

UK Travel Planning Podcast Episode 57

Transcript

Intro: 0:01

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: 0:37

Hi and welcome to episode 57 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. This week, Doug and I are here to chat about tips for budget-friendly UK travel because, obviously, Doug and I have just returned from some time in the UK. Doug was there for three months and Tracy was there for a month. We noticed things have got more expensive, haven't we?

Doug Collins: 1:00

Yeah, we did notice quite a bit of difference in the last 12 months.

Tracy Collins: 1:03

Yes, things definitely seem to have got actually quite a lot more expensive. Certain things are more expensive, for sure food, eating out, that sort of thing. We thought what would be a really useful episode would be to share some of the tips that we have which can help you, when you're planning your trip, to consider your budget and give you some ideas of ways that you can actually save some money as well, because I'm sure you like us always looking at ways that you can budget a bit better when you travel.

Doug Collins: 1:40

That's right. It's not been an exhaustive list. These are just things that occur towards when we get heads together and see what we can think of.

Tracy Collins: 1:48

We've literally just sat down for the last 20 minutes and written a whole load of notes. We're going to go through the things that we thought about which would be worth sharing with you, just things that you can consider, I guess, even from the beginning

of when you start planning your trip to the UK up until actually when you're travelling around the UK. So all those sorts of ideas.

Doug Collins: 2:10

Most definitely this is for single travellers, families, couples.

Tracy Collins: 2:16

Oh, absolutely, these tips really are for everybody, anybody travelling the UK, so I'm sure you'll find all these really useful. The first thing that we said was really as to if you can, because obviously we know that not everybody is flexible about when they can go to the UK. But obviously it is cheaper if you consider going during the low season or the shoulder season and avoid peak times, which is obviously around Easter, June, July, August, when it's extremely busy in London in particular. Well, really in August the school holidays are off in England, they finish halfway through June and July, they go back in August and in Scotland but still Edinburgh is incredibly busy in August. So those are kind of the expensive months and also, obviously, Christmas time and New Year's. Those are also expensive. So, if you can, if you don't have something in particular that you want to go during those seasons, those are probably the times to avoid. However, of course, there are disadvantages of going, I guess particularly the winter months.

Doug Collins: 3:20

You've got shorter days, daylight hours and more shorter.

Tracy Collins: 3:25

Yeah, and obviously some places are closed as well, so you might find some of the attractions that you want to visit may actually be not open and you have to do consideration places like visit and farm of the Scotland, for example. If you're going to go there in January, February, March, it's going to be cold and you may have snow and so inclement weather, which can affect just actually being able to get around. To be honest, I guess that takes us really onto transportation and how you can. So once you've kind of thought about booking your flight, you've got yourself over the UK and you start to think about your itinerary, or I guess actually, one thing we did say is good itinerary planning is actually vital and it's a good way to that you can actually save some money.

Doug Collins: 4:09

That's right. I mean, be sure and clear exactly what you want to achieve while you're visiting, particularly during the shorter daylight hours and the winter months. You need to look at the website. You need to listen to the podcast, these podcasts. Yes, absolutely, but also just be clear exactly what you want to achieve.

Tracy Collins: 4:28

I think to be honest at any time of the year when you're visiting. Really it's been. I know you can do more, obviously you can do more than someone wants when you've got longer hours of daylight and better weather, but still really it's considering like where you want to go, group in those places together so that you could reduce your time, travel and distances, so you kind of see in similar areas and attractions.

Doug Collins: 4:53

And specifically with if you're hiring a car because the cost of petrol, cost of fuel, you want to be traveling as less time as you possibly can, absolutely.

Tracy Collins: 5:03

And yeah, so that's why we do offer itinerary consults. So if you put together itinerary, you can chat through that with us and we can kind of help you. And you know, we've definitely saved people kind of money and time actually when it comes to because we can give you advice and maybe tweak you can tweak your itinerary based on kind of our knowledge and sharing that with you?

Doug Collins: 5:23

Yeah, so we found that the feedback we've had from people has just been that, yeah, absolutely.

Tracy Collins: 5:29

So I guess, if we're talking about transportation, once you've decided where you want to go, you've got a few options about how to get around. So if you decide you want to get around by train, obviously consider things like train passes. So you've got, you know, brit Rail Pass, global U Rail Pass. So it's worth having a look at that, those two passes, and seeing if that's going to be worth it, depending on how many days you're going to be traveling around, because it is different. You can also look at buying travel cards as well.

Doug Collins: 5:54

That's right, the national rail cards. Yeah, they're so some great money with those.

Tracy Collins: 5:58

Yeah, so there's we actually have. I'm not going to go into a lot of details in this particular podcast, but we have got previous podcast episodes where we talk about UK train travel. We actually have got a whole section on the website about UK train travel, including articles about how to save money, you know, while traveling the UK by train. And obviously we've got our ebook as well, all about traveling around the UK by train. So I don't want to go into too much information about that, but you can save some money on train travel in general. If you're going to be traveling in London, recommend getting a no-stick card or go and contact this rather than buying daily tickets, because, honestly, it's just much cheaper to do that.

Doug Collins: 6:36

Much cheaper.

Tracy Collins: 6:36

yeah, so you'll save money. Obviously, buses are an option in coaches, so you can get a coach, but obviously it will take longer to travel around if you decide you're going to get a coach, for example from London to Edinburgh, as opposed to getting the train. So yes, it might be cheaper, but again it depends on how much time you've actually got on your holiday and you know, would you prefer to get the train and get up there in four hours, or do you want to take a long coach trip or do you want to drive it? You know? So if you're considering a drive-in holiday around the UK, I would say do consider. You know parking fees because there's a lot of charges in the UK for parking. So consider if you're going to visit. Many cities in the UK have actually parking ride schemes, so you park your car for free outside in a car park and then you catch the bus. You do pay for the bus, but you can.

Doug Collins: 7:26

That's how we use one this year in Oxford, didn't we? Yeah, we did.

Tracy Collins: 7:30

So then we paid for the bus ticket to get intoxicated and then back out again. Didn't we pay for parking?

Doug Collins: 7:35

for that I can't remember now, we paid for parking and then included the shuttle buses. Ah right, OK.

Tracy Collins: 7:42

So that's cheaper and just easier than driving to the city centre, where you're going to struggle to find parking and it could be extremely expensive, you know. So that's worth considering. But next thing I guess we'll talk about is accommodation.

Doug Collins: 7:55

That's right, depending on your accommodation type that you prefer, with the certain pros and cons with different source.

Tracy Collins: 8:02

Yes.

Doug Collins: 8:02

The bed and breakfast, for example. We've used quite a few of those up and down the UK, mainly the ones that come with breakfast included.

Tracy Collins: 8:10

Oh, absolutely, and I love. B&Bs and guest houses are a fantastic way to travel. You know you get a good breakfast so that sets you up for the day the cheaper than a hotel. You know, obviously it depends on your own travel style and your budget whether you prefer kind of an Airbnb, vrbo type style accommodation or if you prefer to go into a hotel, or you know we do recommend to be honest, because they are our personal favorites is to do the guest houses and B&Bs and you know we will put some kind of luxury stays in there as well. You know, stay in the odd castle or whatever, but it is amazing to you meet so many people. It's a great way to find out about the local area as well.

Doug Collins: 8:53

I was going to say, yeah, the local knowledge. They're also usually very, very good guides to the budget places to eat and the local places where people go to eat, sometimes off the beaten track, off the main streets and these are places that are good value for money and the people who have owned these B&Bs and guest houses. They will know where they are.

Tracy Collins: 9:10

Absolutely. That's a really good point I just want to also mention about I will be doing a podcast at a later date about kind of where to stay in London. But one tip I do want to say about London and I know it's very tempting to go for cheaper accommodation that's a bit further out in London and travel in. But you've got to remember that most of the main attractions in London are kind of in the centre. Therefore, do you really want to spend your day travelling in and out via tube, you know, and paying that additional extra amount than actually staying in near other attractions? I mean, personally, that's something that I prefer to stay as far as I can close to the centre of London. So it can be a false economy, but I kind of work it out. You know, how much time are you going to be spending travelling in and out, how much is it going to cost you? And again, you know if you've only got a limited time that you're visiting for is that really how you want to spend your vacation time really? You know, on transport, again, just talking about London and the UK in general, really as well, is that there are some really good chain hotels. So again that you can. You know, if you're travelling by car as well, things like places like Premier Inn Travel Lodge are excellent possible accommodation options that you can find if you're driving around. Again, there's some very good chain hotels more budget friendly. In London itself, I stayed in a Z Hotel in Holborn in April which I found really good and obviously you know it's. You know there are, there are really good option that you can, that you can choose if you want. You know, when it comes to accommodation, but again, I think again it depends on your kind of travel style and you know what you want to do in terms of accommodation. So I think that's covered that. So what about things that travel so passive For attractions and tours and things like that? So again, there are some good pass is available. So you've got things like the London pass. You've got the Merlin Big City Saver. You've got the Go City Explorer passes. You've got York Pass as a pass for City Pass for Edinburgh. So you know they give you different

options in terms of the number of attractions that they include. You actually have to look at each, each card really to see what's included and really work out what it is that you want to see and then work out if it's going to be cost effective. It really is. You actually have to do the math on those cards.

Doug Collins: 11:37

That's right, you're going to do your homework. This is best done before you travel.

Tracy Collins: 11:42

Absolutely yeah, yeah, work it out. If it's worth it, then definitely look at, you know, those passes and I have got, we have got articles on the London passes and the different passes available and also in our, in our different travel guides, the different areas around the UK. We do mention, if there are passes and again, you know we have links to those so you can purchase if that's something that you feel will work for you. But I will mention and it's really important to be considered there are actually a lot of free things that you can do.

Doug Collins: 12:07

There is. There is a lot of free things, but sometimes you've got to go looking for them.

Tracy Collins: 12:11

Yeah, I mean just, I think, some of the free things, as we were talking before and, to be honest, I mean in London there's lots of free things you can do. I mean actually a lot of throughout the country. A lot of museums are free, you know, museums such as the BNA, the Natural History Museum, the Science Museum, your favourite museum, my favourite museum in York, the National Rail Museum in York, is also free. Absolutely free and also the very best in the UK. Yeah, you know you've got art galleries off-ree so you've got a lot of historical places that you can go and walk around. For example, you can walk the walls of York. That's not going to cost you anything. So again, it's kind of looking if you can include some of those free activities and attractions in your itinerary. A favourite of ours in London is, if you want a good view over London is the Sky Garden. You're just going to make sure that you book it. It opens about three weeks before. Book your tickets to the Sky Garden and you can go up and have fantastic views over Tower Bridge and Tower of London and you can see the shard. And it doesn't cost you anything. You just have to make sure that you get your tickets. And obviously there are lots of attractions as well. You can walk past in London that don't cost you anything. You can walk past Big Ben and Westminster Abbey and you can go and see the change in the garden. So those things aren't going to cost you anything. You know, have a walk around Notting Hill, which I did just admire all the beautiful pastel coloured houses, you know beautiful.

Doug Collins: 13:33

And not to mention all the markets.

Tracy Collins: 13:35

Absolutely the markets, the gardens, the parks. You know there's lots and lots of things you can do for free. I will just mention as well, actually, some of the passes that you can get through English Heritage, historical Scotland National Trust so you can buy annual passes. The National Trust does have a visitor pass as well, but it's actually worth checking in your own country if you can buy a National Trust pass that you can then use when you visit the UK because there's a reciprocal agreement. So that's worth it. I mean, I know for us, we, we, we actually bought Historical Scotland. Yeah, we had the annual pass, so it meant this last year, we now, for the first year, we have half price.

Doug Collins: 14:19

That's right Within the heritage and cadu. Yes, in Wales that's the way it was.

Tracy Collins: 14:24

Whereas now this year for the second time, because we renewed that we now have free entry into the English Heritage and those attractions. So it's definitely worth thinking Again. We've got an article on the website you can check out about that. The last thing I'll guess I want to talk about which is a good way to save money is food, food and drink, because obviously those that can add up, because obviously you need to eat when you're on holiday, you need to eat all the time, basically. So we've found good ways to save money Our things like meal deals.

Doug Collins: 14:55

Yeah, the meal deals are fantastic. And again, even within your own budget, there's more budget versions of the meal deals. You know, cheaper to the more expensive yes, depending on which supermarket you go to.

Tracy Collins: 15:08

So you can go to you can find Marks and Spencers is my particular favourite. That's a bit more expensive but you can go to. You know, the Sainsbury's, there's Tesco's, there's all the different supermarkets Do meal deals and you'll find. For a meal deal you get, you know, a sandwich or a salad, a packet of crisps or a piece of fruit, a piece of chocolate, whatever, and a drink, so they're all. So they can be anything from £3.54 up to £8. So they're great for lunch. You know, obviously, if you've had a, if you're in a B&B, you had a breakfast. You might only want a late lunch later on in the day. Now, if you are then in self-catering accommodation, you'll find that places like Tesco, marks and Spencers actually do like an evening meal deal. So you can get pizza, salad and a dessert and they could be, for example, about £12, £14. So you can get, you know, two mains and a side or something like that. So that's a really good way to budget, again if you're self-catering.

Doug Collins: 16:07

Yeah, and there's usually quite a good variety with those as well, and you know, it's excellent. Full dietary requirements.

Tracy Collins: 16:14

Yes, absolutely Definitely, and I did take some photos when I was back of the different examples which I did share in our Facebook group. So you know, pop over and join the Facebook group and you'll be able to to have a look at the different meal deals that are on offer. Another way to save money is to go to some of the chain restaurants. So Weatherspoons pubs in particular is very well known. Lots of British people will eat there because it has very, very budget friendly pub food.

Doug Collins: 16:43

That's right. And those same chains. They sometimes have speciality even in, say, a curry night or a taco night or a fish and chips night, and quite often those will come for either two for one deals or a free drink within those.

Tracy Collins: 16:57

Yeah, so they're worth looking at as well. Obviously, the chain restaurants such as Nando's, wagamama's, et cetera that I mean we're particularly like Nando's, have to say, that you can go to and they are pretty good value. There's also, obviously, the usual fast food restaurants as well that you can buy food from, and there's cafes as well I'm just thinking that Predamonj for sandwiches. There's lots of different options.

Doug Collins: 17:22

And your coffee shops as well, and your bakeries as well.

Tracy Collins: 17:26

Yes.

Doug Collins: 17:26

Like your Gregg's, they do a few different options.

Tracy Collins: 17:29

For your sausage roll and your bacon sandwiches? Oh yes, absolutely. So. I mean, what you could do as well is try to set a daily budget, which is what we try to do for food and drink, don't we?

Doug Collins: 17:38

We've done it for a few years with varying success for your audience with you. It's sometimes works better than others, doesn't it?

Tracy Collins: 17:46

Absolutely, and can I guess? One last tip that we want to share as well is take a water bottle with you, because you can drink the tap water in the UK. It's absolutely fine and there's more drinking fountains.

Doug Collins: 17:59

Yeah, a lot of train stations have free drinking fountains as well. Bus stations they're quite often to be found.

Tracy Collins: 18:07

Yeah, so you can just fill your water bottle up, so that'll save on buying drinks because you can carry that around with you and keep hydrated as you travel. So I think those are pretty much what we came up with today for our kind of some budget friendly UK travel tips anyway. So I think that's probably it for this week's episode.

Doug Collins: 18:30

I'm going to say it's not an exhaustive list. I'm sure there's other things we can think of. Give them a lot more time.

Tracy Collins: 18:36

Probably, but I think we just thought this would be a really good one to put out, because we've had some questions about budgeting and how to save a bit of money when you travel around the UK. So those are the things that I guess we've just come back. So those are the things that kind of struck us as the most important things to share. I will let you know that you can get the show notes for this episode which we at UKtravelplanningcom episode 57. And we'll put links into some of the different articles that we've written which will kind of support some of the information that we've shared. We do have accommodation guides to lots and lots of destinations around the UK and we do try including that as well B&Bs and guest houses for that idea of being able to kind of save money, and I guess I'm a quite authentic experience, I would say. Oh, that's right, you do that. Yeah, so I guess that really, it just leaves us to say, until next week, happy UK travel planning.