

# UK Travel Planning Podcast Episode 3

## Visiting York

[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, travel inspiration 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.

[00:00:27] Join us as we explore the UK from cosmopolitan cities to quaint vilages. From historic castles to beautiful islands and from the picturesque countryside to seaside towns.

[00:00:42] **Tracy Collins:** Welcome to Episode 3 of the UK travel planning podcast. Today's episode is full of travel inspiration, practical tips, and insider information to help you plan your visit to the beautiful UK city of York.

Hi, I'm really pleased today that we have Sinead who has joined us to talk [00:01:00] all about living in York and what you can do and see when you visit York.

[00:01:03] So hi Sinead thanks for joining us today. Would you like to tell us all about yourself and your background.

[00:01:11] **Sinead:** That'd be great. Okay. Thank you very much for having me, firstly, Tracy, it's lovely to see you. My name is Sinead and as you might guess already, I'm not Yorkshire born. I was born and brought up in London.

[00:01:25] I moved to York 16 years ago, my husband studied up here and when he was offered a job up here, we jumped at it because we love the city. We love the proximity to the countryside. So it was a great, it was a great move for us so we moved up here. We've had three children up here. We raised them in York.

[00:01:46] We love travel ourselves and have been to over 72 countries.

[00:01:51] **Tracy Collins:** 72....That is amazing.

[00:01:54] **Sinead:** Well, that was the last time I counted. I do try to keep count. My kids [00:02:00] are very good at keeping count, but I'm not quite so good at keeping count. I have a family travel website and then during the pandemic, obviously when there was no travel, I decided to pivot and set up a website specifically for people visiting York with children.

[00:02:19] It's called York With Kids dot com and I felt that as a traveling family, we knew exactly what people, what families want to know. So families need to know things to do where to stay, but also, you know, where's the baby change, where's the nearest clean toilet. So that's why I decided to set up this specific website just for people visiting York with children.

[00:02:44] **Tracy Collins:** Oh, that's fantastic. And we will be linking to that in the show notes as well. So don't worry anybody we will be linking to that so you will be able to look at Sinead's website all about York. So you've been living in York for quite a while, but obviously you've done a lot of [00:03:00] travelling as well around the world before settling back into York.

[00:03:03] So was there a particular reason that you chose York? You said that your husband had spent time there before. Studied there. So it was it just kind of somewhere that you thought was because it's in the middle of the country. That's always something that appeals to me about York as well. Great transport route.

[00:03:18] **Sinead:** Initially because we were living in London, when we got married, we just wanted to live somewhere with access, easy access to the countryside. And York is ideal for that.

An hour from the Yorkshire Dales. It's an hour from the Yorkshire Moors. You know it's half an hour to the Yorkshire Wolds. It's an hour to the Yorkshire coast. It's just such a good location. If you're an outdoorsy family and it is, it's a lovely place to live. It's a lovely place to bring up a family.

[00:03:46] **Tracy Collins:** It's a lovely city. And it's somewhere that when we are back in the UK, that we always head to York and it's somewhere I know when I talk about visiting the UK, it's one of the cities and one of the places that, that always gets mentioned in our [00:04:00] Facebook group as well, it's somewhere that is always mentioned as that it's a really good place. And a lot of people when they're travelling from London up to Edinburgh and they are asking what should be do?

And I say stop in York at least get off the train and go and explore York because it's such a lovely city. So for people who are planning to visit York, what would you say are the must do places to visit and experiences that they should be including into their itinerary?

[00:04:24] **Sinead:** There are so many. There's just so much to see and do here.

[00:04:30] I've lived here 16 years and I still haven't done everything on my list that I want to do. Obviously I think the main thing to do is York Minster it is beautiful inside and out is really Yorkies love York Minster. And I advise everybody to take a free tour. Once you get an, you have to pay to get in York minster, but inside they run tours on the hour, every hour.

[00:04:55] And the tours really will delve into the history, the architecture, the [00:05:00] stories, the legends, they really well worth taking. The city walls are another must. York city walls are about two miles long. They're the longest, complete, most complete city walls in England. And it's just a lovely, lovely place to walk.

[00:05:16] It's quiet. You get to see people's back gardens. You get to see different views of York that you don't see from the city centre. It's really definitely well worth doing that. There's quite a few walking tours in the city. Some you have to pay for some are free. Again, they are excellent just for helping you navigate the city, showing you hidden gems, explaining the diverse history we have, explaining the architecture.

[00:05:43] They're great for telling you to look up. Did you see that on that building? All those hidden things you might miss. There are loads of historical sites to visit there's the Norman era Clifford's tower, which is like an open tower, sat on an artificial hill, right in the [00:06:00] middle of York. You can't miss it! The Roman Bath are another great thing to visit.

[00:06:04] Its the remains of a Roman bath house. And it's actually in the basement of a pub. You go into the pub and then you go down the stairs into the basement and there's a Roman bath house. And the pub is the same name it's called the Roman bath Pub so you can't miss it.

The Yorvik Viking is a museum that showcases Viking artefacts that were found on that very site, when they did a dig, it's one of the most popular tourist attractions in York, and it is well worth visiting.

And then nearby that is the Castle Museum, which is much more, um, sort of charting York's history and York's place in England. Thats excellent to visit. It's really good. You can see that the cells where Dick Turpin was held and there's loads to do there. They have a recreated Victorian street and you can go in and out to the shops and meet people in the shops who live and work there.

[00:06:59] And the [00:07:00] police station, the school - it's a fascinating day out. There's lots of historic houses you can visit as well. There's the Barley Hall, which is all wood and it's from the medieval era. You can visit the Victorian era Mansion House, which is where the Lord Mayor of York lives and that's fantastic. In the basement there's a fully working Victorian kitchen and sometimes they do cooking demonstrations that you can join in with. There's my favourite is probably the Georgian era Fairfax house. It's a big pink building and the rooms are recreated and it's just beautiful to walk around.

[00:07:41] There's just so many things to see and do. The National Railway Museum I love because we're a big train, loving family.

[00:07:49] **Tracy Collins:** That's the place that we tend to always go to when we go to York because of my husband's background in the rail industry. So I don't know how many times I've been to York Rail Museum [00:08:00] and of course it's free as well.

[00:08:02] Yeah. And a lot of people don't realise that now I've been. It's free. It's free to go into, and it's a brilliant place to, to go and have a walk around you can spend.

One thing you haven't mentioned, or one place that you haven't mentioned is often mentioned by people that are, you know, asking about York is The Shambles.

[00:08:22] **Sinead:** The Shambles you can definitely, I mean, it's, it's a shopping street basically, so you will see it as you walk around York.

[00:08:31] It is gorgeous The Shambles. It literally feels like stepping back in time. It's a very short cobbled shopping street and the houses are sort of

lopsided and squashed together and they are overhanging and it's just lovely. You would feel like you've stepped on some sort of Disney movie set.

It does get very, very busy in The Shambles so I would go either early in the morning or in the evening. It [00:09:00] can get quite clogged as you're walking along. One thing that I recommend on The Shambles which is what I call one of York's hidden gems is a shrine to St. Margaret Clitheroe right in the middle of the shambles. The Shambles is full of shops, and then there's this wooden door and it's free to open, free to enter.

[00:09:21] And you go in there's this tiny, tiny little chapel that holds about 20 people, and it's a shrine to a Saint that was killed in York, but it's just a really peaceful little spot away from all the crowds of people on The Shambles. It's just lovely. The Shambles has got very interesting history. It was in the medieval era, it was the location for all the butcher's shops in York.

[00:09:49] So all the shops along there would have been butcher shops. And as you walk along the shambles today, all the shops have these sort of slab wooden ledges out the front. And they're the [00:10:00] medieval ledges. The meat was once displayed and some of the shops still have metal hooks hanging from them. And that's where the meat was hung.

[00:10:08] It's just. It just looks like a film set, but it's not, it's all real and it's all authentic. It's fantastic.

[00:10:16] **Tracy Collins:** And it's a fabulous street to walk down as well as a lot of Harry Potter shops on that street these days.

[00:10:21] **Sinead:** And there's quite a few, but there's also some lovely cafes. And you know, if there's a lovely glass shop that makes glass ornaments.

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[00:10:29] So it's, there are a few sort of wizarding shops, but there are still others the Yorkshire Pie Company is course is on the Shambles as well. So it is well worth visiting.

[00:10:39] **Tracy Collins:** Yes, definitely. Is there anything, anywhere else that you can think of? Obviously we've gone through quite quite a few

[00:10:44] **Sinead:** places. I wrote down a few top experiences York is definitely a city to sort of dive into.

[00:10:55] One of my favourite things is you can climb the central tower in York Minster. [00:11:00] It's a long way up. Unfortunately closed at the moment because of COVID restrictions. But once you get to the top, you have a 360 degree view of York. It's really it's well worth doing. If you've got the legs for it, I'd recommend taking a ghost tour in the evenings.

[00:11:16] There's several on offer in York. They take about two hours. They're not scary or horrific. They're more entertaining. But I've done three or four ghost tours over the years. And every time I do one, I learn something new about the city or I see something somewhere I've never been before. So they're well worth doing.

[00:11:37] They're very cheap. It's about five pounds, an adult for two hours. It's well worth it. I'd also recommend taking just a walk by the river Ouse. The river Ouse flows through York is a really lovely part of the city. It's quite tranquil. You can hire a little red boat and drive yourself up and down the river Ouse.

[00:11:57] You can take a boat cruise if you go to the [00:12:00] Rowntrees park. Also York is gaining quite a reputation as a foodie destination. And it has a long chocolate history. We used to have three chocolate factories in York. There's still one today. And you can still smell when they're making Kit-Kats.

[00:12:18] There's some cooking courses on offer in York. The Grand Hotel, which is a five-star hotel. They have a big cookery school there, and you can do anything from meat to bread. They do parent and child cooking classes. They do Yorkshire specialties and also because of the chocolate association in York, we have a place called the York Cocoa House and they run chocolate making courses and they can run, you know, for several days.

[00:12:48] Or you could just do a couple of hours to make a chocolate lollipop. There's just different things you can do to sort of get involved in York itself.

[00:12:58] **Tracy Collins:** They all sound really fun as well. I have [00:13:00] to say. And, and that actually leads really well into the next question, which is recommendations for good places to eat and drink in York?

[00:13:07] **Sinead:** There are loads absolutely loads, you could go to a different pub every day and probably over the course of the year you still wouldn't have covered all the pubs in York there's loads.

We have all the usual chains. So if you are looking for something familiar there'll be all the usual chain restaurants, but we also have some fantastic independent places. Fossgate is a great area to go. looking for a restaurant as is Swinegate.

Personal favourites. I love the Cosy Club, which is on Fossgate. It's two stories and it's made out like an art deco cinema. It's really lavish sort of furnishings. It's beautiful place to eat. I also like the Lamb and Lion Pub in High Petergate.



It's just really good pub food, but their garden courtyard [00:14:00] has the most fantastic view of York Minster.

[00:14:02] So it's really worth going there. If you would like other views of York Minster there's the Judges Lodgings. They have a great view of York Minster. The Market Cat in The Shambles market and the cafe on the third floor of Marks and Spencer's department store, they have one of the best views of York Minster in York.

[00:14:25] It's just amazing. You see the complete Minster. So grab a coffee and just enjoy the view. It's fantastic. My probably three must places to visit are Betty's tea rooms, the House of Trembling Madness, and the Yorkie Pud Wrap.

[00:14:42] **Tracy Collins:** Yes. You've mentioned two of my favourites there out of those three. Bettys is just an institution!

**Sinead:** [00:14:49] Yes Bettys is lovely. It's right in the city centre. It's a hundred year old tea room it's beautifully done out inside. [00:15:00] It's proper old fashioned. You get served by bow tie waiters. There's a classical pianist playing the piano. You can go in just for tea and cake, or they do really good breakfast, lunch and dinner.

[00:15:12] It's a must do when you come to York Bettys and Yorkies love it as well which is always a good sign.

[00:15:19] You can only prebook an afternoon tea. If you just want to drop in coffee, you just have to join the queue.

[00:15:28] There's always a queue for Betty's it's so popular. Absolutely. The other place I'm really recommend going is the House of Trembling Madness. There's two branches in York, but I'd go to the original one on Stonegate and it is just, it's like nothing you'd visited before.

The House of Trembling Madness is a beer shop, a craft beer shop, and the back of the shop, you go up a narrow staircase and you're in a medieval ale house and it's not like a remake or, you know, [00:16:00] done up to it is an authentic medieval Alehouse. They have a tiny bar. They only have a few beers on offer. They have a very limited menu, but the menu is really good. We get loads of food, but it's just, you know, you're sitting under this beam ceiling, all the tables, a long communal table.

[00:16:18] So you just budge up next to somebody and you strike up a conversation. You can't, pre-book there again, you just turn up and if there's, this is a space for you to sit down and you just sit down and join other people. It's really great place to go. And it's very, very different experience. I don't think you would find in many other places at all.

[00:16:39] **Tracy Collins:** And then it's actually, so whether I haven't been to, so that's somewhere we will definitely going to be visiting later on this year.

[00:16:44] **Sinead:** It is well worth it. And the other one is the Yorkie Pud Wrap from the York Roast Company. This is a takeaway. So the York Roast Company came up with the idea because everybody who comes to York has to have a Yorkshire pudding. [00:17:00]

[00:17:00] So you get a giant Yorkshire Pudding and they fill it with roast dinner. So stuffing, potatoes, carrots whatever you can fit in it. And then they roll it up and wrap in paper and you eat it like if fajita, I mean, it's dripping, dripping in calories, but it is fantastic as well.

[00:17:19] **Tracy Collins:** And it has to be done in York. I have to say that that's my definite place I go to have one of those when I go to York because they're just delicious. Absolutely delicious.

So if somebody is planning to visit York, what would you say would be how long they should visit? What would be the minimum you would say as, I mean, I would say days, but obviously what would you say the minimum to be able to just get a flavour of the city?

[00:17:46] **Sinead:** I think if you're just doing the city I'd say two to three days. There is loads to do in the city, but because it's so small, you can get everywhere very quickly. It takes 10 minutes to walk between attractions so [00:18:00] you can fit a lot into each day. So I would say two to three days, but I would always recommend staying longer because there's so many fantastic things to do on the doorstep.

[00:18:11] And York is a really good base for exploring the rest of Yorkshire.

[00:18:15] **Tracy Collins:** Absolutely. I'm hoping that soon you'll be able to come back on and talk about all those fantastic places that you can visit from York as Yorkshire is the largest county in England and it's got, there's just so much to see. It is a beautiful county that's for sure.

[00:18:30] Is there a best time of year to visit York?

[00:18:34] **Sinead:** I would visit every time a year personally. It's I mean, it is a fantastic city. Personally I love spring and summer in the city. The city walls are built on slopes and in March and April, they are covered in daffodils. It really looks amazing. And then when the daffodils go, the cherry blossom comes is a really beautiful time in the city.

[00:18:59] And with the [00:19:00] better temperatures. You know, people come out onto the streets. The pubs put tables outside. The river bank is lined with tables and chairs. Spring and summer is a lovely time to visit, but then it is at any time of year. Christmas is lovely. They have a big Christmas fair in the city centre runs for six weeks.

[00:19:19] The city is really nicely illuminated there's big Christmas trees. It's, it's quite magical at Christmas.

[00:19:26] **Tracy Collins:** That sounds absolutely lovely. So I know we talked a little bit about, we're going to talk more in another podcast about Yorkshire, but if you're spending a few days in York and you think, oh, actually I'd like to take a day trip.

[00:19:37] Where would be your top places that you would recommend for anybody wanting to do that?

[00:19:42] **Sinead:** Everywhere is pretty close really, quite close to York there are several stately homes you can visit within a 20 minute drive. There's Beningborough Hall, there is Castle Howard of course, which is quite famous. That's only 20 minutes drive away.

[00:19:58] There's lots of [00:20:00] monastic ruins around York. The largest monastic ruins in England are at Fountains Abbey, which is about 45 minutes north of York that's amazing. Bolton Abbey is one of our family favourites that's about an hour away. And then of course, you've got the Yorkshire Dales.

The edge of the Dales is about an hour the heart of the Dales is about an hour and a half, and you can do caving climbing, hiking. There's loads of waterfalls

such as Aysgarth Falls and Hardraw Force which is England's highest single drop waterfall.

There's Malham Cove, which is one of my favorite places in the world to be it's a 250 foot high stone amphitheater. One of the Harry Potter movies was filmed on the top. Just the details is beautiful and it's so close. And then in the other direction to the east of York, you've got the Yorkshire Moors that can be reached in less than an hour. You can take a [00:21:00] steam train across the Yorkshire Moors. You can visit all the little villages.

[00:21:06] And then on the other side of the Moors, there's Yorkshire coast Whitby, which I know you love. Robin Hood Bay which is beautiful car free village. There's, it's, there's just so many things to do. And they're not, you know, the longest you would ever drive is an hour and a half. So all these things can easily be done as a day trip.

[00:21:25] **Tracy Collins:** And it's perfect. And of course you can jump on the train because the train stations in just a couple of seconds well a couple of minutes outside York city centre. So it's easy to jump on the train as well to go to any of these. A lot of these destinations.

[00:21:38] **Sinead:** We were very lucky because the train station is only about 10 minute walk from York Minster.

[00:21:43] It's so easy to visit York by train, and then you can get local trains to sculpture on the coast. You can go the other way to go to Harrogate and the Dales. You can also get buses, public buses, or all around. You can get the Yorkshire Coastliner bus that runs from York across to Whitby. It was voted the most scenic bus ride in Britain so that without hiring a car, you can still get around.

[00:22:11] **Tracy Collins:** Which is really good. I mean, that's excellent as well for those people who don't particularly want to drive when they, when, if they're taking a vacation in the UK and they don't really want to drive would prefer the public transport is good to know that it's actually going to be easy to see quite a few of the popular destinations in easy to get to from York itself.

[00:22:27] So that's fantastic. So I'm just going to ask a general question to end, really. So basically, what is your top tip or piece of advice for someone planning their first visit to the UK?

[00:22:38] **Sinead:** I would say much. So I love London having lived there for 30 odd years. I, my top piece of advice would be to get outside of London, see what you need to see in London, or then get out of London because you will see such a totally different experience.

[00:22:55] I would definitely visit some historic like Bath, York [00:23:00] or Oxford. I highly recommend visiting a rural location like the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales, the Yorkshire Moors. Of course, I would really advise, trying stay small, stay in a small market town, stay in a village, eat in a local pub, have a pint of ale, have a full English breakfast at greasy spoon.

[00:23:26] Try as much as you can maybe to attend or time your visit for one of the weird and wacky festivals we have in England. You'd get such a different viewpoint of our, our culture and our history.

In Yorkshire, for example, in May, we have lots of May festivals and May Day celebrations and Morris dancing, kids doing Maypole dancing, Welly wanging, which has seen how far you can throw a welly.

[00:23:57] In Derbyshire you can [00:24:00] see Well Dressing, which is when, individual villages compete to have the best floral display around the village well or spring. One thing on my list to do is to go to the cheese rolling competition in Gloucestershire. They, they roll a big cheese down the hill, and then everybody has to chase it.

[00:24:20] down a really steep hill. It must be so much fun. There's just these weird and wonderful things going on. All year round. I would just say, London is great, but I just get out into the countryside, stay rural, stay local, eat and drink local, do some local weird and wonderful things.

[00:24:42] **Tracy Collins:** Yeah, I absolutely agree.

[00:24:43] And that's something that I do say, go to London, fine, you know, experienced London, spent two, three days there, but then get out of London and go and actually experience a bit more of the UK because there's so much to see and do. And obviously we're covering all the things to do in England

[00:24:58] plus information about [00:25:00] Wales, Scotland, Northern Ireland. We kind of cover it all because there is so much that you can see and do. And I think the big thing is if you plan is not to put too much in just to kind of, when you plan your trip, not to try and think that you can see the whole of the UK in a couple of weeks because you can't.

[00:25:15] So I think it's kind of picking out those, those places and experiences that you really want to have and planning around that.

[00:25:22] **Sinead:** Definitely. If you have the time get to know Ireland, go to Wales and go to Scotland, because I think sometimes people are surprised about

how different they are to England - different music, different language, even different road signs.

[00:25:37] And it just, it will give you a very different experience of the UK.

[00:25:42] **Tracy Collins:** Absolutely. And I definitely agree. 100%. Well, thanks so much for joining us today. It's been absolute brilliant to talk about York and I'm sure our listeners, they're going to be absolutely thrilled to hear all the tips and all that insider information and knowledge that you shared today.

[00:25:55] That's absolutely brilliant thanks very much for joining us.

[00:26:01] **Tracy Collins:** I'm sure you like me. Can't wait to visit York and explore some of the amazing places Sinead recommended today. You can find links to everything Sinead discussed in the show notes, which can be found @uktravelplanning.com forward slash Episode Three Visiting York.

That's all from me for this episode.

[00:26:20] Thanks for listening. And don't forget to subscribe so you don't miss future episodes.

Happy UK travel planning.