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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. Hi, and.

[00:00:38.460] - Tracy Collins

Welcome to Episode 80 of the UK TravelPlanet Podcast. This week, we have followed on from the previous two episodes. Episode 78, where we talked about 10 steps to planning your UK vacation, and episode 79, where we gave you some tips to planning your perfect road trip in the UK. This week, in Episode 80, we are going to share 12 tips to help you plan your UK train trip itinerary. Since we're talking trains, I've obviously got Doug here. Hello. Doug and I are going to be talking and sharing some of our top tips to help you plan your UK train trip because we know quite a few of you may feel a little bit stressed at the thought of planning a train trip if it's something that you're not used to. So these 12 practical tips will help you to plan your trip and make sure that you have a good time when you're traveling the UK by train. Doug, do you want to start off by tip number one?

[00:01:37.490] - Doug Collins

Well, yeah, tip number one is the UK train travel ebook that I've written. This gives you lots of practical tips and help and also includes 10 rail itineraries that I've written, tried and tested many, many times. But also within there is some practical help as to how to use the very old network from buying tickets or using stations, which can be difficult because obviously some of the main stations or main rail calls are very busy and.

[00:02:10.790] - Tracy Collins

Complex places. Yeah, they are. They can be, yeah. Yeah, so that's good tip number one. So tip number two is to check out the UK TravelPlan website because we have an entire section dedicated to travel in the UK by train, which really we are adding to all the time, but it really gives you all that you need to know to plan your UK train trip. So if you use our e-book and the free resources that are available on the website, that's going to give you a huge head start with planning your trip. But you can also obviously join our private UK Facebook group, which Doug runs.

[00:02:46.900] - Doug Collins

Yeah, that's why I'm the UK train travel tips.

[00:02:49.130] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, so that is a private Facebook group. So do come and join that if you've got some questions. So obviously we've got plenty of resources to help you to apply on your trip. So tip three, Doug.

[00:02:58.410] - Doug Collins

Well, to summarise this one, train travel in the UK is not cheap.

[00:03:02.650] - Tracy Collins

No, it really isn't.

[00:03:03.760] - Doug Collins

So we're all looking for the best deals that we possibly can. So in one of our articles on the website is 13 top tips to save money on UK rail travel. And this takes into account the various rail passes and national rail cards that you can purchase. So the rail passes includes the BritRail, the Global URail, which has options for consecutive and for flexi use, and then also the UK national rail cards. You've got examples of the senior rail card, student rail cards, and the two together rail card, which we've talked to a lot of people about that one. But then the only thing where you have to travel at the same time-

[00:03:44.610] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, two of you have to travel because it's two together.

[00:03:47.330] - Doug Collins

But they do give you some good savings.

[00:03:49.610] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, so that's a good option. So now tip number four is to plan your itinerary in a methodical, sequential way, because what you don't want to be doing is wasting your time doubling back, because they say train travel is pretty expensive in the UK, so you need to figure out where you're going to go from each destination to another. So I have got a very popular 14-day best of Britain by rail itinerary, which starts and ends in London. And that includes many of the most popular destinations, city destinations. So it starts off in London, goes to Bath, then into Cardiff, then up to, you've got an option of Liverpool or the Lake district, then up to Edinburgh, down to York, and then back down to London. So obviously that's a 14 day one that you can choose how you might want to extend that. And we've also got a best of Scotland by rail itinerary as well, which you can add to that and make that a longer trip.

[00:04:41.890] - Doug Collins

Yeah, that's right. And that's a good circular rail trip in Scotland, which we've.

[00:04:45.760] - Tracy Collins

Done all these. Absolutely. The only thing in Scotland you can't do that, Alisca, by train, because there is no train.

[00:04:50.520] - Doug Collins

To do that.

[00:04:51.000] - Tracy Collins

It's a bit of a challenge. So another option to consider is whether it's worth basing yourself in one or two locations. So, for example, London and/or Edinburgh, those are really great destinations to base yourself, very accessible by train. So we've taken day trips from Edinburgh before to places like St. Andrews, to Glasgow.

[00:05:10.520] - Doug Collins

Yeah, Aberdeen, Glasgow.

[00:05:12.050] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, there's so many places. Doug has written an article which gives you lots of different options for day trips from Edinburgh by train. Again, equally London, there are so many destinations you can choose to. You can go for a day trip by train. So you've got obviously Oxford, Cambridge, Bath, York. You just get that. It's endless, really.

[00:05:32.050] - Doug Collins

Canterbury.

[00:05:32.700] - Tracy Collins

Canterbury, Winchester, Dover. Winchester, Dover. Yeah, there's just so many places that you can go to. If that's what you'd rather do than actually move around, you can do the day trips by train. So again, we have lots of articles covering these different options, and I will put a link in the show notes for this episode to those articles as well. That brings us to tip number six.

[00:05:53.380] - Doug Collins

Yeah, we all intend to do this and we all try our best to do this one, and that's to travel light. It's really important to get, particularly if you find a bit difficult to carry heavy items or your mobility is not so easy, is to try and reduce the amount that you carry. So say we all try and do it, but sometimes it's not so easy. But there is restrictions as to how much you can take on a train and travel around London with it just to make it... It can be difficult. It can be difficult. So keep it light and small as you possibly

can because you've got to consider getting on and off the trains and obviously storing it within on the trains themselves. And because without saying, some trains can get very full.

[00:06:34.500] - Tracy Collins

They can, yeah. So you are best, if possible, to try and travel as light as you can. Definitely. Number seven, book seats if you're traveling a long distance or at busy times. And we do recommend avoiding Sunday travel if at all possible.

[00:06:48.100] - Doug Collins

That's right. For many reasons, obviously, you've got fewer trains at the weekends, there's engineering works, and so there's more people traveling as well on fewer trains. And booking seats is not compulsory. Point this out, it's not compulsory to book seats on UK trains as a rule.

[00:07:05.460] - Tracy Collins

And trains don't.

[00:07:06.610] - Doug Collins

Sell out. And trains do not ever sell out, which we do get that question quite often with that one. But they do not sell out, and seat reservations are not compulsory on standard daily services. But it's a peace of mind. If you're taking multiple pieces of luggage and you're traveling long distances, I can understand the preference. We have done occasionally, just not.

[00:07:28.850] - Tracy Collins

Very often. Yeah, we do. I know if you've got a booked seat, you do feel a bit better when you're getting on a train. Then you know that you should be guaranteed your seat. I think it's sometimes the best thing to do. Another tip that we have, so tip number eight, is to plan to be at the train station and plenty of time to catch your train, particularly main train hubs. Also consider how you're going to get to the station so you're not late. I'm sure my sister is going to love the fact they want to share this, but a few years ago, my sister came down to visit me from Newcastle down in Burton on trent, and she looked at a train ticket and it was, I don't know, something like 10:00 in the morning. So she got to the train station two minutes to 10:00, and she got to the platform and waved her train goodbye, basically, because she thought she just had to be there for 10:00. And it was like, No, you need to be there in plenty of time. The train is not going to wait, which it didn't. So then I had to pay for another train for her to come and visit.

[00:08:23.880] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, so she hasn't made that mistake since it was quite a while ago. She was quite young at the time. So she hasn't made that mistake again.

[00:08:29.380] - Doug Collins

No, I mean, for safety reasons that they do close the doors and make sure there's nobody near a train before it leaves the platform. So you've got to be there at least 5, 10 minutes before the train departs. And the bigger stations, particularly if you're not familiar with them, you don't know where your platform is. And some stations have a good number of platforms.

[00:08:49.640] - Doug Collins

Absolutely. Yeah. So you've got to be clear.

[00:08:51.280] - Tracy Collins

So another thing to consider, tip number nine is to bring your own food and drink because you can't assume that you're going to be able to purchase food and drink on the train, particularly weekends.

[00:09:01.700] - Doug Collins

That's right. Yeah, I mean, if they're short-staffed, the refreshment services, one service that does tend to get, what should we say, knocked away.

[00:09:10.910] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. What? The actual- Yeah, the.

[00:09:12.730] - Doug Collins

Service will stay in, but it's the... Yeah, it's the refreshment service or trolley service will be cancelled.

[00:09:21.150] - Tracy Collins

Okay.

[00:09:21.490] - Doug Collins

Yeah. So if you're going from London to Edinburgh, you best take your own food and drink.

[00:09:26.660] - Tracy Collins

Exactly. And you will find that there are plenty, especially the main train stations, there's plenty of places to go and buy. You'll usually find a good few shops to get coffee, to get drinks, to get magazines, and get yourself perfectly stocked up for the trip. And we always recommend that you do that because honestly, there's nothing worse than getting on their thinking you're going to buy drinks and there's nothing available. So point 10, about onboard WiFi.

[00:09:52.270] - Doug Collins

Yeah, it can be hit and miss, particularly as the train's travelling along at a good speed and it dips in and out. So the best advice is to look after your own needs with your own device. And if you do need to use the train supply, get yourself a VPN.

[00:10:10.500] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. So that's a network that ensures that your connection is private so that nobody can hack into you when you're surfing online. And obviously it's worth thinking as well that to be honest, sometimes you're going to lose your signal because of just the nature of travel by train, really.

[00:10:27.740] - Doug Collins

Yeah, that's right.

[00:10:28.420] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. So another tip that we highly recommend is consider booking into accommodation near the train station, especially if you're on shorter days. So if you're doing a whole rail itinerary and you're going from place to place, so you might only be spending one or two nights in a particular destination. We do recommend looking at some of the accommodation that's near the actual train station. So when you arrive in, bear in mind that you might be late in the day or you might be leaving the next day or the day after on an earlier train to go to your next destination. You don't want to be... It goes again to that thinking about how you're going to get to and from the train station. So, for example, in Edinburgh, we always stay at the Aldi or guest house. We have Donfies because we know where it is. It's an easy walk in distance from Wavley Station. That's right.

[00:11:14.340] - Doug Collins

I did one in North Wales early this year, and that was literally straight across the road from the.

[00:11:19.110] - Tracy Collins

Train station. And we chose that for your itinerary, didn't we, specifically? And that made everything much easier when you were travelling around Wales, didn't it?

[00:11:26.370] - Doug Collins

It did. That's called the Tracks Hotel.

[00:11:28.080] - Tracy Collins

That was so very good. Yeah. So that worked really well for you. So that's again, if you've got luggage, you don't have to start thinking about, Oh, my goodness, I've just arrived at the train station. I've now got to get my luggage to my accommodation. So even if you're not travelling with a lot of luggage, it's sometimes easy and just feels nice to be able to get to accommodation fairly quickly. Obviously, you

can get a cab. There's quite often taxis outside train stations that will take you to your accommodation, but it is worth checking. And then number 12, tip.

[00:11:58.970] - Doug Collins

Yeah, as much as I advocate train travel, trains don't actually go everywhere in the UK. There's some places not accessible by train, and there is the Cotswolds or Norfolk and actually some Derbyshire, next to the counter and from, it's just not so easy. So you do need a mixture and plan-advanced combination of buses, taxis and trains. You need the combination.

[00:12:24.020] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, and you can always book a private tour. So you can get yourself into someone like the Cotswolds by train and then book a private tour around if necessary, or hire a car, or in a push, look at what the local buses are like. Places like the Lake district are excellent actually in terms of you can get to the Lake district quite easily into Windermere anyway by train. And from that point, we tried this last year. We just used all the public transport. It was excellent.

[00:12:51.380] - Doug Collins

And I did in Wales, North Wales as well.

[00:12:53.150] - Tracy Collins

Yes, your recent trip to Wales.

[00:12:55.310] - Doug Collins

I had a combination. I used trains, buses. I went on a tour as well, so I used bit of everything.

[00:13:01.790] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, but I mean, the main way that you got there and back was, well, you got there back by train and then when you got around, you took the bus in.

[00:13:09.100] - Doug Collins

Multiple.

[00:13:09.440] - Tracy Collins

Bus companies. Yeah. So it is possible. So if you don't want to drive, and I guess that might be the reason that you're looking at a train itiner or you want to do a little bit of drive and then some trains. Yeah, it's definitely worth having a look at the different options that you have. So obviously listen to last week's episode if you haven't already about travelling by road in the UK. But yeah, so as I say, we've got plenty of resources and plenty of information about travel and by train in the UK. So I'm sure this episode will have given you some really essential tips and things to think about when you're planning your trip. As we say, if you want some itineraries already done for you, look at our e-book, because we've got 10 really good itineraries in there.

[00:13:49.480] - Doug Collins

That's right. And one thing I will add on to this is station staff in the UK are excellent and very helpful. If you're in a doubt, any of these train stations, ask one of the staff. They are very knowledgeable.

[00:14:03.050] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, that's perfect. That's a really good tip. So I guess that just leaves us to save for this week because that covers as much as we can think of for train travel. Tip wise, a quick episode. In next week's episode, I share some free things to do in London. So if you're planning to go to London and looking at budget options, there's some different suggestions in next week's 81 about things to do in London. But the show notes for this week will list all of these different tips and we'll give links to our ebooks, links to the different articles and to our train travel category. Also a link to the Facebook group if you want to join that. So that will be at uktravelplanning.com/episode80. But that just leaves us to say until next week. Happy UK travel planning. Happy UK travel planning.