

# EPISODE #56 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 picturesque countryside to seaside towns.

Tracy Collins [00:00:37]:

Hi and welcome to episode 56 of the UK Travel Plan and Podcast. This week I am really happy to have guest Kathryn Johnson on their podcast to talk about her trip to the UK in May. And I was lucky enough to meet up with Kathryn in London, which was fantastic, and her family. And so Kathryn agreed to come onto the podcast. We did do a previous recording of this. I'm going to be totally transparent and unfortunately, the sound was not great. I think at the time. There were hurricane warnings for you, Kathryn, is that right?

Kathryn Johnson [00:01:12]:

Tornado warnings?

Tracy Collins [00:01:13]:

Tornado that's it. Tornado warnings. Yeah. So unfortunately, the sound was a bit iffy, so we're doing it again. But it's always a pleasure to talk to Kathryn. We did an Itinerary consult for you guys last year and we get on so well. So it's always amazing to chat to you. And obviously you're also in our Facebook group, which is fantastic. So Kathryn, without me kind of hogging the show, why don't you introduce yourself and kind of tell us where in the States you're from and who you went on the trip with?

Kathryn Johnson [00:01:40]:

We are, as you mentioned, a family from Chicago. We're outside Chicago in the suburbs and we went two weeks in May, my husband, my adult daughter and myself. And I do think our trip had huge success because of the consultation we did with you and Doug. We felt very ah, thank you.

Tracy Collins [00:02:02]:

And I know you say you're very organized. It was it was lovely when somebody said that. They're so organized that we were able to help you even more because you.

Kathryn Johnson [00:02:10]:

Know it inside and out. And that was our first trip to the UK, so it was hugely helpful.

Tracy Collins [00:02:16]:

And I know it was a very important trip for you because it's somewhere that you've dreamt of going for a long time since I was know, I know. And so was everything that you dreamt of.

Kathryn Johnson [00:02:27]:

It was perfect, honestly. And I keep telling people, how did we get two whole weeks in the UK without any bad weather? It was sunshine every day and I can't believe it.

Tracy Collins [00:02:38]:

You were so lucky. You were so lucky. I mean, the weather was amazing. I only flew back at the beginning of July and I think the weather's not been as great, actually, but I know May and June were amazing. It was really warm and hardly any rain. I don't think you had any rain at all?

Kathryn Johnson [00:02:53]:

No, we did not. We saw a little bit of a drizzle, like maybe five minutes of raindrops while we were sitting on a bus in Scotland. So other than that, that was was it was fantastic.

Tracy Collins [00:03:04]:

So give us a quick kind of brief overview of where you went when.

Kathryn Johnson [00:03:08]:

You were there in London. We did all the basic big tourism things, but we took your advice and did not only stay in London because we were there for two weeks, so we would do about every other day. We would do a trip out to the country or to another part of England, which was wonderful because England is so much more than just a big city. And then we did take the train up to Scotland where we stayed for three nights and that was, again, I'm in love with Scotland now.

Tracy Collins [00:03:40]:

You have to go back and see a bit more.

Kathryn Johnson [00:03:41]:

Yes, I do.

Tracy Collins [00:03:42]:

Yeah. You got a good little taster there when you went up to Scotland.

Kathryn Johnson [00:03:46]:

That's exactly what it was. I feel like we got a perfect it was almost like a charcuterie board of England where we got a little bit of the best stuff and it makes me want to go back for the full meal now, is what want.

Tracy Collins [00:03:57]:

Oh yeah, I can imagine. And I think know, doing exactly what you did, spending some time in London, but also getting out is really important. And I do say that to know I love London, I enjoy visiting. You know, there's so much more to the UK than know and getting out of London as well gives you a bit of respite from the city and the busyness as well and gets you to see some of the countryside.

Kathryn Johnson [00:04:18]:

And it was also good for our steps, getting our steps in. We got a little bit of a break, we'd sit on a train for an hour and it was great. We needed it physically, we needed that downtime.

Tracy Collins [00:04:29]:

Oh, absolutely. So you've already mentioned Kind, that we had the Itinerary consult. So were there any other resources that you found really helpful for planning your trip?

Kathryn Johnson [00:04:38]:

Your Facebook group was hugely helpful and the website, obviously. And then the podcast, we kind of did it all. And then I was thinking about this, believe it or not, my daughter kept sending me TikToks. Oh yeah, we have to go here, we have to try this. I need to see a Highland cow. So TikTok and then you guys basically was everything.

Tracy Collins [00:05:00]:

Maybe UK travel plan needs to be on TikTok.

Kathryn Johnson [00:05:02]:

Oh my gosh. It is a whole other it could be used for good, but it's a lot.

Tracy Collins [00:05:08]:

Finding the time is always the issue, I think, with it, but no, so that's great. And we kind of aim to give as many resources as we can and we're hoping to get some YouTube videos on. Again, it's just finding time. But I love that you use the Facebook group and the website and obviously listen to the podcast.

Kathryn Johnson [00:05:26]:

Podcasts were wonderful, very helpful, and they were a good variety of topics like you can look about trains or about the Highlands or about the countryside and the Cotswolds. It was wonderful.

Tracy Collins [00:05:40]:

Brilliant. Well, we're continuing to develop. There's going to be lots more planning. The podcast out for the next few months, so there'll be lots of trip reports and also some tips from different places like Edinburgh and Bath we've got planned and a lot yeah, we try to put the variety there so that it can meet lots of different interests, because obviously it depends where you're going to visit. So I'm going to ask you, because I know this was a favorite part of your of I'm going to interject with. I know you took some private tours with some of our partners, loved them, Victoria and John particularly. Huge shout out to those. So would you like to just chat about those particular tours that you took?

Kathryn Johnson [00:06:19]:

So we went to the Cotswolds with Victoria. We took the train. She was so easy because she told us exactly what train to get on, what time, what station. She met us there, comfy car. She had bottled water and it was very easy to get along with her. And the thing I appreciated a lot about her is she spent time getting to know what we wanted to do, but also what we wanted to get out of the day. Instead of just an itinerary from us, I said we wanted to experience this and experience that. And then she filled in with the details because she knows the area absolutely, I don't, obviously. So that was great. She gave us a taste, an overview.

Tracy Collins [00:07:03]:

Of the Cotswolds, and she's amazing. She's such a lovely, lovely person. And, yeah, the Cotswolds, it's a large area, so to try and it's huge, kind of know, we often get people say, I want to go at the Cotswolds, I want to do the Cotswolds in a day. And it's like, well, that's impossible to do the entire Cotswolds. But I think doing it the way that you did was the perfect way to do it, in that you spoke to Victoria and she was able to work out the best itinerary that would meet your taste and interest.

Kathryn Johnson [00:07:29]:

She was very easy to communicate with. And the other part too is it was kind of uncertain how it was going to be getting in someone else's car and spending an entire day with them. But she, along with John, who we also did a tour with him, beyond easy to talk to, easy conversation, it flowed. Well, she asked the appropriate amount of questions of us. It just felt like we were with an old friend. It was wonderful. It was very relaxing.

Tracy Collins [00:07:58]:

Brilliant. Brilliant. Well, I was lucky as well to spend a day with Victoria, with Doug and I spent the day with Victoria and had a wonderful time. And again, I spent the day with John in May.

Kathryn Johnson [00:08:09]:

Oh, we loved him, too.

Tracy Collins [00:08:10]:

It was one of the highlights of my entire trip, spending that I mean, obviously, I love Victoria, so highlight that. Obviously spending time with Victoria as well, because she's so wonderful. But I went with John to Heaver Castle, which is somewhere I'd always wanted to go to. And I just had the best day. It was just the weather was amazing. John was amazing. He knows so many people at the different item moat. And heaver castle introduced us to people. It was just like, brilliant. Absolutely brilliant.

Kathryn Johnson [00:08:38]:

They were both people I would in a heartbeat return to do a day with them, no questions asked. I have told so many friends about them. And I'm like, if you go there, you have to talk to these. And I know you have a lot of affiliates that you work with. Those are just the two I happen to.

Tracy Collins [00:08:57]:

Yeah. And so what did you do with John?

Kathryn Johnson [00:09:00]:

With John, we went to Arendelle Castle, and I picked it strictly on the looks of the place. I knew nothing about it. We ended up absolutely loving our day. My daughter said it was the most castle y castle we visited in the whole trip. And my husband loved spending the day with another dude, I think.

Tracy Collins [00:09:22]:

Yeah.

Kathryn Johnson [00:09:22]:

And we talked the whole way home just about things that had nothing to do with specifically the castle, because we did all the castle things at the castle, the drive home. We talked about the government and how do house taxes work and just cars and importing things and finances. What day did your garbage get taken out? And he's like, oh, the rubbish bin. It was so interesting to hear about just normal, everyday life.

Tracy Collins [00:09:52]:

And you know what? I always think that's such a privilege when you go anywhere that you get to meet somebody who lives in that destination and that's truly kind of immersing yourself in a place and discovering what it's like for somebody who lives there, who's that's their life.

Kathryn Johnson [00:10:10]:

That's completely what it was, a full immersive experience that was completely educational from the historic end part, where he told us all about the castle and walked us around and talked to he knew, like, everyone who worked there. He clearly has done homework and has built relationships, and that benefited us. But then just getting the everyday life that I find fascinating of different it's a different culture. We're all English speaking, but it is a different culture.

Tracy Collins [00:10:40]:

Absolutely. That's why I say it's been able to ask those questions and finding out about those details that you're not going to do if you go on a larger group tour. You're just not going to get that with the guy. Just can't. So that's kind of the privilege of being able to take one of those private tours. And that's why I highly recommend to people if you're going to go, and this is a Trip of a Lifetime book with these guys because it will really make a difference. It will make the holiday for you.

Kathryn Johnson [00:11:10]:

Really, I thoroughly agree. And we have talked about returning in a couple of years and all the family agreed. We're booking we're going to spend another day with both of them because it was worth every single penny.

Tracy Collins [00:11:24]:

Oh, that's perfect. So I know I'm also going to mention another tour. Mainly it's one that I also did in London with Walks Tours, which was the Ceremony of the Keys. And I know you also took that tour and I've talked about it on a number of podcasts. And to be honest, it takes a lot to impress me. I've traveled all around the world. I've done lots and lots of tours. I've done lots of stuff. I love all the walks, tours. I like that, the small group. But this tour in particular for me, I don't know, it kind of touched my heart. I don't know, I think it was I'm British, and just being able to experience the Ceremony of the Keys with that VIP tour was just something amazing.

Kathryn Johnson [00:12:08]:

It was a very almost majestic feeling, but also a very almost sacred feeling ceremony. And for Americans, I would liken it to the tomb of the Unknown Soldier that we have in Arlington Cemetery in Washington, DC. Just a very reverential ceremony, but not boring. And so packed with history and such deep meaning in all the details of the tour. We loved the one on one time with the Yeoman Warder. We loved being inside the Tower without anybody else there. And we had like, VIP status. We stood closer to everything. We stood on another side

of the street from the people that I think got like the \$5 tickets that they release that you have to wake up at three in the morning to buy if you're in America. It was a very, I would say almost sacred I don't want to overuse that word, but I do feel like it was that kind of ceremony.

Tracy Collins [00:13:11]:

It just I felt it was such a privilege to spend the time with Yeoman Water as mean. I've been the Tower of London I don't know how many times, but been able to spend that time with Matt, who was our Yeoman Water on the turf, for him to explain and tell us about the history of different places and the tales that he told. And we were very lucky that he had the keys to the chapel. So we spent, I would say, half an hour in the chapel, which was something I really wanted to do on other visits. But it's always so busy, you just can't get the chance to do that. So that was fantastic. And I think you had did you have the Raven Master on Chris?

Kathryn Johnson [00:13:51]:

Yes, we had him so we found out even more about the ravens. That was just more generically covered in a daytime tour. So he's like, look up there. He told us where to look for the one raven that they couldn't catch. And it was just great hearing the details and hearing the story about in the Tower, they had a special toilet for Hitler because they were hoping to catch him during World War II. I also had no clue that Sir Isaac Newton lived at the Tower of London. These are details I just never knew exactly. There's so many from him.

Tracy Collins [00:14:28]:

Yeah. So many things you learn about that you didn't know, so that's amazing. Yeah.

Kathryn Johnson [00:14:32]:

As a side note, you can also take amazing photos at dusk.

Tracy Collins [00:14:35]:

Yes.

Kathryn Johnson [00:14:36]:

Because the Tower bridges lit up. Holy cow. I got some.

Tracy Collins [00:14:41]:

And you're the only people in there. That was the other thing that just kind of blew my mind is that there was just him and then 14 of us and wandering around. I've never been Tower of London. There's not been hundreds of people, thousands of people there. I've done the opening ceremony and you get that time alone then to watch that ceremony, but then as soon as the doors open, it's just full.

Kathryn Johnson [00:14:59]:

It's full of thousands of people.

Tracy Collins [00:15:01]:

Absolutely. So I know those were three highlights for you. We'll talk a little bit more about your highlights, but just going to ask you how you got around when you were kind of traveling, obviously, because you were in London, you went out to do some tours, obviously, with John and Victoria, and you went up to Scotland. So I think you took the train.

Kathryn Johnson [00:15:19]:

We took the train. We took the overground train we took. Only a handful of times did we take a cab, but mostly we used the Tube. It was incredibly easy to use, and the people that work in the stations were so helpful. And the best thing we did was pick up a little pocket size, almost like a directory of all the Tube lines so we could follow along and get to know this system. And the app that we used, City Mapper. You recommended that there's very little cell service when you're inside the Tube stations, but somehow City Mapper still works. And every single stop, it would tell you, get off at the next stop and then it tells you exactly which staircase to take or where to go for the next portion of your traveling. So the Tube was so easy to use. Oh, it is tap in and tap out with our credit card. And it was simple.

Tracy Collins [00:16:15]:

Excellent, excellent. And then tell me about your train ride up to Edinburgh.

Kathryn Johnson [00:16:19]:

Oh, that was beautiful. That was so chose. I just made a comment about this in your Facebook group. We chose to do first class because that was a splurge we decided to make. And it wasn't that much more expensive. It really wasn't that much pricier. And we just got a nice comfy chair at a table. And the views are spectacular, just spectacular. It looks like something out of a movie with the seaside and the sheep and the grass. And I took so many pictures out of moving train.

Tracy Collins [00:16:54]:

I mean, I've done that journey so many times, and I'm originally from Northumberland, and we always say to it, Doug Smiles now, because so many people in the group and we hear it so often, people will say, oh, yes, you need to sit on the right hand side. And that's doug says that all the time. And it's like and that's the thing. If you sit on the right hand side in the direction of travel from London up to Edinburgh, you get fantastic views, fantastic coastline, because you told us.

Kathryn Johnson [00:17:18]:



To, and I'm so glad you told us to. And also, I was able to try something called a flapjack. Oh, yeah. On the train, they said, do you want a flapjack? I was like, well, in America, that's a pancake. I'm assuming you're not offering me a pancake for a snack. So I said yes, because I just want to know what it was. It ended up being a sweet treat. And it was good.

Tracy Collins [00:17:39]:

Yeah. Oh, good, good. So is it a hot pancake in America? Yes, it's a hot so that's interesting. So how would you describe a British flapjack? How would you compare it?

Kathryn Johnson [00:17:54]:

British flapjack is like a dense Rice Krispy treat that has some dried fruit in it.

Tracy Collins [00:18:00]:

Yes, and it's very tasty. Very tasty.

Kathryn Johnson [00:18:02]:

With a cup of tea with my hot coffee.

Tracy Collins [00:18:06]:

Kind of put you on the spot there. We have got a couple of actually talking about other podcasts. If you guys are listening and you're interested to find out about British food, we have got another podcast about British food, and we've also got a podcast about traveling from London to Edinburgh as well that Doug and I did about how to make the best of that trip. So I will link to those episodes in the show notes as well. So let's talk about accommodation. I know you had a little bit of a disaster in Know.

Kathryn Johnson [00:18:39]:

I've stayed at a lot of places because we've traveled a lot. We had a few issues personally with two different airbnbs that we rented, and we found ourselves ten days before arrival with no place to stay. So we ended up finally taking your advice and we looked into apart hotels in London. We ended up staying in the most fantastic place that we loved. It was across the street from a tube station. It was convenient, it had air conditioning, and it was bigger than a hotel room. And it also had a washing machine and dryer. Well, a washing machine and dryer, that's one compartment, which I didn't know it.

Tracy Collins [00:19:23]:

Was going to be.

Kathryn Johnson [00:19:24]:

One thing we're going to talk about.

Tracy Collins [00:19:26]:

That, aren't we, in a podcast to.

Kathryn Johnson [00:19:28]:

Come, I learned, but it ended up being fantastic. We loved where we stayed, and then when we were in Scotland, we stayed at an old hotel right across the street from the Waverly train station. And that was lovely. And they gave us a beautiful room overlooking the Old Town or what? South Newtown. It's all so old. It all seemed old to me.

Tracy Collins [00:19:57]:

Opposite Waverly. It depends on which direction you were going, I guess, but Waverly's in the new.

Kathryn Johnson [00:20:02]:

We were looking at the castle.

Tracy Collins [00:20:03]:

Okay. I don't know. We'll have to look at the have to look at figure out where that hotel was. But kind of where the station is. If you kind of walk directly out of the station and you've got kind of Scott Monument on the left, that's Newtown behind you going up the Royal Mile and the Castle's at Old Town.

Kathryn Johnson [00:20:19]:

Okay, so we stayed in yeah, in a very old historic hotel looking at Newtown, I guess.

Tracy Collins [00:20:26]:

Well, it sounds perfect. And I'll get the names of the accommodation as well, so we can put links into the show notes as well, if anybody's interested in booking those. So we've talked about some of your favorite places and favorite experiences. So obviously we've talked about three different tours. What else are there kind of standouts for you?

Kathryn Johnson [00:20:44]:

I think what stood out to us was also not only the Ceremony of the Keys, but eating at the Brixton Prison, which ended up being a very unique experience, completely safe. We never, ever once felt like we were in danger because you are going into a working prison to have some of the best food of our whole trip. I wish we could have taken pictures because you're not allowed to have your phone or your camera or even a Smartwatch. You can't have anything, but everything is locked up very safe. You go through airport type security to get in. And the whole program that they have is something I am so supportive of and so in favor of.

And it was called Clink. The Clink at Brixton. Phenomenal food. Had Yorkshire pudding there with my Sunday roast dinner.

Tracy Collins [00:21:37]:

So I'm going to have to definitely find out more about this because this is something that I've not experienced before, so it's something that I'm definitely going to add into my future. Itinerary and I'm sure there'll be interest in this because quite often people will ask us as well about different experiences that you can have, particularly in London when people have been if you've visited three, four times, you might be looking for something different. So I think having that is a different experience, and again, it's something different that you can do or it's also supporting a very important program as well.

Kathryn Johnson [00:22:08]:

As you say, a very good program that's been around for over ten years and they've had great success. So it's nothing new that you're trying out. It's established and I recommend it. I highly recommend it.

Tracy Collins [00:22:21]:

That's good. Now we'll definitely add that in and other things that you can recommend.

Kathryn Johnson [00:22:26]:

Okay. Tea. We went to tea. I have to talk about tea. When we were in Bath, we went to Sally Lunds, because you told us about the Sally Lunds bun. So we went there and had when we first arrived in Bath, that was our breakfast. And it was amazing and phenomenal. And we came home with, like, the Sally Lund proprietary tea blend because that was our favorite. But then in London, we decided to splurge. And it was a planned splurge. It wasn't a last minute splurge. We had tea at a place called Sketch, which was super bougie and super wonderful. And I understand now why everybody Instagrams this location. And you have to go. You need to go.

Tracy Collins [00:23:12]:

What you can't see if you're listening to this podcast, is my Face, which is very sad because Catherine invited me to join them at Sketch. And unfortunately, on that day, I had something else scheduled, which then got canceled.

Kathryn Johnson [00:23:25]:

I was so sad when I heard that.

Tracy Collins [00:23:29]:

But I'm so glad that you had an amazing time there. It does look beautiful because obviously it used to be pink and now it's yellow.

Kathryn Johnson [00:23:34]:

I think, though, Ambiance adds to it. But it was also the impeccable service, the amazing food. And I did tell my husband, he's an accountant, so he counts every penny. And I just said two things. You absolutely cannot make any comment about the cost of this while we're there, and you can't complain about any of the food because he's kind of a burger and hot dog kind of guy, not a tea kind of guy. They had so many options of food, and if you like something, they kept bringing it to you. So it was an all you could eat, all you could drink. We left there so full, we had to bring our Victoria sponge cake home in a box.

Tracy Collins [00:24:14]:

And I met you afterwards, didn't I? Yes.

Kathryn Johnson [00:24:16]:

And that was wonderful that we walked around the flower show in Chelsea. It was wonderful. Went to Harrods. That was great.

Tracy Collins [00:24:23]:

It was busy, though. It was busy. It was hot. I remember that. It was busy and it was hot. But the Chelsea Flower Show, all the exhibitions in the shops was that was fabulous.

Kathryn Johnson [00:24:30]:

Beautiful.

Tracy Collins [00:24:31]:

I'll put some photos in the show notes of that because that was lovely. And we had a lovely kind of stroll around, didn't we?

Kathryn Johnson [00:24:36]:

And it was so great to meet you and put a face to a name.

Tracy Collins [00:24:41]:

I know. It's so nice. I feel like all friends. Honestly, Catherine, I feel like I've known you forever. It's like, funny how you just click with some people, don't you? Yes.

Kathryn Johnson [00:24:47]:

Well, you're very easy to get along with.

Tracy Collins [00:24:49]:

Thank you. I'm just going to also just say, if you're listening about Sally LUNs, I'm going to highly recommend I don't know what you had on your Sally Loans bun. But lemon curd is my favorite.

Kathryn Johnson [00:25:01]:

We didn't have that. We had a breakfast one. So we had like a bacon and some syrup and oh, it was so.

Tracy Collins [00:25:10]:

Good because you can have savory or sweet. I've been there for even a meal as well and had the savory. But I took my mum a few weeks ago because it was her birthday. And we went to Sally Blunds, as always. And we shared a lemon curd one, which was lovely, and cup of tea.

Kathryn Johnson [00:25:23]:

It was delicious and it really felt like something out of a movie. And if anyone goes there, they have to go to the basement because that's where they have a tiny little gift shop. But also the original oven that I believe is almost 1000 years old. It's so ridiculously old. No, because they unearthed it like back from the Roman days. Okay. It really is.

Tracy Collins [00:25:47]:

Been down there. I can't remember.

Kathryn Johnson [00:25:49]:

It's very old.

Tracy Collins [00:25:50]:

I'll have a look on the website. I'll have a look. I did go down and actually talk to the lady that worked in the shop. Not this time when I was back, because I was with my mom, but when I was there last year. And I always go to Sally London, just some of that. It's just a lovely place to go. We went this time. There was lots of Americans there, so.

Kathryn Johnson [00:26:08]:

They must be listening to your podcast.

Tracy Collins [00:26:10]:

I hope so. So, what other foods did you like? Since we're chatting about food, we had.

Kathryn Johnson [00:26:16]:

Delicious bangers and mash in Camdentown. We went up there. That was wonderful. You also recommended or I saw you there on social media and then I asked you a bunch of questions. We went to pick and cheese.

Tracy Collins [00:26:31]:

Oh, yes.

Kathryn Johnson [00:26:33]:

That was in Seven Dials.

Tracy Collins [00:26:34]:

Yes.

Kathryn Johnson [00:26:35]:

Come god, I would have never have thought that cheese would have been like one of the best things. They would pair the cheese with a sweet or a savory. Oh, my goodness. The gouda with a little bit of a handmade salted caramel. Oh, it was so good.

Tracy Collins [00:26:51]:

Isn't it delicious?

Kathryn Johnson [00:26:53]:

Occasionally Soul talks about it. Weeks later, it's like, Remember that? It was so good.

Tracy Collins [00:26:59]:

Doug absolutely loves to go there. So when he was over, we didn't get time to go, so I kind of didn't tell him that I went twice when I was back. But it was so good. It's so good. And I like to have a little glass of pork with my cheese.

Kathryn Johnson [00:27:14]:

And you can get a grilled cheese sandwich so it can be like a meal which my husband loved.

Tracy Collins [00:27:20]:

Yeah, it's a good thing. It's a good one. I remember when I shared that, you were like, oh, no, I'm definitely going to go there.

Kathryn Johnson [00:27:25]:

And we did that.

Tracy Collins [00:27:26]:

You enjoyed it. So I was looking at my fridge today, which sounds like a weird sentence, but it's full of fridge magnets and all our fridge. Magnets that we bought in the UK are on the one fridge that we have, the main fridge. So what did you buy when you're in the UK?

Kathryn Johnson [00:27:44]:

Okay, I bought two things that I love. I bought Windsor Castle gin because it's infused with raspberries that are actually grown in the gardens at Windsor Castle. And based on the label, I wanted to buy that, so I did buy that, and I'm so happy. I traveled to the UK with those liquid travel bags that are padded and you can put your alcohol in it. And then also in Scotland, I really wanted to get some Harris Tweed because I know that's been made in Scotland for well over a hundred years or longer. It's been quite some time, hundreds of years, I think. So I got a backpack with some real authentic Harris Tweed, and I was very careful to look to make sure that it was made locally, not like, shipped in from somewhere else. The other thing I did that ended up being a great souvenir is I would purchase a lot of postcards from the places we went, but I wouldn't buy postcards that replicated the view that I could take in my own picture. I would try to get an aerial view or maybe a view of something that you couldn't get close to. And a lot of places like Windsor Castle, the Jane Austen home in Choughton, even. Let's see, tower of London, Scotland. A bunch of places had very specific location stamps that had, like, St. Paul's Cathedral on the stamp. And we would send a postcard home to ourself, and I would have my husband and my daughter write a line or we would say something on the postcard, like, best thing I ate today was cheese. I'm still struggling with a 24 hours clock or things like that. Like, just our own little memories. And just last week, we got another postcard in the mail. So it's been fun to get those.

Tracy Collins [00:29:40]:

Yeah, I love that. I love that idea. I just think I'm going to New Zealand next month. For a month. Aren't I lucky? I'm very excited. So I'm going to do that because I've never thought about doing it and I just love it. And like I say, you've been back a while and their postcards are still coming.

Kathryn Johnson [00:29:58]:

My sister in law texted me. She just got one that we sent her from Scotland. I was like, well, that took a while, but at least she got it.

Tracy Collins [00:30:05]:

And it's a bit worrying about how long it took man the postal system.

Kathryn Johnson [00:30:08]:

I don't think the problem is on your end.

Tracy Collins [00:30:10]:

Okay.

Kathryn Johnson [00:30:10]:

It's on our end.

Tracy Collins [00:30:12]:

I'll be honest, I don't honestly, in Australia, we might wait for about two years to get a postcard. Honestly, it's not the fastest in Queensland, I have to tell, but okay, so that's really you. Have you cracked open any of the gin yet?

Kathryn Johnson [00:30:24]:

I haven't. I'm actually waiting for my son and daughter in law to come in.

Tracy Collins [00:30:28]:

Okay.

Kathryn Johnson [00:30:28]:

We have some plans.

Tracy Collins [00:30:30]:

Okay.

Kathryn Johnson [00:30:30]:

That's to enjoy. I did open the whiskey. Yeah, I bought some whiskey. I will say this. Here's a tip I read. I believe someone in your Facebook group made a comment. They said, ask about alcohol before you buy it. Make sure it's not exported to America, because I'm not going to buy alcohol overseas. Come home and find I could buy it here.

Tracy Collins [00:30:52]:

Yeah, exactly.

Kathryn Johnson [00:30:53]:

So all the alcohol, they have little mini bottles of whiskey that I bought for my family. It's only sold where we purchased it, like the Edinburgh Castle only sold there. So that was a great tip I got from your group.



Tracy Collins [00:31:09]:

That's really good. And when I was over, I did buy lots of little miniature gins because lots of the different places now, they do all sorts of gins so you can different places that I was at. And gorgeous bottles as well.

Kathryn Johnson [00:31:21]:

Beautiful bottles.

Tracy Collins [00:31:22]:

So I did buy a few bits and pieces of little bottles of gin, which Doug brought some back from me, for me, because he came back before I did. So my daughter got some, so she was very happy with those.

Kathryn Johnson [00:31:36]:

It makes a very happy gift for many.

Tracy Collins [00:31:38]:

Absolutely. So is there anything else you can think about that you want to share about your trip? Catherine before, I would say a couple.

Kathryn Johnson [00:31:47]:

Of random little things. One of the best tours we did was the Verger Tour at Westminster Abbey, which is something that doesn't seem heavily advertised, but when you're there and you purchase your ticket, or you purchase your ticket in advance and you get in with your QR code. I went to the table and I asked or the check in desk and I asked if we could buy a Virger tour. I think it's ten pounds per person and it's worth every penny. We got to go into places that the public didn't get to go into when they're listening to their headphones. So it was a personally led tour by somebody who's an employee of Westminster Abbey, and that was a great, really good tour. The other thing I started doing is I would ask employees, I did this at Tower of London, I did this at Westminster, I even did it at Buckingham, and I also did it at Windsor. I would ask the employees, what should I not miss when I'm here? What do people tend to skip over? And we got some fantastic answers. That's a great because they know their attraction inside and out.

Tracy Collins [00:33:03]:

Absolutely.

Kathryn Johnson [00:33:03]:

And you can't cover everything. You just can't cover everything in the time allotted, because I probably need six.

Tracy Collins [00:33:10]:

Months to come back. I know. Well, I spent three months last year, three months this year and most of the rest of my life, and there's still places that I'm going to still.

Kathryn Johnson [00:33:18]:

Have something to learn, something to see. I'm so fascinated absolutely.

Tracy Collins [00:33:24]:

Well, it's good because then you'll be planning to visit again and again.

Kathryn Johnson [00:33:26]:

We actually are.

Tracy Collins [00:33:27]:

We actually are just really exciting. So just to kind of sign off from this episode, but I know we are going to be doing another podcast soon, but this one about your trip. What would be the one tip that you would give to anybody visiting the UK for the first time?

Kathryn Johnson [00:33:43]:

I would say don't overpack. We packed what we thought we needed and then we pared it down from there. You will want to come home with. Souvenirs, yeah, absolutely. So we only brought what we couldn't replace, like medications or our glasses. Beyond that, buy shampoo and buy even a toothbrush, toothpaste, cotton pads, whatever you need. You can buy that in the UK. And then we used it and we threw it away before we came home because I wasn't going to travel and pay to bring my little bit of toothpaste back to the States.

Tracy Collins [00:34:20]:

Good idea.

Kathryn Johnson [00:34:21]:

Just don't overpack. And what you should pack is comfy footwear.

Tracy Collins [00:34:24]:

100%.

Kathryn Johnson [00:34:26]:

Don't break in footwear in London. Bring comfy footwear and function over fashion.

Tracy Collins [00:34:32]:

Oh, absolutely. 100%.

Kathryn Johnson [00:34:34]:

No one looked at my feet.

Tracy Collins [00:34:35]:

No.

Kathryn Johnson [00:34:36]:

And I wore what I needed to wear to be comfortable and not get blisters. And I got over any fashion faux paw real quick because I was comfortable.

Tracy Collins [00:34:45]:

Absolutely. 100%. You've got to be 100% comfortable, really. Nobody really cares. It's pretty laid back.

Kathryn Johnson [00:34:52]:

We saw everything over there. The range was very wide, so just be appropriate for the occasion. But beyond that, yeah, if you're going.

Tracy Collins [00:35:02]:

To get the rich afternoon tea, do check what you need to wear, because.

Kathryn Johnson [00:35:06]:

We did each bring one nice outfit. Everything else was mix and match. Everything matched everything else. And we rotated, I think, through five T shirts on the whole trip. T shirts, like tops, like, nicer. We were very careful not to wear, like, big logos and names of things because that just looks more casual. And we wanted to not stick out as tourists. I'm sure we did, but we were hoping to not.

Tracy Collins [00:35:34]:

I think the accent might give it away.

Kathryn Johnson [00:35:36]:

Yes. As soon as I opened my mouth, they're like, yeah, you actually, the first time I was in a coffee shop and someone asked me how I was doing, and I said, oh, I'm doing great. How

are you? And the man looked at me like I had three heads. I don't think he was looking for an actual answer. I think it was more of a how you do?

Tracy Collins [00:35:55]:

You probably get you okay, you okay. That's what he said quite often. And I found that actually when I moved to Australia, that was really interesting because I just go, Are you okay? You're right.

Kathryn Johnson [00:36:08]:

It was you okay? I'm doing great. How are you?

Tracy Collins [00:36:14]:

It's a casual greeting. You're right, you okay. It's more just a hello.

Kathryn Johnson [00:36:20]:

Actually answer. Well, I answered one time and then I shut up.

Tracy Collins [00:36:25]:

It's okay. But that's a common one, that you're right. I think it's particularly I don't see it as much now I've got the habit. Not sure because people kind of looked at me. Yeah. Why do I look do I not look very well?

Kathryn Johnson [00:36:37]:

Is something wrong with me?

Tracy Collins [00:36:38]:

Do I have something on my face? No, you look fine. It's just I'm English and we say that. I don't want to say that anymore.

Kathryn Johnson [00:36:43]:

Well, I made the mistake of answering.

Tracy Collins [00:36:46]:

Oh, it's all deal. I'm sure when I go over to America and I've been a few times, I'm sure there'll be times when I'll have answered things inappropriately or said the wrong thing. And it's one of those things, isn't it? We were talking about earlier. It's like you go to a new culture and we speak the same language. We all speak English. American. English. English. English. Accented English. Me from the north. Australian English. Whatever. But it's still a different culture.

Kathryn Johnson [00:37:10]:

It's a very different culture way of.

Tracy Collins [00:37:12]:

Living and different traditions and different foods and different the British, we're just brilliant at it always. It always fascinates me. I go out of the places and it's kind of like a free for all. And then you're in the UK and it's like if you don't queue and you don't queue properly and line up I know it's the American word. You will get side-eye. You will get people looking at you kind of like and you might get somebody challenging you. Chance is probably not being English, but you will get the looks.

Kathryn Johnson [00:37:42]:

I will say brilliant at queuing. You are correct. Nobody does the little chat thing. No one talks with each other in line. And in America, by the time you get to the front of the line, you're best friends with the person behind you. That did not happen as much.

Tracy Collins [00:37:57]:

No, not as much. We tend to be a bit more reserved. But anyway, we're kind of going on to the next podcast because Catherine is going to be joining me. So in last week's podcast, episode 55, I did a bit of a kind of UK versus us to prepare us visitors, really, but also wherever you're from, for some of the differences that you can expect. So Catherine and I are going to be in a future episode to talk a little bit more about kind of these cultural differences, the things that may have taken Catherine a little bit by surprise or you weren't expecting. And obviously some of those things I don't even think about because I've grown up in that culture, so they're not even things that I consider. So I did obviously do the podcast episode 56 55. This is episode 56 and chat a little bit about those things. But Catherine and I are going to be on soon to chat a little bit further, aren't we?

Kathryn Johnson [00:38:43]:

Yes, I can't wait because, yes, we're all speaking the same language, but the culture, as you said, are different, and I loved exploring those differences. I loved immersing into the British culture. It was beautiful.

Tracy Collins [00:38:58]:

And I'm going to love chatting further with you about all of those. But for this episode, this episode 56 of the UK Travel Plan podcast, I am going to say thank you very much, Kathryn, for being on the podcast.

Kathryn Johnson [00:39:08]:

Thank you for helping make our trip as beautiful as it was, because you and Doug in the Itinerary Consult was the best kickoff to our trip.

Tracy Collins [00:39:17]:

Thank you so much against thank you so much, Kathryn, for coming on so you can find all the details everywhere and all the places and the tours and the hotels that Kathryn talked about in this episode at the [Show Notes@uktravelplanning.com](mailto:ShowNotes@uktravelplanning.com)/episode 56, you can pop over and join our Facebook group. You can book an Itinerary consult. We have got a limited availability. I'm going to be very upfront about that because we are going to be travelling again, but we are putting some hopefully by the time this episode comes out, we'll still be some appointments available. But do pop over if that's something that you're interested in or even shoot us over an email if it's something you really, really want to try and fit in. Otherwise, you can support our work by sponsoring the podcast, which a lot of people, including Kathryn, do. So thank you very much for a huge shout out to our sponsors. Everything helps us to continue to produce all of this free information to help you guys have the best UK vacation that you possibly can. So that just leaves me to say for this week's episode, happy UK Travel planning.