

[00:00:01.460] - 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.

[00:00:38.120] - Tracy

Hello and welcome to Episode 34 of the UK Travel Plan podcast. In this podcast, I chat with Doug of Meneage Tours in Cornwall. If you listen to Episode 32 of the podcast when we chatted to Wendy Hulme about her month long driving holiday around the UK, you may remember how much Wendy loved her day tour with Meneage Tours, so I had to ask Doug onto the podcast to chat about all things Cornish.

[00:01:01.100] - Tracy

In this episode, Doug shares information about the various tours he offers around Cornwall, including tours for fans of Doc Martin and Poldark. He shares tips and insider information perfect to be planning a trip to Cornwall, including the advantages of taking a private driver, guided tour with Meneage Tours, and also Doug's number one tip for first time visitors to Cornwall.

[00:01:22.080] - Tracy

So without further ado, let's chat to Doug.

[00:01:24.820] - Doug

Yeah, my name's Doug, and I'm also married to a Tracy as well. Yeah. that's pretty unusual. But I've predominantly been, for 15 years, I have my own taxi company. And about four or five years ago, when Poldark was still filming down here, I was invited to provide a vehicle for one of the actors who lived in Cornwall, needed to get to the set. And because the set was, or some of the positions of where it was being filmed, were off road, they asked me to take him down, but also take him from the set or from the trailers down to the set.

[00:02:04.480] - Doug

So I did this for a few days. And I noticed there actually a lot of people watching and looking around, and I thought, well, maybe if I did some tours or something along that lines. And that's how Meneage Tours was born. So that's how it really started, really. And so I ummed and arred for a little bit, then took the plunge, and immediately found that I wasn't actually the only one doing tours. There were quite a few other companies. So all I did was I emailed them and said, Well, look, if you get any extra work, would you consider me?

[00:02:44.800] - Doug

And one of them did, and actually gave me a lot of work for that year. And it went really well. And of course, then I started getting a lot of bookings for the next year on my own. And of course, then COVID hit. So that knocked everything back into a cocked hat. And so, yeah, sadly then with COVID, I had to look at options. And so unfortunately, one of the things was that the nice four by four had to go. So.

[00:03:17.400] - Doug

I'm hoping to get back and get another vehicle of that ilk eventually. But at the moment, we've got more practical vehicles in the shape of a people carrier and a larger people carrier. Rather than the complete luxury.

[00:03:37.000] - Doug

But I guess in terms of when you take your tours and people book, what's the minimum number of people that you take on a tour and the maximum? I guess that would be interesting as well to know.

[00:03:46.400] - Tracy

Yes. Minimum number is, well, one person, but I can cater for up to eight people, but I wouldn't perhaps recommend doing a really long tour with eight people. It can get a little cramped. I should have said that the Muniq tour, the name Muniq, actually I get lots of pronunciation of Menage and Muniq and Manage. If I had a pound for every time, I got a mispronoun reation wouldn't need to work.

[00:04:17.640] - Tracy

I've realised, Doug, that I've been pronouncing it the whole time because I've been saying Meneage, so I've been getting it wrong as well.

[00:04:26.500] - Doug

That's okay. But funny enough, it's actually a Cornish term and it's quite a local term for the Lizard Peninsula. It actually means monkish land or land belonging to the Church. And it's actually a higher grade than Glebe. Glebe is another Ecclesiastical term that means vicar's land, but Meneage is actually bishop's land. And it's probably thought to be where perhaps also monasteries appeared several hundred years ago in the Lizard Peninsula, which was a route favored by people going down to the Holy Land and Spain on walks because it was actually considered too dangerous to sail around the land's end because of the pirates and everything like that.

[00:05:11.520] - Doug

Only then, latterly, then people started going a bit further north and coming into and then walking across Bodmin Moor and then picking up another boat from Fowey, going across the Brittany. And you actually see that if you did a tour with me on the Doc Martin tour, we go on onto Bodmin Moor. And there's a place there called Temple. And there's an old one, it's a church now, but it's actually called temple because of the Knight's Templar, which was a resting point. And you can actually see a stained glass window to that effect of the Knight's Templar in the stained glass.

[00:05:48.360] - Tracy

I see. I wish I'd known you last year because we actually stayed on Bodmin Moor. I didn't know about that. My Doug would have absolutely loved that. And that was, I guess, one of the questions. And I answer this in the group myself quite a lot and on the Facebook group and on the website is there's so many advantages to going out on a private tour with you guys.

[00:06:09.940] - Tracy

And one of those things is what you just said, that local knowledge that you have, which is invaluable. And you can do a lot of research. And obviously, we write a lot about the area and stuff, but we know that if people want that in depth experience of going on Cornwall, a great way to do it is to go with you guys.

[00:06:30.930] - Doug

Exactly. And you're going to get little anecdotes like that. You could perhaps research it on your own. You could go and drive there, fair enough. You can find it. But you're perhaps not going to know exactly where it is, or the history, or where we can just take you straight there.

[00:06:47.760] - Tracy

Exactly. Well, that's it. You can do more in a day in terms of rather than us trying to find that place that you can plan it out as well, because I know that you can do tours that are bespoke for people. But I wondered if it would be worth actually talking about some of the tours that you do, your most popular tours, because I know you've got quite a few. I was going to talk to you a little bit about the Ancestry one because that fascinates me. But I think if we talk about maybe your most popular tours, and I know a lot of them, they're going to be based around some of those famous TV shows.

[00:07:17.900] - Doug

Yeah, I mean, probably the two most famous ones or the two most popular tours that I do are the Poldark and West Cornwall tour, because that's a lovely day trip. And we take to a few Poldark locations where it's filmed. And it's not just Poldark. So even if you haven't watched the show or anything like that, we're still going to take you to lots of places that great Cornish vistas and places like St. Michael's Mount. And there's some really lovely places to see that even if you haven't seen

Poldark, you'll just be amazed at the scenery and everything like that.

[00:07:56.560] - Tracy

It's such a stunning, beautiful part of the world. The advantages, we did a bit of a road trip around Cornwall last year and obviously we did struggle. It was July. We struggle, like a lot of people do when they're driving. We couldn't get parked in some places. So places like Mousehole, we had to just drive straight through because there was nowhere to park. But obviously, if we go, you guys, you know where to go, you know where to park, you know where you can always drop your guests off.

[00:08:21.580] - Doug

So they can have a walk back. I mean, a lot of the places parking is a premium. I mean, the Doc Martin tour, particularly if you're taking people to Port Isaac, it's an absolute nightmare, narrow streets and everything like that. And you can't park anywhere near the actual car park is about a mile out of town. So the advantage of having a tour is that we can drop you right in the centre and you can wander around. It's about 45 minutes. It's all self explanatory. There's a guide that you can walk around and it tells you all the locations of where the places are filmed, which is really good. And we can pick you up again 45 minutes, an hour later, and you've been able to see it and then not have to struggle either down the hill or even back up the hill again.

[00:09:11.210] - Tracy

Yes, we did park and walk down and then walked back up again. You don't want to do that on a hot summer's day, I tell you.

[00:09:18.110] - Doug

Exactly. No, that's right. Absolutely.

[00:09:20.410] - Tracy

And St Ives, perfect example for St Ives, because we drove to St Ives and we gave up trying to get parked. So we actually ended up going the next day and going to St Erth and get the train in. That was what.

[00:09:31.740] - Doug

We did. Yeah. I mean, if you're going to do St Ives and park in St Erth and get the train in, it's by far the simplest way and actually the best way because that was one of the most scenic train lines in Britain.

[00:09:44.460] - Tracy

It is a lovely, it is absolutely beautiful train line, that one. And it's not very long. But then it gets you straight into St Ives, which is amazing. But I think a lot of people, obviously, are scared about driving in Cornwall because I didn't drive in Cornwall. I asked my husband to do it because I was not driving on some of them. I took a quarter when she was five, actually, and I did all the driving on that trip, which is another reason I didn't drive last year. Because obviously high hedges, you can't necessarily see what's coming around the corner. You've got single roads, you've got steep. So again, you guys do the driving. And I always think if you go to some of these beautiful places, one person, if the driver is missing out, they're not getting to see all that beautiful scene because they're concentrating on the road.

[00:10:27.910] - Doug

Well, you're probably too missing out because you've got one driving and one map reading.

[00:10:32.760] - Doug

Yeah, that's absolutely true.

[00:10:35.780] - Doug

And then you have an argument when you miss the turning.

[00:10:39.760] - Tracy

Absolutely. Yeah, you're right. Somebody's navigating and watching and another person's driving. And

there's probably a few words I had with Doug a couple of. Times. About. And also the amount of the horses is on the road, the sheep on the roads in the morning when we were going backwards and forwards, the wild horses, the wild ponies were there.

[00:10:58.600] - Tracy

So you've got to be mindful of all of that. So that's a huge advantage. So when people inquire to book with you guys, I guess Poldark and Doc Martin are going to be the two TV program things that people are wanting to see. And obviously, other associations were called were going to be people like Rosamund Pilcher, who was from St Ives and the Shell Seekers, which I read in the 80s, I think late 80s. I've not read it.

[00:11:25.660] - Doug

Yeah, that was the Joanna Lumley, where she started in that. And yeah, she was born in Lelant and raised there. And you can actually see her house still there, lovely house overlooking the estuary. And of course, then she moved away to Scotland when she was about 20, married an army officer. And she was dreadfully homesick. I think she was quite young and married young. And then she was on her own, pretty much. And she started writing these novels about growing up in Cornwall. They are fairly similar, a lot of them. But she did very well at it. She made a lot of money. They're still popular.

[00:12:07.910] - Tracy

Because they're actually the shell seekers has come up. So we were talking about just different books and books that we're reading at the moment. I did a Facebook live a couple of weeks ago, and we're talking about what we're reading. And the shelf seekers came up from a few people in the group. So it's still something that people are enjoying reading.

[00:12:24.500] - Doug

Do you know that they've actually been adapted for German television?

[00:12:27.840] - Tracy

Yeah, I've heard they're very popular in Germany.

[00:12:30.300] - Doug

Yeah, really popular. It's a massive following. And you get a lot of German, Austrian, and Swiss tourists that come over each year to come and see Cornwall. It's actually very difficult, though, to actually try and pinpoint some of the locations because they do tend to flit around Cornwall. So you see the one scene it's down in West Cornwall. And then two seconds later, they're flying over Padstow on an aerial shot. And then they're back to the South Coast. So it's incredibly difficult to actually try and pinpoint scenes and stuff like that. But there are a few notable ones that we can take people to if they're into that.

[00:13:08.660] - Tracy

Yeah. So obviously, you've got some tours that you've recommended. You've got your Poldark, you've got your Doc Martin. So Poldark is your West Cornwall Poldark, and then Doc Martin is your West Cornwall Poldark, and then Doc Martin.

[00:13:20.060] - Doug

Is the North Coast. I do another one, which is a tour, which takes you out onto the Lizard Peninsula. So that's really a nice countryside, but that's going to take you down to the most southerly part of Great Britain as opposed to the Lands End, which is the most southwesterly part. And of course, then if you're going to Lizard Peninsula, you can go down to Kynance Cove because Kynance and St Michael's Mount have just featured in the latest Game of Thrones, The Day of the Dragon. So that's featured quite heavily in those two places. So I guess that would take you to both.

[00:13:59.870] - Tracy

Connection with that now. So it's going to be the Lizard Peninsula with the...

[00:14:04.760] - Doug

Yeah, the Lizard is going to start getting a lot of hits there now. I'm a slightly biased because I live on the Lizard. So it's a beautiful area and it doesn't get enough attention all the time.

[00:14:18.570] - Tracy

No, it probably doesn't. And actually, even when I was thinking about it in last year, we didn't get a chance really to explore that area. So that's definitely if I get a chance to come over, I'll be over in the UK for three months this year, then that's the area I would like to see more. Again, trying to raise the profile of some areas that people don't necessarily have first in there because a lot of people know about St Ives comes up more often than not. And obviously, St Michael's Mount is hugely popular. So it's nice to also highlight some of the areas that might not be on people's radar.

[00:14:51.130] - Tracy

So if people want to come on your tours, do people tend to come down to Cornwall by train and then you pick them up there? Or do you go and pick people up from airports? How do you do?

[00:15:03.990] - Doug

Everything, really. At the moment, because of the train strikes, obviously it's quite difficult. Sometimes people trying to plan things and not being able to. But it's really a mixture, I suppose, of people that come down by train. We don't tend to get involved in the organization so much as for their accommodation, although we can recommend places to stay.

[00:15:27.180] - Doug

So generally, we take people out on day trips, although sometimes we're happy to go up to Heathrow or anywhere in London or anywhere in the country for that matter and go and pick people up. And then we can always tour people back down into Cornwall and then incorporate a bit of touring on the way back down. But unfortunately, Cornwall is long and thin and it's 75 miles long, 22 miles wide at its widest point, and then five miles wide at its narrowest point down near Penzance. So I think when you come to stay in Cornwall, you have to bear in mind where you're staying to which tour you want, because there's no point having a tour in West Cornwall if you're staying to further north than Truro because the traveling time is an hour and a half, two hours.

[00:16:24.080] - Doug

The roads, as much as it's lovely down here, we have no motorways. We have one dual carriageway going up through the spine of Cornwall and that's it. And that just gets clogged up in the summer. I have a lot of people that come in by cruise ship into Falmouth and they want to go and do a Doc Martin tour around Tintagel and Boscastle. And they're like, well, it's only 70 miles. Well, yeah, I know it's only 70 miles, but that's nearly a two, two and a half hour trip each way on a seven hour tour, 7, 8 hour tour, well, that's five hours. And you haven't got a lot of time then to see a lot more.

[00:17:07.900] - Tracy

I think that's actually a great point to make as a Doug, really, because I think people don't assume that it's as far as it is from London. I think that comes up quite often. But also when you get there, getting around is not quick because you're talking about small little lanes and roads. And like you said, there's no motorways and it gets busy. Brits love going to Cornwall. It's a popular holiday destination for Brits.

[00:17:34.700] - Doug

That's right. Yeah.

[00:17:35.710] - Tracy

You just need a nice summer like we had last year. We were there in July and we couldn't get parked in lots of places. We had to drive through and it was very busy. And that was before the schools broke up. So I'd hate to think what it was like in August.

[00:17:51.780] - Doug

It's still a beautiful county, but you just don't want to rush it.

[00:17:54.670] - Tracy

If somebody's thinking, I really want to go to Cornwall, I'm really interested in the Doc Martens stuff. I'm really interested. I really want to go to St. Michael's Mount. I really want to do that, is to talk to you is to get in touch with you and say, how would this work? How could you do this for me?

[00:18:09.340] - Doug

Exactly. Probably the easiest thing is to perhaps go and stay in two places. We can also do it that you can have a touring day or part day, and then we just move and have a transfer and move you down to another hotel.

[00:18:25.160] - Doug

Then you could have a day on your own and then perhaps another day on tour and then move on. Anything's possible. You just have to think slightly out of the box sometimes and do things a different way.

[00:18:37.620] - Tracy

Yeah. But it's like that advantage of being able to speak to you and say this is what we're interested in because you know the area so what would work best? I know you do a five day tour as well.

[00:18:48.800] - Doug

We do. Yeah. So that's taking in doing the Poldark tour, Doc Martin, the Lizard, and then you can do a further Rosland Peninsula tour and go on further. And then an East Cornwall tour as well.

[00:19:06.850] - Tracy

So that's a pretty in depth one where you get.

[00:19:08.580] - Doug

To see. That's a pretty in depth one. And generally, a lot of those ones, people tend to tack on where they go back on up to Bath on the final day. And maybe they're coming down from somewhere else on the first day. So you can do visit other places on the way down. As we normally tend to do. If we're picking up from Heathrow, we'll do a drive past Stonehenge, so people can see that. And then perhaps go on to Avebury, which is another beautiful set of standing stones and stuff like that. And that's actually free. And you can get up close and touch the stones and everything, unlike Stonehenge, where you're kept at more than I was linked.

[00:19:52.120] - Doug

I love Avebury. I have to say I really do love Avebury. I enjoy going to Stonehenge, but I remember going to Stonehenge 30 years ago when you parked and you went through the tunnel.

[00:20:02.460] - Tracy

It was just me.

[00:20:04.970] - Tracy

It just seemed like a different world now when you go and it's so popular.

[00:20:11.880] - Doug

The other place that we go to quite often is a Stourhead, which is near Warminster, which has some gardens there. And that was where the 2005 film Pride and Prejudice was filmed, where Mr. Darcy proposed to Elizabeth Bennett there. And also that's just recently featured in series two of Bridgerton.

[00:20:36.220] - Tracy

Okay, well, that would make it.

[00:20:37.480] - Doug

Popular as well. Yeah, quite a good little place to stop as well.

[00:20:41.770] - Tracy

So I guess if somebody wanted, even if they wanted, there's a couple of two or three people wanting to pick it up from Heathrow and bring it back to take into accommodation in Cornwall, you can incorporate the places of interest along.

[00:20:53.000] - Doug

The way. Exactly. Yeah. It's not just straight down the motorway.

[00:20:58.090] - Tracy

Yeah. So that's great. Kind of like arriving and having a first day of tour on your first day that you arrived, but also in comfort because you're getting driven, which is great. It's a great way of dealing with it. You're not driving anywhere because you guys are doing it. So obviously, if people want to get in touch with you to book a tour with you, there's going to be links in the show notes for this episode. At the end of the podcast, I'll put all that information on there. So obviously, if people want to do that, they can click through to the show notes. But also if you want to just share, Doug, as well, how they can get in touch with you.

[00:21:31.560] - Doug

Yeah, the easiest way is just go to my website, MeneageTours.com, and then there's a page on there where they can send a message and get in touch by email. So that's probably the easiest way.

[00:21:45.580] - Doug

Yeah, I.

[00:21:45.890] - Doug

Think that's true. Or my email is meneagetours@yahoo.com

[00:21:49.500] - Tracy

Com. And that's M E N E A G E

[00:21:52.980] - Doug

That's.

[00:21:53.400] - Tracy

It. Yeah. I could pronounce it incorrectly. I know. I will remember it's meneage now. So obviously, it's been great having a chat with you and talking about some of the tours. I just wanted to just mention one tour that really struck with me.

[00:22:08.810] - Tracy

And I think this might be of interest as well to a lot of our listeners worldwide, is the fact that you got the tours for anybody who's interested in their ancestry. Now, the reason I mentioned that is actually my great grandfather was from Cornwall. He was a Cornish tin Miner who left in the late in the mid 1800s and met my great grandmother in Derbyshire on the way up and then settled up in Northumberland in the coal mine. Yes, I have Cornish blood.

[00:22:33.460] - Doug

There we go. Excellent. If people want to do an Ancestry tour, that's something they definitely need to get in touch with me beforehand because, yes, we could perhaps do it on the day, but if people want to actually get in touch with me and then I can do a bit of background research and get hold of church wardens and stuff like that from the churches.

[00:22:54.890] - Doug

And normally quite a lot of these people, they're more than happy to look at the old records and stuff like that. I did a few a couple of years ago where I did get it sprung on me. The husband was rather reluctant to mention it. The wife was giving a bit of a few nudges. We just found this church and I said, Well, let's go and have a look. And we actually found that the husband's descendants in the graveyard, which was... And just by chance, the church warden happened to be there at the time and we found the records in the church as well. But that was real pure luck. And a lot of the records,

unfortunately, aren't kept in the church anymore because of damp, I guess, and things like that.

[00:23:42.800] - Doug

So if you want to answer this, we're more than happy. But please get in touch first.

[00:23:48.620] - Tracy

Yeah. No, I think that's great. I will be because I'm passionate. I was like, Oh, my goodness. Now I know who to talk to about my ancestor in Cornwall. Because everybody, I guess, it's a hot topic at the moment. People are interested in tracing back their ancestry. And as you say, I couldn't believe it when I read that 25 % of the Cornish population left Cornwall in that late 19th century. And I was.

[00:24:12.620] - Doug

Like, Oh, my God. Yeah, that's right. When the tin mines closed down, it was such a big employer, and that's how the expertise spread around the world. And ultimately, the religion spread around the world as well. They took their religion with them and their churches.

[00:24:31.520] - Doug

Absolutely. So a fascinating topic, and I'm sure there'll be plenty of people that are listening going, Oh, hang on. I'm sure I've got Cornish ancestry. I need to get in touch with Doug. So that'd be brilliant. So just one last question. Doug, for today's answer. It's a question I always ask everybody who comes on the podcast.

[00:24:46.180] - Doug

What.

[00:24:47.320] - Doug

Tip do you have for anyone planning to visit Cornwall for the first time?

[00:24:51.320] - Doug

First time, well, my biggest one would be don't expect to see Cornwall in a day. As I said earlier, it's 75 miles long. You're probably looking, just to have a touch of all places, you're probably looking at about minimum of four days. And it's a lovely part of the world and every bit is different. But on the most part, we're all friendly, we don't bite.

[00:25:16.980] - Tracy

Lovely Cornish pasties and lovely ice cream.

[00:25:21.150] - Doug

Yes, that's right. And a few cream teas as well.

[00:25:24.880] - Tracy

Absolutely, with the jam on first and then the cream, of course, because we're in Cornwall.

[00:25:29.660] - Doug

Well done. Okay. Got that one right.

[00:25:33.820] - Tracy

Cornish background. Doug, Cornish background. Exactly. Yeah. Anyway, I have to say, Doug, thank you so much for coming on the podcast this week. It's been brilliant to talk to you.

[00:25:45.120] - Doug

Yeah, it's good to talk to you and it's great.

[00:25:47.580] - Tracy

Thanks again to Doug for coming on to the podcast to talk about the beautiful County of Cornwall and of course, Monique Tours. You'll find links to everything we chatted about in today's episode at uktravelplanning.com/episode34. This includes a link to Meneage Tours website and the various

tours offered for those of you keen to book one of Doug's fabulous tours.

[00:26:09.640] - Tracy

If you've enjoyed this episode, please leave us a five star review and rating just like listener "All This & Heaven 2" from the United States, who said, Full of actual helpful information. The passion and excitement for travel in the UK is evident through this informative and fun podcast. I have gleaned so much helpful information and I've learned so much more about the UK than I expected to. This podcast is a great blend of Tracy and Doug sharing their vast knowledge and having guests speak to speciality topics or areas of the country. Tracy also asks great questions to keep the content fresh and applicable.

[00:26:46.540] - Tracy

Thank you so much for your lovely review. All this and heaven too from the US. We really appreciate that. For the chance of a mention in a future episode, please leave us a review too. We really love hearing from all of you.

[00:27:01.000] - Tracy

Anyway, that just leaves me to say for this week - Happy UK travel planning.