

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.

Tracy:

Welcome to episode six of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. We believe that to get the most out of a destination, take in a guided tour with a professional tour guide can't be beat. So today I'm excited to talk to John Coupland, the founder, owner, and professional driver guide behind John England Tours. For those of you visiting Southeast England, John's personalized private tours will provide you with a memorable experience of the authentic England many visitors miss. In this episode, John shares information about his private detours to various destinations in Southeast England, including the popular Hampton Court Palace, castles such as Hever, Leeds, and Dover, some hidden gems, plus his London walking tours.

Tracy:

John also discusses the many advantages of taking a driver guided tour, including being able to sit back, relax, and enjoy the views of our English countryside without the worry and stress of driving yourself. The ability to visit smaller villages and areas of interest that coaches can't even get to. Tailor making your itinerary to your specific interests, and of course, access to local knowledge and expertise. John also shares tips about what to look for if you plan to book a driver guided tour, and how to ensure you get the most of your day. Stay tuned to the end of the podcast, when John announces an exclusive special offer to UK Travel Planning Podcast listeners.

Tracy:

Hi, John, I'm really pleased that you could join us on the podcast today. Would you like to introduce yourself to our listeners and tell us a little bit about your background and how you started John England Tours?

John:

Hi, Tracy. Hi, everyone. Thank you for having me on. Yes, I'm John, John England Tours. I'm the owner and also the guide. The one and only. So it's me, myself, and I. Yeah. I started the business a few years ago, delivering private tours. And that's, private driving tours that is, to castles and historic houses in Southeast England. And I also do private walking tours in London.

Tracy:

Oh, that sounds fantastic. And definitely something that our listeners I will be really interested in. And I know people that read the website and are part of the Facebook group are often looking for tours, particularly just going outside of London. What areas and places do your tours cover?

John:

Right. I'm very biased with this, and it's part of the reason why I started the business a few years ago. Just to give you a bearing, and your listeners are bearing, is obviously London is a big city. I live just

outside of it in the suburbs, in a borough called Bromley, which is Southeast of London. I'm literally under borders of Kent and London. It goes without saying, really, that predominantly it's in the county of Kent where I deliver my private driving tours, but not exclusively. I do areas east and west Sussex as well, and sometimes into Surrey. So really, the southern counties in the corner of England, and that Southeast England.

Tracy:

Yeah. Could you tell us some of the places that your tourists go to? Because I know you do visit quite a few castles and a few areas of special interest.

John:

Yeah, sure. There are different themes really, although I don't position it as that. There are various castles, where they range anything from Hever Castle to Dover Castle in Kent. I also do more tailor-made tour, places like Penshurst Place, which is not far from Hever Castle, but less well-known. But dripping in medieval into the history, which is just fantastic. I love the place.

Tracy:

I've never actually been. I did read about it, and I was like, that sounds absolutely fantastic. Really interesting.

John:

I mean, a lot of people in my sector, or the travel industry, love to use the hidden gems. I try to avoid that, but I tell you, there are a couple of places where I'll just blatantly use that. I mean, that is a hidden gem for sure.

Tracy:

Yeah. No, it sounds absolutely amazing to go and visit.

John:

Yeah. Just to also just to add to that, they also range from this Hampton Court Palace that I tour in, or guide in, shall I say. Which I'll come back to in a minute, actually. I think it's important for me just to explain the guiding side, maybe later on. So don't forget to ask me about that, the specifics about that. And also, okay, that's Kent, Surrey, and Sussex as well. But also, Rochester Castle, which is a medieval ruin. Those would be the private guided driving tours. And of course with London, the difference is that I deliberately, when I do my walking tours in London, they're all outside in London. Okay? However, with the driving tours in the countryside, I predominantly, in most cases, guide indoors as well.

Tracy:

Okay. Okay. That sounds good. And I know when you take people into places like Hever Castle, for example, I know we've chatted before about, you have a great relationship with the people at Hever, that run Hever Castle. And it makes your tours really special and unique. So it would be really lovely if you could talk about that. And also, about what the advantages are for people who take a tour rather than visiting a destination, such as Hever Castle independently, for example.

John:

Sure.

Tracy:

I mean, I'm a great one for really encouraging people to take a tour with a local guide. Because to me it's invaluable, and you will learn far more than you would. I think if you could expand about that, would be really, really interesting.

John:

Yes. No, I'll be delighted to. The obvious one really is accessibility. Some places are perhaps a little bit easier to access than others. And for those who perhaps haven't been to this part of the world in England before, and compared to larger countries like America and Australia, et cetera, it's not about which side of the road you drive. Okay, that's obviously important, just in case anyone's maybe even thinking of hiring a car while they're traveling in England. It's the whole dynamic of the driving. Our roads are very windy in the countryside, they're much smaller. And I can see it from both sides, because I have driven abroad, both in Australia and the States, and various other countries. So yes, there's a bit of bias to us, what I'm just about to explain. But it's an important point, because it's a completely different dynamic of driving.

John:

Now, of course you can take the train. And I'm sure, Doug, your husband, would be very pleased when you say that. I mean, there are usually a good railway system in England. However, these places, take for example Hever Castle, that's in part of Kent called the Weald, which derives from an Anglo-Saxon term called forest. And that's where the kings used to hunt, it's quite remote. So even though we're a very small country, compared to Australia, and various other countries like the US, it's some nooks and crannies, if you like, within the countryside. And of course, that resonates in the beauty of the whole place. So if you've got any more questions about the accessibility and the travel, let me know.

John:

But to answer the other part of the question, Tracy, in terms of what I deliver during the tour, like Hever Castle, and the differential, is that I'm local. So where I meet my guests, in fact, the irony is that they take the train to meet me. It's just a 20 minute ride, straight ride from London, Victoria Station. It's in London zone five, because like I said earlier, I live in the suburbs. The guests will miss out on all that traffic in London, and all the traffic lights. We save a lot of time. I meet them at the station, my local station. And literally within minutes we're in the countryside. And so not just about Hever Castle, of course, there are other places we can talk about. But then we can concentrate on myself delivering that tour for them, and giving them the local experience. For example, very quickly, I will deliberately take them through a couple of really nice quaint villages that's literally off the beaten track, that many coaches will miss. Because it's not just because they perhaps know little about these villagers, it's because they can't access them.

Tracy:

That's a really good point. Absolutely. And it's that local knowledge that is invaluable that you know that you can take them to those places and tell them about their history, and what's beautiful about that particular village.

John:

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. And with that underlies the interaction. So at the end of the day, I know this sounds really obvious, but I'm in a people business. Yeah? So yes, it is about using Hever Castle as an example, showing them Hever Castle. Of course the guests have different levels of knowledge about, let's say, to the history and Anne Boleyn. Obviously, Hever Castle being the former family home of Anne Boleyn. And I can take that interaction to all sorts of different levels. I mean, there'll be some guests who are completely new to the Tudors, who've just seen that Jonathan Rhys Meyers, The Tudors, from 20 plus years ago, and suddenly got hooked into it. What is this? To those who know a lot more and read a lot of books. I don't position myself as a historian, because I'm not, I just happen to know a lot about British history.

John:

And to address your question earlier about what to expect. Yes, I mean, as a local because I know a lot of these places well, I know the curators and the management. And I'll introduce my guests to some of them, so they can interact with them because they're local as well. And of course, Tracy, the key thing is the interaction, that's really important to my guests. They want to know the local insights, they want to meet some local people. Yeah?

Tracy:

Absolutely.

John:

Although the castle experience is important, it's what surrounds the whole thing that really makes that day.

Tracy:

Yeah. No, that sounds absolutely fantastic. And if somebody was going to book one of those tours with you, because obviously they've listened to this and they went, "Oh my goodness, this is fantastic. I really want to do one of those tours." Can you tell us what they would expect from a typical day if they book a tour with you?

John:

Sure. I mean, what I deliver as personalization. So it really starts from the inquiry, because what I deliver is not commodity. And there's a bit of a sea change going on, on there, actually. Because we did have a bit of a buzz of visitors last autumn, or what some Americans call the fall. I had a couple of months of being very busy last autumn. And I noticed that people really wanted to go deeper with their experiences. So yes, of course, time is of the essence for business as well, it depends how much time they have. But my tours are never, ever rushed. Otherwise, I may as well just throw the towel in, because that just defeat the whole object of delivering a private tour, as far as I'm concerned. So just to keep it brief really, take Hever Castle again as an example. They may inquire about Hever Castle and then interact with me and ask a few questions.

John:

And then what I'll do is actually also just ask them to consider that actually there's some adjacency in terms of, I mentioned, Penshurst Place. Particularly if they're really into the Tudors. Yeah? And I'll suggest that. And it may or may not be something they can fit in their schedule, but usually they can,

especially when I tell them it's only 15 minute drive away and it's got an original medieval hall in it. I mean, come on, how many medieval halls are you going to see? This is 100% original. Where a lot of films have been filmed there because of its originality. Or there's Leeds Castle. Not to be confused, as you know, you come from Northern England, with the grand city of Leeds. This is Leeds Castle in Kent, and there's medieval and Tudor history there. Catherine of Aragon used to stay there.

John:

So maybe the point I'm trying to make is that there are some guests who just do the Hever Castle, which is absolutely fine. Or they may opt in to do Hever Castle and Leeds Castle, which is an hour's drive away from Hever Castle. But both I will guide within those castles. And it's the same thing that I mentioned, that there is interaction with some of the curators in there. Now everybody's different. Because one thing I've developed, I mean, I've always been in the people business. I run a business network. And it's not about what the questions when you meet the guests and what they say, it's also their body language.

Tracy:

Yeah. Definitely.

John:

I don't want to digress too much, but you may have a couple, for example, and perhaps the wife is more into the Tudors than the husband, and he wanted the World War II stuff. They're either going to be in one of my tours or somebody else's. So this could be her day, run his. Do you see what I mean?

Tracy:

Yeah, yeah.

John:

So it's important that, yes, I involve him, but not so heavily, it's more perhaps for the wife. But it could be the other way around, I do Chartwell, which is Sir Winston Churchill's former family home. And it could be the other way around.

Tracy:

Oh no, that sounds fantastic. There's two questions I want to ask you about that. I guess one is, you offer tailor-made tours. So, with a tailor-made tour, so you could combine a couple of your tours together. So would you class that as a tailor-made tour? So you could choose to go to perhaps Hampton Court with Hever Castle or-

John:

That's right.

Tracy:

Yeah. Dover Castle and maybe would you go down to the Cliffs of Dover as well?

John:

Yes.

Tracy:

Yeah. Okay.

John:

No, absolutely. I try to make it easy, of course, on my guests to give them some ideas. So there'll be a couple of tours where I've already, use the travel speak, packaged them. These aren't packaged holidays though, far from it. But so they can help themselves. So on the website you will see there's a listing for Hever Castle, but there's also a listing, a separate listing for a Tudor day tour.

Tracy:

Yep.

John:

Which, as it speaks for itself, it's Hampton Court Palace. Where I'll meet the guests at Hampton Court Palace. Okay? So they would just take a train down there, it's very easy.

Tracy:

Very easy. Yeah.

John:

I'll already be there parked up. We'll do the Tudor parts of Hampton Court Palace, because it's absolutely ginormous. It's huge, because it's got the baroque William and Mary part. But for that particular tour, be the Tudor, hence the Tudor day. And then we'll perhaps have a spot of lunch, and then we'll in my car, and then we'll drive into the countryside to Hever Castle. Okay? So that would be there. Obviously, I can tailor it a little bit for them in the inquiry stage, that's fine. And then to answer your other question about the Dover Castle, absolutely Dover Castle with the white cliffs. And then there is a page on the website about tailor-made tours, where I then list some ideas. Because this is from my experience, before I started really focusing on the tailor-made with what I said earlier about the sea change going on.

John:

I'll give you an example. There was a couple last autumn who loved the idea of medieval England. They wanted something different, they wanted to go deep. So I asked them about what they liked about it. And so what we did was we did Ightham Mote in Kent.

Tracy:

Okay. Yeah.

John:

Which is about half an hour drive from Hever Castle. It's Britain's fully intact small medieval house. And it seems to be the only one that exists in its entirety run by the National Trust. It's not big, but that doesn't matter, it's very unique. And they combine that as part of the tailor-made tour with Hever

Castle. So they had a bit of medieval history there, a walk around it. And then we drove to Hever Castle and did Hever Castle on that same day.

Tracy:

And that sounds absolutely fantastic. And it's great that you can do that as well. Do you have a particular tour that you'd say that is your most popular tour that people choose to go on?

John:

Yeah. I mean, for what I do, I mean, it probably wouldn't come as a surprise if any of the listeners have already seen my site that Hever Castle is the most popular. But with this thing about tailor-made tours, of course that Tudor comes up, there's a big following about Tudor history for various reasons. But we are very blessed with some very inspiring young historians who've written some fantastic books, and done some incredible podcasts and documentaries. I mean, don't start me, I can really go on about this.

Tracy:

I'm a big fan of the Tudor Travel Guide. I was actually telling somebody this morning [crosstalk 00:18:52]-

John:

Oh, yes, absolutely. Sarah, yeah, absolutely. I know her. And it's a bit of a community, which is great. And of course the medieval bit comes out as well, you know? Because when you say medieval, it has connotations that, ooh, some people would perhaps cringe a bit. But it's actually a very fascinating era, for whatever, [inaudible 00:19:15]. And then the other thing is, I mentioned earlier Sir Winston Churchill's former family home, Chartwell. Which is on a hill, and you can see a lot of the Weald of Kent from that property, and it's grounds, it's beautiful. And some guests will combine that with Hever Castle. So you may think, God, Tudor history and suddenly you're talking about Winston Churchill? Absolutely. And it could be for reasons already said, or hinted on. That one couple, or it's not just couples obviously, a group, a family. Their private tours. But I get families. It depends what they want as a group, a small group.

Tracy:

And actually, for myself, I am actually the Tudor history fan in our family. Whereas, my husband absolutely love medieval history. So absolutely perfect, that perfect split. And then I'm going to ask you about one of the tours that's on your website that absolutely fascinates me. And it's your Pooh sticks tour. I have to ask you about that. I'm guessing there's a story behind that.

John:

Right. Let me just say to you right up front, it was never part the plan. And I'll keep it brief. But I think it was 2018, a lady inquired, American, living in Washington, DC, mom of two kids, very busy husband. They were accompanying him on a business trip. So while he was flying across Europe, they had some free time. Now, maybe not so unique that she used to live... I mean, well, stay as a student back in the day, studying in London, university. But quite unique, she wasn't actually staying in London, she was actually staying with a family in the countryside, in east Sussex. And I thought, whoa, when she was writing to me. So from memory, I think it was something like, there were two days that they wanted. And it was Hever Castle, Leeds Castle, and then Penshurst Place. That's it, Penshurst Place.

John:

And I'm thinking, wow, she really knows what she wants. You know? "And John, Pooh sticks." And I looked at her email and thought, what? Anyway, but she was shown these places as a student by this English family. And what she wanted me to do was to not quite step in her shoes, because she'll be a part of the tour, but be that driver guide to give them the access. You see, that accessibility again. And so I just caveated. I said, "Look, my kids have grown up now, it's been years since I've been down to Pooh Corner and Pooh sticks, which is a bridge in Hundred Acre Wood, which is Ashdown Forest. And she said, "No, that's fine. We really want access to that." And so we had some glorious weather a couple of days. And on the way back, obviously we got to know each other.

John:

And so in the second day, on the way back she said, "You know what you need to do now, don't you?" And I said, "Go on." "You need to list that as a tour, because you really helped us. You'll be helping other people." And I tell myself, "How is that going to look with the castles and historic houses? Are people going to take me seriously?" She just said, "Just do it." And she checked up on me, she checked up on me. And be lovely. And I did do it, of course. And it's not a volume tour, but I've had a few bookings. I've delivered that tour a few times, absolutely. And you know what, last point, mainly for adults.

Tracy:

Yeah? Okay.

John:

Yeah. They've grown up with the stories-

Tracy:

Winnie the Pooh.

John:

... of Pooh bear and his friends, Christopher Robin. And includes going to Pooh Corner, which is their local shop in Hartfield. And I've got to know the owner there. I mean, again, I can go on. It's a fantastic [inaudible 00:23:13].

Tracy:

I was going to ask you about memorable tours that stick in your mind, but obviously that's going to be one of them, because it was different, I guess.

John:

Yeah. Yeah, that's one of them. Absolutely. Absolutely.

Tracy:

Yeah. Are there any other tours that stick in your mind that-

John:

Yeah. I mean, there are quite a few memorable ones. And like I said earlier, Tracy, this is about people. And I know that's stating the obvious, but this is about their experience. So this is not at all, really. I mean, obviously we use those phrases so people understand what we're about, for Google and things like that. It's certainly an experience. And if I can be part of that in terms of delivering what they want, the rewards are great. I come back home with a spring in my step. And I remember two sets of cousins, four women, wow, did that do my castle cred a lot of good. In fact, I bumped into somebody in my business network, Andrew, and he said, "Oh, John!" Because he saw me with four women, and [crosstalk 00:24:16] my wife, by the way. So I just said, "Angeline knows. All right?" And they become very good friends.

Tracy:

Yeah. Absolutely.

John:

Two sets of cousins, yeah. And they were such a laugh. And we had two days. In that particular thing, I don't do more than two destinations in a day. Sometimes I do get inquiries. "John, can you do Hever Castle, Leeds Castle, Dover?" I'll politely, not decline, but I'll say, "Look, we will really be rushing this. And I do not advise it at all. So if you've got a bit more time, can you have a second day? It doesn't have to be back to back, depending on availability and stuff. Or, let's cut it back." Because you just won't enjoy it. One of the most important things about this is, Tracy you'll know this, we have some fantastic gardens here.

Tracy:

Oh, absolutely.

John:

Yeah. And these castles and historic houses, whether it's Hever Castle, which is a private foundation. Leeds Castle, different dynamic, different private foundation. You've got the National Trust, you've got English Heritage. And you don't want to be missing out on the gardens.

Tracy:

Oh, no.

John:

And the mazes and things. And I thought about this in terms of knowing that this interview is going to come up, how do I get this across? And so what I say, and try and get across to yourself and the listeners is, it's like taking a back step. Taking a deep breath. You've seen the castle, you go around the grounds at your pace. And sometimes I'll ask, "Would you like some free time?" I've had some couples, newly married, they can't stop touching each other.

Tracy:

Yeah, yeah.

John:

So, body language, right? Literally. [crosstalk 00:26:05] let's say an hour to [crosstalk 00:26:06]. You get humor with what I do. And the other couples have been with each other for 35 years that they've had enough, they want you to be with them, you know?

Tracy:

Yeah. Yes, they will [inaudible 00:26:20].

John:

But it's taking a back step and literally soaking it in. You look at the gardens, the view. There could be a lake, like Hever Castle [inaudible 00:26:29] fantastic. And just relaxing. Obviously, there are different tours for different needs and wants, and that's respected. But if you take a coach, for example, whether it's a large coach or small coach, you're not going to get that. They're rushing. Literally I've seen them, they don't go in the gardens. They haven't gotten the time. Which I think is [inaudible 00:26:50].

Tracy:

It's actually really interesting that you've brought that up. Because I was actually doing an itinerary review, because we did itinerary reviews. And we did one a couple weeks ago. And actually, the people we were talking to had said they'd actually done a coach tour, and then visited Hever Castle, but they actually hadn't seen the gardens. That's a big part of their itinerary this summer, that they actually want to go back and enjoy the gardens. And they are beautiful, so enjoy all of it. Enjoy the castle and do the tour, but the gardens in particular. And I know, actually, somebody had asked in my Facebook group this morning about beautiful gardens throughout the UK. And there are so many beautiful places that you can visit.

John:

Tracy, the stories I could tell you, there's not enough time.

Tracy:

No.

John:

But let me just tell you a very snippet, a quick snippet. It reminds me of a couple from Florida. I picked them up a Bromley South Station. Obviously, you have a chat and get to know them a little bit more on the way there. And it turned out, I mean, that was a Hever Castle tour. They'd already been. "Oh, wow. You've already been." And that particular tour, nothing else just Hever Castle. "You must really like it." And she said, "John, we've been before as a coach tour, we hardly saw it. We were rushed through. And so we absolutely, in this visit, we wanted a day there to really soak it all in." I've had people literally go in there and touch the walls. They're not really meant to do that. In some places the curators don't really like it. But it's okay. I just take a back step.

John:

People can behave differently, as long as they respect the place. But I've had people wait years to visit some of these places. Not just Hever, but Leeds Castle.

Tracy:

Oh, absolutely.

John:

Yeah. I've had, just very quickly, a brother and sister, semi retired, who wanted Hever Castle. She wanted a place called Smallhythe Place, which is in the southeast corner of Kent. And that's a very small cottage. I've been there many years ago. And there was a Victorian actress called Ellen Terry, and she's an Ellen Terry fan.

Tracy:

Right.

John:

And, yeah, absolutely. Tailor-made tour, I took them there. And it meant a lot to her. She had waited years and years to see that cottage. And a bit of luck came our way that it wasn't busy, it was the mid afternoon. And the curators, they're smart, they can read people very well. They knew it meant a lot to her and they said, "Come, come this way." And they opened all the cupboards for her.

Tracy:

Wow.

John:

Just to see tiny scripts and the... Talking about tailor-made.

Tracy:

Yeah.

John:

Clothes, the actress's clothes.

Tracy:

Oh, wow.

John:

Yeah. And Mary's still in touch with me, that's [crosstalk 00:29:32].

Tracy:

That's memories that are made for a lifetime, aren't they? [crosstalk 00:29:37] You can't even put value on that.

John:

Just even explaining this, it's goosebumps for me. It's great.

Tracy:

No, absolutely. I'm just listening to you and go, that is just fantastic. What an experience.

John:

Oh, yeah.

Tracy:

To be able to help people to experience that as well, I mean-

John:

Oh, totally. Totally.

Tracy:

It's fantastic what you do. And I know that people who listen to this podcast are going to be really enthusiastic about getting some of these tours with you, John.

John:

It would be a pleasure.

Tracy:

Yeah, absolutely. And I'm really looking forward to meeting you as well this year, which is going to be fantastic. In principle, how far in advance should people book a tour with you? Because obviously we're expecting it to be fairly busy this summer in the UK, I would think. If they need to book, when do they need to start thinking about doing that?

John:

Sure. I mean, certainly for the castles and historic houses, I would advise, try to at least inquire three months in advance. At least. Because spring and summer, we're coming out of this awful pandemic, hopefully. The restrictions have been lifted in England finally, so we're all looking forward to obviously experiencing the tours again. Of course, with that comes the inquiries. So of course, spring and summer are usually the busiest parts, late summer as well. For the London, the private tours I deliver in London, which are just out outside. That's deliberately because, I mean, I just don't like cues. Who does? And I just don't do that. So they could tours, two and a half hours to three hours walking tours. And that's a different dynamic, some people inquire weeks in advance, or sometimes I get bookings a week or two in advance. And if I'm free, I'll try and do them. But my mainstay is basically the castles. Yeah, absolutely, I hope that answers the question in terms of giving [inaudible 00:31:30].

Tracy:

Definitely. I know you offer some virtual tours as well.

John:

Yeah.

Tracy:

I want to maybe, just if people are thinking, oh, I'm not going to be able to get over this year. I know a few people who've canceled and are thinking about maybe going next year. But I know that you do offer some virtual tours, which might be interesting for our listeners to hear.

John:

I do a couple of virtual tours in London.

Tracy:

Yeah.

John:

Those are private virtual tours, and they can range from a family who wants to experience... It's up to an hour, they're about historic London. There's only so much you can cover, because I'm literally walking, driving in those. Yeah. And I'm using a professional gimble, it's like a stick that has a bit of suspension, if you like, on it. With the tech, and while it's headphones and the microphone. And giving insights. And it's very interactive. Because there's private tours, people aren't speaking over each other.

Tracy:

Yeah.

John:

There's also a role theme one that I do. And of course this is a big year for the UK with her majesty's platinum Jubilee. I mean, 70 years, it's just amazing.

Tracy:

It's so exciting.

John:

And sometimes corporate events as well, but that's a completely different angle on that one. But, yeah. And there could be treats, sometimes I have grown up daughters treating their mom's for their birthday, who perhaps their mother's really into the British royal family.

Tracy:

Absolutely.

John:

Yeah. So there could just be two of them on these live tours. Yeah.

Tracy:

They sound really good. And so I'm going to just mention, because at the beginning of the podcast I did say to listeners that there was going to be a special offer. Would you like to tell us a little bit about that and what that applies to you, please? That would be great.

John:

Yeah, pleasure. As a thank you for listening to us, I'm offering 10% discount to all my list of tours. And if you wanted highly personalized tours, the tailor-made tours, where we're exchanging emails, et cetera, and you wanted to go for it, of course it applies to that. The discount applies, the 10% discount applies there as well. And it's to on transaction use the following code, and it's UKTP, after your UK Travel Planning. So it's UKTP10.

Tracy:

Okay.

John:

For the 10% discount. So the offer using that discount code UKTP10 is valid to the end of May of 2022. And for tours to be taken this year in 2022. So just put that code on transaction.

Tracy:

That's fantastic, John. And I'll put that code in the show notes as well, so don't worry if you're listening, you don't have to write that down, that will be in the show notes and you can access those at the end. I will tell you where they are. When I do a podcast, I like to ask one final question to our guests.

John:

Sure.

Tracy:

The question is, if there's one piece of advice or tip that you would offer someone visiting the UK for the first time, what would that be?

John:

Great question. Foremost in my mind, Tracy, and to the listeners, is that if you're looking for a guided tour, qualify what that guided tour entails. There are all sorts of people in the industry calling it different things. But usually there'll be driver guide, words to that effect. But what does driver guide actually mean? Perhaps before you inquire, read their reviews, see what people are saying. And I'm not here to criticize any of the other driver guides, but you'll find quite a few chauffeurs. So if you're looking for somebody to guide you, not just drive you to the destinations, but also to guide you within the castles, historic houses, for example, do ask them, does that include guiding? Because you don't really want a driver to say, "Right, I'm going to meet you in a car park in three hours time." I mean, that defeats the whole object.

Tracy:

Yeah, absolutely.

John:

Being absolutely upfront. Ask me as well, if you're going to inquire. Because we all work differently, so even though in the castles and historic houses, most of the them I guide into. I have that permission. I won't guide in a place I do not have permission to guide them. I mean, I just think that's disrespectful anyway, but that's another matter. I wouldn't do that. So I've earned my rights to guide in these places. For example, Canterbury Cathedral, I will guide in the city, which is really a large town of Canterbury. But

I actually don't guide in the cathedral. They have their own specialist guides there. And also to me, it's a place of worship.

Tracy:

Yeah.

John:

So where I have guests who perhaps want to go into Canterbury Cathedral, I've already managed their expectations with the listing upfront, and the inquiries, et cetera. And then we'll just re-meet again. And then we'll continue the outside guarding tour in Canterbury. But that could be mixed, let's say the Leeds Castle where I guide in the castle. So if in doubt, ask whoever you are booking a tour with.

Tracy:

Yeah, that's brilliant. That's a really good tip.

John:

Your welcome.

Tracy:

Thanks for that, John. And I just actually want to say thank you so much for coming onto the podcast. It's been absolutely fantastic to talk to you today. I'm sure we'll get you on again as a guest to maybe talk more in-depth about [crosstalk 00:37:09]-

John:

Yeah, it'll be a pleasure, Tracy. Absolute pleasure. It's been great. And thank you so much for inviting me on. And good luck to everyone who is obviously thinking of traveling this year. I mean, it's been long awaited, isn't it? A lot of people certainly wanting to discover.

Tracy:

Definitely, definitely. I think it's going to be busier this year. There's definitely a lot of people who are looking forward to all those plans they've kept on hold for the last couple of years there. They're really looking forward to those trips.

John:

Totally.

Tracy:

But yes, thanks again, that's brilliant. Thanks very much for coming on, John.

John:

Thank you.

Tracy:

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Once again, I'd like to say a huge thank you to John for coming onto the podcast today, to share information about his tours, and some of the wonderful destinations it is possible to visit with John England Tours. You will find links to the places and tours we discussed in this podcast, including the John England Tours website, in today's show notes. Which can be found at uktravelplanning.com/episodesix. If you've enjoyed today's episode, please leave us a review and don't forget to follow us on your favorite podcast app. I'd like to say thanks for listening. And until next time, happy UK travel planning.