

[00:00:01.610] - 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 town.

[00:00:37.610] - Tracy

Hi and welcome to episode 29 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. In this week's episode, I talk with lifelong Beatles and George Harrison fan Ken Lambert, who in 2022 actually bought Beatle, George Harrison's childhood home in Liverpool.

[00:00:53.930] - Tracy

Wow.

[00:00:54.480] - Tracy

How cool is that? Ken chats about how he came to own the home and how he's refurbished it, in particular the front room, to reflect how it would have looked in the late 1950s and early 1960s, when John Lennon and Paul McCartney were regular visitors to rehearse in that very same room with their friend George. And for Beatles fans, Ken shares the details about how you can actually book your very own stay in the house. Without further ado, let's hear from Ken.

[00:01:24.330] - Tracy

Hi, Ken, it's great to have you on the podcast and would you like to tell us a little bit about yourself? Because you obviously hit the headlines last year when you bought a certain person's childhood home, which is what we had to talk about. So just talk a little bit about yourself and about your love of The Beatles and how you actually heard about George Harrison's home being up for sale.

[00:01:47.580] - Ken

Sure. Thanks, Tracy. It's great to be here and it's been quite a roller coaster and been quite fun over the past year. Plus, as you can tell, I'm not British. So I am from New Hampshire, here in the USA East Coast, and I'm 48, married, I have two kids, two sons, and so never had like a dream of, hey, I'd love to buy a Beatles house or Beatles home. I've always been a huge Beatles fan and since I was, I would say, 14 or so, 15 when I was young. And then I became really into George specifically, and all of George's solo stuff and his Travelling Wilberries, all of that stuff as well, probably starting at 18 or 19 when I was in college. And that just kind of kept on. It just continued, really, up until now. So I have all the George and Beatles records and albums and tapes and the whole nine yards, so that was always in the background. Okay. And then, of course, there's so many Beatles fans out there, right? Millions and millions of them. But this house, I wasn't aware that the house I didn't know anything about. You know, I will say this, before I bought this house, I had never been to England.

[00:03:11.690] - Ken

I had never been to ever been to Europe, ever. So when I ended up having to go to Liverpool to do the closing paperwork, the completion paperwork and all that, the legal documents, that was my first time setting foot in England. So that was last January, almost a year ago. So the house came up for it was up for public auction and a real estate auction. And my friends who know that I love George Harrison, they ended up texting it to me because they saw it on CNN, on BBC. It was widely publicised that it was going up for auction, so they sent it to me kind of as a joke, like, hey, Ken, you got a bid on this, this is great, this is right up your alley. And they joke about it and all that. And then I joked about it also. And then all of a sudden the joke started not becoming a joke. So for me, I decided I had to end up getting prequalified about a day before or two days before I had to register with the auction house and all that. So about a day or two before I decided I was going to place a bid on it, I was serious going to bid on it, and it ended up that I placed the winning bid.

[00:04:25.080] - Tracy

I know, which is crazy. I mean, how did you feel when you found out that your bid had won?

[00:04:30.630] - Ken

I was shocked. I did not think that I was going to win the bid or have the high bid. So the funny thing is, I wasn't prepared because I didn't think I was going to win.

[00:04:43.240] - Tracy

All right?

[00:04:43.870] - Ken

So all of a sudden, I was the winner. And it's a legal binding contract and document at that point, and then I had to figure out what my plan was.

[00:04:54.270] - Tracy

I could imagine. And so you'd never been over to the UK, never been over to Europe, so all of a sudden you own one incredibly famous person's childhood home, it now belongs to you, you've got to come over and kind of do all the sign, all the paperwork and everything. So what did you say to your friends that had been kind of joking about? Did you tell them? I bet you were like straight onto them, guess what?

[00:05:16.570] - Ken

Well, before it took me about, I would say a week and a half before I told them because I had to work out things financially because it was not free. Obviously I had to work out things financially and make sure it all was going to make sense, but then also had to make sure that my wife was a willing participant in all of this. So that took a little bit. And then I told my friends and they were astonished, but they know me and they kind of knew that I wasn't joking when I told them because I kind of have that personality.

[00:05:58.450] - Tracy

Obviously you had the winning bid. There was quite a lot of publicity around that. I mean, there's a lot of interest around the world about the fact that George Harrison's childhood home was up for sale. So have you had loads of I know you had some interviews with journalists and been on, I don't know, were you on CNN? Have you been on the BBC? Have you had it?

[00:06:17.910] - Ken

Yeah, not until February. So this was like December 1 of 21 that I won the bid, and so the auction house asked me if I wanted to remain private, and I actually told them I did want to remain private because I didn't want a bunch of people calling me right. Immediately. So I kept everything on the down low until about February last year and then kind of slowly did some things. So I've been on BBC radio over there twice, and I've been on the New York Post and then the Boston Globe is the big Boston newspaper, and a few other things like that, but not a ton of things.

[00:07:00.540] - Tracy

But enough yeah, I'm sure there's enough interest. And everybody still loves The Beatles, don't they? Have visited Liverpool a few times and visited John Lennon's house and Paul McCartney's home. But the fact that you actually bought one of The Beatles homes, it doesn't happen very often, does it? It's not something that you see here about very often that is possible.

[00:07:26.850] - Ken

Right. And the thing that's key, I think and this is what really my love of George was key. But really it goes more than that with this home because George was there for twelve years and from 1950 to 1962. And George, of course, learned how to play guitar there and he grew up there and was there a long time. But more than just that, George would often have John Lennon and Paul McCartney over to his home to practise, to rehearse and that really was the key. It's not just George Harrison's old house that he grew up in, which is great, but the mystique of it. And when you're there, is that you can sit in this room that The Beatles and The Quarrymen, before they were called The Beatles, were there playing guitar and practising and singing Chuck Berry songs and all that, and coming up with some of their first songs that they would perform. And so that is like kind of it's really kind of crazy.

[00:08:30.870] - Tracy

Yeah, it's amazing that you can, you can sit in that that same room and kind of know that 60 years ago that you've got those guys were sitting there genius with that music that influenced everybody. I mean, I don't know anybody in the audience who doesn't know about The Beatles.

[00:08:48.660] - Ken

Right?

[00:08:50.810] - Tracy

Talk us through the timeline of the bid went through. You won the bid, so obviously you said you had to get all your ducks in a row, I guess, and sorted all that. I know you were over in the UK a number of times last year. So do you want to talk us through basically what happened and how you got sorted and what you've done with the home since you've owned it?

[00:09:13.620] - Ken

Yeah, that's a good question. When I got it, I will say that the place was in pretty good shape, pretty good condition, so it wasn't like it was in shambles or anything like that. So that was nice. The landscaping outside was in pretty rough shape, so I did myself. And a friend of mine, who actually is a minority owner of the house with me, my friend Steve, he and I were over there in late February doing a bunch of landscaping and cutting down brambles and planting evergreen shrubs in hail over there in a hailstorm in George Harrison's backyard and clipping hedges and all this stuff. But so the backyard, the yard was a little rough, but on the inside I ended up I had to do mostly decorating and then also did a little bit of remodelling stuff, but very minimal, not really remodelling, a little bit of painting. We did new floors upstairs. But the big thing is, and if you see the pictures on our website and things, is the front room, which is the living room, right, the front room. You're British, you know what that means. But Americans don't have a front room.

[00:10:27.960] - Ken

But anyways, the front room, I recreated that to look like it did back in 1959 and 1960 when George was there with John and Paul and George's family. And I have a floral wallpaper there which matches almost exactly as the old black and white photos that we have of George and his mom there in that room with George's guitars and all that. So I spent a lot of time on that room and making that look like that's the feel when you walk into the front door, you go over to the right and you see that room, and then you walk in that room and you're there. And that's really the feel of it. I think that's really what I've done. That's been key. And then I had to get all furniture and, of course, all the normal stuff. It was vacant.

[00:11:17.490] - Ken

It was empty, yeah, absolutely. And I've seen the photographs and it's fantastic because you've got the photograph from the late 50s, early sixties of George, and then you've got how you've done the room. And it's fabulous. Absolutely fantastic.

[00:11:32.230] - Tracy

Thanks.

[00:11:32.770] - Tracy

You've done a really good job on that.

[00:11:36.510] - Ken

I picked the floral sofas, which was very hard to find, and then my wife picked out the wallpaper, which was incredibly hard to find. So it was a team effort.

[00:11:49.730] - Tracy

Yeah.

[00:11:50.070] - Tracy

Now, you did a really good job. Really good job. Obviously, I'll share in the show notes a link to your Facebook group and the photos as well, so people can actually have a look at those and see the job you've done. So that was February. So you went over a few times last year, I think it was a few times, yeah.

[00:12:10.150] - Ken

I was there in June and then so I was there in July with my family. So I was there once on a legitimate vacation with my wife and two kids. We went for four days in middle of July, which was great. And that was their first time. They are their first time, my wife's first time in England, the whole nine yards, so it was great. I was there one time in June to kind of get ready for all that. And I've been fortunate because of this home, I've been able to meet with some pretty cool people from that area that are in like the Beatles industry. So the name of the band before The Beatles, it was called The Quarrymen, right? And so the Quarrymen there's still a few living Quarrymen that were bandmates of Paul and John and all that. So I've met two of them in the house there. I've invited two of them over there and I'm sitting there listening to Len Gary, one of The Quarrymen, sing Elvis songs in George Harrison's living room. Just pretty kind of a special musical moment there.

[00:13:16.820] - Tracy

Do they have memories of being in the house?

[00:13:18.260] - Ken

We have some clips of that. There was another gentleman, Colin Hanton. Colin was the drummer for three years, actually, before they were called The Beatles. Colin remembers being in the house way back then. He didn't bring his drums over there, but he would go it was funny, these old stories are so great. Colin would only go over there because he wouldn't be bringing his drums all over the town. There was a city because it was a pain, but he would go over there just like the night before or the day of when they had a gig, just so he could kind of go through and just know what they were going to do. And he would just kind of wing it there if there was a new song there on the drums at a gig.

[00:14:00.670] - Tracy

So cool.

[00:14:01.630] - Ken

It was great.

[00:14:03.150] - Tracy

So obviously you now own the house. You've got it all decorated, it's ready. So tell us what you are doing with the house now and how any Beatles fans out there can actually stay in the house.

[00:14:23.370] - Ken

Yeah. Thanks, Tracy. Since about middle of April it's been a vacation rental. So you can actually a Beatles fan, you Beatles fan, George fan, whatever, can go and spend a couple of nights. You can spend a week there if you want. And we have had a couple of people stay there for a week. Most people are there two or three nights, maybe four nights, but we have a two night minimum to stay there. And it's on a couple of the noteworthy sites out there. We also have our own Facebook page and we'll talk maybe at the end. There's a way. I have a property manager over there in the UK nearby, and if you're interested in staying, we can give you that information. You can get in contact, right, with the property manager. Yeah, it's been quite busy since May or so, all the way up through just the last few weeks or whatever. We've had a lot of interest in the place. And what I love as the person who really kind of did this, if you will, or whatever, had the idea, I guess, to do it or the stomach to do it, is reading people's reviews after they're gone, like, whether it's online or we're also seen on TripAdvisor and as, like, a local place to see, like, a local landmark.

[00:15:47.970] - Ken

And when you read those reviews, it's a very special thing for Beatles fans that make a pilgrimage to go to Liverpool and actually stay in a Beatles home and know that The Beatles were there and played there. Like I said, it's just a surreal experience, really, and the people that go there and then they come

back home, they're talking about it forever. They always have something to talk about at the cocktail party or at the Christmas party or whatever. It's something I was going to say.

[00:16:19.630] - Tracy

How many people can actually say that they've stayed in a formal home of one of The Beatles? And let's just say not only that, but a home where they could sit in a room where the creative geniuses of John Lennon and Paul McCartney, they've all sat in that room reading that music. I mean, it's fabulous, absolutely fantastic opportunity. So if somebody wants to book so let's talk that through, because I just know that there's going to be loads of Beatles fans listening to this. We have obviously, I have a very successful Beatles itinerary for Liverpool that does very well. I get lots of hits on that and there's always a lot of interest. I've actually got one for London as well, but obviously the Liverpool is the key one. Obviously, in my article I'll put a link to the property, but let's talk about sure. How do people do it, how do they get to book?

[00:17:08.400] - Ken

So, yeah, the easiest thing, quickest thing, would be to send an email to my UK property manager. The company is called Guest 365 and they're a well known company over in England, but the email is hello@guest365. That's one word, guest365.co.uk. And then in the subject line, if you want to put Upton Green UK TP for UK Travel Planning, I think that would be good, but either way, that would be the best thing. We also have a Facebook page, so I know everyone's on Facebook, right, or most people are. If you go to Facebook, just do a search on the Facebook tab for George Harrison Liverpool home, and then it'll bring you to and once you're there, we have a Facebook company page there. Basically, you'll see tons of stuff and you talked about videos and pictures. I mean, there's a lot of stuff there from the house.

[00:18:10.880] - Tracy

Okay, that's brilliant. And also, like I said, I'll link to all of that in the show notes as well. So that's going to be at uktravelplanning.com/episode29, so all of that information will be there. So I can imagine people frantically trying to write down that email address. But don't worry, you can't actually get that fire and a link to the Facebook group as well via the show notes. So is there anything else you want to share before I kind of wrap up? Because I've got one question that I always ask everybody and I've kind of put a Beatles twist on it. I always ask people what the one tip is when they travel to the UK for the first time. But I'm going to ask you what's, what is the one tip you would share with all Beatles fans who are planning to visit Liverpool?

[00:18:49.830] - Ken

Right, well, I think for starters, you want to stay at 25 Upton Green in Liverpool. Obviously. It's George's house. If for some reason you can't stay there, if it's booked already when you're going there, take a drive by there. There's plenty of tours, the Fab Four taxi tour. Sometimes I let them have access to the house. But even if you go to outside in England, they have the Heritage blue plaques outside of famous buildings, right? So we have one in front of George's house on the front wall. So you see that and that's a big going there, taking the selfie. It kind of shows you where you are, right? And that's kind of a cool thing, even if you can't stay there. But I would say Liverpool. Further. Beatles fan. I mean, it's the number one destination, obviously, for a Beatles fan to go to Liverpool. I've been there several times this year and I've done the Cavern Club and all these other things and it's great stuff, I've seen mostly everything, but I would say that the most significant thing for me. I think you have to go to Strawberry Fields. I think that is a very special place to be.

[00:20:03.810] - Ken

When I was there, I've been there twice. Once with my family and once just on my own when I was doing my own little tour there. And Strawberry Fields is cool, it's actually owned by Salvation Army, so it's sort of a charitable endeavour as well. They actually do good things there. But it's also, of course, the big Beatles presence there and John Lennon presence. And you see the Strawberry Fields gates, the red gates and all of that. And again, when I go back to people being emotional when they go there, like I've been there a few times and even for me, but then you see other people getting off a bus, the magical mystery tour bus of 70, 60 people, they get off there. And then you just watch people come up to the gates and all that as Strawberry Fields. There's people breaking down there, crying at the

gates or whatever. So I would say that that's a cool place to go if you're going to Liverpool.

[00:21:03.470] - Tracy

Yeah, I definitely agree. And I have a selfie at Strawberry Fields at the gate right from my last visit. Yeah, I took the Magical Mystery Tour, which was brilliant. We really enjoyed that. And also I loved the Cavern Club. It was the first we were in Liverpool for a wedding and that's where they kind of that evening after the wedding, we all went to the Cavern Club and that's the first time I'd actually been and I was blown away. That was amazing. It was such a great atmosphere.

[00:21:29.590] - Ken

Great atmosphere. Everyone's just having fun. There that whole thing, Mathew Street or whatever, but the Cavern Club is just great. And so last thing, I mean, one of the people that I've met now twice, just because I own George's old house, is the former manager of the Cavern Club. I know her quite well now and I met her twice. She came over to like a private party that I had, her and her husband. But she was the manager from 1966 to 1971 of the Cavern Club. Anyways, just some just crazy stuff that a year and a half ago you couldn't have told me that all of this stuff would have happened to me, but it's funny that we sit here and it has.

[00:22:10.140] - Tracy

That's crazy. It's amazing though, what an exciting journey you're on.

[00:22:14.490] - Ken

Right? I still have to work for a living, I still have to work for a living, but it's been a great endeavour.

[00:22:21.150] - Tracy

That's brilliant. Well, I'm going to say thanks so much, Ken, for coming on the podcast. And like I said to everybody, all the information, the links to everything that Ken's talked about will be available on the show notes for this podcast.

[00:22:33.150] - Tracy

Thanks again to Ken for coming onto the podcast and sharing his amazing journey over the past twelve months since he bought the house. Links to Ken's Facebook page where you can see more pictures and videos from the house, plus information for booking your stay are included in the Show Notes for this episode at uktravelplanning.com/episode29 that just leaves me to say until next week, Happy UK Travel planning.