

[00:00:00.760] - Intro

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.

[00:00:38.160] - Tracy

Hi, and welcome to Episode 53 of the UK Travel Planner podcast. In this week's episode, Doug and I are going to be talking about his trip to the Isle of Wight, which he took while he was in the UK. Doug's actually now back in Australia. I'm still in the UK for another few weeks. But while Doug was here, he did do quite a few trips himself, including last week's trip to Wales. If you haven't listened to that podcast and you're considering going to Wales, do listen to Episode 52. But in this episode, we're going to talk about his visit to the Isle of Wight. Doug decided to go to the Isle of Wight while I visited Paris, so I popped over to Paris for a day, which, yes, I will be recording for a podcast, hopefully in a few weeks, to go out, probably in end of July, August. I will be talking about my day trip. But so, hi, Doug. We thought we would have a chat about your day trip to Isle of Wight this week, didn't we?

[00:01:28.340] - Doug

We did. Yeah, it was a bit of a last minute decision to go. For those that don't know, the Isle of Wight is located off the south coast of England, and it's separated by a stretch of water called the Solent.

[00:01:41.360] - Tracy

Absolutely. And so obviously, when I was going off to Paris for the entire day, so I was away from half past five in the morning until I didn't get back till half past nine in the evening because it was quite a long day. So you were deciding about where to go on that day because obviously there's loads of fantastic day trips that you can take from Paris. So why did you decide to visit the Isle of Wight, particularly as it was a last minute decision?

[00:02:04.670] - Doug

Okay. Well, incidentally, that week there'd been some comments about the Isle of Wight within the group. And it just seemed like perfect opportunity while I was in London to have a look at it and see if I could plan it logistically for one day. And you're right, there's lots of things to see there on the Isle of Wight, but there's a few priorities I wanted to see if I could accomplish in that one day. And really, I looked at the weather forecast as well, and it was a beautiful, hot, sunny, warm day in the UK. So I thought, why not? Give it a go.

[00:02:45.280] - Tracy

Actually, yeah, it was a good choice actually, because I know between the two of us, we've been the most places in the UK. Either you've been or I've been or we've been together. But Isle of Wight was one of the places that we had said we hadn't been to. So I think that was another influence because obviously we do get asked... We've been asked quite a lot actually this year about the Isle of Wight. So it certainly seems to become a more popular destination, that's for sure. And obviously it was a lovely hot summer's day. So what more perfect could you have than a day trip to a beautiful island?

[00:03:16.200] - Doug

That's right. And also, as you well know, we get asked quite often for different alternatives and choices for days out from London. And the Isle of Wight seem to tick all those boxes because there's something for the whole family to do there.

[00:03:30.800] - Tracy

So do you want to talk us through about how you went about planning your day?

[00:03:34.390] - Doug

Okay. So I try not to make this too lengthy, but first of all, I looked at all the popular locations on the island. Those obviously included Osborne House, Carisbrooke, the famous Needles Landmark, the

attraction centre there not to mention a steam railway on there, which I really wanted to do above all else, but didn't get a chance. But there's birds of prey there, donkey sanctuaries. There's not to mention beautiful coastal footpaths and walks within the island. So that was the starting point. And then I narrowed that down just to priority list and places that have been asked for in the group. And then from then I went on to see how many different means we could get to the island. Obviously, it's been an island there's numerous sea routes onto the island from Southampton, from Lamington and from Portsmouth. So I looked at all the different possible routes and how long they take. And surprise, surprise, the fastest was going to be a hovercraft, which is only 10 minutes.

[00:04:44.850] - Tracy

Yeah, that's amazing. I never thought about a hovercraft when you did mention that because I remember taking a hovercraft when I was really quite small. And I think we went over to France from what I remember, but it was a long time ago. So I was quite surprised when you mentioned a hovercraft.

[00:04:58.920] - Doug

Yeah. Obviously, I say it was the fastest route, which is only 10 minutes. And when you're only going for a day, you want to get there as quick as you can. And incidentally, it turned out to be the fastest train route as well from London. I went from London Waterloo Station, which was on the tube line from St. Pancras, where we were staying, because you were catching the early morning Eurostar. So that fitted particularly perfectly. And it was only just under two hours for direct train on the Saturday, down to Portsmouth and SouthSea train station. So what you have to do from that, this sounds really good, you've got to catch the hoverbus to the hoverport to catch the hovercraft. That's good. Yeah. So it was all the hovers. But the website for that is actually really good. So I looked, whether it was a space on the hover craft in the morning, around the time I wanted to go, to every 30 minutes to an hour. I think it depends on the day and the time that you travel. So I caught the direct train to Portsmouth and Southsea train station. And then outside the front of the station, I was looking for the bus and I could not see it. And then I found it was a little way to the right. So I knew it was the Hover Bus because in big letters on the front it said Hover Bus. So I found my way there. You don't pay any more for the bus because that's already included in the price of the train ticket. I just have to show the ticket pass to the bus driver. And then it's just five minutes to the hover port and very straightforward. I actually managed in time for an earlier sailing. You say sailing to hovercraft? I'm not sure is that the term. Because you can't sail for the float. I don't know what the term is. I don't know. No, I've never been sailing. We'll stick with sailing. And so they changed my booking and 10 minutes, straight across. Perfect, smooth, fast, just wonderful. That was across to Ryde. And then there's Ryde interchange there, which is there's a little train that runs from ride to Shanklin, which was not going to suit me on this particular day. I never shy away from train journeys, as you all know, but I had to on this occasion. So I caught the local buses there. I'd already looked at all the local services.

[00:07:23.490] - Tracy

Yeah. I just want to ask, just before we move away from the hover crafting. So obviously, you do get seasick, which we talked about before when we're coming. So that was obviously important that you had checked to make sure the weather was good and it was smooth. So how did you find the sailing? Were you okay on that?

[00:07:43.510] - Doug

Yeah, to be honest with you, it was more adrenaline and excitement. I'm a little boy again, and something I've not been on before and it was no more than 10 minutes. It veered so fast, it was so smooth that I thought I might have a lot of vibration. But no, it was just...

[00:08:00.380] - Tracy

I remember it being quite noisy. Was it noisy?

[00:08:02.810] - Doug

I suppose, yeah.

[00:08:05.000] - Tracy

And was it busy?

[00:08:07.160] - Doug

I would say that one was probably about half full. The one coming back was more full. And that was obviously in the afternoon, late afternoon. But it's just wonderful. I took a couple of videos I posted them as well to share again. It's just wonderful. It's really been exciting. There's lots of children on there and they were very excited as were the father's less so than the mother. But it was wonderful. So back to the buses then. The buses were run by a company called Southern Vectis and that's the local bus service. And their website was excellent, really was. I wanted to find out whether it's going to be cheaper to buy single tickets, return tickets, day ticket, etc. And I went back to some of the information I found out, actually, North Wales, when I saw some of the bus drivers there who were actually very helpful, to be truthful. And they said to me, The best thing for train and for bus tickets is to ask the drivers. They know what's best. That's where you go in and when you're travelling, that's what they do. And they are the best people to ask for which is the most suitable ticket. Now, around the time I was there, it happened to be the Isle of Wight festival, which is a music festival. And so I'm not sure if it was just a temporary thing or an ongoing thing. Each single journey was only £2. So for the first place I was visiting, which I'll come to later, it was one single bus. So I bought a single ticket on the advice of the bus driver. From there, I went to another location that wasn't going back to Ryde. So he said, You need to buy an ongoing ticket, a forwarding ticket. So I was catching two buses. And that worked out even cheaper. Instead of £4, it was £3.80 or 90. So talk to the bus drivers. That worked very, very well. Okay, so that was the buses. But what I had to do... So we've got the train, we've got the hover bus, hover port. So what I did then, we've got the buses all sorted. But what I did pick up, the driver gave me was a copy of the bus timetable, so I could plan my route out exactly how long it was going to take each journey and how long I could spend at each location. Because it's very important. I did a lot of walking and looking at my watch as well. I needed to know where the bus stops, my ongoing journeys were. So when the bus was dropping me off, I said to the driver each time, Where do I catch the return bus from? Because it's not always just across the road.

[00:10:49.180] - Tracy

So it sounds like obviously, I know you only planned it the night before, but it sounds like you had to do quite a lot of planning.

[00:10:55.370] - Doug

Yeah, I did a lot of planning with a bit of flexibility as well. If I missed that bus, how soon is the next one after that type of thing? Because obviously I've got to get back to Ryde into change later on in the afternoon to catch the return sailing of the hovercraft.

[00:11:10.150] - Tracy

Yeah. And also you didn't want to just spend the entire day sitting on buses traveling around the Isle of Wight.

[00:11:15.240] - Doug

No. And that was another major consideration. Each journey, I think the maximum was about 30 minutes. And I did find out particularly later on in the day, there's some faster buses and slower buses that literally go round the houses. So you have to gauge which one you're going to catch. So that was the logistics part of it. What I decided to do was to visit the main two attractions that I could see that would most represented.

[00:11:45.200] - Tracy

I was going to ask, what attractions you settled on? How did you decide which ones you're going to visit, I guess? And then did you manage to visit them?

[00:11:53.500] - Doug

Yeah, the main two was Osborne House and Carisbrooke Castle. They were not particularly close together, probably about 30 minutes apart. So they were the two I considered to be the most beneficial to visit. They're both run by English heritage. Obviously, we've got an English Heritage card through Historic Scotland, haven't we? So we've got that covered.

[00:12:20.750] - Tracy

Yes, we have. We can put information in about English Heritage just in the show notes as well, if anybody wants to know about English Heritage. Because basically, because we were in Scotland last year, we joined Historic Scotland. And for the first year of that membership, we got half price entry to English Heritage. But because we've renewed that Historic Scotland membership for a second year, we now get free entry into English Heritage.

[00:12:46.710] - Doug

And Cadw Attractions, the equivalent in Wales.

[00:12:51.440] - Tracy

Yes, that's correct. So just give us a little bit of information about Osborne House in Carrisbrooke Castle.

[00:12:57.480] - Doug

Yeah, no problem at all. So Osborne House is the island home of Queen Victoria and her husband, Albert. They love that house. The house was built between 1845 and 1851, and it's absolutely magnificent. And I timed this just perfect. I was the first one visiting the vast majority of the house. So the photos that I have taken, there was nobody else in them. So I took some really good photos, to be fair. But that's wonderful. And then, Carrisbrooke Castle, a very rich history on the island. And that's a historic fortress, which is a place where King Charles I was actually imprisoned for a year after the English Civil War.

[00:13:47.580] - Tracy

Yeah, that was in 1647, from the 13th of November. That will be history.

[00:13:52.720] - Doug

That's where he was in prison from that day. Imprisoned there.

[00:13:55.620] - Tracy

So obviously, there are other places that are of interest on the Isle of Wight, such as the Needles.

[00:14:02.540] - Doug

Yeah, the Needles Landmark. Yeah. And there's Birds of Prey, donkey sanctuaries, monkey house. Not to mention the Isle of Wight steam railway, which I didn't get to do, which is a point. On my next visit, I'll definitely be doing that because it looked fantastic. And because of the weather, just magnificent. I did find out there's a village not far from Newport called Godshill, which is absolutely beautiful. It's got thatch cottages and beautiful quaint tea room there. It's well worth a visit at some point.

[00:14:37.990] - Tracy

So did you go there on the day trip?

[00:14:40.390] - Doug

No, it was literally from A to B. I had to plan my route out directly. I spent a little bit of time in Newport because you have to go to the bus station there. So I had a little walk around there and I got a bit of lunch as well. I even planned my lunch in.

[00:14:55.380] - Tracy

So I guess you had to keep it around the time?

[00:14:57.230] - Doug

Yeah, literally. All the time because a place like Carisbrooke. When the bus dropped me off there, I asked which is the way to the attraction. That was the bottom of the hill. Not surprising, the Castle is generally built on the top of the hill. So the bus does not go all the way up there. So that was a good 20, 25 minutes walk to the Castle, which had a fantastic Museum as well. There's a connection there with being in Victoria as well, which I won't tell anymore. But we'll write about that.

[00:15:27.350] - Tracy

How much time did you spend at each of those destinations?

[00:15:31.870] - Doug

Close to two hours at both.

[00:15:34.200] - Tracy

Okay. And you would say that was a decent amount of time, or would you have had longer if you could have done?

[00:15:38.670] - Doug

Yeah, I certainly could have spent more. The Osborne House I didn't manage to get down to the Coast where there's the bathing area where Queen Victoria had spent some time there. I just did not have time for that because the house is a bit set back from the main road. It's a good 10 minutes walk there. And besides the fact, I saw the tea room and I wanted a cup of tea and a slice of Victoria sponge, which is not unusual for me, is it?

[00:16:01.200] - Tracy

No, absolutely not. No, that's what you enjoy. So would you recommend taking the bus to see the island? Did you find that a good way to get around?

[00:16:10.830] - Doug

I did actually. I saw quite a few people using the bus, not just the one people there for the festival. But when I told them to one of the bus drivers, he said it's an incredibly popular way to see the island because obviously some of them did just get quite congested as well. One other thing as well, I was going to say for the buses. Because the attractions are scattered on the island, around the island, the day Rover tickets, they seem to be individual areas. I could not find one that seemed to cover the whole island or the attractions. It seemed to be area specific. The Osborne House is in East Cowes, which is Northern part. The Needles is the West Point. So everything was scattered around.

[00:16:55.880] - Tracy

Okay. So obviously you managed to see the two places that you had on your list. And I must admit, I was quite jealous about Osborne House because I would really like to go there. So next time you visit, hopefully I'll be with you. Where would you like to go?

[00:17:09.700] - Doug

The Needles are certainly I'd like to go. And steam train. We'll go to the steam train first. It's definitely worth visiting. The buses go straight past one of the stations, so it's easy to get to.

[00:17:23.410] - Tracy

So just to clarify again, the Needles then is a landmark?

[00:17:28.410] - Doug

Yeah, it is a landmark lighthouse. It's an attraction centre. It's bits and pieces there.

[00:17:35.180] - Tracy

Okay, so probably a popular destination to go to then. Yeah. Okay, so let's think about it. Talk about it again. What time did you leave London and what time did you return? Because I know, I think, well, you left the hotel at the same time as I did, very early in the morning, but you got back before I did.

[00:17:51.680] - Doug

I did. I caught the just about 0630, 630 in the morning tube onto the northern line and I went straight down to London Waterloo and it took about 20 minutes. So I came out of there and then I caught the five past seven train from Waterloo and that was direct and I caught up to Portsmouth and Southsea, which is the one station back from the Portsmouth Harbour train station. So just under two hours that train journey.

[00:18:24.330] - Tracy

When you arrived back in Southsea Portsmouth, did you catch the train straight back to London?

[00:18:30.460] - Doug

I didn't, no. I stepped off the hovercraft at the hoverport and then decided to walk along the seafront there when it was a beautiful day, there's all the attractions and fairgrounds type of attractions. And to watch the boats coming in and out. You've got the ferry, the normal ferry, which takes about 45 minutes across. And it was just a beautiful, lovely day. And then I could see the Spinnaker Tower in the distance. Well, I say distance, it's not very far. And that's the observation tower, about 100 metres tall. And it stands as a real landmark of that area. And that's right next to the historic port with Dockyards. And it's just a lovely area to walk on. We walked around it last year, didn't we? But I wanted to go there from the Southsea, which was being recommended to me, well. The day before, really.

[00:19:27.890] - Tracy

I think we should do a podcast about our date visit to the Historic Dockyard because it was fantastic. Yes.

[00:19:35.130] - Doug

And we were with a great company as well that day. Weren't we?

[00:19:38.550] - Tracy

Yeah, we were. So it was a really good day trip. So maybe that's something to consider that we can do in the future. So obviously, you did this trip in June. It was a beautiful English summer's day and you had a lot of hours of daylight. So probably not something to recommend in the winter.

[00:19:56.260] - Doug

Probably not. You probably need to do it over a couple of days. The Osborne house is still open, you still see most of that. Carrisbrooke Castle is a castle. Some are arguing seeing castles in dark, gloomy weather is probably a little bit better. I don't know. Needles Lighthouse is still going to be there. So you could do most of it, I think, is just you say, a shorter day, but you might have to stay overnight or just do one of the things. You could probably just do Osborne House. That was the priority.

[00:20:26.890] - Tracy

Yeah. So obviously we've got quite a few we've got articles on uktravelplanning.com and londontravelplanning.com on day trips from London. And we've actually got an earlier episode as well which covers... It's episode number 19, get it right? Episode number 19, get it right, episode number 19 where we talk about tips for choosing the best day trips from London. So if you are considering and you're thinking you want to get away from London for the day, you have got lots of options. Obviously, the Isle of Wight was thrown there in the mix. I'm going to have to add that into the article now because now you've done it, Doug, so I know it's an achievable. Would you recommend it?

[00:21:06.530] - Doug

I certainly would. I was very pleasantly surprised. The quality of those attractions, I only saw two, but well presented and well managed. And the buses, I was very impressed with the buses as well. The drivers incredibly helpful. Yeah, it was just a very enjoyable day out. Don't forget, I've now accomplished one thing. I've been on a hovercraft.

[00:21:31.510] - Tracy

Yes, absolutely. Okay, so good. That's lots to recommend. So if you're considering, as I say, a day trip from London, consider Isle of Wight, then you can put that into the mix when you decide on where you want to visit. So thanks, Doug, for joining us on this week's podcast again to talk about some of the places you have visited when you were over in the UK this year. It's great to find out all the information about how to get there and how you organised it and what you enjoyed.

[00:21:59.760] - Doug

Thank you. Yeah, it's been great.

[00:22:01.460] - Tracy

So you can find all the information about Doug's trip to the Isle of Wight in terms of links to the different... The hovercraft website and all the different websites to the different destinations he visited on the Isle of Wight will be in the show notes for this episode, which is uktravelplanning.Com/episode-53. And we'll also put some photographs that you took on the day as well there, Doug, so that people can have a look at those. As I say, for more great ideas for day trips from London, we have got episode 19 of the podcast, so that's worth also looking at as well as reading through some of the articles. Obviously, you can obviously join the Facebook group and chat to other people about what day trips they've taken from London. And obviously, I'm going to be coming back soon as well to talk about my day trip to Paris and how that went. Remember, I just want to also just have a little shout out for those people. Thank you who are sponsoring the podcast. We really appreciate you. Remember, if you are enjoying it, you can become a sponsor from us at least three US dollars a month. More details are included in the show notes, or you can leave us a tip via the tip your guide button at the footer of our website. And we really appreciate everybody who does that, don't we, darling?

[00:23:09.500] - Doug

Certainly do. Yeah, thank you very much.

[00:23:11.360] - Tracy

Yeah, we really do. I guess that just leaves both of us to stay until next week.

[00:23:16.620] - Tracy and Doug

Happy UK Travel Planning!

[00:23:18.010] - Doug

That was a long scene, wasn't it?

[00:23:21.440] - Tracy

It wasn't at all. Anyway, thanks, everybody. Until next week.

[00:23:26.290] - Doug

Bye.