

EPISODE 39 UK TRAVEL PLANNING PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

Intro [00:00:01]:

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 West Country Side to Seaside Towns.

Tracy Collins [00:00:37]:

Hello, and welcome to episode 59 of the UK travel planner podcast. In this week's episode, I chat to Mom of three, Debra Blazer, about her family's whirlwind 12 day road trip of England and Scotland. Debra started the podcast with a few questions for me before sharing the details of her trip plus tips for those of you who are planning a UK road trip of Rone. So without further ado, let's have a chat with Debra. I know you wanna ask me some questions, Deborah, so go for it.

Debra Blazer [00:01:08]:

Yes. First of all, I'd like to know how you and Doug met. Yep. And did you do the podcast? Was it something you formed together, or was something you started and he joined later or vice versa. How did that come about? Okay. Well,

Tracy Collins [00:01:20]:

Doug and I have been married for I reckon maybe 20 years coming up. Oh, congratulations. Yeah. I would say maybe, like, I don't know, 18, 19, something like that. I'm not very good at remembering. He'll he'll probably you know, and I usually forget the day as well, the date, because I wanted to get married on the 1st April, April, full day, but but, so that's in that's the date that was think about. So so we we met a long time ago, and, I've always traveled. That's always what I've done my entire life. So before I met Doug, I've got a daughter. She's 27 now. So I traveled a lot with her as a single parent. And then Doug and I met, and I was like, you know, I love travel. So bear in mind, I was kinda, mid thirties. So at that point, I'd done a lot of travel. And Doug hadn't, he'd previously been married and was divorced, and hadn't really done a lot of traveling really outside of Europe, certainly not outside of Europe. So -- Okay. -- we kinda got their travel book from me. It's you just have to, really, I just love travel. From a very young age, I've been it's been kinda my total love and obsession, and a lot of it is about the people that I meet. Because, I love visiting gorgeous places, obviously, around the world, but but for me, a lot of it is about the people that are made along the way that that for me makes a destination. So I am I have an insatiable, first for to find out about how other people are living on this same planet as I am, share what's their life like. I kinda wanna know -- Yes. -- how how everybody lives their lives. So kind of so then to cut a long story short, because I could be on the the test all day. I started a website in 2016 called Tracy's travels in time. Okay. Basically, just to write about my travels and what I was doing. And that

website still does really well. I'm actually gonna be starting a new podcast, which, will be about, global travel planning. Oh, that's gonna be coming out soon. I'm gonna I'm starting to together episodes for that. And that basically is gonna be me just sharing where we travel to because, obviously, we we have a lot of the K and, a lot of knowledge about UK travel, which is why we have UK travel planning. Yes. But we also travel to a lot of desk other destinations, and I kinda wanna share how I planned those trips, what we did, what we saw, who we met, and hopefully talk to people on a different destination. Some after New Zealand, in a few weeks time. And then, we've got it in Japan. Yeah. Japan in October. So I thought, well, you know, Oleg. Fantastic. So jealous. So let's share a bit of that. so it's not becoming up. So, I started UK travel plan in 2020. I'd just come back from the UK, and obviously then COVID hit, and I was I was very keen to start a a UK travel planning focused website, which is what what I did first because I had the practice from doing Tracy's travels and time website. And then the podcast last year, I figured, really, the the website's fine, but, you know, to to give a full of resource for people. Mhmm. Not everybody wants to read. some people like to listen. I know I like to listen. I also like to video. So that's something I'm gonna be hoping to get more into making YouTube videos. I'm I'm trying to. It's just a matter of time. Right.

Debra Blazer [00:04:32]:

Oh, the podcast was invaluable to us. Yep. I would sit and work all day and I listen to Spotify. I often listen to audiobooks. Yep. And I found your podcast and it was like finding gold.

Tracy Collins [00:04:46]:

You know what? The the podcast, I love doing the podcast because it also, you know, doing the website is one thing, and it's, you know, it's a it's a huge resource we've put together. But I don't necessarily know who goes on my website. Well, I don't know who goes on certain reads and stuff. But when I do a podcast, I kinda get my voice out there, but I get other people's voices out there. So obviously talking to you today, Deborah, you know, we can share your trip with people all around the world, and we have listeners on every continent.

Debra Blazer [00:05:14]:

Yes.

Tracy Collins [00:05:15]:

So people listen and they they they they wanna they listen to the advice they take the the the wants, so the inspiration, but they want the practical tips. And that's what we're sharing, but also not only with myself and Doug do and the podcast, but also bringing in guests to all, like, specialists in different areas like Sinead, who did the episode 3 about York. And also because we obviously were sharing a lot of our own travels, around the UK as well. So, again, up to date, cool knowledge that people are after. Right. and there wasn't really anything out there on the podcast world for UK travel planning really. So So I started it and I dragged Doug into it. He he's he's getting better. He's he also gets a little bit nervous when he does a podcast episode, but he's getting far better now. Because you know what? You you don't have to they don't have to be perfect. People don't expect perfection. Right. That's

what my family just kept saying. Have fun with it. Just be yourself. You'll be fine. Yeah. Exactly. And, you know, this is gonna be episode 59. I've done 59 you know, and even myself, which people think is strange. I get a little bit nervous every time I do an episode. So -- Right. -- you know, and that's me on the 15th episode. And I know I can stop and rewind and we can cut out the stuff, but it's still that I just like, oh, I don't know if it's a bit excitement as well because I love doing them. So, yeah, so dog took comes on the podcast and he'll he took his specialty as train travel in the UK. So anything with train travel or He did recent episode because he did some time travel to Wales when in the UK, and he he went to the Isle of Wight. So he did some episodes specifically about those. Right. Yeah. So he I do more of the talking, but he'll come on when when it's something that I think, oh, yeah. It'd be really good to get him involved with.

Debra Blazer [00:06:53]:

Do you have a favorite episode, Deb? Well, I actually learned about Glencoe through the podcast, had not heard of Glencoe before. And as soon as I heard you talking about it. I was like, oh, we gotta go there. Yep. And the Caledonian sleeper train was so insightful and so wonderful for us. We were trying to fit so much in such a small period of time that taking the sleeper train back from Scotland to back to London bought us an entire day of travel. Yeah. Absolutely. We didn't have to drive that distance back. We could just sleep on the train. It was that was just wonderful.

Tracy Collins [00:07:31]:

Brilliant. Brilliant. And that was, like, drag Doug in to do. You know, well, we're planning our trip back over this, Christmas in January, and we've already talked about the caledonian sleep, but, because for me. And, obviously, I mean, I've traveled all over the world, but, but, you know, catching the caledonia sleep and sleep by from London on on night time and waking up in Scotland, particularly you go out to Fort William, it's just for me, it's like heaven. I absolutely love it.

Debra Blazer [00:07:56]:

There's something magical about it, and I wanted to make sure to give especially our children. That was gonna be an experience that I knew they would carry for the rest of their lives. Absolutely.

Tracy Collins [00:08:07]:

I'm so grateful we did that. So I was just thinking, Debna, we're kind of a few minutes into the podcast, and you've asked me a a a few questions about about myself and the podcast. Would you like to introduce yourself and just tell us a little bit about what who you went on the trip with and, where you live in the states?

Debra Blazer [00:08:25]:

Yes. My name is Deb Blazer, and we're from Florida, the United States. We live on a very island just south of St. Augustine, and St. Augustine's actually our oldest city. It was founded

in 1565. so we have a fort up there, and it's three hundred years old, which is nothing. Doesn't even compare to how old everything is in England and Scotland. So we were we were excited to get out and see the history.

Tracy Collins [00:08:56]:

And this is your first trip. Was that right, abroad?

Debra Blazer [00:08:59]:

This is our first trip out side of the United States. I've gone myself. I went to Canada once and down to the Bahamas, but this was our first Family trip out of the US. My my oldest son and I were actually supposed to go to Japan this summer. We were signed up, scheduled to go to Japan with the school, and he's actually in a, accelerated program. that's actually run out of Cambridge. Wow. They do testing into the summertime. And when the when the kids agree to be part of this program, they sign papers saying they will be there for the tests. And so his test conflicted with our Japan trip. So we ended up cancelling that back in March, and I said to them I said I got gathered the family, and I said, look. I'm going somewhere. I don't care where we are going somewhere. because I think I've I've talked to you before that we we have a, we have a business that we run from our home. My husband and I work together. So You know how it is. You never get away from work. Yep. Absolutely. The only way to get away from work is to travel. Yeah. For you, travel is work, but

Tracy Collins [00:10:13]:

-- fun work fun work when it is work. Yeah.

Debra Blazer [00:10:17]:

I like that kind of work. So I said we we need to go somewhere, and I asked the kids where they wanted to go. And the first thing they said is let's go to England and Scotland. And I said, okay. Let's do it. And, my maiden name is Baird. We're originally my ancestors originally from Scotland. And so I always it was always a place I wanted to visit. So we knew that we wanted to include where the Baird clan was in our travels. That was very important. one of the first things I did was sit down and just start looking at geography and

Tracy Collins [00:10:53]:

mapping out distances because being from the US, you have no idea how long it takes to drive from London to Scotland. Absolutely. And that's a really smart move, and that's something we kinda recommend that people do. Like, once you've got an idea where you wanna go, is map it out. Yeah. That's the best way to then start planning from that point in terms of logistics from getting from those, you know, a to b to c to d. and how you're gonna fit them into the time frame that you had. So you were you were over the UK in June, so, not too long ago. So how long were you in there altogether?

Debra Blazer [00:11:26]:

We did 12 days. I would have rather have done 14, but my my oldest son's a home body, and he said, I'll give you 12. Right. And I said, okay. I'll take it. And that's where I said the caledonian sleeper train really was so helpful in being able to fit in everything we wanted to do. Yeah. The other thing, it was a whirlwind. I mean, we we covered nearly 2000 miles, and we didn't stop. We we stayed there were two times we stayed in the same place 2 nights in a row. Yep. Other than that, we were on the move. So we packed very light. Like I said, we're a family of 5, and we have it's my husband and myself, our sixteen year old. We have a fourteen year old boy, and then we have a five year old daughter. Yep. It was a family of 5, and we finished into 3 suitcases. Excellent. Well done. They were medium sized suitcases, and then everyone had a backpack. Perfect. Perfect. We knew we had to go from

Tracy Collins [00:12:25]:

we had to be able to travel -- Yeah. -- and move easily. Yeah. And the more that you have, the harder it gets, because the more that you're worried about and the more you're thinking about and you're like, what? Where's that bag? Where's this bag? And then especially because you were doing a lot of moving, you know, one night here and to maximize, you say maximum 2 nights in only a couple places. You didn't wanna be unpacking loads of bags every night. It's just -- Right.

Debra Blazer [00:12:48]:

One thing that I got from the podcast and the Facebook group was, do the the compression bags. Yeah. for packing. That was brilliant. So good. I was able to pack complete outfits, and then I just labeled them. This is Tuesday. This is Wednesday.

Tracy Collins [00:13:08]:

It was perfect, especially with the five year old. I just put her clothes and my clothes together, and we were ready to go. Perfect. Perfect. They're brilliant. I I use compression bags this year, and I've always used packing cubes, but compression bags. Wow. You could just fit so much more in as well so you can Oh, it was great. It was great. -- down. It's great. It's just obviously the way I I came back from the UK with my usual 23 kilograms on the dot.

Debra Blazer [00:13:31]:

So how did you get around? I guess that's the next question I wanna ask. We knew we wanted to basically do a road trip. Yeah. Another thing that the Facebook group and the podcast taught me was make sure you book an automatic vehicle because everything just defaults to manual, which my husband was when I originally booked the car, he said, oh, I can handle it. I'll be fine. I can drive manual. I said, honey, you've got enough to worry about. You're just let's rebook it. book the automatic and have one less thing to worry about. Absolutely. And we're so grateful we did. 100%. Yes. We flew into Gatwick and rented our car there and drove into London. I do not recommend this.

Tracy Collins [00:14:13]:

No. I would not do that. I've I used to live in London and drive in London. I I wouldn't do that. But but -- Oh my gosh. He survived.

Debra Blazer [00:14:24]:

We survived, but by the time we made it to the hotel that night, our plane was running late. We finally got the car worked out, and we got to London. We got to the hotel. And I just turned to my husband and I said, I don't think we can do this. I was like, we have to turn around and go home. We can't do this. This is this is too hard. Oh, so but we got the we we got some sleep. the next day, we felt better. And, we kinda got into our groove. And but for the 1st couple of days, every little accomplishment felt like the biggest win. It was like, okay. We got from point a to point b. Yay. Go us. And I also recommend if you're gonna drive, make sure you have one person driving and one person navigating. Absolutely. I had made an entire music Spotify list to listen to, and the car I was gonna basically play a whole bunch of old bands and and teach the kids what real music is. and We didn't listen to any of it because I was navigating, and my husband was driving. And I was looking at the at Google Maps the whole time going, okay. How do you There's a sharp right up here. You're gonna need to slow down. Yeah. That's good. That's that's really good to do. And I know I know you didn't do the trip Yarmo,

Tracy Collins [00:15:47]:

resource, but I know you kinda regretted it afterwards. So -- Yes. I wish we would have done that because we just threw ourselves right into it, and it was that was That was rough. Yeah. Scary. So so where did you go? Give us tell us tell us your itinerary.

Debra Blazer [00:16:02]:

Well, the first it was we drove into London. And we stayed right out of right outside of King's Cross. We were right there. Yeah. And then the next day, we took a Golden Tours Day tour from London to Windsor Stonehenge and Bath because I wasn't going to go to England and not go to Stonehenge. Mhmm. That was not happening. And It was such a diff such a diff distance to travel that I I didn't wanna have to drive that part. Okay. Yep. So and I figured I thought we'll be tired from from flying over because you don't you don't sleep on planes. No. Not very well. So I figured that day, we could take this day tour and kind of relax a little bit. And Windsor was just getting out of London and getting to win was like a brush. It was like a breath of fresh air. Yeah. And it was so absolutely picture perfect. It was gorgeous. And I would have loved to do Windsor Castle, but it was closed that day because the Royal Escott was starting the the following day. Yep. So the royal family was actually coming in pretty much right after we were in town. And it was but as my oldest son said, it was really neat to be in Windsor with with them preparing for the arrival of the royal family. Okay. Cool. And just to see how all that went down and see all the people lining the streets and their Sunday best and the guards and there were news reporters. It it the whole town was just buzzing. Yep. So that was kinda cool. We'll do Windsor Castle next trip. Yeah. It's fine. but bus tours are a whirlwind. It's go go go. You have you have an hour to get out and run and go see what you wanna see, and then you be back on the bus. Yeah. It's very good. Very rushed. Yeah. Yeah. Yes. But I felt like that was the only way we were going to get see those things. So -- Yeah. -- we kinda did a trade off and said, okay. Let's do that. Yeah. The other thing with bus tours is

make sure you bring food and water for yourself because there's not time to get anything. Yeah. We learn that from the first tour. There's You barely have time to grab food. And if you're grabbing food, you're missing you're not seeing things. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. That. Yeah. because, obviously, there's quite there could be quite long queues in the cafes and these places to food. So -- Exactly. Because everyone's on a bus tour. Okay. And then you you know when the bus tows in town because the queue, the FAA is out the door and you're like, oh, no.

Tracy Collins [00:18:30]:

Exactly.

Debra Blazer [00:18:32]:

But, so it's it's bus tours are I kinda have a love hate relationship with them. It was great. We wouldn't have gotten to see those things without it, but I feel like I barely saw it. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Thought it was a bit it was a bit rushed.

Tracy Collins [00:18:49]:

and then so you went to you went to your store, Stonehen. Did you go to bath, did you say, on that as well? Yes. So that is a lot. Yeah. My oldest son's

Debra Blazer [00:18:56]:

very interested in the Roman history of England. So -- Yep. -- we kinda focused on some of that, and I wanted to make sure he got to bath. And -- Yes. saw the room and bath. Okay. So did you actually got to go in and see them?

Tracy Collins [00:19:07]:

Yes. We did. We did. It was I I wanted to go see the cathedral, but everyone else wanted go see the Roman baths. well, the baths in the Abby are kinda they're right next to each other, but the the Roman baths are amazing. I I just took my mom a couple of, well, last month for her birthday. And, it's the first time she'd been to see the Roma bats. And, we went into that as well, but she she absolutely loved it. She she

Debra Blazer [00:19:29]:

waiving about it. We have nothing like that in the United States. So it's it's interesting. It's it's just it's a once in a lifetime thing.

Tracy Collins [00:19:38]:

Absolutely. So then so that was a day trip. So then you got back into you got back into London.

Debra Blazer [00:19:44]:

Back in London, and we got the car. Yep. and drove away from London, which was a happy day. I love London, but I just don't wanna drive in it ever again. And -- No. Don't. Honestly,

Tracy Collins [00:19:59]:

we highly recommend people that they don't. It's just not you've got it you've got a congestion charge as well when you're driving on London, it's stressful in London. If you don't know, you know, if you're driving on the different side of the road than you used to anyway, that's massively stressful, but I drive on the left hand. I left hand side all the time, and I would not drive in London again. I've done it in the past before when I lived there. And honestly, I was like, nope. Never doing this again. Yeah. There's nowhere to park anyway. So There's no point in it. No. You you you just waste a lot of time actually because you're just sitting in a car. It's so you're better off literally. And the subway system is so easy. Easy and cheap.

Debra Blazer [00:20:33]:

My kids loved it. Yeah. Exactly. Well, we we did have a little bit of a glitch when we first used subway because we didn't understand

Tracy Collins [00:20:40]:

that everyone needed a unique credit card and having kids. We had I ended up just getting day passes for them. Yeah. And it that worked really well. Okay. Well, because you weren't in London a huge amount of time as as well. So -- Right. -- as if that that were easier for you. So so you you drove out of London and then you headed north?

Debra Blazer [00:20:59]:

Yes. We went to Warwick Castle, which -- Yep. -- it's My son said it's better than Disney World.

Tracy Collins [00:21:05]:

He loved it. Warrick Castle is amazing. It it was always the destination that I'd take my daughter in the in the school hall is because they do so much for kids.

Debra Blazer [00:21:14]:

It's so it's so great. And it's it's like a big Renaissance festival in a castle. And my son loves the trebuchet, and they fire the trebuchet, and he thought that was amazing. And it was just for For our first castle, it really set the bar high. Yeah. Did you stay near work for for the evening, or did you continue to drive We were on we were at Stoke on Trent. We traveled up to Stoke on Trent and stayed at Cabersville Castle. Okay. Because I wanted to stay in a couple of castles. So -- Yep. -- we had a turret at Catherswell Castle up there. And then the next morning and this is another thing where I I Like I said, I started planning probably late

March, early April. If I would have had more time, I would have been able to better plan this, but we wanted to get to Bolton Castle and do their Falconry.

Tracy Collins [00:22:06]:

Yeah.

Debra Blazer [00:22:07]:

Which starts at 9 AM, which is 3 hours away stoke on Trent. Yeah. We were up at 5:30 in the morning and on the road again. but we knew we wanted to do the Valkyrie because that's that's something you don't do in the United States. They just don't have anything like that. Okay. And it's something that I've always personally been interested in. And I wanted to give that experience to my boys. Mhmm. And it was it was amazing because you you imagine when a bird what a big bird is flying and landing on you. You kind of I always thought you had kinda had a brace for it, but they they land so lightly.

Tracy Collins [00:22:48]:

Yeah. It's a great stand there.

Debra Blazer [00:22:51]:

So that was that was an amazing experience. And Bolton Castle is just picture perfect, beautiful. It is a gorgeous castle, and the history with how Mary Queen of Scots was held there, and it was just that Bolton Castle, I think, so far, maybe my favorite castle that we that we went to? Yeah. I just loved it. And you stayed in Yorkshire that night, Indiana, in a in a cottage? We went up to yes. We went up to Northumberland to, Can you hear someone? Yeah. We drove we drove up through the Yorkshire Dales, which were amazing. Yeah. Saw so many sheep. We stopped counting.

Tracy Collins [00:23:29]:

and they really are on the road. You honestly do have to watch for them. Yeah. You have to be careful. And and I'm really pleased with the because you you went up to the the part of the UK there I'm from. You'll see you went up to Northumberland, which is great. Yeah. So I was gonna that's one thing I wanted to ask you is where exactly are you from? Okay. So, I'm originally from a place called Seaton Delville, which is on the coast. Okay. So near Whitley Bay, which it's so it's really on that kind of that the Northumberland coast itself. But my father was from Wall's end, which I guess you can tell is from the end of the wall. Great. Yeah. And I was actually born very close to the wall further into Northumberland. They wanted to sell the pod So you don't wanna say where you actually born, but it was a a a major town on a along Hadrien's wall. Put it that way. So, yeah, I was born at 50 something years ago. So I I absolutely adore Hedgreens. Well, it's fantastic. This, my sister's still lives, in in in the same town or village where where we grow up. And, so we we always do trips out to go and see the wall, and, we went to Halstead's and Findelander second time. I was there last year as well. And I know you went to Halstead's, didn't you?

Debra Blazer [00:24:45]:

Yes. We actually didn't get to go through the fort. we went we went to Vindalanda first and -- Yep. -- took all of our time there. And then went to house deeds and the wall. And by the time we got there, it was closing, but we got to walk the wall, which was -- Oh, good. -- thing my son wanted to do. And As soon as we were up there on the wall and in that space, both my boys turned to each other and said, we're coming back and we're hiking the entire wall. Oh, fun. tested, fabulous. So I I they'll be back in a couple of years when they get a little bit older to hike the entirety of the wall because it was just it was peaceful and stunning and amazing, and it we just loved it. But I also have to give a shout out to, Janet She runs an Airbnb and they have the cutest little garden cottage and lovely little dog. And to this day, when I ask my five year old, what was your favorite part of the trip. She says the dog. No. But it was just she was absolutely what Wonderful. She hand homemade gave us homemade,

Tracy Collins [00:25:51]:

griddle bars that we took with us. Yeah. And aid on for the next couple of days as we traveled, and she was just absolutely lovely. It ties into exactly what I was saying at the beginning about. It's the people. Yes. Oh my gosh. Yeah. -- amazing places, but also those people, you know, those people that you meet that will make it so special, isn't it? They do. And it's it's it was

Debra Blazer [00:26:12]:

I'm so glad we got out into the country and got to talk to people and meet people and really see the countryside and see how everyone lives. That was that was the best part of the trip.

Tracy Collins [00:26:26]:

I think that's important. And I do try to encourage people too. to to do that, get out of London, stay in London. I mean, you know, explore London is is fantastic, but to actually kinda get get to know

Debra Blazer [00:26:37]:

the country. You have to get out of London. My thought process of getting out of London too was that's going to be home based. We're always going to probably fly in and out of there. Yep. So over time, we can catch all the London sites as we come back time and again because you you don't go to England and Scotland just once. Once you're there, you fall absolutely in love with it and you go back. It's true. You know, we do we do itinerary consults. And,

Tracy Collins [00:27:05]:

this year, we're actually doing second time around itinerary consults for quite a number of people we did itinerary with last year who are also returning back to the UK this year. Yeah.

Debra Blazer [00:27:15]:

It's really nice. So, yes, next, we drove up to Scotland, and we stayed in this little apartment in Edinburgh. just one night because, you know, that's how we roll.

Tracy Collins [00:27:28]:

Mhmm.

Debra Blazer [00:27:30]:

so the next morning, we actually I was under the impression that there was parking by Edinburgh Castle. There's not. We drove up there, and we had to be up our Our appointment time was 9:30, and we drove up there, and it took us an hour to find parking. And by time, we got up to the castle, it was 10 30, 11 o'clock, but they so kind and they let us in and said, oh, don't worry about it. And, so we didn't we didn't have as much time at Edinburgh Castle as I had hoped. Yeah. And it was raining and it was crowded. So we we kinda we saw the the crown jewels and did a couple of things, and then we took off because I also wanted to hit Balmoral that day. Yep. Yep. So we had to drive clear up to Balmoral. we ended up getting up there. It was nearly 5 o'clock. Right. It was around it was around 4, and they said go in the castle and talked to the people, and we ended up talking to this lovely lady that worked there. We oh my gosh. We talked to her. We talked to her until it was closing time. Wow. She was just full of information, and she oh, she was wonderful. But then they said, you know, the grounds don't close, so feel free to wander around. So because we got there so late, we were the only people on the grounds of Bemoral. Wow. It was that was really amazing. and I kept telling my daughter, I said, you're playing with real prince is in princess's play. So then after Balmoral, where did you head? we we went up to Elgin and stayed in a Castle gatehouse. up in Moray. Right. one of the coolest things about this place is every morning, and we stayed there for 2 nights, and it was wonderful. And every morning and every evening, Usually around 5 in the morning and around 7, 8 o'clock at night, a pheasant would come into the yard to eat from the bird feeder. Oh, wow. I I have I dubbed him lord Elgin lord lord Elgin of Morey.

Tracy Collins [00:29:32]:

Yeah.

Debra Blazer [00:29:35]:

And he would come visit us every day. So the next day, we drove out to Penn Inn, which is where my ancestors are from. Right. at one point, the bears apparently had a castle up there somewhere, but I believe it was it was pretty much in ruin. And then in the 19 eighties, I think they just got rid of it. Right. But in our ancestral lord, they actually speak of the cliffs of Pennon, so we definitely wanted to go there. And another thing I was really grateful for was on the way to Pennon It was kind of an easy day. We stopped at an antique store in colon because I I knew I wanted to pick up souvenirs, but I also wanted to get some really cool authentic old things. especially for my close family members. I wanted to make sure. I didn't wanna bring them home a magnet. Yeah. I wanted to bring them home something thoughtful

and special. So we stopped in an antique place and talked to everyone there, and it was actually it's actually owned by a man and his grand his father or his grand I think it's his father. and we were talking to them. I started talking to his father because his father sneezed And I said, oh, bless you. And he said, thousands wouldn't. And I just laughed. I I said, I gotta talk to you. You're interesting.

Tracy Collins [00:31:00]:

Yeah.

Debra Blazer [00:31:02]:

So at one point, his his son turns to me and he says, are you driving? And I said, no. I said, my husband's driving. And he said, You need a shot of real Scottish whiskey. And I said, okay. It's 2 o'clock in the afternoon. Sure. Well, and then ironically, I had woken up that day with a headache. And I and he he said, oh, don't worry. This will take care of your headache because I had a grand day. It was great.

Tracy Collins [00:31:28]:

Oh, yeah. Sounds it. So what did you buy? I have to ask what you bought.

Debra Blazer [00:31:33]:

I got it, a toothpaste container from the Victorian Era. It's a little ceramic toothpaste jar. And I got my mom a little pewter box. My brother, because he he feeds the squirrels around his house. So I got him I found him a little pewter squirrel. and my sister loves Winnie the poo. So I got her, an antique ceramic, Winnie, the poo frame. Oh, it's huge. And some other little things. Oh, I had gotten, a foundry, a a metal foundry sign from Aberdeen. That was one of my favorites. Yeah. but the other thing I wanted to mention was, I took a journal with me thinking that I would have time to journal on my trip. Yeah. I didn't have time to journal. So what we ended up doing was we would pick flowers.

Tracy Collins [00:32:29]:

Oh, good idea.

Debra Blazer [00:32:30]:

And plants from everywhere we went, and we basically just used it as a as a flower press. Yeah. Yeah. So now we have we can go back in and we oh, we got those. We got that flower from Hadron's wall, and we got those from Balmoral, and we have all these flowers. that we collected on our journeys. Oh, that's lovely.

Tracy Collins [00:32:48]:

Oh, that's lovely, though. And then after that, do you went to I know you went to Skye, didn't you? You went to out of Skye and I haven't done any yet. Yes.

Debra Blazer [00:32:57]:

We really quickly, if anyone has a chance to go to Pennon. Pennon was amazing. It was this little fishing village, and then we're probably 20 to 30 houses. And down this huge cliff, and I honestly don't know how these people get out in the winter They're just stuck there. I don't know.

Tracy Collins [00:33:16]:

They'll probably grit the road so that they'll put salt on for it. That'd be the only way I would imagine.

Debra Blazer [00:33:21]:

It was absolutely gorgeous, though. I'm so glad we went there. And then we took off the next morning, we stopped I've kinda added elgin Cathedral in late. Yep. Because I realized that we had to be out of the Castle gatehouse at 10 AM but we could not check into our room at the Highland Club until 4 PM. And I think there was maybe 2 to 3 hours driving time. So we had some time to kill. so I found I found elgin Cathedral, which was just absolutely stunning. It that was gorgeous, gorgeous ruins. And then we also stopped at Brodie Castle because they have the coolest play garden. And with a 5 year, even the big kids were playing. They were rolling down the hill too. They all had a blast. but it it was good to just let them run off some steam.

Tracy Collins [00:34:16]:

Yeah. Yeah. Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, they did well because you you're doing a lot of, car travel. So Yeah.

Debra Blazer [00:34:23]:

My our five year old was a trooper. She walked up and down all those castle stairs, like nobody's business. You don't realize how how tight and I mean, some of the castle stairs, you're walking on ruined castle stairs that they were they were half halfway up her shin -- Oh. -- for each stair. Yeah. And she would everyone was so patient with her, and she was up and down the stairs and She did really well.

Tracy Collins [00:34:50]:

So then what you stated, you're saying that highland club that night, and then next day, did you take a tour from them? Definitely.

Debra Blazer [00:34:58]:

I am. We stayed at the Highland Club because when else are you ever gonna get the chance to stay at an old Abby on Loch Ness? That was just that was something. Yeah. And then the next day, we took a day tour out to Isle of Sky because once again, I knew We were

doing so much driving. And Iowa Sky was gonna it's another 2 to 3 hours out, and I thought, Let's just take a bus tour and give ourselves a break. Yeah. I don't blame. So we went with Luke. He calls himself Luke Skywalker. It's luke.tours. It's his Instagram. Yeah. And he was amazing. really personable guy. He knew I he taught us so much about the Jacobite Relian and all of that and pile of sky, and it was just it was a good time. we ended up having really good weather. He said a lot of times, when you go out there, you don't see as much because it gets really overcast. Mhmm. But we had a beautiful day, and you could see you could see everything. You could see all the mountains. It was gorgeous. The next day we drove and and this is where, like, I cannot stress enough to people to stay flexible because I wanted to go to the Glenfinnenauk viaducts so badly. Yep. But it would have added another 2 hours driving time. And by that point, we were we were spent Yeah. And I just said, okay. Next that. Forget that. Let's just make sure we get to Glencoe. Both our boys are are big monty Python fans, so we had to go to Castle Stalker and see that. And if you're at Castle Stalker, I don't remember the name of the place, but up on the hill, right you could there's a view of the castle, and there's the wonderful little cafe. I had the most amazing garden salad, and it sounds ridiculous because you're thinking, how can garden salad be amazing? But it it was so good. and they had the best coffee. Oh my gosh. Oh, that's good. That's good. And did what did you think of Glencoe? Cause, obviously, that's somewhere that I I rec because I love Glencoe. I just think it's so beautiful. My younger son says that he's going to live there someday. He he loved it. He it was raining the day we were there. So we ended up pulling off, and there was this waterfall on the hillside. And my son wanted to do a little bit of hiking, so we hiked up to the waterfall while my husband stayed in the car with the little one. And he kept saying, oh, can't we just get out and hike? And I said, your sister's five years old. We can't be running her all over the mountainside and the rain. I was like, this just we can't. I'm really sorry. Oh, well, you'll have to go back. Definitely. Yes. Yes. He's he love Glenco was his favorite. To ask him what his favorite part of the trip was, Glenco, hands down, loved it. Oh, no. He just wanted to hike all over those hills.

Tracy Collins [00:37:57]:

We're very popular. I think they do. Absolutely. And then, so after you you went to a castle Stalker, and then you went down to drop the car back off it?

Debra Blazer [00:38:08]:

Yes. But first, we stopped at StoneCastle. Yes. Oh, yes. Very quickly. because of Monte Python. We had to go there too. Yep. And then we drove down to Glasgow and dropped the car and waited on the sleeper train, which was an experience. It's it's very small. The rooms are Mhmm. absolutely tiny, which I knew to expect. Or I listening to your podcast, and I kept telling my husband. I said, you need you need to pack an overnight bag because you're not gonna be able to get in the suitcase. Yep. Yep. Yep. Make sure you've got what you need. Yeah. He didn't believe me. And then we got on and he said, oh, yeah. There really isn't really here. Yeah. because I've been telling you. That's an honestly the podcast and the Facebook group had me so well prepared. And there were, of course, there's still surprises. but I knew about turning switches on and off for outlets and ovens, and I wouldn't have known that. I knew that there weren't outlets in the bathrooms. Mhmm. I knew that there was an AC, things like that that I could prepare for. I think it was It was one of the podcasts right before we left I was listening to, and somebody mentioned that there weren't outlets in the

bathrooms. And I said, oh my gosh. Okay. I need to grab a some sort of little standing mirror so that I can fix my hair in the hallway.

Tracy Collins [00:39:32]:

Yeah. Yeah. quite often you'll find mirrors in in on in the halls anyway or in in hotel bedrooms and stuff anyway because, yeah, that it's not allowed for, building regulations or safety regulations that that are not allowed to have, the electric outlets near water. It seems to catch a lot of people from around the world by surprise, but, that's, I guess, when you grow up in the UK, you don't know any different. So you got our get a bit of a surprise when I do see electric in in passing the bus.

Debra Blazer [00:40:02]:

Is that okay? It was it was just it was so it was so comforting to be prepared for those sorts of things and not be surprised by them. And that's the I mean, we had enough surprises. On day 2, be right before we left London, our luggage broke. Oh, yes. My son had brought a full breastplate and backplate of armor. in the luggage, and I don't I don't think the luggage liked that. so they too our suitcase busts open. but we we went to Tesco and got a new suitcase, and I actually picked up a little suitcase just for souvenirs. You know? So you arrived back in London, and you spent,

Tracy Collins [00:40:50]:

a day or so in London before you flew back to the states. Is that right?

Debra Blazer [00:40:53]:

Yes. We we co we called it our London pickup day because our plane was late getting there. We had hoped to go to tower of London the day we arrived. I had high hopes that got dashed repeatedly.

Tracy Collins [00:41:06]:

You have to go with it. It's couples.

Debra Blazer [00:41:09]:

I was trying to fit everything in. so we ended up going to tower of London on our London pickup day went their first thing. One thing I would do differently in the future going back is look into the UK heritage passes, we had no idea

Tracy Collins [00:41:27]:

how many heritage sites we would end up visiting. Yeah. And we would have saved so much You would have saved a lot of money, actually. And we we do have an article about those because we, you know, Doug and I have. We have, National We have English heritage. We have hist historic. We have all of them, I think, because it just is just so useful when you're

back to save to save money. so I will put a link to that if anybody who's going over who who wants to know a bit more about that, because, yeah, you did visit a lot of places that probably would have added up. Yeah.

Debra Blazer [00:41:57]:

you don't realize how many places you're going to go that take those sorts of things until you're there and they're asking you and you're going, no. I don't have it. But we we just we we said, you know what? It's it's a donation to these wonderful places, and they're upkeep you go to museums in London? I saw the natural natural history museum in your -- We did. We went to the natural natural history museum in London, and we all went to the National Museum of Scotland when we were up in Edinburgh. Yep. my oldest son wants to be a paleontologist. So we tend to go see dinosaur bones any chance we get. So -- We get natural history museums. Perfect for that.

Tracy Collins [00:42:38]:

Yeah. And have a great excavation.

Debra Blazer [00:42:41]:

We did tower of London in the morning, and then we did the natural history museum in the afternoon. So it was a good day. And then we flew back home the next day.

Tracy Collins [00:42:50]:

Wow. So it was a really was a whirlwind 12 12 days, or, yeah, you had you you really packed it in. You had a busy busy time. but it be I'll we will include, kinda, we'll do a bit of a right loop of your itinerary because we're putting some itineraries together at the moment because we get asked about driving. road trips around the UK, and we're we're sitting talking about this today, other day saying we actually need to put some together. So I'll I'll, I'll use yours as well if you don't mind that in. We'll be doing the showing it anyway, but I'll include it. Absolutely. You know, it works. You did it. It's it is a busy one. The good thing about it being so

Debra Blazer [00:43:23]:

fast paced is I felt like we were we were in it. We were just in it, live in the moment, and my kids didn't pick up any kind of digital device the entire time. The only thing was when we were driving, our our five year old was watch Bluey on her little tablet. But that's it. Yeah. We didn't even watch TV the entire time. No TV, no devices. I mean, we were just we were in it. Yeah. You were yeah. I don't know if it would be the same if we if we weren't going at the pace that we were. Yeah. So I'm grateful. I'm grateful we did it now with the kids. Kinda leads me into the last question, which is a question that, ask everybody. is what is the one tip that you would give to anybody planning a trip to the UK for the first time? I would say the most important thing is to really search your soul and consider what you want to get out of your trip. That's going to dictate how you plan. the other thing is to just be flexible. When your suitcase falls apart in the parking lot, go get another one. Yeah. Don't let it ruin your trip.

Tracy Collins [00:44:32]:

Oh, perfect. Perfect. advice. And I think in in this day and age, we we you have to just have that ability to kinda roll with things when things don't quite work out exactly as you kinda hope they're gonna do because things always go wrong. Oh, absolutely. But, I wanna say thanks so much, Deb, for coming on to I can call you, Deb. It was Deborah. Absolutely.

Debra Blazer [00:44:53]:

Thank you. This has been an honor. Thank you so much, and I'm going to continue to listen to the podcast because I love it.

Tracy Collins [00:45:02]:

Thanks for tuning into this week's episode of the UK travel pond podcast. Information on all the places Deborah mentioned, plus links to relevant resources can be found atuktravelplanet.comforward/episode59. If you've enjoyed this episode, you can support our work via the tip your guide button, which can be found on the website, or you can even become a sponsor of the podcast for as little as 3 US dollars a month. More information about that can also be found on the podcast in the show notes. we love having sponsors. We love it when people, support our work. It really helps awesome. We really, really appreciate it. And also you can get a shout out on the podcast too. Anyway, that just leaves me though for this week to say happy UK travel planning.