part of your trip as well. So how did you find London? How was that? Because obviously it's a bit busier in London. It's a major cities.

[00:18:19.230] - Marissa

I am a country girl. Yeah, for sure. I liked London once we were in London and in a hotel and not carrying our bags on the Tube. Which is not fun, we were able to take the Tube to two places, and that app that Doug recommended was super helpful because I could actually know where I needed to go.

[00:18:41.260] - Tracy

I think probably all the transport for London Go app.

[00:18:44.890] - Marissa

There's a Trainline and then was really helpful, but I liked walking around it. But I definitely think we had enough time, just because we did an evening and then a full day, and then at the end, we had another full day and an evening. And I think for us, we kind of saw what we needed to see. I would definitely go back and I'm sure there's more I could see. But we did the British Museum at the end, which was really cool. My son loved the sarcophaguses.

[00:19:14.170] - Tracy

Oh, yes.

[00:19:15.010] - Marissa

So that was good. That was on my brother's, like, must see was British Museum. And then we did, like, a lot of walking on our first day, full day in London, and did just, like, the Trafalgar Square Covent Garden at the end. Yeah, because my brother has a friend that lives in London, so we saw her husband perform in Covent Garden and stuff. That was brilliant.

[00:19:36.710] - Cindy

So you've got to do London twice.

[00:19:38.630] - Marissa

Yes.

[00:19:39.400] - Cindy

I only did the tail end, and for me, it was so busy that it wasn't we were more of the wide open, less busy places, but also somebody, when I was talking about it was saying they were getting ready for the Coronation, too. So it probably was busier than usual. I don't compare it to, but it was definitely.

[00:20:07.650] - Tracy

It was very busy because I was there, because obviously you're there at the tail end of the Easter holiday. Kids are off school, so it's really busy. I was there then and I went in end of April, just I think it was the day, the London Marathon. I've never seen it as busy as it was then. It was absolutely manic and I think a lot of it was preparations for the Coronation. And I think it was just a lot the weather was pretty good, so a lot of people out and about. Yeah, even I was like, wow, this is really busy. Really busy.

[00:20:39.930] - Marissa

And of course, we ended up on a May Day, was our full last day in London. So we had the bank holiday on one end and the Easter holiday on our other end in London.

[00:20:49.390] - Tracy

We were like, yeah, you really got it. But it gets busy. I mean, like, June now, July and August. I think it was extremely busy because of the Coronation as well, because then there were so many preparations going on for that. So that was all.

[00:21:03.920] - Cindy

There were just so many people. It was just and with such a large group, it was hard to even just walk and stay together. But it's definitely something that I probably would do again.

[00:21:19.030] - Tracy

And I do say to people on the planning trips, yes, spend the time in London, go and see London. Go and see the things that may be on your list that you really want to see in London, but the best thing to do is go to London. Get out of London.

[00:21:32.430] - Marissa

Absolutely.

[00:21:33.470] - Tracy

Because you'll have realised as you've travelled around that you get out of London and you get out to the countryside and you'll meet so many different people, you'll hear lots of different accents. You're in Wales, you're in Scotland, you're in England, you were down in Cornwall, so you'll have met lots of different you're in Northumberland, which is where I'm from. So you'll have met lots of different people and you get a different taste of the country when you travel around like that, for sure.

[00:22:02.470] - Marissa

I'm really glad that we had London on both ends, too, and not just like a full, like, four days in London, because that would have been really overwhelming. So having the day and a half and the day and a half bookends really was helpful. And we planned our last day to be like a more low key hop on, hop on bus tour. They knew we'd be exhausted.

[00:22:20.530] - Tracy

And that's the thing, I think sometimes people don't realise just how exhausting London is. I've got ten days at 20th or 30 June and I've got full on. I'm doing lots of tours and I know I'm going to be exhausted, so I'm kind of gearing myself up for that because it's a lot of walking and a lot of noise and a lot of busyness.

[00:22:42.070] - Marissa

I didn't realise just how restaurants, they always have loud music and a lot of people talking at the same time, so that was very overstimulating, especially for my son. That was a lot.

[00:22:54.710] - Tracy

Totally understand. Totally get that.

[00:22:56.940] - Cindy

One thing I think is important to know, too, that we've found out when it comes to restaurants and things, if you want to have dinner somewhere, you need to make a reservation, which is.

[00:23:07.950] - Marissa

Something Tracy told me, but I don't like to plan that far ahead.

[00:23:12.370] - Cindy

Well, it's also something that we're just not used to doing, but it definitely especially with a bigger group needed and we're more of the, oh, we're walking about, we're all getting hungry, let's find a place that looks fun to eat. You can't do that.

[00:23:33.090] - Tracy

Especially because there's a lot of people.

[00:23:33.910] - Marissa

I didn't have any issues in St Ives with that, though.

[00:23:36.470] - Cindy

No, not in the small areas.

[00:23:38.320] - Tracy

Since we're kind of talking about food, let's talk about how did you find the food, what did you enjoy?
What were your favourite?

[00:23:44.380] - Marissa

So good! I could have lived off of the fish and chips. Just everywhere.

[00:23:49.230] - Tracy

There's a kind of reputation about food not being brilliant in the UK, but actually...

[00:23:55.370] - Marissa

I don't think we had a bad meal. I think everything that I ate was delicious.

[00:24:00.910] - Tracy

That's brilliant.

[00:24:01.490] - Cindy

We tried things, different things, too.

[00:24:04.430] - Marissa

We went to your recommendation in London for the Indian restaurant.

[00:24:09.690] - Tracy

Yes.

[00:24:10.140] - Marissa

Which was probably my first experience with Indian food.

[00:24:13.010] - Tracy

And you enjoyed it?

[00:24:14.040] - Marissa

It was delicious. Not many choices for a four year old. No, but he had a mango smoothie and, like, a dessert, so he was.

[00:24:23.120] - Tracy

I bet he'd be happy with that.

[00:24:24.660] - Marissa

Yep, he was pretty happy with that.

[00:24:26.230] - Cindy

So he's pretty happy with all the ice cream.

[00:24:28.050] - Marissa

We ate a lot of that ice cream, gelato ice cream. Like dessert pretty much daily clotted cream, the cream teas and St. Ives and the pasties.

[00:24:38.890] - Tracy

Oh, yeah. Did you have a favourite Cindy meal?

[00:24:42.320] - Cindy

I really liked the fish and chips. Yeah, I think that was probably my favourite.

[00:24:47.790] - Marissa

The sticky toffee pudding on the Isle of Skye.

[00:24:52.510] - Cindy

That was amazing. When we were on Isle of Skye. We were in the Airbnb and we were right on the water. But some of our parties stayed at the little hotel, the Little Old Inn. And they had a restaurant attached to it where you could make reservations if you were staying there. So we would go there for dinner each night. And we tried the first night, I think we tried that sticky toffee pudding. And, oh, my. I'm not a big dessert person, but, wow, that changed my mind.

[00:25:26.550] - Tracy

That is always a favourite I hear so much about because I'm not a big dessert person at all. I mean, I like cold desserts more than the warm desert. But my husband, he loves his sticky toffee pudding. Absolutely. Did he have it with custard or cream?

[00:25:42.570] - Cindy

They had ice cream with it.

[00:25:43.870] - Tracy

Ice cream. Okay.

[00:25:44.990] - Marissa

So my son would eat the ice cream and I'd eat the toffee pudding.

[00:25:47.730] - Tracy

Yeah. Lovely. Now, I'm glad that you enjoyed that and that you enjoyed all the different foods. Did you try haggis when you're in Scotland? We did.

[00:25:57.810] - Cindy

No, I didn't try Haggis.

[00:26:00.210] - Marissa

We went to Dunvegan Castle in Skye and they had, like, a haggis with cheesy potato. Like a nice potato with cheese and haggis in it. So good. The food for it being just like a cafe at a castle was amazing. And they had a venison stew there, too.

[00:26:16.280] - Cindy

Yeah, the lamb was really good. We had lamb a couple of times, too.

[00:26:20.040] - Tracy

So did you guys eat out all because I know you stayed we can kind of talk about accommodation because I know you stayed in some Airbnbs and hotels, but how did you find in terms of catering, what did you do for did you have the breakfast where you're staying and then have lunch out?

[00:26:33.870] - Marissa

And then we did a lot of eating out. My son and I would stay back more often than not more often than the others did for doing dinner at home and stuff. Yeah, I think we did a couple of nights where we would do taken or like mac and cheese and stuff for him. But most of the time we went out. But we would like sandwiches and stuff for lunch deals and stuff.

[00:26:55.610] - Cindy

Most of the stores sold the fresh sandwiches, even the warm sandwiches. We would pick up some things. And then when we were on the Isle of Skye tour, our tour guide had built in lunch stops, places, so we would go out for lunch there.

[00:27:13.690] - Marissa

And he took us to stop for groceries before we. Got onto Skye, so I made sure I had, like, lots of fruits and stuff and peanut butter and jelly for my son during the day and stuff.

[00:27:24.110] - Tracy

A lot of their supermarkets as well. You can get the meal deals, which are excellent, so they're really good option because you get your drink and your piece of fruit or your pack of crisp and your drink. I love that. I know you mentioned before about your son the whole crisps and chips thing, because that's really confusing, isn't it?

[00:27:40.580] - Marissa

It was more confusing than I thought it would be for him, because I'd be like, yeah, I'm getting fish and chips you can eat. It came with chips and peas and he loves peas.

[00:27:50.300] - Cindy

He loves peas.

[00:27:51.740] - Marissa

I was like, yeah, you can eat the chips and peas. And I'd give him fruit and stuff before we went out for dinner to make sure he was going to be full and then he'd have dessert and he was like, but those are French fries. And I was like, no, they're chips here. And he's like, no, chips are like, in a bag. And I was like, no, those are crisps here. And I had to explain that to him, like a dozen times and I think by the end of it, he was just doing it just on purpose. He's like, no, those are not chips, those are French fries. And I was like, Buddy, I think by now, you know, what the difference? He was so funny about it, though.

[00:28:25.110] - Tracy

It is funny, but there's different terms that we use in other chips and crisps, because I grew up between the UK and Africa, and in Africa, we used to call them chips for crisps. Oh. Then I used to come back and then I'd get all confused. What is it? What are we calling them?

[00:28:41.990] - Cindy

And her dad and our son really liked all the different pubs and trying the different beers and the cask beers and things like that, and the hand pumped beers. So they really were having fun trying all those different things out.

[00:29:00.010] - Tracy

Yes, there's always a favourite. I actually put a photo on in the Facebook group last week. I went in and took all the picture on one of the supermarkets. All the different beers that you can buy, just different. I know that was a very popular post that I put on saying because there's so many different sorts that you can get and of course, all the different types of gin that you can get as well.

[00:29:21.970] - Cindy

Gin is very popular there.

[00:29:23.860] - Tracy

Yeah, it is really popular.

[00:29:26.170] - Marissa

Mom enjoyed the whiskey tasting.

[00:29:31.270] - Cindy

I'm more of a bourbon whiskey person and yours is more of a malted Scotch whiskey. But I did try them and I found some that I liked.

[00:29:40.450] - Tracy

Oh, that's good. So let's talk about accommodation. So how did you choose your accommodation? What were your favourites?

[00:29:49.690] - Marissa

Well, since we had a bigger group, I tried to do, like, Airbnb a lot of the time where there was like a large enough space especially. So if we were going to be somewhere for multiple days, I tried to do Airbnbs. And if it was just going to be like a one night overnight, I would do, like, a hotel. Just because then it would give everybody their own space and be affordable. St Ives we found a gorgeous Airbnb that fit our whole group, which was impressive. And then, like, London, we did hotels because you're not going to find something for that big of a group and it's just easier to split everybody up at that point, give everybody kind of a break. And then Edinburgh, we did, like, an Airbnb and then like, Inverness, just a hotel, because we were there for a night.

[00:30:35.240] - Speaker 3

And do you have favourites out of those?

[00:30:37.610] - Speaker 1

Yeah, our Isle of Skye airbnb, I booked as soon as it was available on Airbnb, because I saw it, like, two years ago and I was like, that's where we need to stay, need to stay there. And literally, that was definitely the first thing I booked out of the entire trip, was that stay.

[00:30:54.390] - Cindy

It was right on the water. Right on the water.

[00:30:58.000] - Cindy

Front courtyard, a back courtyard, walking trails, lovely.

[00:31:01.980] - Marissa

And it was three bedrooms and a living room and a kitchen, and it was, like, perfect size for all of us. And that was before I knew our two others were going to be joining us. But it worked out that there was the inn next door. They could just stay and give everybody kind of some space to do their own thing.

[00:31:18.250] - Cindy

It was also nice, that location. There was a little playground, so Finn was able to go to the playground.

[00:31:24.240] - Marissa

A little community store.

[00:31:27.050] - Cindy

Matthew, which is her brother, my son, he's an early riser because of his job and he likes hiking, so he was able to get up on a lot of mornings in the different locations. We were multiple nights and go for a morning hike and take some pictures and then come back and we were all getting ready for the day.

[00:31:46.800] - Tracy

That's good. I know you mentioned the place you stayed in the Lake District as well was a favourite.

[00:31:51.570] - Marissa

Ashness Farm.

[00:31:52.810] - Cindy

Ashness Farm, that was the best.

[00:31:54.580] - Marissa

That was our guide. Keith for the Lakes District recommended that that's one of his preferred places to stay, and I absolutely can see why. Right up the road from Ashness, you're on like, this tiny side road up in the northern Lakes at that point, and there's like a gorgeous viewpoint over all the lakes and you're on the farm and the lambs and it's a bed and breakfast, so you get your cook breakfast, full English in the morning, fresh break. She baked the bread.

[00:32:28.410] - Cindy

Was it the Cumbrian sausage? Is that what that was? That was amazing. That was probably my second favourite thing.

[00:32:38.200] - Marissa

Yeah, I could have stayed there for a long time. Just like to go out in the morning and enjoy the view over the lake because we're up on the hill and the lambs and everything. And my brother was able to hike the mountains behind us.

[00:32:53.830] - Tracy

You were there for the perfect time of time of year. For the lambs as well.

[00:32:57.340] - Marissa

Yes, there's so many lambs, especially because.

[00:33:00.150] - Cindy

Marissa's lambs were lambing back home, too.

[00:33:04.330] - Marissa

So I was missing out on my sheep.

[00:33:06.270] - Tracy

Yeah, you missed them, but you got to see them there. So that's really nice. That's good. And I know you mentioned the White Heart Inn and Wells was somewhere else that you really liked as well.

[00:33:16.060] - Marissa

We loved Wells. It was gorgeous. I definitely wish we had had more time there. Some of the places I'd go back.

[00:33:22.610] - Cindy

They were so accommodating.

[00:33:24.300] - Marissa

So nice. That was my brother's favourite place. They had a really good beer selection. I guess the food was good. We learned that everything's, like, a bit slower paced for meals in the UK compared to the States because everybody in the States, I feel like it's like, okay, they sit down, they order, and they want their food pretty quickly.

[00:33:45.240] - Cindy

Bam, bam, bam.

[00:33:46.000] - Marissa

And so it's more relaxed and slower and we had to get used to that. But the food was so good. That was towards the end of our trip and my son was like, I just want to grilled cheese. And I was like, what are the chances that you can make a grilled cheese for him? And I was like, literally two pieces of bread and cheese and he will be the happiest kid ever. And the chef was like, Absolutely. And made him probably the best grilled cheese I've ever had a snack of. Wow, it worked out well. Yeah.

[00:34:16.930] - Cindy

And we were sharing a room and they didn't have a really big bed. And so the assistant manager I think, the assistant manager came running.

[00:34:27.560] - Speaker 4

Up with a folded up heavy quilt and made Finn a little bed on the floor. And it was yeah, he slept really well. It was great.

[00:34:36.740] - Marissa

So accommodating. And Wells was just gorgeous. Oh, my God, I wish I had been able to stay for the evening song because I've heard that. That's really nice. But we went to the Victor's Close and the Bishops got to see the Bishops area, like with the water and stuff. And then we had our tour guide, Keith, for that part and just the history and being able to learn from him. And he walked all around with us and showed us everything. And it was kind of cool. Like, we get to have lunch and breakfast with him and kind of learn about the area.

[00:35:11.250] - Tracy

That's cool. And I can hear people going, oh, I really want to know where these places were that you guys made. And I will make sure I get the names off you and I'll link to those in the show notes. If anybody's listening now, don't worry, there will be in the show notes and you can check out the places that they stayed at.

[00:35:28.950] - Cindy

It was funny because we had two different tour guides that I was with and they had two different styles, and one of them, you had a definite set agenda and this is where we're going, which was great because you knew what you were doing. And then the second one, Keith, it was more of, and he actually stayed with us where we were staying. And so we had a general idea of our options. And then in the evenings, when we knew kind of what the weather was going to be like, we'd sort of talk about a possible plan and then at breakfast, we would make a more definite plan and we could change it as we went along. And so I liked them both equally. There were advantages to each one.

[00:36:12.630] - Marissa

It was really nice to get the two different styles, too. And I would recommend highly both of them. And I would definitely go back and there's a lot more I told Keith that the next time I go back that I'll just have him. I'll just be like, Here, I have a week. Tell me where I'm going. I have faith. Like, a lot of the places that we ended up going were not places I would have known about or would have been on my radar. And there's a lot of smaller villages and towns that were really nice that I wouldn't have really known.

[00:36:47.730] - Tracy

And that's the thing, is you can get off the beaten track and the places that everybody knows about. But that's the thing about if you with somebody, you're going to go to those places that you wouldn't necessarily know about.

[00:37:02.170] - Cindy

Yeah, we did Stonehenge, but we also did what, the Maidens or the sisters?

[00:37:08.980] - Marissa

Oh, yeah. Like he showed us. Castle rig. Castle Rig. Stone Circle. Mary Maidens was Cornwall, but there was.

[00:37:17.550] - Cindy

Another one with her daughters or sisters.

[00:37:19.650] - Marissa

Lone Meg and her daughters.

[00:37:22.510] - Cindy

Which was really I mean, yeah, it was nice to go to Stonehenge, but when we were at the other ones, you could really get up close and personal and check it out.

[00:37:32.430] - Marissa

And he made sure we knew if you're doing Stonehenge, you need to be the first bus in. And he had us there and he had us on the bus and had us there first.

[00:37:40.440] - Cindy

Before it got too busy.

[00:37:41.350] - Tracy

Before it got busy, exactly. It's like that insider knowledge, isn't it?

[00:37:45.860] - Marissa

Yeah, it really is. Like I wouldn't have known. Like, we did Snow's Hill Manor. I wouldn't have known about that. Or like Llyn Idwal, which was like a hike in Wales up to a lake in the mountains. And those are things that would have been off my radar and it's just really cool.

[00:38:06.090] - Cindy

What was that? Slate Mine. That we went to. That was really cool.

[00:38:12.910] - Marissa

Let me look.

[00:38:15.790] - Marissa

It was a slate mine, and it. Was really that was in the lake, right? Yeah.

[00:38:22.270] - Cindy

And it was a really nice gift shop. But they also they did a lot of sculptures with the slate and it was beautiful.

[00:38:30.710] - Marissa

I can't remember the name of it. Yeah, I don't remember. I don't have that down. We were able to do a lot more and see a lot of gardens and stuff that I wouldn't have known about.

[00:38:42.900] - Tracy

Yeah. So it's good. Yeah. You definitely had a kind of well rounded experience that you got to go deeper, you got to go further. You got to see more than you would have done if you hadn't organised it the way that you did.

[00:39:02.270] - Speaker 4

I really liked and Daddy really liked and Matthew Liverpool, too. Oh, yes, Liverpool was it reminded me of a small Nashville here in the United States because of the live music all the time. I really enjoyed that, too, walking around there and just being able to pop into a pub and hear the music in the streets. And Roger is a huge Beatles fan, so they did the Beatles tour and then great. Again, met up with Matthew's friend recommended she has, like, a friend who's like.

[00:39:37.540] - Marissa

A big Beatles guy who toured my dad around all day.

[00:39:41.180] - Tracy

Oh, perfect.

[00:39:42.080] - Cindy

Huge beetles fan. He used to work in the Cavern and he took Matthew and Roger on a big walking tour. That was wonderful.

[00:39:52.660] - Tracy

And that's the thing. It's like everybody on your trip got all their interests, kind of for, which was exactly what you aimed for. You did such a good I said this to you, I don't know, six months ago when we spoke, just like you did a really good job.

[00:40:08.470] - Cindy

She did. I said she's missed her calling. She needs to be a travel guide or a travel planner.

[00:40:15.280] - Tracy

You did a great one. I was thinking about was there anything that surprised you about the trip? Because obviously you prepared, but when you go somewhere that you haven't been before, and often a lot of people think they know the UK because you watch a lot of TV. Was there anything that surprised you when you came over?

[00:40:35.210] - Marissa

I don't know. I feel like I was just kind of surprised by how tired I was from travelling, but I don't know. I don't know. Everybody was so nice and the food was so good, and I think everything went really smoothly.

[00:40:50.680] - Tracy

The weather was probably better than maybe it thought. Was the weather better than you expected?

[00:40:59.170] - Cindy

That was the surprise. I think the weather was so good.

[00:41:02.560] - Marissa

We had probably, like, one washout day when we were in Lime Regis, and we walked to the fossil beach because that was the reason we were there, was to see the fossils. And we walked the mile to the fossil beach in the gale. It was like one of the days where we had the gale eight or something and pouring rain.

[00:41:19.760] - Tracy

Oh, no.

[00:41:20.320] - Marissa

We were literally looked like we had been swimming for, like, hours by the time we got done with our walk. So worth it, though, because it was something that we were only there for one day and we weren't going to be able to do it the next day because the tide was going to be off and whatnot. So other than that, though, we got some showers and stuff, but we got really lucky. But back home, while we were there getting 65 and sunny, they had two weeks solid of rain, which is not what we usually get. So we went to England for the good weather and the rain stayed at home, apparently.

[00:41:55.690] - Tracy

Oh, well, that's okay. It was better that way around, for sure.

[00:41:58.060] - Marissa

Exactly.

[00:41:59.590] - Cindy

I don't think it was a surprise, but I think one of the things that I was really struck by was the history, because we're from the States and we're a relatively very young country compared to your country in the UK. So just seeing the buildings and the stones, and I remember walking with Keith and saying, Keith, how old would you say the stonework is? It's probably 300 years old, and that's something that our oldest places are, maybe 150. For me, I think the most emotional moment is I had done some ancestry and found that I'm directly related to the McBains in Scotland, and my great grandfathers were the clan chiefs. So we went to the McBain Museum memorial. There's a little park there. And then when we went to the Battle of Coladon, I always say it wrong. Like, the third stone that we saw on the walkway was my great, great, great Gileas McBain McBean. And so that was very powerful for me.

[00:43:19.250] - Tracy

Yeah, I can imagine. It's nice to be able to do that, isn't it? It's nice to be able to go back and kind of get that connection with generations past, but be able to do it. But even obviously I'm from the UK, but even my great grandfather was from Cornwall, and I love it when I go down there because I feel that connection with the tin mines down in Cornwall, even though it's 120 years ago. Then he moved up to

Northumberland. But it's lovely for you guys, but to come across from the States to be able to do that, it's amazing, isn't it, to kind of get in touch with your roots, however far back it is, that you can find that connection. That's lovely. Now, I'm going to ask you one more because I'm kind of conscious of time, because we're on 44 minutes already, so we're doing a lot of talking today, which is brilliant. It's really good to talk to you guys, but if there was anything that you're going to do differently, because I know you're going to plan another trip. Marissa I know. Definitely going to. Is there anything you would do differently?

[00:44:16.570] - Cindy

Yeah, I would not get COVID while I was there.

[00:44:19.590] - Tracy

You got sick, didn't you?

[00:44:21.570] - Cindy

No, I think we would have for me to do differently, would have slowed down and tried to maybe done just two or three things or two things and then left more free time to just wander about when you're driving about and you see a cute little town and I like to window shop and things like that. That's just me. So that's I think something that I would have done differently is just spent more time, had more free time to just kind of wander about.

[00:44:56.340] - Marissa

Yeah. With the way that I had to do it with so many things, we didn't really get that opportunity. But the next time I would definitely do make sure that I'm in the same place for two or three nights instead of like a bunch of one night stays so that I could see more. And then we packed pretty light, but even packing lighter. But I packed for my son and I in a check bag and backpacks. And I still had outfits that I packed that I probably didn't wear, even though I only packed like five outfits. But we made sure we had laundry every week. But I really could have packed less.

[00:45:32.410] - Cindy

But it's also hard to pack for the UK because it's almost like you're packing for three different seasons because you just don't know what you're going to get.

[00:45:40.820] - Marissa

Especially going from Cornwall to Skye. We didn't know what the temperature differences were going to be, but I could have packed less, reminding myself that if there's something I need, I can buy it there.

[00:45:52.180] - Tracy

Absolutely. But you know what? Even I've done that because I've been over for twelve weeks. So I try to minimally pack and I've still got stuff that I'm looking at the cupboard going, I don't think it's actually going to be warm enough. I think was maybe a bit optimistic about thinking it was going to be very hot and it's not, which it was last July. And then I'm not going to wear. Doesn't matter how many outfits there's always something you think I've not worn that. So it is difficult and as you say over the UK, because the weather can be so variable and you were going from right down south to right up north, and that there's a big temperature difference then as well, so it's difficult to know. Yeah. But I always end the podcast with the same question for everybody. So I'm going to ask you guys if there was one tip you would give to anyone planning their trip to the UK for the first time, what would that be?

[00:46:39.550] - Marissa

Mine would be doing the Itinerary consult because it really made my anxiety so much less because I was so stressed out and so worried that I was going to get something wrong. And mess up the whole trip for everybody and put a lot of pressure on myself. But that just being able to have the two extra sets of eyes overview it and kind of like, no, it looks good. Here's my suggestion on this. And that just really, I feel like, took my stress level down a lot and really made it so that I could enjoy the trip while we were on it and I didn't have to worry, like, oh, did I mess something up? Did I mess something up? I think that was really my thought.

[00:47:16.970] - Tracy

That's brilliant. And we loved working with you, Marissa, and helping you, and it's been a pleasure for the last couple of years, really, since you've been planning going through it. And it was just so lovely when you were on the trip and that you shared in the group. And I know you sent me some messages saying how things are going. I was asking, and it was just lovely to have that. And that's one of the things that's really special for myself and Doug, is that when we do the Itinerary consults, it's like we get to know you guys, and it's fantastic. The only thing was I didn't get the chance to meet you when you were over. I know that was something we couldn't coordinate, but I'm just so pleased that you had such a wonderful trip and.

[00:47:59.070] - Marissa

That you'll just have to come to Maine.

[00:48:02.730] - Tracy

We will do. Anyway, so I just wanted to say a huge thank you to Marissa and Cindy. Thank you so much for coming on the podcast.

[00:48:09.380] - Cindy

Thank you.

[00:48:10.110] - Tracy

Thank you and talking us through your trip. It's been brilliant. Thanks very much to Marissa and Cindy, once again for coming on this week's episode of the podcast. It was really great to talk to you guys about your trip and get your trip report and recommendations via podcast. So thanks very much, you guys, for agreeing to do that. You will find links to everywhere that Marissa talked about in this episode. So the accommodation and the guides that they used in this week's Show Notes, which is is@uktravelplanning.com/episode-50. I just want to say thanks to everyone for supporting the show, whether that's via the Tip Your Guide button on a website or via sponsoring the podcast, which you can now do from as little as \$3 a month. We really appreciate that, and I will be giving a shout out episode soon for everybody who is sponsoring us because we absolutely appreciate it so much. It's lovely that you do that. Do pop over and join the Facebook group as well, if that's something that you're interested in joining our community over there. Information about our Itinerary consultation service as well will be in the Show Notes, and we will be reopening that service again in July. We do a limited number every month. So if it is something that you think you would like to do, please take a check out the link and see if you can book a slot. Anyway, that's until next week. That's all. Leaves it to say, as usual, is happy UK travel planning.