

*[00:00:00] **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.*

*[00:00:24] 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.*

[00:00:35] **Tracy:** Welcome to the UK Travel Planning Podcast. There are many fantastic train journeys to take across the UK and travelling by train is a popular choice for many visitors.

[00:00:49] If you are travelling from London to Scotland and want to make the journey extra special, one possibility is to take the Caledonian Sleeper.

It is one of our favourite train journeys anywhere in the world. And one we highly recommend to train lovers, or those who are simply seeking to experience something a little special. Today, I'm joined by my husband and co-founder of the UK travel planning website and author of the guide to [UK train travel e-book](#) Doug Collins.

[00:01:15] He is not only passionate about train travel, but with 25 years of experience working on the UK railways he is a perfect person to answer questions about travelling the UK by train. In this episode, Doug shares information about travelling on the [Caledonian sleeper](#) plus tips to ensure you make the most of this iconic train journey.

[00:01:36] **Doug:** Hello, good to be here again. Oh, Caledonian sleeper service. One of my favourite topics. One of my favourite trains. It's a luxury train and a fantastic experience for all UK and overseas travellers who want to enjoy a unique travel experience. This allows you to get to sleep in one country and wake up in another.[00:02:00]

[00:02:01] **Tracy:** How many Caledonian sleeper services are there available?

[00:02:04] **Doug:** The sleeper services run along the West Coast Main Line six days a week. There's a northbound and southbound train service.

[00:02:21] The two options really for passengers to choose from are the Highlander service northbound from [London Euston](#) around nine in the evening. And that travels to Edinburgh Waverley train station, all as one train. And then the train splits into three sections for onward journeys.

[00:02:43] It goes to Fort William, Aberdeen and [Inverness](#), and southbound services are reversed. The Lowland runs northbound from London Euston just before midnight, about 10 to 12, Monday, Friday. There is one [00:03:00] train. and this divides at Carstairs, which is south and sort of between [Edinburgh](#) and Glasgow - then one section goes to Glasgow central and then one to Edinburgh.

[00:03:10] The southbound service runs in reverse

[00:03:14] **Tracy:** What different types of sleeper accommodation are available?

[00:03:17] **Doug:** There are three types of sleeping options available depending on your own preferences and especially budget. This is in addition to what they call the **Comfort Seat** option which is sleeping in your seat overnight.

[00:03:31] The configuration is two seats side-by-side an aisle or gangway. For peace of mind there is as a small lockable storage area. As well as this there is wifi and multiple charging points and then at seat food and drink can be requested [00:04:00] via an Encore button.

[00:04:02] There's the standard room, which is now called a **Classic**. These are twin bunk beds and rooms with a washbasin. And priority club car access is really the equivalent of a traditional dining car where you can go for breakfast or for dinner. Your room also comes with a sleep kit, which includes your masks, earplugs, and various other bits of gadgetry.

[00:04:29] The breakfast in the classic room is not included, but it can be purchased. Additionally, there are multiple charging points in these rooms, which is an improvement on the old type services, touch room temperature control, and also wifi, which is again a new addition. There is room key card access, good baggage storage.

[00:04:55] There's no toilet in this room but there are shared facilities at the end of the corridor. [00:05:00] Then we have the **Club Room**, which is our particular favourite which is a real hotel type experience. It is similar to the classic room, but with a bonus, you've got an en suite toilet and shower. This room does also include the cost of your breakfast and station lounge access.

[00:05:19] This is our usual go-to accommodation. If possible, of course, whether it's available as it ticks all the boxes for us in terms of facilities, and the value for money.

Then we have the Caledonian double room. [00:05:50] Now this is a luxury. This is a double bed, no bunk beds in this one. It's a double bed and the facilities are the same as the club room, but we haven't been in this one as yet. [00:06:00] But we hope we all told it's actually very luxurious and it gets booked up very quickly.

[00:06:11] **Tracy:** I know the Caledonian Sleeper is special to you can you explain why.

[00:06:13] **Doug:** It certainly is one of my first experiences as a solo traveller in my teenage years was travelling on the British rail sleepers. I think I was about 18 or 19 and my parents were on holiday in the [Scottish Highlands](#) and the plan was to meet me off the sleeper in Crianlarich, which is on the Highland line to Fort William.

[00:06:35] The whole experience was so new to me and I was so badly prepared in terms of luggage food drink. Luckily for me, there was an elderly gentleman who took pity on me. He explained everything about the sleepers, the facilities, the times where to put luggage, the dos and the don'ts of sleeper travel.

[00:06:56] It was really like having my granddad on the train. He was [00:07:00] so kind and thoughtful. He was a retired headteacher who regularly travelled to Scotland to go walking with his friends. And he was in this traditional walking gear. He was such a nice man. And he was also getting off the train at Crianlarich.

[00:07:13] I'll never forget his kindness to a fellow traveller. He was just so lovely. As well as this, the experience of waking up in a different country. I was 18 or 19 and it was very special.

[00:07:35] You could open the birth or sleeper compartment window and I just remember, I can really remember the fresh air and the pine smell coming through the windows. Absolutely amazing. What it's just stayed with me.[00:07:56] On our last visit there was snow everywhere which just added to the experience.

[00:08:06] **Tracy:** Yes that was a fantastic trip. I struck up a conversation in the corridor with an elderly Scottish lady who told me all sorts of information about the area and about the families in the area and the history of the area and who was very interested to know that I was a Campbell.

[00:08:25] So it was just absolutely fantastic. And not something that you expect to be able to in a doesn't happen every day. And it was just absolutely brilliant to have that experience and have that conversation with her.

So why do you recommend the Caledonian sleeper?

[00:08:39] **Doug:** It's such a unique and magical experience.

[00:08:45] Each journey is always so different, different times of the year and different people to talk to. And they've all got their own stories to tell, particularly though it provides travellers with a time-saving option to see more of the [00:09:00] UK besides London, particularly when they are really pushed for time or have a packed itinerary that you spend your time, you sleep time on the move, then you wake in a different country.

[00:09:12] You feel refreshed and ready for the day.

[00:09:16] **Tracy:** So what is your favourite sleeper service?

[00:09:20] **Doug:** Mine. Well, ours is the Highlander Northbound service. This is one from Euston to Fort William, mainly for the reasons described the nostalgia of all my happy memories of this service, the beautiful scenery of the Highland line [00:09:36] when you wake up in the morning.

The arrival time of 10 am or just before is ideal too. Every time we use this service we have a fantastic time [00:10:00] touring the Highland region.[00:10:05] The sleeper train is more than a means of transport for us because it is always a start of a fantastic holiday,

[00:10:09] **Tracy:** Do you have any tips for people planning to take the Caledonian sleeper?

[00:10:13] **Doug:** Well, yes, from my own experience is you need to travel light and wear comfortable clothes. The baggage storage area in the births or rooms has improved. But it's still a little limited.

[00:10:27] **Tracy:** Yeah. It's one of the reasons that I do recommend [travel packing cubes](#), because you can put in whatever it is that you're going to need on the journey, into your packing cube. Then you can just use that during the train trip and actually leave everything

else in your bag. So it doesn't mean that you've got to try and get everything out of your suitcase or your bag.

[00:10:45] And there's just not really the room to be able to do that. So highly recommend if you're going to do this, that you have a packing cube with the items that you require for the journey.

[00:10:56] **Doug:** And also you need to pack for potential different temperatures and weather [00:11:00] between England and Scotland throughout the whole of the year.

[00:11:03] Scotland's weather can be unpredictable more so than England. Also, I would recommend putting all your valuables in one bag or a smaller bag to take with you to the club car if you go for dinner or meals and not leave them in your room. I would also recommend that you sample the seasonal, traditional Scottish food that is served in the Club car for dinner and breakfast.

[00:11:32] it is delicious in my opinion. So give the haggis and the [different types of whisky](#) a try. And finally, I would always recommend talking to your fellow travellers. Some of our most memorable experiences, not just on sleeper trains, but generally have been from talking to people from all around the world.

[00:11:51] **Tracy:** Do you have any final words about the Caledonian Sleeper you'd like to share with our listeners?

[00:11:55] **Doug:** Yes, I do I can highly recommend visitors to the UK [00:12:00] as well as UK residents who love train travel as much as we do try a Caledonian sleeper journey, at least once. Trust me you will not be disappointed.

[00:12:11] **Tracy:** Thanks again to Doug for joining me for this episode and sharing his extensive knowledge and experience of the UK.

[00:12:17] You can hear more from Doug on [Episode Two](#) of the podcast where he provides an introduction to UK train travel and shares some essential tips for those of you planning to travel the UK by rail. Doug will be back in future episodes with more UK train travel inspiration and tips.

You will find links to everything mentioned in today's podcast in the show notes [@uktravelplanning.com](#) forward slash Episode Five Guide to the Caledonian Sleeper as well as more resources and inspiration for planning your UK vacation.

Please don't forget to subscribe on your favourite podcast app so you don't miss an episode. If you're enjoying our podcast, please also leave a review.

[00:12:57] If you have more questions about visiting the UK [00:13:00] join our free Facebook community [@facebook.com](#) forward slash UK Travel Planning.

That's all for this episode until next time. Happy UK Travel Planning.