

UK Travel Planning Podcast Episode 55

Transcript

Announcement

00:01

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 Collins Host

00:37

Hello and welcome to episode 55 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast this week. I am recording this episode in Australia after flying back in to Brisbane last Friday night. I must admit I am feeling a little bit dead-lagged at the moment. I had a couple of good nights sleep, followed by two nights of waking up at two o'clock in the morning, so I am feeling a little bit tired. Anyway, I thought this week what would be a really lovely little episode for me to do is to talk a little bit about US versus UK, not in a bad way or any way to criticise either the United States or the UK in any way, but really just to kind of give some information to prepare you for the trip. Mainly these things have all come up in the Facebook group or in conversations in trip reports that have sometimes surprised visitors from mainly from North America. These are the things that have come up. So really I just wanted to talk through these differences so that if you are flying into the UK and it's your first trip, that there's nothing that can surprise you. I mean, some things may surprise you, but these are kind of the big things that I know do come up. So I thought let's kind of talk through them really so that if you know fall warned is fall armed. So let's start talking through some of the differences. As I say, some of these things will give you the opportunity because you're aware of them through this into the podcast to prepare yourself before

you actually arrive in the UK or when you're at the point of actually booking hotels and things like that.

02:35

The first thing I wanted to talk about was top sheets, which comes up really regularly. I think there's two things that come up really really very often and one is top sheets. So you'll find in the UK that most hotels, but breakfast guest houses, don't have top sheets. That's because, basically, we have a duvet and the duvet cover is washed regularly. So obviously if you're sitting in a hotel once you've checked out, or every few days when you're in the hotel, the duvet cover is taken off and it's washed. So you don't find top sheets very often, not saying that you don't find them at all, because sometimes you will, but it isn't as common as I believe it is in the United States, for example.

03:20

Now, I kind of grew up it's really interesting because I grew up in our household we just had a duvet. In my mum's household we had a duvet, but if I stayed at my grandparents they would have a top sheet and then the duvet or sometimes blankets. So I get obviously that this can be an issue if it's warm I mean it was particularly hot in the last month or so in the UK while I was there and if you've got a duvet it can feel very, very hot and obviously either take the duvet off and then that's it. You've got nothing. So, having a top sheet, I can see the advantage of that. So basically, if a top sheet is something that you feel that you're going to need, that's something you're used to, then I suggest that you take one with you. That's probably going to be the best option. Obviously, just put one in your pack-in and then you'll be sorted.

04:06

The next thing that comes up really really very often is washcloths. So in the UK we'll call those flannels or facecloth. So again, some hotels will actually have washcloth. So it's not a blanket thing that you will not find them in any hotel in the UK because you can. However, they are kind of considered a personal item, so don't expect necessarily to find that you're going to have washcloth. So I know quite a few of Americans have spoken to, talked to, have mentioned that they've just taken some other disposable washcloths with them, or just bought, bought some and take them on holiday and use them and wash them or, you know, just got rid of them. So, again, that's something. If you like a washcloth,

then perhaps the best option unless you're going to stay in probably you know the more expensive hotels you'll probably will find that they do have them. But if it's important to you, then I suggest that you do take some washcloth and put some in your packing.

05:13

The next thing I do want to talk about, because it comes up such a lot, is air conditioning. So I think it's worth just reminding really just reminding you that you know the weather in the UK is. In the last years it's certainly got hot, it's definitely getting warmer, but it's not a particularly warm or hot climate. So therefore, air conditioning, if it is needed and I guess, yes, we could argue that it's needed for a few months of the year, especially since it started to get warmer, but it's not common. In fact, accommodation houses everywhere in the UK it's actually built to keep the heat in because it's cold. So you've got to bear this in mind if you're coming from a climate where it's hot and you used to have an air conditioning. It's not the same in the UK. You are not going to find air conditioning everywhere. If you think about going on the Tube, some of the underground lines were built in the 1800s. Air conditioning didn't exist. And also I think it's worth saying that you've got to think.

06:16

Some of the buildings that you're going to be visiting whether it's a museum or whether it's a hotel that you're staying in they are old, they may have heritage status, they're protective, so actually they can't add air conditioning into the buildings. So really do consider that Lots of the places are old. They're not going to have these things. If it's important to you, especially if you're visiting in the summer months, then I would really recommend that you check when you are booking your hotel or accommodation that it does have air conditioning. Quite often you'll find that accommodation will provide you with a fan, but obviously if it gets really warm then that can be an issue if you haven't got air conditioning and it's important to you that you do have that. But, as I say, you've got to think that most of the time in the UK it's not particularly warm, so everything is booked to keep the heat in rather than keep it cool.

07:14

Another thing, actually, which kind of relates to that, is lifts. Again, you're not necessarily going to find a lift in a hotel, at your accommodation again, because

you might be staying in an old building which has heritage status or it's just an old building and therefore lifts didn't work around, so they didn't have any lifts in the building. So that's something that, again, we really recommend that you check when you're booking your accommodation, because what you don't want to do is get to somewhere and find you're on the fifth floor and you've got to carry all your bags upstairs and there is no lift or elevator. So do check that if that's something that is important to you. And I must admit we've been caught out on that. We were caught out on that in York last year when we booked and ended up being, I think, on the third floor, fourth floor, and had to take all our luggage upstairs. Well, Doug did, I didn't, yeah, so that's worth checking.

08:03

And also, actually, when I mentioned that, we'll just I'll just talk about also the difference in the terminology between first floor and ground floor. So in the UK the ground floor is what you may call in America, the first floor, so we have a ground floor, then a first floor, second floor, third floor and up from that point. So obviously in the United States it starts with first floor, second floor. You don't actually have that ground floor. So if you're going to look for accommodation and you know that they don't have a lift, so make sure you ask for room on the ground floor, because if you say the first floor, you're gonna be going up a flight of stairs. So that's important to know.

08:45

Okay, so, thinking about supermarkets, because there's an interesting difference in Australia, as well as different. So in the UK you need to take your own bags to the supermarket. You can purchase bags which cost five pence, 10 pence, to pack your. Whatever you purchase in, you will have to pack it yourself, which is different to Australia, where somebody will pack your bags for you. I'm not sure. In America I think people pack them as well, but in the UK you are expected to pack your own bag and to either provide your own bag or to purchase a bag when you're actually in the store. So I recommend just having a couple of small bags that you take around. We've just got ones that fold up and we keep those in our bags and then take them out when we actually go into a supermarket and then you can use that. So that's good for the better environment and also you're not comfortable to buy plastic bags every time you go somewhere.

09:45

Another thing that comes up a lot is drinks. So you might find it surprising in the UK, but you will get asked generally if you would like ice in your drink. But don't assume that you will get ice put into the drink automatically, because we tend not to like a lot of ice in drinks and this is something that's come up again. I've talked to the Facebook group where I was kind of told well, we like our drinks cold. Well, yeah, we've kind of like our drinks cold in the UK as well, but we do not like a full glass of ice because to me and this is a personal it just waters down the drinks. So I ended up having mainly water and hardly any drink. You won't find as well that you kind of get some places you will get like bottom of soda, so you can kind of keep going and refill in it, but it's quite unusual. So generally you will get asked how much ice you want. So if you want a full glass of ice. You're probably gonna have to ask for that, because if you ask, if they say at a bar, do you want ice? And you say yes, chances are you'll get one or two cubes of ice, that'll be it. You probably won't get more than that. So if it is important to you that you want a full glass of ice and hardly anything to drink, then you need to ask for it when you're ordering your drink.

11:02

I also just mentioned about iced tea as well, because this is something that comes up quite often. So iced tea in the UK you can purchase peach iced tea, mango iced tea, I think I'd lime and mint iced tea, but you tend to be able to buy that in the supermarket. You can't order that necessarily in cafes and restaurants. Sometimes you can. It's kind of homemade that they'll make, but it's very it's not the same as iced tea that you get in America. So it's fruit based rather than, I think, made from actual tea bags, from what I gather when I've been speaking to other Americans about that. So if you like your iced tea, it's gonna be very different. You can buy it from a supermarket and it's gonna be a kind of fruit flavored lemon, peach, that sort of thing. But I think, as I say, I think it's from what I gather it's very different.

11:54

I'm not going to talk about coffee, even though I have heard quite often that the coffee in the UK isn't great. I can't talk about that. So I'm not going to, because I actually don't drink coffee. So I guess that's going to be something really probably worth. If you join our Facebook group, you can ask people in the group about what they're, where they, where they recommend for to go for the best coffee, because obviously there are quite a few different chains and though I

must admit, from what I've heard from people, everybody just says go to the kind of smaller, individual kind of cafe. You know, not the chains, basically.

12:28

So the next thing I was going to talk about is tipping Because of a camera talking about getting drinks and bars and restaurants and that type of thing. So tipping isn't Necessary, it isn't expected. However, it is a nice thing to do, but you won't have somebody, won't tell you off if you don't tip. Put it that way Tip for good service, absolutely. What I will say is that some restaurants do actually put a tip on their own kind of discretionary service a 10, 10 percent, 12 and a half percent on the bill. So you can check that when, when you actually get the bill, that that's already put being put on. So if that's already added to your bill, there's no expectation that you're going to tip anything extra than that. You know, if you want to tip the waitress or waiter, absolutely go ahead and do that. That's fine. If you're in a cab, we usually say just, you know, round up to the nearest Pound. So if it's like on a three pound, fifty, one up a five pound, or if it's, you know, eight pound, go up to ten pound, that sort of thing, just just round it up. But again, things like if you're in a pub, there's no expectation that you're gonna Tip the person that you know ordering a drink from behind the bar. So yeah, and or.

13:35

I will just mention one thing about tipping though Please, if you are going to give a tip and you're going to give cash tip, please give it in UK money as in pounds sterling, because I have seen, when I've been on tours, people tipping in American dollars. Well it's, it's not really much use to the tour guide, really, unless they're getting hundreds of dollars with you know of tips, because what are they gonna do with it, unless they're gonna visit America and then they can spend it. It's just, you know, more polite, really, if you're gonna tip, to actually tip in in the UK currency, so in pounds. That's something that I just noticed, anyway. Next thing I just want to just mention briefly as well is driving. If you're planning to drive in the UK, obviously the UK would drive on the different side of the road to America same side as Australia and many other countries but Obviously drive on the left and there are more roundabouts or traffic circles than you may be used to. I Was actually reading before.

14:31

I think there's something like 9,000 roundabouts in the US now, but they've such in and not as common. You're gonna find them everywhere. In the UK roundabouts are very, very popular. If you are concerned and if you are planning to drive in the UK, I really recommend that you listen to podcast episode number 12, where I talk to you, the founder of Trippiama, which is a program that has been specially developed to help North Americans learn and prepare for driving in the UK, and that includes things that roundabout. So I would recommend that because that is something, if you're a plant driver, that you're probably going to find that you're not used to. So, yes, I would highly recommend that and again, we've had some fantastic reviews from people who've used that program to prepare.

15:19

And I guess the last thing I just want to talk about really is, I guess, some terminology differences. Obviously, you know there are differences with spelling between American English and British English, english, english, I'm not sure British English Anyways. But some of the terminology differences which I'm sure you'll be aware of, but I'll just kind of just do a reminder is that you know we'll walk on the pavement rather than the sidewalk, we use a lift rather than elevator. We will say chips for what you may call French fries, and we will call what we call. What you call chips, we call crisps. And then you know cookies, we will call biscuits. So to be honest, you will hear people saying cookies now. So that's definitely kind of creeping into into English, english, british English language. And also, if you're asking for the bill at the end of the meal, obviously you might call it check, we call it the bill. So it's just kind of being sure about the terminology. But though I imagine if you kind of ask somebody, could I have the check, they'll know exactly what you mean.

16:21

But again, it's just kind of just bringing up some of those, those differences so that you're aware of that. I think that's kind of summed up everything that I had notes on. I'm sure there's plenty of other things that I have forgotten to mention, but those are the kind of main ones that keep kind of coming up and and I keep hearing about kind of all the time and we do mention certainly the top sheet and washcloth and ice and air conditioning comes up very frequently, anyway. So I'm hoping that this episode will just prepare you and so you kind of know about these things now, so that when you are packing and when you are booking your accommodation, you kind of keep those things in mind so that when you arrive

in the UK you don't have any kind of uncomfortable surprises. Obviously, the UK and the US are different countries, where different countries have different culture, so you're going to expect some differences, but obviously embrace the differences, enjoy the differences, but just be prepared so you know exactly what will make you more comfortable when you're on holiday. Anyway, that's really it, actually for this episode.

17:26

I just want to just do a quick shout out and thanks to anybody who has sponsored our podcast. We really appreciate that. It really helps us and if you want to sponsor the podcast, there will be a link in the show notes. And also for those of you who have used the tip, your guide button to leave us a tip again, it doesn't matter for \$5, \$50. I mean, we just appreciate it. Whatever. It is so lovely for those people who thought about doing that. So I just want to say a huge thank you. There will be links to the different things that I've talked about, for example, the different podcasts for Trip, your Elmo and any other articles that we have that are relevant to what I've talked about in this episode which we at the show notes for this episode, which will be at UKTravelPlanning.com, forward slash episode 55. Anyway, that just leaves me to say until next week, happy UK travel planning.