

Transcript Episode 85

(note this is an AI generated transcript)

Hi, and welcome to 85 of the UK travel planning podcast.

This week, I'm here with Doug Hello. To chat about our experiences of Walks Tours in London. So now this follows on with the last week's episode where I chatted to Walks ground operation manager in London, Charlie Bennett, which is a fabulous episode. And if you Haven't managed to catch up with that. I highly recommend you go back to episode 84 and take a listen to that. We have had some Fabulous Times on walks tours in London. So I kinda wanted to talk about those experiences in this episode, and Doug has joined me on some of those, haven't you?

Doug Collins [00:01:20]:

Yeah. I have. That's right.

Tracy Collins [00:01:21]:

Yeah. And I know if you've listened to episode 54 of the podcast, which I recorded Last year, after I'd spent some time in London, I talk about my top 10 experiences in London over Canada. I think it was sort of May, June time last year, And walksters featured heavily in my favorite experiences. So this episode, we thought we would talk about Why we enjoy walks tours and what it is that we particularly like about them, and also just our experiences of the tours themselves, really. So We're gonna be talking about, a number of tours that we've taken. I will say that we have been guests of walks for these tours, But our views and opinions are completely our own. So what is it that we like about Walkster? So, basically, For me, it's the fact that we you get privileged VIP access to some events, don't you? For example, the ceremony of the keys.

Doug Collins [00:02:13]:

Yeah. That's right. And the the size of the groups are important, aren't they?

Tracy Collins [00:02:16]:

Yeah. That's for sure. Yeah. You get the small groups. So I think maximum of 20, we've been in smaller groups when we've done some tours as well.

Doug Collins [00:02:24]:

And what I really enjoy is the guard takes the time to introduce themselves properly to the group before you walk straight off very quickly. Yeah. Introduce yourself, yeah, to the the other members of the party as well, which is

Tracy Collins [00:02:35]:

Yeah. Yeah. That's true. Yes. And we found that the guys are passionate, they're knowledgeable, they're Friendly, and they're engaging storytellers, which is what you remember because, you know, we can all go on tours where we just get endless Historical fact after fact

after fact. But how much of that do you actually remember afterwards? It's, you know, probably of a moot point because probably not a whole lot.

Doug Collins [00:02:55]:

That's right. And the way that the consultant engage, on a on a personal level, which was, I find, an astounding for every one of the guys that we've had.

Tracy Collins [00:03:04]:

Yeah. Absolutely. So, yeah, I mean, really, the ability as well to skip the queue, escape the crowd. So, you know, I've taken tours before, of the Tower of London, I guess, opening ceremony is a is a kinda obvious one because you actually are in the Tower of London, as it's open, so you're in there before anybody else.

Doug Collins [00:03:23]:

That's right. And it's really important because people think, oh, I know where I want to go. I know a little bit about this, but And you felt following every lit single stage, but there's 1 eye on those crown jewels on that on that on that queue outside.

Tracy Collins [00:03:35]:

Yes. That's absolutely true. And if you're there for the opening ceremony, you're obviously in there before everybody else. I remember doing doing a tour of Westminster Abbey last year, and We could skip the queue. So we went in via a side entrance, and therefore, we didn't have to stand in the huge, long queue, which which you can get over the summer months And over public holidays and over, obviously, Christmas time where it gets incredibly busy in London. So I don't wanna really spend my vacation Standing in line. It's not something that I really wanna do with my time. So should we talk about some of our favorite tours that we've had with Walk? So I I guess I guess, really, we should probably start with the Tower of London because, let's say, it's like my enthusiasm for how much I absolutely love the summary of the keys is It's starting to become a bit legendary, I think.

Tracy Collins [00:04:20]:

But, anyway, let's talk let's talk about the opening ceremony. So both myself and Doug have Taken the open ceremony tour, which has been it's really interesting, isn't it, to be in the tour of London at that time?

Doug Collins [00:04:32]:

It is. It's, It's a privilege thing to belter, I think, getting there so early as well. You know, there's so much there's something for everybody at the Tower of London. And to be there, well, a lovely summer's day, wasn't it?

Tracy Collins [00:04:42]:

Yes. It was.

Doug Collins [00:04:43]:

So all you said, you meet everybody else in the party as well, and you're walking through there when it's quiet and empty. And

Tracy Collins [00:04:51]:

And everybody else is looking good. How are they going in the travel London? Back. Yes. Yeah. So you go in the travel London, and you actually get to witness the opening ceremony, which is, as it sounds, is that getting the keys and actually unlocking the Tower of London and letting everybody else in. So you you get to see that ceremony. You can take pictures of that, and I have got pictures and videos of that ceremony. Actually, I've got an article which I wrote about our experiences of that, that particular tour.

Tracy Collins [00:05:16]:

And then after that, because you're in 1st, you get in before the crowds, and, you know, there's thousands of people that go to the Tower of London. You go, as I say, to, to see the crown jewels before anybody else. So you you get to and I was I was joking with Charlie actually last week is that we went on a travel later a couple of times because you you're on a moving walkway past the crown jewels. And because we're there with before anybody else, we could go round and round, which a lot of us did, went round and round That's right. And had a really good look at these amazing jewels.

Doug Collins [00:05:44]:

And the the crowd when we came out queuing up to see the crown jewels was Was incredible.

Tracy Collins [00:05:49]:

Yeah. It was already starting to get long. So it's, You know, peep people wanna see the crown jewels. And so the fact that you are in there, you've already seen this amazing ceremony, you've had some time to chat to a human warder, and then you go and see the crown jewels. And then afterwards, your tour guide will will take you on a tour of the town of London. So you get to learn a little bit little bit about the town of London. You can't see everything. So the advantage is, actually, at the end of the tour, which I think was about 11:11 ish finish, You stay in the Tower of London so you can explore more because we didn't go into the White Tower during that tour, but you basically can stay in the Tower of London and explore to your heart's content.

Tracy Collins [00:06:24]:

But you've obviously had you've opened a ceremony. You've seen the the, crown jewels, and you've had the guided tour.

Doug Collins [00:06:31]:

It's actually so much to say and so much to take in, but But the knowledge of the the the urban waters is astounding as well.

Tracy Collins [00:06:38]:

Oh, absolute well, they've gotta pass their kinda exam, don't they? And and, obviously, the tour guides as well, they know this stuff, so that's really good. And then I guess so that's the opening

ceremony, which is very special. And then, obviously, my favorite is the ceremony of the keys, which I've now done twice, and Doug was enough before Christmas to be able to join me on a tour as well.

Doug Collins [00:06:56]:

That's right. I thoroughly enjoyed that. It's such contrast. And to be there And a separate occasion for the opening and then a separate occasion for the closing was, very special.

Tracy Collins [00:07:06]:

It is. And you really feel that you're taking Part and a historic event, which it is. It's happened to I think it's about 700 years now. Every single night, that ceremony takes place as it is. Now that Ceremony, you cannot take photos, you cannot take video, but you go into the Tower of London around about 8:30 ish, I think it was. And I know you meet at 8:30, and then you meet your yeoman warder, who is a different yeoman warder each time. So, I mean, I've had Been twice and had 2 year awardees. I'd like to go as I was saying to Charlie last week, I'd like to go enough times that I can meet all of them because they're fascinating to talk to, and they're very different.

Tracy Collins [00:07:41]:

Obviously, got very different backgrounds, and they've got very different personalities, and they all have to learn a huge amount of information about the Tower of London. But it's just the fact that you can spend that time just talking to them, asking questions.

Doug Collins [00:07:53]:

That's right. And you can see it's something special to them as well. You can see that it's They they say there's a privilege to be part of that 7 minute themselves.

Tracy Collins [00:08:02]:

Oh, absolutely. 100%. And, and just the fact you know, I think it was only about 10 or 11 of us before Christmas on the show. It was very small. So Yeah. Imagine you've got an hour and a half with a you're an order to ask them about their life in the town of London. So you can ask them about the history. But you know what? It was things like finding out that the yummy water that we had is Pete, and he owns the new kitten That is at the travel runners.

Tracy Collins [00:08:25]:

She was telling us all these stories about the kitten, and she'd got locked in a tower, and they had to find her. And, yeah, she's bit been a bit naughty, I think. So it was just really interesting to find out about their that and about the pub, and just, like, just their normal life of living. Can you imagine living in the town of London? Well, these guys do. Yeah. With their families.

Doug Collins [00:08:44]:

That's right. With their families. That was that was the important thing, was sharing his his story as well. Yeah. It's just an incredible

Tracy Collins [00:08:52]:

It was. It's just it's brilliant to learn about that. So, you know, you're learning about the past history, but you listen learning about what's What? This living history is what is happening there today. And then you get to actually see this amazing ceremony. So, obviously, the human water talks you through what you're gonna see so you understand it.

Doug Collins [00:09:08]:

That's right. And I have to say, the hairs on the back of my neck stood up, you know, during the the, you know, the battle of the keys and the the the the, the challenges.

Tracy Collins [00:09:17]:

Yes. Yes. Yes. Well, we can't tell you too much. No. Can't tell you. To it. But, yes.

Tracy Collins [00:09:22]:

So what you see, it's it's fantastic, and this is It's really a VIP tour. You know, you are in there with the human order. So I went in the summer where it was daylight. It was light. And I also went in the winter Where it was dark and, like, it was very atmospheric, I have to say Yeah. To be in the the grounds of Tower London With not very many other people. It it it's a real privilege.

Doug Collins [00:09:45]:

That's right. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:09:47]:

And it's completely different to experience of going during the day. So So now if you do the summary of the keys, it's different in that you don't get to a tour of the Tower of Roond in itself. So I do recommend that if people wanna Want to do the summary of the keys that they also consider just, getting a ticket and going into the Tower of London during the day as well, so they get that experience. But the summary of the keys is something, believe me, that you'll never forget. It it really is historic. Your name gets written in a book.

Doug Collins [00:10:13]:

You are part of history. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:10:14]:

You are part of HistoryVid. This is just a fantastic experience that you can give, you know, yourself and your family. And, you know, I I just love it. I I know I can I can talk about it Free just because I for me, there were so many special moments to it? But, you know, I was really proud of British. I was proud of the history, proud of being part of it, And just listening to it. And Pete, our Yeoman Warder for Christmas was is from the same part of the world as me, so that was really nice as well talking to him. So, really, I can't I can't just really kinda just say how much. I just loved it.

Doug Collins [00:10:45]:

No. It I bet that we could undersell it. It was just fantastic.

Tracy Collins [00:10:48]:

So that's the Tower of London. And then some other tours that we've done have involved Westminster Abbey and also the House of Parliament. So Doug and I did the Westminster Abbey to with the houses of parliament. So we did that in, 2023. 2022, actually, we did that one. Yeah. That was in about June, July time. So, again, that's an a fantastic tour to do, isn't it?

Doug Collins [00:11:12]:

It it really is. It was, again, part of history. I mean, we know the Westminster Abbey. We know a little bit about it. I thought I knew a little bit about it. Obviously, not very much. And and then the house of parliament, which is obviously being British, is part of our life as well, and to actually walk in and walk through where, You know, so many great people have been.

Tracy Collins [00:11:34]:

Yeah. Absolutely. So think about the first part of that tour, you have the tour guide that takes around Westminster Abbey and a lot of the history because there is so much at Westminster Abbey. I mean, I've been on a few tours in Westminster Abbey, and I learn something new every single time that I go. And after that, you get taken over to the house of parliament and then handed over to, to a guide from the house of parliament. So they actually give you the official to and like Doug's saying, you know, actually standing in the house of commons and the house of lords, it was quite incredible.

Doug Collins [00:12:07]:

It it it was. And the the the knowledge that both separate tour guides had is just astounding. I wish I'd read a little bit more about Westminster. I'll be honest. I wish I I've read up a little bit know more more to expect when I was there.

Tracy Collins [00:12:23]:

That was so savvy.

Doug Collins [00:12:24]:

The in the Abbey. That's right. Yeah. And then for the house of parliament, the the there's so much about it that you you've seen on TV, Anything? Oh, yes. I've seen that, and I recognize it.

Tracy Collins [00:12:34]:

You know,

Doug Collins [00:12:34]:

the the different benches and the different,

Tracy Collins [00:12:37]:

the color the different colors? Yeah. Like, you can't sit on the seats, So

Doug Collins [00:12:41]:

you're not allowed

Tracy Collins [00:12:41]:
to sit on the seats?

Doug Collins [00:12:42]:
No.

Tracy Collins [00:12:42]:
No. Pretend that you're an MP or prime minister. You're not allowed to do that.

Doug Collins [00:12:45]:
You just feel history. In both in both the Abbey and the houses, you just feel Part of history.

Tracy Collins [00:12:51]:
Yeah. Absolutely. And I did a Westminster Abbey tour last summer, and, again, that was interesting. So skip the line. So it was brilliant. So we got in early. I had the guide take us around Westminster Abbey. And as I say, there's so much to Westminster Abbey.

Tracy Collins [00:13:06]:
I really you really need a guide. I highly recommend if you go to Westminster Abbey that you have a guide, that you take a tour because you will learn far, far more. There's So much there to see

Doug Collins [00:13:17]:
industry.

Tracy Collins [00:13:17]:
So much there to learn about. You know, for example, Poet's Corner. Just just looking at all the the the Gravestones on the ground. You wanna see who's there or is you know, who who's being, recognized there. The Jubilee Gallery. So the tour that I did last Jo was Western savvy with the Jubilee Gallery. So access to Jubilee Galleries is via, Poets Corner. So you can go upstairs or you can take a lift up.

Tracy Collins [00:13:42]:
But we again have the guide who was able to explain you know, give us some time to have a look around the Jubilee Galleries, but answer questions again and explain to us the importance of a lot of the artifacts that are actually up in that gallery. Now you're not allowed to take photos up there, we'll see.

Doug Collins [00:13:58]:
That's right. There's one thing that impressed me with with the Westminster Abbey part was the fine balance that the tour guide had between time to explain And, well, also, time for you to able to explore.

Tracy Collins [00:14:11]:

Yeah. Absolutely. And I think that that is important. And also because you you the questions that you come up with is why Oh, I didn't know that or I want to know that and, you know, things that you don't think about. And, also, I remember seeing there's a couple of things just seeing the coronation chair after the coronation. It was because it was in June, so the the chair was back there. And, obviously, the year before when Doug and I had been the coronation chair was there. But just knowing that this Graffiti on the coronation chair and stuff like that is quite interesting.

Doug Collins [00:14:37]:

That's right. It really was. One other point I'd like to add about the the tour guide was How easy it was to ask questions, because the tour guide was amongst us. So when we were walking, he was happy to sort of talk to everyone, you You know, because not everybody wants to ask questions in front of the of the group.

Tracy Collins [00:14:55]:

Yeah. Yeah.

Doug Collins [00:14:56]:

So he was amongst us when we were, looking around on on our own. So So he's actually coming over to individual people and just saying, you know, how are you going and, you know, where are you from and, you know, that sort of thing and more questions. And because because it's sometimes easier to ask questions on your own than

Tracy Collins [00:15:12]:

anybody else. That's true. Yeah. So so that's really good. So so that they're both really good. So whether if you've got if you haven't got an interest House of Parliament. Then, obviously, just doing something like the Westminster Abbey with the Jubilee Galleries. I'd highly recommend including that.

Tracy Collins [00:15:26]:

You can do that. If you have got an interest in the House of Parliament, we were actually talking before this recording saying, actually, there were quite a lot of British people in that tour as well Oh. Who did Westminster Abbey and then wanted to go over the house of parliament to to kinda learn a little bit about parliament and see, you know, you know, the House of Commons and also to oh, yes. And also

Doug Collins [00:15:43]:

Great Hall.

Tracy Collins [00:15:44]:

Yeah. The Great Hall. So, yeah, it's a great way to immerse yourself in the history. I always recommend anyway that, you know, having a guide Just gives you so much more information

and knowledge, but also can share stories that you wouldn't necessarily get if you use Headphones, I'm not a great fan of, of having those headphones when you go around places. It's

Doug Collins [00:16:12]:
so it just totally enhances your The whole experience by being part of the group.

Tracy Collins [00:16:16]:
Yeah. And I think so. And the thing is, you know

Doug Collins [00:16:18]:
delivers on that.

Tracy Collins [00:16:19]:
Yeah. Oh, they do a 100%. And, you know, those are the things that, You know, leave you with memories. And, actually, a friend of mine came on the walkster for the ceremony of the keys last June. And Terry is still talking about that to us. She's talking to all her friends about that to us because you know? And she wasn't aware about that ceremony and absolutely loved it. Absolutely loved it. This is the sort of thing that you look back on in years past after your trip, after your vacation and go, you know, those are things that you remember.

Doug Collins [00:16:45]:
That's right.

Tracy Collins [00:16:46]:
Those are the special moments. And and so, you know, that is what we enjoy doing. So that is why this week, I kinda wanted to follow-up to with interview with Charlie last week to to just Kinda say that. These are the things that we enjoy, we've we will remember. You know, standout moment for me is always gonna be The summary of the keys and, actually, the privilege of going into the chapel with the human order and just spending time in the chapel. I'll never ever forget that. And what about you?

Doug Collins [00:17:14]:
I just find it mind blowing that you're part of a ceremony that's been going on for so many

Tracy Collins [00:17:19]:
Oh, yeah.

Doug Collins [00:17:19]:
100 of years.

Tracy Collins [00:17:20]:
Yeah. Yeah. And, also, I guess, like, we've just mentioned the Great Hall At Westminster because we were there, a few months before the queen passed away, and and, obviously, you

know, she was laid in state there. So we were able to kinda You know, we remembered that we'd be in there, and it just it just meant such a lot because we weren't in the country after she passed away. So it was just really touching that we could Kinda remember, we'd actually stood in that hall.

Doug Collins [00:17:43]:

Yeah. And we could relate to it when you saw the pictures and the videos on the news, broadcast. You know, we were in that hall, and we can sort of visualize.

Tracy Collins [00:17:51]:

Absolutely. So yeah. So I will put links to the walk's tours in this week's show notes. So if you're interested in booking, do pop over The show notes, which will be atuktravelplanet.com/forward/epieceide85, and then you can use those links To book any of the tours

Doug Collins [00:18:08]:

And I would definitely, a 100% recommend walks.

Tracy Collins [00:18:11]:

Oh, absolutely. So, really, I guess that just needs me to say for this week, You know, continue to listen to the podcast, continue with your UK travel planning, check out the the websites UK travel planning and London travel planning for To resources.

Doug Collins [00:18:25]:

So, yeah, happy UK travel planning.

Tracy Collins [00:18:26]:

Yeah. And also from me, as always, we we end the podcast with the words, Happy UK travel planning.