

[00:00:01.530]

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.

[00:00:38.410] - Tracy

Hi, and welcome to the UK Travel Planning Podcast. So this episode, Doug and myself are here to talk to you about how to make the most of the train journey between London and Edinburgh. We know that this is one of the most popular train journeys that you guys are going to possibly take because in our Itinerary consultations, it comes up more often than not how to actually get from London to Edinburgh by train. So there are three different routes options that you've got. So Doug here is going to talk through those different options with you.

[00:01:11.260] - Doug

So the options are the east coast main line, the west coast main Line and the cross country lines. So, self explanatory east coast main line goes from London Kings Cross - predominantly the east side of the UK to Edinburgh. And then the west coast main line comes back between Edinburgh, heads west, and it comes down the west side of the country to London Euston and the cross country, surprisingly surprise, goes across the country from north to south. It's straightforward, really.

[00:01:45.520] - Tracy

Yeah. So those are the main three routes. So if I was deciding to go from London to Edinburgh, I've got an option to choose any one of those routes. Yeah. Okay. If I'm going to go and choose one of those routes, if we went through each of those, where would be the places that you would recommend? Well, I kind of know as well where we would stop off if we were recommending to somebody.

[00:02:09.050] - Doug

I think York's the biggie because there's something there for everybody, really. And that's from London. King's Cross to York is about 2 hours and break the journey up nicely. And so York has such a lot to offer, doesn't it, actually?

[00:02:23.140] - Tracy

I mean, you could do York on a day trip from London. I mean, that's something we talked about before, but certainly if you're travelling up to Edinburgh, we do always recommend people to get off in York and explore because there's so much to see in York. I mean, episode number three of the UK Planning podcast, we talked to Sinead, who knows York so well, and shared lots of insider knowledge about York.

[00:02:49.460] - Doug

Yeah. And I don't think we've ever actually been on the train I think we've got off just about every single time and had a good look around, I think.

[00:02:57.190] - Tracy

So. I mean, yeah, you can even just if you've got a couple of hours. It's worth hopping off the train and exploring York, that's for sure. And there is some way, if you are travelling with luggage, there is somewhere that you can leave your luggage.

[00:03:09.600] - Doug

That's right. There's left luggage at most of the principal train stations. Obviously, there's Kings Cross as well. If you don't want to take everything with you. There's left luggage in York and Edinburgh as well.

[00:03:20.020] - Tracy

Yeah. I was thinking, if you're travelling from London up to Edinburgh and you want to get off and you've got luggage, I know that might be thinking, what do I do? But actually, you can store the luggage, so you can then go and walk around. It's probably about a five minute walk, ten minute walk from the train station into the centre of York. And obviously you've got places like the Shambles. You can go and visit York Minster. It is a really magical city to visit, and very different from London. And I haven't yet to speak to anybody who does not love York.

[00:03:52.030] - Doug

That's true. Yeah. There's something there for everybody. Trust me, you won't be disappointed.

[00:03:56.720] - Tracy

So you talked about these three routes. Is York a feature on each of those?

[00:04:01.560] - Doug

On two of the three, actually, the cross country line from Edinburgh comes down as far as York, and then you can go for the East Coast main line from York runs down to London. But York is the main one that seems to appeal to most people. But worth noting, if you're coming from York and you're heading further up to Edinburgh, it's a good idea, particularly north of Newcastle, to sit on the right hand side of the train, because that's the sea view or the view of the North Sea. It's a good view.

[00:04:35.720] - Tracy

It absolutely is. And, I mean, that's a tip that we normally share. An itinerary consult, actually, is that to sit on the right hand side in the direction of travel, because you're going to see the stunning Northumberland coast, which is the part of the UK that I actually come from originally, and the beaches and the castles and yeah, it's absolutely beautiful. It really is. We did that trip this year when we were in the UK and I took quite a lot of video when we travel up there because it was so pretty.

[00:05:06.450] - Doug

Yeah. In other places you can stop as well. North of York, you've got Durham and Newcastle, also places worth stopping off.

[00:05:13.760] - Tracy

Yeah, definitely. So for both of those cities, really, the train station is a few minutes, 5/10 minutes walk from the main part of the city. So in Durham, you can get off, you can go and explore again.

[00:05:25.980] - Tracy

It's a cathedral city, really famous, and it's UNESCO World Heritage Site, the actual cathedral. So you can walk from the train station into Durham City in Newcastle, you can hop off the train and there's a few places that you can visit the Quayside which is kind of full of cafes and restaurants. And there's a Life Science Centre also so all pretty close to the train station. Also, I just want to mention as well if you're travelling up from that trip, but if the train line from Durham up to Newcastle is not to miss the Angel of the North, so Anthony Gormley statue, which is huge, you can't really miss it from the train. That's also, if you're not on the right hand side of the train, again in direction of travel, you'll be able to see the angel of the north.

[00:06:13.370] - Doug

And also I need to point out that there's lots of brand new trains on this route. There's two main operators on the East Coast Main Line, there's a new Lumo service which is standard class only or second class only. And the LNR. London Northeastern Services. All brand new trains. Very nice, very smart.

[00:06:32.120] - Tracy

So would you recommend anybody? So if they're planning to do that trip from London to Edinburgh, so obviously that the planning to spend maybe base themselves on Edinburgh for a few days travel around Scotland, and I know this is something we've done. So would you suggest then that East Coast Main Line would be the recommended route that you would choose to actually go up to Edinburgh?

[00:06:53.550] - Doug

I think so. I think so. Particularly if you're a first time traveller to the UK. I think it gets you to York and Edinburgh as quickly as you possibly can. It's the quickest services between the two capitals.

[00:07:05.310] - Tracy

And again so how long does it take to get so if I left London, what sort of time, how would I plan my day to actually get to visit? Be able to sort of enjoy a bit of time in in York?

[00:07:15.280] - Doug

And then also a good example of times from the current timetable, there's an 08:00 service from King's Cross and there's a direct service that is to York arriving at 9:49. So that makes the journey up really nicely. And then you can have until five to three. There's a service out from York to whatever and that takes another two to two and a half hours. And so, you know, it's sort of grand. Total travel is about 5 hours. So it makes it very nice, particularly with children, you know. Yeah, it just makes the journey really, really nicely.

[00:07:47.020] - Tracy

So that's the kind of recommended route. So kind of imagine. Then we've got ourselves to Edinburgh. So arrive in a nice time, spend a few days in Edinburgh, obviously, whether you take a road trip from there or travel a bit more of Scotland by train, which obviously, we've talked a little bit about the other day, actually, because we're busy putting an article together at the moment about Scotland by train with different routes and scenic ideas and an itinerary as well. If you're thinking about visit and train Scotland by train, we have got an itinerary by road, but we thought, because we've travelled a lot in Scotland by train, that we put that together.

[00:08:21.630] - Tracy

So, obviously, imagine that you're now in Edinburgh and then you want to get yourself back down to London. So you talked about the three different routes. So you're saying the best route to get up to Edinburgh is the east coast main line. But you're also talking about kind of if I had a bit more time, if I needed to get back quite quickly, would you again suggest going back on the east coast main line or no?

[00:08:43.270] - Doug

If time was of an essence, to get back as quickly as you could, I think perfect option would be the Caledonian Sleeper service, the Lowlander service, right, which actually comes back down the west coast main line, ultimately bring you into London Euston, and that is obviously an overnight service, but quite an experience as well. They love the sleepers. We've took them a few times. And it's luxury.

[00:09:07.800] - Tracy

It is. I think in episode I think it's episode number five of the podcast, we do talk about the Caledonian sleeper because it is one of our favourite train journeys to take from London. To me, there's nothing but taking the trip from London Euston and up to Fort William in particular. And the scenery is stunning. But obviously we're talking about coming down the opposite way this time. The Caledonian Sleeper from Edinburgh to London is one option if you want to do that as an overnight trip. So obviously you could come back the same route as you went up on the east coast.

[00:09:42.980] - Doug

Certainly could, yeah. But an alternative as I say. The circular train journeys are daytime travel on the west coast main Line, which brings you from Edinburgh. Need to go across to Glasgow if you want to do it that way, then Glasgow down the west coast main line from Glasgow Central. But there is a direct service also from Edinburgh. You've got the options, you got Carlisle, you have Liverpool, you have Manchester, you also have Birmingham.

[00:10:09.670] - Doug

All these lines verge onto the west coast main line brings back into London. Houston on the opposite side. It's only about 10/15 minutes, walk between London, Euston and Kings Cross, if you had less

than luggage there to pick up as well. So he's not far between the two. So those options embrace the journey up down the west coast, but all these different places. It's a beautiful journey. When you head down through Cumbria and all the way down towards Birmingham, it's just different. It's different the east coast scenery. And then the third option would be this is a longer deal of the west coast Main Line. In grand total takes about five and a half to 6 hours pending with services you catch.

[00:10:54.010] - Tracy

So if you were going to skip so if I was going east coast main Line, I would come from Edinburgh and arrive at Kings Cross. But if I was doing the West Coast Main Line, I would leave Edinburgh and come in to Euston.

[00:11:05.270] - Doug

That's right. Okay, that's it. You can come from Edinburgh or across to Glasgow and then down, or you can just cut it out.

[00:11:14.950] - Doug

It's just different. It's just a different route to take because as you know, Tracy, I like change journeys where I don't have to come back the same direction just to give you that different change of scenery.

[00:11:27.490] - Doug

The other option I'm talking about, and this does take longer, is the cross country line. You come from Edinburgh, straight down the middle of the country, initially again to York. If you miss something on the way up, you can see stop off on the way down. And then you can come down through Doncaster, Sheffield and towards the city of Derby. And then you have the options from Sheffield & Derby you can come back to London St Pancras, which goes on the midland mainline route, and so you can go back onto that side of London again, or you can head all the way down from all the way down to Birmingham, Birmingham New Street, and then you can join the West Coast Main Line from Birmingham New Street.

[00:12:06.930] - Doug

Also you can come from Birmingham train stations and you can go on to the Chiltern Railways, which is a slightly slower route, but different again. And that brings you into London, Marylebone.

[00:12:19.290] - Tracy

Okay, so that you've got those options to get back into London if you're leaving from Edinburgh.

[00:12:25.380] - Doug

I should point out before anybody I used to work with points out to me, birmingham is not on the West Coast Main Line. But you can rejoin the West Coast Main Line at RugbyBirmingham.

[00:12:34.470] - Tracy

Right.

[00:12:34.770] - Doug

Because somebody would tell me I was wrong.

[00:12:36.400] - Tracy

Okay, what would be you recommend for tickets for this route? I guess would be worth asking. I mean, we've done this various ways and this year we caught the lumo service.

[00:12:53.190] - Doug

Yeah, that's right. The standard class. If you want the first class seat or experience, the Lumo is not going to provide you with that. It is more reasonable price tickets, but it provides standard class only. But there were new trains. Really got a seat service, you got free WiFi. It's really nice.

[00:13:14.830] - Tracy

Yeah, we were pretty impressed with that. It was good.

[00:13:19.090] - Doug

Yeah. And Lumo just one year old, so that's how the services coming back through the cross country routes is as Tracy mentioned. I'm from the Northeast, I'm from the Midlands and more of industrial side. It's just such different scenery again. And, yeah, Sheffield is a fantastic place to start a lot of history. Into Derby, then back towards Birmingham. Different trains. It's completely different to the east or the west coast main Line.

[00:13:48.620] - Tracy

Yeah, see, there's lots of options with this route, actually. This kind of London, Edinburgh. And then back to London. So you have options if you want to get up to Edinburgh fairly quickly, you have got the option of just hopping off in York again, spending a few hours and then heading up to Edinburgh. That works really well. But you have got those options to see other cities of the UK on your way back.

[00:14:12.720] - Doug

That's right, yeah. I mean the network is very good and inaccessible from anywhere. Time is up against a lot of time for people, isn't it really?

[00:14:22.610] - Tracy

Yeah.

[00:14:23.140] - Doug

But you mentioned tickets earlier. The ticket options are we've documented many other times, but what the ticket that gives you the most flexible option is the anytime ticket. Now I do point out that is not the cheapest ticket. However it gives you the more flexibility to catch any train on that day and also any train at any time.

[00:14:48.250] - Tracy

So it's worth considering that. And also you'll be able to basically get off the train at York and get back on the train at you.

[00:14:54.030] - Doug

That's right, yeah.

[00:14:55.940] - Tracy

So that's the trouble that day I've just purchased a ticket turn up and any train that I want jump off at York and then go back on the train and go back to Edinburgh.

[00:15:04.850] - Doug

That's right. You can do that. And the only downside would be if you're the sort of person who likes having seats reserved in advance for every single train and so you need to know what train you catch. That's fine. And that's fine if that's what suits you. What we do, we tend to sort of be a bit more flexible, don't we, and try and find a seat wherever we possibly can on that service because you don't have to have the seat. Reservation from vast majority to the services in the UK is only the sleepers really that you have to have them.

[00:15:38.510] - Tracy

And it is quite nice to have that flexibility if you want to spend so maybe you plan to spend 4 hours in York for example, but you decided after 4 hours that you wanted to spend another hour there or something. It gives you that flexibility because you say there's plenty of trains to choose from, very frequent trains that gives you that flexibility to do that. So you're not kind of clockwatching and thinking oh gosh, I've got to get back to the train right, the train station this second, otherwise I'm going to miss my train.

[00:16:07.910] - Doug

And we've done it the opposite way around because of weather as well. We plan to spend four or 5 hours somewhere, the English weather has performed as we expected to do and we spent an hour, 2

hours somewhere and we've got back on the train. To get out sooner, head to a different part of the country where the sun might be shining hopefully.

[00:16:26.690] - Tracy

So I think that gives a pretty good overview of kind of those train routes, definitely give us an idea of how to get around. So obviously the option as well as perhaps tickets in the form of a Brit Rail pass or a global Eurailrail pass.

[00:16:47.640] - Tracy

Those are something I know. We've got an article on the website which looks at both of those options for people to decide, especially if they're doing lots of train journeys in the UK. We do have quite a lot of information about travel and by train in the UK on the website, including we've got a 14 day Best of Britain Rail Itinerary, which this year we've actually had members of our UK travel planning Facebook group have actually done the itinerary this year and loved it and were raving about it. So obviously, when you're doing lots of train journeys like that, there's a good option to explore.

[00:17:22.180] - Doug

Yeah, I know what it does as well. If you haven't got a specific individual train ticket, you've got a train pass that gives you that flexibility to the end degree because you can hop on and hop off any train you like.

[00:17:38.550] - Tracy

So that's a good option. So are there any other kind of tips that you can think of, anybody planning that London to Edinburgh route? I mean, we tend to recommend staying near the train station, but to be honest, really, in Edinburgh you've got loads of options of places to stay that aren't too far from Waverley train station anyway. And obviously in London, if you're leaving from Kings Cross, just got to have bear in mind that if you're taking an early train, just make sure that you have the train station and plenty of time.

[00:18:11.080] - Doug

That's right. And also what we recommend is to travel light as well.

[00:18:14.960] - Tracy

Yes. If possible.

[00:18:15.890] - Doug

Yeah. Because it just made life so much easier when you're walking around places.

[00:18:20.040] - Tracy

Absolutely.

[00:18:20.460] - Doug

But as we alluded to earlier, there's left luggage at most of these stations.

[00:18:25.430] - Tracy

Yes. If you need to leave your luggage, but obviously plan your trip Edinburgh to . We've been doing some train journeys doing this, Edinburgh to London to Edinburgh in particular. Make sure you get the train station in plenty of time.

[00:18:37.510] - Doug

Yeah. And also I'll download the National Rail enquiries app to your phone as well. That gives you live train details and quite often actually on the national rail enquiries app the platform that you train is likely, and we say always is likely to depart from, which makes life a lot easier as well.

[00:18:59.120] - Tracy

So I think that was great. I think you've given a really good kind of overview of and information about how to make the most of that trip. If you're deciding to take the train from London to Edinburgh to say,

there are places that we recommend that you consider stopping off on the way, York would probably be my number one choice, but obviously Durham and Newcastle also are easy stops.

[00:19:22.940] - Tracy

We have got more information about travel in the UK by train and actually podcast number two, Doug, gives an introduction to travelling in the UK by train with more tips to help you with that. And also we've got a recent episode about kind of travelling around London by public transport as well, which we will link in the show notes to that. And we also have an ebook, which is a UK, a Guide to UK Train Travel, which Doug and I wrote. So obviously, Doug's background, he said he worked on the UK rail network for over 25 years. So we spent a few weeks putting all our knowledge and information and we've just updated that into a book, which it's also got sample itineraries in it, but it shares lots of tips and information about the tickets, about the day of travel, what you need to know, how to get, basically trains, everything you need.

[00:20:15.030] - Tracy

No, really, everything. We've had lots of travel in the UK by train. Yeah. So as I say, I'll link to the show notes, I'll link in the show notes to everything that we talked about today and the articles that we have, and obviously our UK train travel guide. We are also available to do Itinerary consultations as well, if you need some help to fine tune your itinerary. As I say, we have a huge amount of background and knowledge about train travel as well, so Doug's always happy to talk about trains. Always. Yeah, so that's always a joy. So thanks very much for joining us for this episode.

[00:20:53.670] - Tracy

Please leave us a review and subscribe so you don't miss any more. And I guess that just leaves us for Doug and I to both say, until next time, Happy UK Travel Planning.