

Episode #65 Transcript

(Please note this is AI generated so excuse any spelling errors)

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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.

[00:00:36.920] - Tracy Collins

Hello and welcome to Episode 65 of the UK TravelPlanning Podcast. This week, I am very excited to be chatting to Deborah Harrison, who was on the podcast last year, for episode 22, when she visited the UK with daughter Emily. This year, I was actually lucky enough to meet Deborah and her daughter, Brit, who she went to the UK with this year. When I actually met up with Deborah in London, I asked if she'd come on the podcast again, and she said she would. Thank you, Deborah. Would you like to introduce yourself and tell us a little bit, obviously, where you're from in the US and who you travel to the.Uk with?

[00:01:14.130] - Deborah Harsen

Absolutely. Thank you again, Tracy. It was fun meeting up with you in person. That was an amazing part of my trip. It's one of my highlights. I'm Deborah Harrison, as you had said. I live in northwest Pennsylvania, not too far actually south from the Niagara Falls. I went this year with my daughter Brittany, who lives in Las Vegas, Nevada. She had quite a bit longer of an airline trip than I did, but we ended up meeting in Washington, D. C. Before we flew over to London. That's who I took with me this year. It was absolutely lovely and a dream to return back to the UK after having just left it nine months prior. I could do that all he time.

[00:01:55.350] - Tracy Collins

It's like me because I think I was away about eight months and then flew back, which it was a little bit sooner than I thought, but yeah, it was great. Last year you did the four weeks with Emily. Obviously this year you decided to visit with Brittany and I was looking to meet Brittany as well in London, which was lovely. Hi Brittany, if you're listening, I'm sure you will be. Last year you did a lot of travels with Emily. You were in Northumberland, you were in York, you were in Canterbury, you were in London, you were in the Cotswolds, you were in Loch Ness, Edinburgh. Tell us a little bit about how you went for this year and where you chose to go with Brittany.

[00:02:34.420] - Deborah Harsen

Well, Brittany and I only were able to take a two-week, a little bit over a two-week stay, primarily because she is a teacher and her school does go year-round, so we had to go within her break. I let Brittany

choose where she wanted to go. Originally, she wanted to go see lots of castles, so I'm thinking, Wales. I get to go back to Wales. I'm so excited. Then she started looking at the map and looking at different areas. Because she lives in desert, she said, I want to be by the water. She is the one who actually chose Cornwall, which was lovely for me because it was an area I've not gone into or had not had the opportunity to really go into much prior to that. It was new for me as well.

[00:03:17.110] - Tracy Collins

That's exciting.

[00:03:17.930] - Deborah Harsen

A lot of beautiful areas. Yeah, it was a lot of fun. We spent our first several days in London, and then we went into Cornwall and saw all sorts of wonderful, wonderful things, and then spent the last five days of our trip in London as well. We were able to combine the bright lights of the big city with beautiful, beautiful countryside and beachfronts and just gorgeous, gorgeous areas.

[00:03:44.320] - Tracy Collins

Oh, I absolutely love Cornwall. It is gorgeous. I didn't get a chance to go this year. I went last year and we had a wonderful week down there and we had fantastic weather. It was absolutely beautiful. Tell us how did you plan to get down to Cornwall? Did you go on a tour or did you do that independently?

[00:04:04.050] - Deborah Harsen

No, we did do a tour to go to Cornwall. I will say this was one of my favorite tours, simply because our tour director made it. I think that's the case with a lot of it. It's a very small tour, but he was a younger man, but boy, he knew his history of Cornwall and made it engaging for everybody. I love history, so every word he said, I was soaking in and writing down in my little journal. But even those who were there just to enjoy the beauty or maybe their interests were some of the TV shows, of course, that are filmed in the area or whatever the interests were, he just was able to encapsulate it all and just made it thrilling and beautiful for everybody. I think that really, really, really made the tour along with the gorgeous areas we went to see.

[00:04:50.480] - Tracy Collins

Absolutely. I think that you're right. It's who you... Because obviously you go into gorgeous areas, but if you've got a tour guide that you can engage with and who knows this stuff, that makes it even better, doesn't it? Yes. How long were you down in Cornwall? How did you get down there? Were you picked up by a bus and taking a bus down there? Did you get a train?

[00:05:10.900] - Deborah Harsen

No, we were picked up by a bus in London at the hotel in which we were staying. We were in Cornwall for six days. Yes, six days. It was absolutely stunning. We actually started in Wells. We saw Wells first, which is not in Cornwall, but I mean saw Wells first, then went into Dartmoor, where we spent our first night, and

then did Northern Cornwall and then down into the southern part of Cornwall before we headed back to London. I'm just in awe of all the areas.

[00:05:45.300] - Tracy Collins

There, really. What were the highlights of Cornwall for you? I know that's difficult, but.

[00:05:50.510] - Deborah Harsen

It's actually not. Well, St. Michael's Mount, that was on my bucket list because Lindasfarne, the Holy Island was on my bucket list last year, and I was fortunate enough to go. This completed the bookend of the area for me. I absolutely loved, I believe it was Bedruthan.

[00:06:13.160] - Tracy Collins

Stunning.

[00:06:16.130] - Deborah Harsen

Just stunning. I guess at one point you could walk down those steps. They don't recommend it now because there's been a lot of rock erosion and so forth. But oh, my goodness, absolutely stunning. Port Isaac was just gorgeous.

[00:06:31.220] - Deborah Harsen

Yes, just gorgeous. Oh, Say Knives. Of course, Brittany got her picture taken at Land's End. There were a lot of moments and highlights that, Gosh, the area was just so beautiful. I'm almost speechless talking about it and trying to think about some of the places. But I think it captivated both of us.

[00:06:52.660] - Tracy Collins

It really does. That's good. It is a lovely area. I know we've got, I can't think off the top of my head which episode is, but Doug and I talked about our trip around Cornwall last year in one episode. That's very good. We do work with a private tour company down in Cornwall who does tours around, Meneage tours as well. He's been on the podcast to talk about his tours that he takes around as well because it is a lovely area. I think people sometimes don't realise how long it takes to get there, though.

[00:07:20.100] - Deborah Harsen

I agree.

[00:07:21.260] - Tracy Collins

It is quite a distance from London.

[00:07:23.690] - Deborah Harsen

It really is. It's so varied in the landscape as you go as well. It's not just a moment of, Oh, here we are. Fortunately for us, our bus went right past Stonehenge. Brittany was able to say, Oh, here's Stonehenge. We saw it beautifully as we passed by. Stopping in places like Wells in Dartmoor National Park, I think really helped keep the excitement up. It wasn't just a long drive.

[00:07:52.680] - Tracy Collins

That's always the advantage. It's a long way to go. But when you do drive there, there's lots of places to stop along the way. In fact, too many places to stop along the way. That's true, too. It can take quite a while to get there. I know last year we got the train to Exeter and picked up a hire car there and then did our drive from there and then back to Exeter to pick up. Well, we're supposed to pick up the train, but we ended up keeping the hire car for a little bit longer. But yeah, you also had lovely weather as well because you were there in June.

[00:08:19.190] - Deborah Harsen

Well.

[00:08:19.730] - Tracy Collins

Yes and no. Yeah, okay.

[00:08:21.930] - Deborah Harsen

It was beautiful. I mean, when we arrived in London, when you and I met, it was incredibly hot. When we first set out to Cornwall, it was beautiful, but it did get much cooler as the trip went on. Certainly when we were in southern Cornwall, we had one day where we were just enjoying the sun. Oh, my goodness, I actually got windburn and didn't realize it because the temperature was low enough but wind was blowing constantly. Eventually I looked at it, Oh, my goodness, my face. It was actually from the wind. We had some cooler days, not unpleasant, cool, and not the rain that I understand they had been after that. But definitely some cooler days, but it didn't take away any of the charm. No.

[00:09:12.810] - Tracy Collins

That's good. Well, it's sometimes crazy. It can get too hot. I think when we were down there last year, it was perfect. I actually was wearing shorts, which I never thought I'd ever wear in the UK, but I had shorts on, which was really good. That was your Cornwall bit. Were there some accommodation that stood out in Cornwall?

[00:09:29.150] - Deborah Harsen

In Cornwall, yes, there was the Carlion Bay Hotel, which was rather in the middle of nowhere. It's right between Charleston and in Foy, in that area, in a beautiful area. But this hotel had incredible amenities. We could have played golf for free. They had a gorgeous lawn, all sorts of these lovely round beach chairs with umbrellas over, and you just sat there and watched the water and you could walk to the

beach. Helicopters were landing for—in a very VIP people who were arriving. I didn't get to see who they were, but I saw their helicopter.

[00:10:05.880] - Tracy Collins

I have to say it wasn't you.

[00:10:07.120] - Deborah Harsen

I thought it was you, actually. I was calling out, but it wasn't you. But that was one of my favorite places. We stayed at in Fulmouth, a place called Green Bank, which had been an inn for, gosh, I think it was three or four hundred years at this point. That was very quaint and very pretty. Two Bridges Hotel in Dartmoor, which is in Two Bridges, was absolutely stunning. That was a beautiful place too. But I think our standout was the Carlion Bay. Simply the location, just the amenities. You felt like you were being treated like royalty. It just really stuck out. Beautiful place, but just a beautiful setting, just a beautiful area.

[00:10:56.970] - Tracy Collins

Perfect. After, obviously, you had a few days in London, you went and did your Cornwall trip and then you came back to London.

[00:11:03.470] - Deborah Harsen

Right.

[00:11:04.370] - Tracy Collins

Should we talk about London? What did Brittany want to do and see in London? What were her priorities?

[00:11:10.820] - Deborah Harsen

Well, our hotel in London was in Westminster. It was right on St. Vincent Square. Gorgeous location for walking, a little bit of a trek for the tubes, but not too bad. Our very first day, we got to our hotel about one o'clock and dropped off our luggage and walked 10 minutes and we're smack dab in, Here's Big Ben, here's Parliament, here's Westminster Abbey. I think for Brittany, it was a case of, Wow, this is bigger than life. I know she enjoyed that a lot. The next day we went to the Tower of London. She has said to this day that that just really amazed her. I don't know if it was necessarily the age, the structure, just the entire mood of the place. But she has repeatedly said the Tower of London was one of her favorite places, and she got to meet the fourth hired female warder at the tower. She was thrilled to death about that. She was incredibly kind and let us take pictures. She was just really wonderful and Brittany really, really enjoyed being able to meet her too. I think that just helped to make the Tower of London even more memorable.

[00:12:24.600] - Tracy Collins

It is. I actually met her as well in May, I think it was when I was at Tower of London quite a few times this summer. She hadn't been there very long, maybe three months, I think. I've also got a photo with her.

She's lovely. But yeah, I mean, quite daunting to see how much history she had to learn. Obviously, you've got to learn such a lot. But what a privilege. What a fantastic opportunity.

[00:12:49.590] - Deborah Harsen

It really was. I loved at the Tower of London too, all of the different school groups. You must have seen that in May, who had decorated all the throne appearing chairs throughout the lawn and the paintings and the artistry, those were just simply fun. Those were so much fun to see and to see the different school groups. I just enjoyed that almost as much as being at the tower, even though the tower is one of my favourite places, and I love seeing that as well. That was really enjoyable.

[00:13:17.890] - Tracy Collins

What other highlights did you have in London?

[00:13:19.880] - Deborah Harsen

We ended up going to the Victorian Albert Museum. This was a Sunday, so we were there for several hours and then went next door to the Natural History Museum and enjoyed both immensely, could spend all day in both. Just spending a couple of hours in both didn't really lend credence to seeing too much, but we really enjoyed it. A couple of days or the next day after that, we went to the National Portrait Museum, which had just reopened, I think, two days after Brittany and I had arrived. That was a lot of fun. They've put an awful lot of energy and money and vision into redesigning that museum and making it more cohesive. I think it's.

[00:14:02.450] - Tracy Collins

Really- It's lovely. It's stunning. It's really good.

[00:14:07.320] - Deborah Harsen

On our way to the National Portrait Museum, I finally got to do something else I wanted to do for years, and that was have tea in Saint Martin's crypt.

[00:14:16.610] - Tracy Collins

Oh, okay. Coffee in the crypt.

[00:14:18.690] - Deborah Harsen

Yeah. I always wanted to do that, never had opportunity or had squeamish people with me. Brittany was all for it. She said, Oh, absolutely. Let's go. We got to do that too, and that.

[00:14:32.620] - Tracy Collins

Was- That's great. Yes. Another thing I know you had on your list is you had a photoshoot with our lovely, Dommy of Scale and Studios. How did that go?

[00:14:41.780] - Deborah Harsen

It was lovely. Damis is amazing. She is sweet. She is professional. She knows what she's doing. She managed to do it with so much personality and ease and just making you feel like, I've known you forever. I adored it. We just opted for the half-hour photoshoot simply because Brittany won't be too upset when I say this, but having her picture taken is not her thing. We just opted for a smaller photoshoot, but also wanted some nice photos of the two of us while we were there. We were right by Westminster Abbey, the phone booth there, and then we went over the bridge to another view by the London Eye. Very, very closely, densely packed areas that we were in. Dommy, she was just amazing. The pictures are phenomenal. I'm looking at them going, Really? That's us?

[00:15:41.060] - Tracy Collins

She's really good. She's really good. I think actually my most favourite photo that I've ever had taken of me was if she took it in Notting Hill in April. I rarely would say that I love a photo of me, but I just absolutely love it. It's just fantastic photo. She did a really good job. She just always does a great job. When I first have a photoshoot we had with Dominic last year, I was all a bit, I've never done one of these. But she put just so at ease.

[00:16:09.750] - Deborah Harsen

She does.

[00:16:10.740] - Tracy Collins

She's incredible.

[00:16:11.610] - Deborah Harsen

I think she had Brittany joking with her within the first three minutes. She made me feel very comfortable, but she made Brittany just feel like, Okay, this is what we're doing. Let's just do it, and having some fun.

[00:16:25.610] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, that's great. We'll have to maybe if you want to send us some photos, we can put in the show notes. If you want to share those, that would be really good. Obviously, you've said that you managed to go and have tea in the cafe in the crypt.

[00:16:37.250] - Deborah Harsen

Yeah.

[00:16:37.700] - Tracy Collins

What other foods did you eat? How did Brittany find it?

[00:16:42.320] - Deborah Harsen

Her goal was to eat as much fish and chips as possible. This was her goal. She definitely tried other things. We had Sunday roast. One Sunday, obviously, and some different things. But right around the corner from our hotel was this fabulous place that has been on my list—I'm a huge list maker—of places that people recommend. It's called The Laughing Halibut. We ended up eating there three times. This was between pre and post, our to our to our to. By the third time, our waiter knows us. Am I going to see you girls again type of thing? We did take away, I think, the first time. And then we actually ate in the restaurant, the last two, superb and just superb. It's wonderful fish and chips. Emily and I had had wonderful experience at another small place. It's called The Friar's Delight. These places are comparable in that they're obviously very family-owned and small and niche and lovely, just lovely. I couldn't recommend that enough. But then we went to Borough Market as well and tried the salt beef. Oh, I know. That was delicious. I had a doughnut that should have been called a cake.

[00:18:02.710] - Deborah Harsen

It just was luscious and creamy and incredibly beautiful and lovely. Of course, Brittany tried the fish and chips there, too, and I even loved them. But that was another highlight, though. Just being able to go through Borough Market and— I love Borough Market. —all the food or sampling some of the things on display, that was just a treat. Just a treat.

[00:18:29.350] - Tracy Collins

Oh, it's fantastic. I did a food tour of Borough Market, which was great and got to try lots of different foods. It was busy because Saturday it can get very, very busy at Borough Market. It was very busy, but we were lucky because we didn't have to stand in a queue to get things. Our tour guide did that.

[00:18:46.100] - Deborah Harsen

That's true. I believe it was a Wednesday morning. I believe it was a Wednesday morning. It was bustling when we got there, but it wasn't busy. That wasn't until probably one or so 1:30 in the afternoon that you could see people were starting to come and it was going to be a lot more crowded. That's another thing I'd say about London, too. I know people, especially on the Facebook group, often ask, Do I really need to book things? Do I really need to do this? Now, last year, and just being fortunate enough to have just been there nine months ago, and when people were first starting to travel, Emily and I could pretty much get into anything we wanted to fairly easily. What a difference nine months makes. I mean, we had all of our tickets for the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, and different places pre-book, so that wasn't an issue. But oh, my goodness, the crowds, just the sheer number of people that are now out and about and traveling and in restaurants or in pubs was entirely different. It was almost like visiting a different city.

[00:19:50.130] - Tracy Collins

Oh, it's very, very busy. It was very busy this year. In fact, when I was there in April, I was there before the coronation for a week. I've never seen it so busy in April. It was crazy. Then in June, it was very busy. I actually popped over to Paris for the day. Now, Doug and I went to Paris last year and it was busy, but this

year it was even... It's just everybody's traveling there that want to travel, all that pent up waiting. I know we get asked all the time, I should have bought the book and should have...

[00:20:17.900] - Deborah Harsen

Yes. Yes, the answer is yes.

[00:20:21.100] - Tracy Collins

If you want to go somewhere in particular, if you want to eat somewhere in particular, book.

[00:20:26.370] - Deborah Harsen

Yeah. I just saw a picture recently of Edinburgh, the Royal Mile for the tattoo. Now, Emily and I were there last year and I had reservations about it. I thought, Oh, my goodness, the tattoo the first time in a couple of years. It was busy, but it was not a madhouse. The picture I saw just the other day, people were literally shoulder to shoulder. It was a massive humanity. Yes, people are traveling. Yes, book.

[00:20:50.470] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, don't underestimate it. Absolutely. That's a very good tip. Yes. What about packing? Obviously, you're used to packing. You know what you're taking. You guys were pretty organized, I reckon, with your pack in?

[00:21:02.290] - Deborah Harsen

We both just did carry-on again. It was just for two weeks. That wasn't difficult at all. The one thing I did differently this year... Last year I taken a large tote from my under-the-seat storage. That was lovely. It worked just fine, but you had to dig for things. It wasn't as organized. I actually found this year an under the seat suitcase that actually slides onto my carryon. I use that instead, and I'm not sorry and probably would never use just a tote again. That was fabulous. I knew exactly which pocket my passport was in. I knew exactly which pocket the extra change of clothes or whatever I needed was in. That's the difference between last year and this year as far as packing. But both times, Carrie-on, we did a load of laundry.

[00:21:51.080] - Tracy Collins

I think Carrie-on is great. I don't know. For us, it's seven kgs. Because I have to take things like my Insta 360 and I've got my laptop, and I've got my... I'm already on five kgs before I put any clothes in, so I can't take anything. But my dream would be to just do carry on. I must admit I've found two things this year that have changed everything. One is those compact cubes, packing cubes that... What do they call them? I can't think of the name of them. You know what I mean?

[00:22:18.170] - Deborah Harsen

No, we use them too. They're brilliant.

[00:22:21.610] - Tracy Collins

Put the cap and cubes in and you take the air out. I can't think of the name of them, but they're fantastic. Oh, amazing. They're really good and the name's completely gone on my head. But I will put a link in the show notes when I do remember. The other thing is, which is something I started doing a few years ago when I was travel around Queensland for work, is just starting to put things in small packing cubes in my hand luggage. I put my book and a pen and a notepad in one, put my earphones and all the electrical stuff that I want in another. I don't have to go digging around my backpack. I found that really helpful. I've been.

[00:22:54.270] - Deborah Harsen

Doing that. It makes it much easier.

[00:22:56.260] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. That makes things a little bit easier.

[00:22:58.630] - Deborah Harsen

Absolutely.

[00:22:59.400] - Tracy Collins

Is there anything? Because obviously you've traveled to the UK a lot, Deborah, but was there anything this time that surprised you? Anything that? Or is there anything that Brit said she wasn't expecting?

[00:23:11.370] - Deborah Harsen

I think what surprised me the most, besides just the absolute lushness of Cornwall and realizing I could just get lost there very, very easy, was the fact that we actually went to a tea plantation, the tragothan tea plantation in southern Cornwall. It's the only one in the UK. They said they are actually one of the larger suppliers of tea to China, which I found quite interesting. But around that area, and of course, because they can grow the tea, it's because of the changing climate, because of the Gulf Coast Stream that goes up through there, there were so many tropical plants. It just felt surreal. There is no other word for it. I know I'm in the UK, and there's a palm tree looking. That was completely surprising, but in a very good way, in a very delightful way. At the tree plant or the tea plantation, excuse me, too, we got to pick our own tea leaves, so we could brew tea later. That was just a fun, surprising additional activity that I certainly would have never expected, and I know we enjoyed that. For Brittany, I think the thing that surprised her was when we got to St.

[00:24:23.880] - Deborah Harsen

Michael's Mount, and of course, we took the boat over, and I kept referring to this causeway that you could walk over. She obviously, not for the first time or the last, thought her mom was completely bonkers. We get to the top and climb to the top of St. Michael's Mountain, the castle, and she's looking down and you could see the tie going out. You could see the causeway. She ended up walking it. When we got

down to the bottom, she could walk it and she just had so much fun doing that. I think that was a surprise because once again, something you didn't expect to be able to do and she was able to do. I think those moments were the biggest surprises.

[00:25:05.200] - Tracy Collins

That's lovely. It's nice to go by boat and walk over if the tides are in your favour. That's lovely. That's really good. Is there one tip? I know I asked you this question last year, but I'm going to ask you on the end of this podcast because I ask everybody and then you might come up with different this time. What is the one tip that you would share for anybody planning a trip to the UK for the first time, Deborah?

[00:25:25.520] - Deborah Harsen

Well, actually, I have two. One goes together. Anytime you're anywhere and you can ask a curator, a verger, anybody questions, do that, and in turn, visit the gift shop, because I think you find the best treasures there. You really, really do. But the biggest thing I found this year was, and I believe somebody had posted it on your Facebook page to download the MPC app, and that's Mobile Passport Control. I did before our trip, and I thought, Well, I wonder if this will really make that big of a difference. Now, it is primarily, I looked into it today in anticipation for this, primarily for US residents and eligible Canadian residents. I know it does take out part of your viewership and the people that would listen, but essentially, it was like global entry. All I had to do to put into it was where we were landing and we ended up coming back in through DC, what terminal we were going to be at. We had nothing to declare. As I'm doing take it, you snap a picture of yourself while you're doing it. We're in line with a line that was longer than anything I've ever seen before, and I'm doing this.

[00:26:37.110] - Deborah Harsen

I finally asked one of the workers as he went by, Is this the line for the MPC? He goes, No. He takes us out of this incredibly long line, takes us to an entirely different area, the airport. There's five people, six people ahead of us in line. We literally... You get this QR code, you put it down on the screen, and you're through. Essentially what it does is it takes out all of your re-entry requirements. You've already downloaded them into this. They do a quick search and forward you this QR code and you're through. It was amazing. Download it, do it. That would be my biggest.

[00:27:15.520] - Tracy Collins

That's for US citizens arriving back into the US?

[00:27:19.210] - Deborah Harsen

Yes, to get back into the US. It was just so easy. I know that line had to have taken people over two hours to get through. Oh, wow.

[00:27:29.450] - Tracy Collins

The great tip. Yes.

[00:27:32.540] - Deborah Harsen

That's no exaggeration. That line was just horrendous. It just wove itself back and forth over and over and over again.

[00:27:38.860] - Tracy Collins

Oh, well, that's brilliant to know. I'm going to say a huge thank you, Deb, for coming back on to the podcast again to talk about your trip with Brittany. It was brilliant to talk to you.

[00:27:50.420] - Deborah Harsen

It was wonderful to meet you in London, too. I enjoyed so much going to Starbucks and saying, Well, that's where my friend and I met.

[00:27:57.260] - Tracy Collins

It was. It was so nice to meet you there and obviously to meet Brittany as well. For anybody listening for the show notes for this episode, we'll have the places that Deborah visited. We'll have links to the different restaurants that she ate at, which I'll also add into our London food guide, which was on our website, londontravelplanning.com. Also the show notes will be on UKTravelPlanet at uktravelplanet.com/episode65. That's where you can find also the photos that Deb took and the photos that a dummy took of Deb and Brittany as well in London. You'll find all of those on the website. But that just leaves me to say until next week, happy UK travel planning.