

Intro (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 (00:38):

Hi, and welcome to episode number seven of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Today, I thought I would talk about some of the questions that get asked quite often in our Facebook group and through emails and quite often, just questions about visiting the UK and etiquette and kind of rules and how to not make any faux pas when you're in England. So I'm actually going to talk specifically about England today because I am English. I was born in the Northeast of England, so I felt it was probably better if I talked about this from an English perspective, because we are different from the Welsh and the Scottish and the Northern Irish. So I thought this was the best way to approach this subject. So I'm going to talk through kind of 14 things that I think it's useful to know when you're visiting England for the first time.

Tracy (01:37):

And hopefully, I'll answer quite a few of those kind of questions that you probably have at the back of your mind. Okay. So number one is don't push in or invade personal space. So I don't queue jump. So we line up, we queue very readily in England. I don't know if we're trained to do that from birth, but I know that it's something that we feel quite strongly about. We also like our personal space, so it's really important to not push into that bubble. So if you need to squeeze past someone, we will always say, excuse me, as we pass. And that's the polite way of just asking permission before you attempt to move through. You're actually fine, to be honest, if you bump into an English person, they'll probably say, sorry, even if it was you that bumped into them. I think, again, something that we've just conditioned to do this strong queue culture, or I think it's a lineups in America, you call it.

Tracy (02:37):

We just like to form queues and wait for our turn patiently. We're just not really fans of kind of pushy people and pushing in and if you push in accidentally, you'll probably find that you're going to get lots and lots of tuts and lots and lots of stares at you directed by the people who you've actually jumped in front of. We tend not to really say anything. So you probably won't get anybody saying something to you directly, but what you will get are a lot of stares and a lot of touching, but yeah. So that's my number one tip to think about when you're in the UK. Following on from that, I'm going to give you a tip number two, which actually applies particularly for those of you who will be in London and traveling on the London underground system or the Tube is not to stand on the left hand side on escalators. Always keep to the right.

Tracy (03:32):

You will see signs that will say keep right. If you do stand on the left, you'll find a lot of unimpressed people who will be trying to get past you because the left hand side is used for people to get up and down the escalators quite quickly. Also would just recommend that you avoid traveling during rush hour periods, definitely before 9:30 AM and after 4:00 PM on weekdays, if you can, because it will be busier at that point on the Tube. There are other ways to get around London. So, if you go on underground, it's fantastic and it's a really good system, but you are underground. So you're not going to see as much. So

we would recommend trying out some of the other methods of transport when you're in London, including walking because it is quite a walkable city and we will be talking in a future podcast about how to get around London on public transport.

Tracy ([04:19](#)):

So do keep an eye out for that. But basically the main point is I guess, with one and two, is that just to kind of be aware of what's happening around you. So as I say, if you see a queue, join the back of it. If you are in London and you're on escalator, keep to the right, look at the signs because that's what you'll see and you'll see, everybody else will be queueing up on the right hand side as well. Tip the number three is to please learn the difference between the United Kingdom, Great Britain and England. It is a useful thing to know. So basically, Great Britain consists of England, Scotland and Wales. The United Kingdom is Great Britain plus Northern Ireland. England is not the same as Britain. Scotland is not England. In Scotland, the people are Scots or Scottish and Wales, the people are Welsh.

Tracy ([05:09](#)):

In England, the people are English, but you can call us Brits too. Bit complicated, isn't it? But actually it's a really useful thing to know. And I think it's when people talk about Great Britain, the British, the English, UK, it can get really complicated, but if you basically know Great Britain is England, Scotland and Wales, but the United Kingdom is Great Britain plus Northern Ireland and then you'll be on the right track. But definitely do not call Scottish people English because they're not. Do not call Welsh people Scottish, because they're not or English. They are Scottish. They are Welsh. We are English or we are all British. I hope that clears things up. Okay. Tip number four is that we don't all speak like the queen, which you can probably tell from my accent because I don't sound like the queen. Each region of England has their own accent and you may hear many accents as you travel around. You will hear many accents as you travel around England.

Tracy ([06:06](#)):

Some are easier to understand than others. And some are easier on the ear as well, shall we say. Do not expect many people to speak about the queen. She speaks the poem of English called received pronunciation, which is considered very posh by us commoners. It's also an indication of someone from the upper classes who probably attended boarding school and was raised by nannies. I'm from the north, so you could probably hear that my vowel sounds are I say bath, whereas people from down south will say bath. So we pronounce our vowels very differently. So you're going to meet lots of different people from around the UK when you're visiting. And if you are traveling around England, you don't have to go very far to hear a different accent. Especially, obviously, if you get outside of London, you're going to hear lots of different accents.

Tracy ([06:56](#)):

So, I'm majority because I'm from the Northeast. So that kind of applies to Tyneside and Northumberland. But even in that area, there's quite a difference in accents. A Mackem is somebody who's also from the Northeast, but from Sunderland and surrounding areas. And then I can't do these accents. I know there are some very talented people out there who can do them, but I can't. So a Scouser that is from Liverpool and surrounding area. So think about Paul McCartney and his accent. Mancunian is from Manchester. Cockney is from the east end of London and Brummie is from Birmingham, but that's just to kind of a few examples of the different accents that you might hear.

Tracy ([07:37](#)):

And I have to admit that some older generation speak with stronger accents. I know, unfortunately my grandfather passed away a number of years ago, but I had a friend who joined me, came to visit from Liverpool and she couldn't understand what my grandfather was saying, because his accent was very strong, but I had actually the same when we went to Liverpool and I struggled a couple of times over in a cafe to understand what somebody was saying.

Tracy ([08:05](#)):

So it's regional variations and differences are very interesting. As I say, just don't be surprised by it. And I'm sure if you've watched lots of television programs, there's great TV programs and you'll have heard lots of different accents anyway. But we're all very proud of our accents as well and try to keep them alive. Yeah. So enjoy though, enjoy them, but just don't try and copy us please because it's not easy. And I know I can't do, I could try and do a Liverpool accent or a London accent, but I can't. And there are some really good comedians that do good jobs of it, but yeah. So just enjoy listening now out and also we use different words as well. So you might get different words used in different parts of the country to describe similar things. But again, that's just that kind of regional variations, but yes. Enjoy that, when you're there.

Tracy ([08:58](#)):

So I think the thing is, if you do spend enough time in England, you will learn to recognize the different accents. That's for sure. I guess the next point is probably a little bit related to that, is that some English place names are not pronounced the way you may expect. Yes. And it can be very interesting. Even myself has fallen foul this on more than one occasion where I've totally pronounced the place completely incorrectly. One very famous place in the UK is Loughborough, which is often pronounced as [Luga-Bruger 00:09:29] by people who do not know how to pronounce it correctly. Even from my area of the world where I come from, which is near Alnwick, which is spelled A-L-N-W-I-C-K. So you would pronounce, it would be kind of Alnwick. It's actually Anwick, you don't pronounce the W. So we have lots and lots of fun words like that.

Tracy ([09:50](#)):

Berwick again, we don't pronounce the W and then I guess my personal favorite for it and this, I guess been spending some time in Australia, where is Leicester, which is L-E-I-C-E-S-T-E-R, which is pronounced Lester. And I've actually heard that pronounced as [Liechester 00:10:10]. But again, just have a go, as I say, I've done exactly the same. I've mispronounced places. I remember there's a place in the Northeast, which is it's spelled C-A-M-B-O-I-S. And I pronounce it Cambois, much to my mom's hysterical laughter because it's actually pronounced [Camis 00:10:31]. Of course, it is. Okay. So tip number six and actually deals with tipping, which again is one of the most common questions that I'm asked. Especially if you come from a culture where tipping is expected, such as America, you might be surprised to know that actually tipping's not expected in England.

Tracy ([10:50](#)):

It's always appreciated, but it's not expected. If you want to tip for good service in a restaurant, a 10 to 15% tip is generally what we'd recommend, but do check that in case of service charges already been added, which can be the case. So if that has been just, there's no expectation to tip. If you're ordering a bar, there's again, no expectation to tip, but if you're in a restaurant and served by waitress, yeah, sure. Add 10% to the bill and give them the tip. If you take the London cab, for example, round it up to the

nearest town, we'd recommend that. And if you have a baggage porter who takes your baggage to your room, a two pound tip is absolutely acceptable. So that's not a problem.

Tracy ([11:35](#)):

But as I say, it's not a huge expectation that you were going to tip. It's not, you won't have somebody, I know when we traveled around America, we had a few occasions where the expectation of the tip was, I don't know how to put this, but it was very strongly suggested. So you won't find that in England at all. As I say, if you had good service, it is a good thing to tip, but again, as I say, it's not an expectation. So tip number seven, what do you do when you need to spend a penny? If you're out and about in England and need the loo, you may be wondering how to find a public toilet. So you'll find that there are public toilets in shopping centers, department stores, train stations. And of course, there's always McDonald's if... You'll always find a McDonald's. There are some great apps available, which you can use to find the location of the nearest public toilet.

Tracy ([12:29](#)):

And I've got actually an article on my website about different apps that are useful to have when you travel in the UK. And I will link to that in the show notes. But yeah, so if you leave the toilet, you'll find that most of them are free as well, although some will charge, but on most occasions we would head for the shopping center department store McDonald's and train stations recently have stopped charging to use the toilet. So you shouldn't need any change for that. But again, that you'll find that there are kind of plenty of toilets around. So don't worry. Especially if you're in one of the cities. Obviously, if you're out in the countryside, that might be slightly more difficult, but yes, I'll recommend sort of downloading an app, if that's something that you're going to feel that you're going to be conscious of, that you will need the toilet and that's probably your best way forward.

Tracy ([13:18](#)):

So tip number eight is to enjoy England with all its quirks. Embrace, expect it to be different to where you come from. Don't go looking for the familiar, but actually embrace the food, the culture and the opportunities that you have to explore the country. This is one of the reasons I highly recommend that you don't spend your entire holiday in London because you won't really get to experience England. So get out and about, see attractions in other parts of the country, because there's so many amazing places to visit in England. We've got areas of outstanding natural beauty, such as the Lake District, the Cotswolds, the Peak District. England's also filled with places of interest, the history buffs. There's like quite a few castles, I've heard. Quite a few stately homes, historic cities, such as Bath, which is also UNESCO world heritage site. York, seaside town, beautiful, and very little villages and the Cotswolds, for example.

Tracy ([14:18](#)):

As you explore, don't forget to add some unique English experiences into your travels, such as enjoy a pint in an English pub. Have a hike through the countryside, go to an English football match. If you can't get tickets, which I know really difficult, then enjoy it from a pub. Enjoy fish and chips supper. And enjoy the random opportunities and places to visit as you travel. I love London. I really do. And I understand why people want to see famous sites in the landmarks like Big Ben and Buckingham Palace, but a few days in London does not mean that you have experienced England. So if you can, even if you're planning a week in London and that's all you've got, try and do a day trip. Try and get out, go to Bath for the day. Go down to Brighton to the coast. Go to Canterbury.

Tracy ([15:11](#)):

There's lots and lots of places that you can visit from London for the day. In this previous podcast, we spoke to John England from John England Tours and he takes some absolutely fantastic tours for those who are interested in history. To Hever Castle, Dover Castle, going see the White Cliffs. There's lots and lots of amazing places to visit outside of London. So, take the opportunity while you're there to actually go in and explore. And you'll obviously meet lots of different people as well when you're out and about, which will be, is always great. I think that's one of my favorite things about traveling is actually yes, I enjoy seeing the places and learning about the different landmarks and attractions, but it's actually meeting the people and just kind of learning how people in England live would be really great to do.

Tracy ([16:02](#)):

So, as I say, pop into a pub, go and have a Sunday roast, have a stroll through, there's lots of places to walk. So have a little bit of a walk through some of the parks or go down as I say, there's lots and lots of places you can visit. So yeah, just enjoy the experience of actually being in England. So the next one is probably one of our favorite topics for the English is the weather. And I get asked a lot. Again, I get a lot of emails and messages about what to pack and you know what? English weather is... The main thing I can say about it is to actually expect the unexpected because really it's so unpredictable and I kind of expect to become as obsessed as we are about it.

Tracy ([16:51](#)):

Really you'll need a coat, jacket, whatever time of year. Layering is what I absolutely say to people, wear layers. And if it does get warm, you can take them off. If it gets colder, you can put more on. If you're visiting in the winter, you may see snow. And that's definitely more likely the further north that you go. So though, I know the last few years sort of, February's been kind of the snow month, don't discount visiting the UK in winter. It is low season outside of Christmas, New Year anyway. And so places are quieter. England's not the sunniest country in the world, so it's not somewhere that you're going to go to for the sunshine. That's for sure. In compared to many countries, we do have a relatively short summer.

Tracy ([17:38](#)):

And again, even in summer, the weather is unpredictable. So you really need to keep an eye on local forecasts and news bulletins. Make sure you've got plenty of jumpers and cardigans, a pair of comfortable walking shoes, waterproof. So in London I would not use an umbrella because it's just not practical. And again, I guess it can be windy. So you've got an umbrella, even if you're outside of London, if it's windy, you're not going to be able to use an umbrella anyway. You can take a pac-a-mac, something like that. Personally, I don't like wearing them because I find them too hot, but they are probably your best bet. Then you can keep that in your bag. And then if it starts raining, you can pop that on or just have a small travel umbrella. But again, as I said, I wouldn't recommend that in London.

Tracy ([18:20](#)):

Yeah. And just invest in something that can keep you a bit dry, if it does rain. Because yes, we do get a lot of rain, but I think we do get a bit of bad press for that in terms of people just think it rains every single day. So just the main thing really is to not to over pack when you're putting stuff in, putting your packet together. Really is to think in layers. So for example, I'll take t-shirts and then I've got kind of long sleeve tops. And then jumpers, and then a few sort of different things, as a jackets, obviously in winter, if you go and then I've got things like socks and boots and hat and scarf and gloves. And sometimes I've

bought some of those little hand warmers as well, but that was particularly when we were in Scotland, because it does get colder the further north that you go.

Tracy ([19:08](#)):

So that's worth bearing in mind. But I think the main thing is just to expect unexpected because you literally can't predict it. We could have an absolutely glorious summer this year or it could be a complete washout. I don't know. The only thing that I do kind of, I think, is typical is that the schools break up for their summer holidays and about at the third week in July and guaranteed, usually the weeks before that are beautiful sunny weather and the minute the schools break up and the kids are out for the summer holidays, which are six weeks in England, it starts to rain. So hopefully that won't be the case this year, but just bear that in mind, again, that you just pack for every eventuality. Pack a few colored things and then maybe add some accessories.

Tracy ([19:57](#)):

So maybe just kind of go in your black, grays, navy blues, and then add a few accessories in for some color. And again, yeah. I've got a packing list. So I will link to that in the show notes. So you can have a look at the sort of things that I recommend that you take, but we're, I should say light packers. We take as little as possible with us. I just find it a lot easier. So again, it's kind of mixing and matching and taking the minimum that you think that you're going to need. There's all shops that you can go and buy clothes if you find that there's something that you need anyway. So number 10 thing to know before you go to England is don't underestimate the English love of tea.

Tracy ([20:39](#)):

So I personally don't drink coffee. I absolutely adore tea. I'm sure that it actually runs through my veins. Lots of people are coffee lovers in the UK, that's for sure. And England definitely. It's just not something that I've ever really enjoyed. If you order tea, expect to come with milk and sugar, which you can add. So the sugar won't be added to it, but you can add it. In a posher establishment, so if you're playing an afternoon tea in London, for example, expect teapot, tea leaves in a strainer, and a large choice of different teas. Because of course there's lots and lots of different teas available. From what I've heard and from fellow Brits and particularly Australians have told me that the coffee isn't brilliant in the UK, which I think is probably a bit of a exaggeration, but I know you'll definitely get a decent cup of tea.

Tracy ([21:31](#)):

I can't promise you that you'll get a decent cup of coffee. Yay. Next thing to know is don't talk too loudly in restaurants or on public transport. And I can't really stress this enough because actually the English aren't really loud and we're quite aware or very aware, actually, being respectful to other around us. So we tend not to talk very loudly on fact, possibly at all on things like the Tube or buses. So if you do, if you are quiet and I've got a very loud voice, so I have to be, my husband's always telling me. So I have to be conscious of this myself, is just to be conscious of the loudness of your voice because nobody wants to sit in a restaurant and hear kind of the people at the next table or on a train and hear that the people further down the compartment talking. It actually is considered quite rude.

Tracy ([22:29](#)):

And so again, a bit like pushing in the queue, you'll find that you might get quite a lot of stares, a lot Paddington bear. I don't know if you know if Paddington bear stares. Well, that's what you will get and tuts, especially if you on the train, for example, are you in a designated quiet zone? Because trains do

have designated quiet. So there's no expectation there. There's going to be any music or loud talking. So yeah, you'll find that you'll probably not be appreciated by the other people in the compartment with you. And then the next tip. The next thing to know is that don't say that we drive on the wrong side of the road because actually you do. No, only kidding. Okay. So you just need to remember that in the UK, we drive on the left. We don't drive on the right.

Tracy ([23:20](#)):

We drive on the left. When you drive in and you, if you're used to driving on the right hand side, which obviously, in Europe, mainland Europe, they drive on the right, but I'm trying to think. Well, the places to drive on the right time side, America, Canada, I'm sure there's quite a few places in the world that do. But there's also quite a few places that drive on the left. For example, Australia and New Zealand, Hong Kong, and obviously all over the UK, we drive the left. And I know that's quite a daunting prospect for if you're used to driving on the right, the thought of, then all of a sudden I'm going to be driving on the other side of the road, not on the wrong side of the road, but you will get used to it because you have to remember that when you get into your hired car, that the seats on the other side, the driver seat is on the other side.

Tracy ([24:05](#)):

And believe me, there's been so many times when we've hired a car in France, for example, and we're getting the wrong side. And I know actually quite a lot, I know some of the cars will actually will have a little sign just to remind you to drive on the left, and also there's a lot of cars crammed on England's roads. So don't be surprised at just how busy they are or how narrow the roads are. Compared to the wide streets I've driven on in Australia or North America, English roads are very narrow. And we will talk in another podcast actually about how to get around the UK, including talking about driving, because there are obviously different rules and things to know. We have lots more roundabouts for example, than other countries. And we actually have got a guide, if you are thinking about renting a car on our website and I will look to that in the show notes.

Tracy ([24:57](#)):

Also, it's a good thing to know, actually, if you are used to driving on the wrong side of the... Sorry, the right, you will instinctively look the wrong way when you attempt to cross the street, right? It's just what you're used to doing. And so that's really important to remember to actually look both ways and then double check before you actually cross the road. In fact, use traffic lights or a crosswalk would be far safer, but that's something you really need to be conscious of, particularly in busy cities, that if you are used to driving on the right, you are actually going to look at the opposite direction when you go to cross the road. And I know that's something that quite a few of my American friends have mentioned.

Tracy ([25:37](#)):

Well, the next thing to note is actually quite funny, actually. I always find it quite funny is that you'll find when you go to your sink, if you are in a hotel and bathroom, that you'll find two taps for some reason. No idea. You'll find that water rarely comes out of one central tap in England. In fact, most of the UK. So you'll get cold water, very cold water at a cold tap, if it's winter. And hot water out of hot tap. So prepare to be scolded. It's a bit weird, but anyway, there are a few historical reasons for it, but I just thought I'd mention it because I think it is quite surprising if you used to have, like most people in the world one tap so you can get the temperature of, you either have cold and hot and then you've got to

put them in the sink because you're going to have to mix it to a temperature that is not going to either freeze you to death or going to burn you.

Tracy ([26:30](#)):

So that's worth knowing. Another thing to know is don't expect to try and see everything in one visit because you can't. We are going to be in the UK for 12 weeks. So we're there, May, June and July this year. And we will be primarily in England and Scotland. Hopefully we'll get into Wales as well. And that's in 12 weeks and we are struggling to fit in as much as we want to see. So, you're just not going to be able to do it. It is tempting to try and do, put as much in your schedule as you can, but obviously, you'll just end up exhausted and you probably won't as enjoy it as much as you would've done, if you kind of think carefully when you plan it. So, I know putting together itinerary, especially visiting somewhere like the UK, which has got, there's just so much to see and we're talking about England, we've got England, we've got Scotland, we've got Wales, got Northern Ireland, where'd you go?

Tracy ([27:29](#)):

What'd you see? And again, that's something that's quite often mentioned to me. So if you're feeling overwhelmed with that process, we do have the five step itinerary planning challenge, which again, I'll link to in the show notes. This is free. It's basically videos. I take you through videos to take you through each of those steps. And there's a little booklet, which you can work through as well, just to try and help you focus and choose those places that for you are kind of your must dos and also, your nice to dos, but then we can build an itinerary around that. And we also are offer, if you've done that and you're still feeling a bit overwhelmed and you're not sure, we also do offer an itinerary review service where we spend some time on Zoom, we go through your itinerary and then give you kind of a detailed PDF document afterwards, where with everything that we've talked about, because you want to make the most of your time in the England when you're visiting.

Tracy ([28:26](#)):

So we totally understand trying to prioritize what it is that you want to fit in and the best ways to get around so that you don't find that you go back after two weeks and you're just absolutely exhausted. And you spent 10 minutes at Hever Castle and you spent 15 minutes at Stonehenge and you sort of glimpsed Bath you drove past it in the coach or whatever. We'll help you be able to kind of get the most out of your trip and your priorities. So there you have it. Those are my kind of 14 things to know before you visit England. I hope that's helped. If you've got any questions, do join our Facebook group because it's a great place there to ask questions of people who've been on the travels to the UK and returned or people who are also planning their trips.

Tracy ([29:13](#)):

You can book an itinerary review with us as well, if it's something that you want to go through. And also if you just want to have a chat, we're both English. Doug's from the Midlands, I'm from the north of England. Yeah. So these are all kind of useful to tips and useful things to know, I think, just to keep in the back of your mind and kind of, I know certainly questions about tipping is one of those ones that comes up really often and again, what to pack and what to expect from things like the weather. And honestly, if I could predict the weather in England, I'd be a multimillionaire by now, I think because it's unpredictable. But yeah, so everything I've talked about will be in the show notes for today's episode, with the links to everything as well, that the places that I've mentioned and those services that we offer. Do listen out for future podcasts, where we're going to be talking about how to get around London,

around public transport and actually the best ways to get around England, Scotland and Wales and Northern Ireland with Doug.

Tracy ([30:10](#)):

So he'll be talking specifically about train travel because that's his area of expertise, but we'll also be talking about how to driving tips, buses, coaches, and also talk actually a little bit the language that we use, how we describe those different ways of getting around, what the difference between a bus and a coach and we use the term underground and Tube, but it's the same thing. So we can talk through all of those issues and those areas too. So do pop in, listen to us via your favorite podcast app. So please do subscribe. Also, if you're enjoying our podcast, please leave a review. That would be absolutely fantastic. We'd love that. Until next time. I'd like to say happy UK Travel Planning and speak soon.