

[00:00:00.160]

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.

[00:00:38.970] - Tracy Collins

Welcome to Episode 69 of the UK Travel Planner Podcast. This week is going to be a slightly different format in that I'm not going to be asking the questions. No, this week we have a guest who is going to be asking myself and Doug a friendly get-to-know-you interview, you called it, Deborah. So I know we did an episode with Deborah, episode 59 about her family trip around the UK. And after that episode, Deb said, Do you know what? I'd really like to interview you guys. And so we thought, Well, why not? So Doug and I are here today with Deborah. I'm going to hand over to you, Deborah. Off you go. Introduce yourself, and then you can start asking us questions.

[00:01:24.760] - Deb Blazer

Well, my name is Deb Blazer, and I came about your podcast when we were planning our trip to the UK, and then I joined the Facebook group. I think there are so many people that are grateful for what you guys do, so we'd like to know more about you.

[00:01:42.920] - Tracy Collins

Okay, well, we're going to give you the floor. We do know the questions. We have proved all the questions. But yeah, feel free.

[00:01:53.990] - Deb Blazer

I think, first of all, how did you and Doug meet and how did you get together?

[00:01:58.620] - Tracy Collins

Okay, so I'll answer this one. Go for it. Yeah. We met in 2001. We had a little bit of chat about that this morning. We're going, When was that we met?

[00:02:08.680] - Doug Collins

2001. It was momentous. We can't.

[00:02:11.200] - Tracy Collins

Remember that.

[00:02:11.910] - Deb Blazer

Yeah, no, we're like, Tana. Oh, I know.

[00:02:13.680] - Tracy Collins

We actually met in a shop. My mum was the receptionist manager of a double-glazing shop, actually, in Burton on Trent. My hometown. Where Doug's from. I'd moved down there with my mum and my daughter, who at that point, I think, Dominique was about two. No, she was older than that. She must have been about four, trying to think. Four or five. Four or five at that point, that's right. We had moved down there and Mum got a job in the shop, and I happened to go in the shop one day and Doug was in the shop, and that's how we met.

[00:02:46.200] - Doug Collins

It is. Because I knew my mother-in-law longer than I've known Tracy. That's correct. And we got on well. Oh, wow. So we used to chat and yeah.

[00:02:53.650] - Tracy Collins

I asked Doug out. So she approved. She did.

[00:02:56.570] - Doug Collins
Well.

[00:02:57.370] - Tracy Collins
Maybe. She did. I asked Doug out on a date. I had an 18th birthday party for somebody. So at that point, I was teaching. I was a teacher. And I'd been invited to one of the daughters of one of the teachers that I worked with who was her 18th birthday. So I was invited to the 18th, so I asked if you'd go along with me.

[00:03:19.610] - Doug Collins
What she really needs.

[00:03:20.400] - Deb Blazer
Is- Oh, well, what did you teach?

[00:03:21.960] - Tracy Collins
Oh, I taught history. I qualified as a history teacher, but I actually was a special needs teacher and then head a special needs for quite a few years, and then I became an advisor. But that's a whole different thing.

[00:03:32.410] - Doug Collins
She actually wanted somebody as a taxi driver so she could have a few drinks. That's what she really wanted.

[00:03:38.240] - Deb Blazer
Possibly. I thought we are.

[00:03:40.900] - Tracy Collins
So then we got married four years later. About four years later. Yeah, 2005. We've been married ever since. We haven't been divorced and remarried. We've just been married, don't tell.

[00:03:53.510] - Deb Blazer
You that. Congratulations. So when did you begin the website, podcast, and Facebook page? How did that come about?

[00:04:01.850] - Tracy Collins
Okay, well, I think it was about late 2015, I started because I've always travelled my entire life. I think I'd just come across... I started to notice there were all these travel blogs on the internet, and I thought, you know what? I could write one of those. But at that point, I was just thinking, let's just write about the things that I've done and where I've been. I started tracetravelsintime.com, which is still not my favourite name for a website. I'd love to change at some point and will do at some point in the future. But Tracey's Travels in Time because I thought, well, when you start travelling, you travel in time literally, because obviously you've got it whether you're doing a car journey or a plane journey or a train journey, it takes you the time to get there. But also you travel, you experience history and culture and you get that. So it was that. And because I suppose the history background has been a history teacher, I was like, going to places where, for me, some places in the world you go to and it's like you can actually feel the past so strongly.

[00:05:09.200] - Tracy Collins
So I guess that's where the name for that one came from. So I started that 2016... I mean, I was bobbing along, doing that, writing it, developing it, trying to make it better, learning all the time about SEO and how to write. And then in 2019, beginning of 2020, we visited the UK and I thought, You know what? We've got a lot of knowledge about UK travel, so let's put together a UK travel planning website, which is exactly what we called it. We came back from the UK in January 2020, and of course, then COVID hit. So a lot of travel bloggers obviously were hit because nobody was searching for travel, nobody could travel. And I think a few people thought it was crazy. You're going to start this UK travel plan and website, but nobody's traveling anywhere.

[00:05:57.840] - Deb Blazer
During a time when no one's travelling.

[00:06:00.410] - Tracy Collins
Exactly. But to be honest, obviously, we were at home a lot, so it gave me the time to really focus and think about what it was that we wanted to do, who we wanted to write for. We're both over 50. I know we don't look at it, but we're both over 50. I think when you get older, there are slightly different things when it comes to travel you have to think about. Obviously, when your kids have grown up and left home, you can do a little bit more, a little bit easier. We did travel with Dominique quite a lot, and I traveled on my own with Dominique in my 30s.

[00:06:34.670] - Deb Blazer
Oh, I love my kids, but I can't wait.

[00:06:36.830] - Tracy Collins
I did a lot of travel in my 20s solo, so I traveled all around the world on my own. So, yeah, I think we started that. That's amazing. And then 2022, I decided to start the podcast because I felt that in this day and age, really, you can't just have a website. I'd love to do YouTube, and it's something we're looking at doing more video, but it's very time-consuming. I'm a bit of a natural talker.

[00:07:06.570] - Doug Collins
No.

[00:07:06.920] - Deb Blazer
Really?

[00:07:08.430] - Tracy Collins
It's a podcast.

[00:07:11.320] - Deb Blazer
That's what we love about you.

[00:07:13.130] - Tracy Collins
Podcasts seem to be the way they go, to be honest. So I started that and it's been hugely successful. I have to think every single listener, everybody out there who's listening to our podcast, really, thank you so much. We can't believe how popular it is and how many downloads we get and how it's growing so rapidly. It's amazing.

[00:07:31.020] - Deb Blazer
I love it. Our trip was in July and I'm still listening to it.

[00:07:34.790] - Tracy Collins
Oh, brilliant. I'm happy to hear that. I'm having you next fall now. Exactly. Yeah. So then I decided at the beginning of 2023 to do a London travel planning website. So I could focus a little bit more on London because there's a lot obviously that you can write about the UK. But I thought there's opportunity there to focus on London. So that's what we did. We started the London Travel Podcast in 2023. Yeah, not podcast, website. And we've just recently or in the next week or so, going to launch a brand new podcast. But I will talk about that a bit later, which is about global travel.

[00:08:13.930] - Deb Blazer
So has Doug always been a part of this? Or did you bring him in later?

[00:08:18.680] - Tracy Collins
Doug really came in for the UK travel plan, really, didn't you?

[00:08:22.440] - Doug Collins

I did, yeah. As soon as somebody mentions trains, my ears pick up and think, well, to me, I know a little bit about this. So I pushed myself forward and said... And I think it was in correcting a few things Tracy was saying, Actually, no. Actually, this, this, and this. So it was more a case of, well, if you know so much, you write it.

[00:08:46.000] - Tracy Collins

You do it. Yeah, that's what I said. I was like, Well, you can start writing articles and you can start coming on the podcast. And Doug was incredibly nervous the first podcast, weren't you?

[00:08:56.260] - Doug Collins

Yeah, trying to be a perfectionist and trying to get it absolute. And after take 27.

[00:09:02.230] - Tracy Collins

I.

[00:09:02.420] - Doug Collins

Said, You know what? Let's just leave that on.

[00:09:04.920] - Tracy Collins

But the more-

[00:09:06.620] - Deb Blazer

The editors work magic.

[00:09:08.660] - Tracy Collins

Exactly.

[00:09:09.740] - Doug Collins

Because every time you record the next one, it changes.

[00:09:13.900] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. Its like a user guide.

[00:09:14.790] - Deb Blazer

And you have a book on train travel, correct?

[00:09:19.510] - Doug Collins

That's right. I've written an e-book with all my experiences. It's like a user guide. I hate the term idiot guide, but, really, it is from first principles. This is this, this is this, this is how to do it, and this is what you need to look for, and this is how to go about it.

[00:09:38.110] - Deb Blazer

Well, the public transport in the UK is so much more advanced than what we have here in the US. So it was a little intimidating going into it, and learning to use the different systems.

[00:09:53.330] - Doug Collins

Absolutely. Yeah, yeah. That's it. I mean, the UK had a 100 years head start on the state, so it should be better. True.

[00:10:02.470] - Deb Blazer

Yeah, but the states need to catch up.

[00:10:04.580] - Tracy Collins

And it's quite, we knew that for a lot of people, the train travel in UK is it stresses them out and it's confusing and they're not quite sure and they get intimidated. So it seemed... We sat down, You know what? Let's write an e-book and put it like the A to Z of train travel in the UK. What do you need to know? The important stuff that you need to know just to make it less stressful. And then also what we

did as well, which we've had some really good feedback on, and I've published a couple on the website, we put together some train itineraries as well, because that tends to stomp people, doesn't it?

[00:10:41.080] - Doug Collins

Yeah, it can do, because the assumption is that the UK is so tiny, you can go everywhere within a few minutes. Yes, the UK is tiny, but that doesn't mean you can get anywhere quickly. So what's obvious to us is not necessarily obvious to anybody visiting for the first time.

[00:10:59.060] - Tracy Collins

Yeah. Right.

[00:11:00.470] - Deb Blazer

One of our first things that we did was just map everything out because we had no idea of the scale. And I remember we were so intimidated to use the tubes in London, but they were so easy.

[00:11:14.800] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, absolutely. Absolutely. It was great.

[00:11:16.860] - Doug Collins

It's like riding a bike. It's difficult. You're all learning to drive. It's very, very difficult. But when you've mastered it-

[00:11:23.160] - Tracy Collins

It all makes sense. It all makes sense, yeah. Absolutely.

[00:11:26.970] - Deb Blazer

So what's it like working together? Is does one of you focus on one part and somebody else? I mean, Doug obviously does the train travel. I just do as I'm told. And I know you do the tea rooms.

[00:11:39.150] - Doug Collins

That's easy. That's so easily answered. I do as I'm told, and I make the tea.

[00:11:44.850] - Tracy Collins

There you go. Absolutely. If I say absolutely one more time. But he's true, he does. I guess I'm the overall manager, director, controller of everything that goes on for the business. So I'll have the plan, I know what direction we're going in. Doug works for me, with me, and for me.

[00:12:09.070] - Doug Collins

I get it.

[00:12:09.710] - Tracy Collins

I.

[00:12:09.870] - Deb Blazer

Can.

[00:12:10.110] - Tracy Collins

Summarize this.

[00:12:11.310] - Doug Collins

To summarize, it's what my grandad used to say, A ship's only got one captain. And there you go.

[00:12:17.600] - Tracy Collins

Yes.

[00:12:19.080] - Deb Blazer

You met my husband and we work together. And yeah, as much as he likes to think he has an equal say, no. Don't put that in there. Oh, my gosh, I'll be... No, I love them. Honestly, it's great when you can work together like that and you're a team. It brings a whole other dimension to your relationship.

[00:12:45.210] - Tracy Collins

Absolutely. We learn so much from each other as well, because obviously, Doug knows such a lot about train travel. I thought I knew a fair amount, but I certainly know a lot more now. It's really... Because we both love the UK as well. So sitting and chatting about it and deciding where we're going to go, we're planning for our trip at Christmas at the moment. We're sitting yesterday and we're talking about where we're going to go in London. Then after Christmas, January, we're looking at going to... We're going to go to actually the Republic of Ireland. We're going to go to Wales, Republic of Ireland, Northern Ireland, then over to Scotland, and then back down to London, and then hopefully back up to Scotland again on the sleeper train. A lot of people would go, Oh, my goodness. That's a lot of travel, as in we're going on these train travels, but it'll be really good fun.

[00:13:37.110] - Doug Collins

Oh, it's always fun sitting on a train. Not a problem.

[00:13:41.360] - Deb Blazer

We did the Caledonia sleeper train, and it was a great experience to give the kids.

[00:13:45.690] - Tracy Collins

Oh, yeah, we'll be looking forward to it. I think we're going to do it at least twice.

[00:13:49.290] - Doug Collins

Yeah.

[00:13:50.220] - Tracy Collins

It.

[00:13:51.690] - Doug Collins

Is. It's magical. It doesn't matter how old you get the Caledonia sleeper, it's magical every time. Yeah, that's true.

[00:13:59.100] - Deb Blazer

I just... I wanted to make sure that our kids experience that because I don't think we have anything like that over here. We rode from Scotland to London, and to be able to fall asleep in Scotland and wake up in London the next day, it's crazy.

[00:14:15.870] - Tracy Collins

I know, it's so good. It's such a lot of fun. We love it. I do love that. My favourite is going from London up to Scotland and waking up. So you leave the city at night and then you wake up and you've got the beauty of Scotland. It's like the winter as well in particular, it's.

[00:14:29.640] - Doug Collins

Just beautiful. Well, yeah, just actually on that one and the old sleeper service used to have you spell to open the windows. So you catch a train at Euston and you get up at Inverness or Fort William and you could open the window and you got the smell of the pine trees through the window. So you could actually lie there and or stand at the window and it's just amazing.

[00:14:51.920] - Tracy Collins

Which obviously you can't do now.

[00:14:53.200] - Doug Collins

No, you can't now. There's something air conditioning.

[00:14:57.060] - Tracy Collins

Safety, I would think as well. Safety. Yeah, you can't.

[00:15:00.720] - Deb Blazer

Do that. It surprised me when we were over there how much the landscape changes. Definitely. As we talked about, we did a driving trip and from London, clear up into Scotland, every day we were driving through a new atmosphere. It was amazing.

[00:15:19.860] - Doug Collins

That's right. And Scotland's got multiple different terrains as well. The further you go, it's quite flat. And obviously you've got the national parks and it's.

[00:15:29.580] - Tracy Collins

And if you go the far northwest of Scotland, really, I like that from Glencoe up, it's like different landscape after different landscape. It's stepping back in time, I think. Yeah. It didn't feel like... It doesn't feel like you're in the UK at some point. You go, Really? This is just so far removed from the rest of the.

[00:15:48.570] - Doug Collins

Country, really. And I've got so many friends in Wales as well. I should say the Welsh terrain as well is equally beautiful.

[00:15:53.360] - Tracy Collins

Yes, and Cornwall.

[00:15:54.940] - Deb Blazer

And Cornwall. That's on our list for our next time ever. We're going to Wales.

[00:15:59.500] - Doug Collins

It's.

[00:16:02.170] - Deb Blazer

Hard when you're planning because you want to go everywhere.

[00:16:05.700] - Doug Collins

Oh, we're no different.

[00:16:06.910] - Deb Blazer

You have to narrow it down. It's awful.

[00:16:10.530] - Doug Collins

Yeah, it comes down to the conversation, not just where you want to go, is where can we afford to leave out? Because we wanted to do anything.

[00:16:20.110] - Tracy Collins

But we're having the same problem. I've just got back after being there, I don't know, three or four months. I got back and we're finally now back in December and it's in January and it's the same thing. It's like, okay, obviously you've got to think where's the best places to go for that time of year. And London is obviously for me, I just adore London at Christmas. And then going to York to the Christmas markets. Oh, I bet the decorations are amazing. Yeah, exactly. So York and Bath and hopefully Winchester. We want to get to some of the Christmas markets and take lots of videos and photos of the Christmas lights. So yeah, lovely.

[00:16:52.240] - Deb Blazer

So when you're flying from Australia to the UK, how long of a flight is it?

[00:16:57.630] - Tracy Collins

A flying time that you're actually up in there is around about 21 hours. Oh, my gosh. Yeah, it's long.

We're actually about to embark on a bit of an epic trip. Obviously, we've got the new podcast coming out. For Tracy's travels, I'm going to be adding new content for that. So this time, instead of flying directly back to London, we're actually going to be going via some other destinations. Oh, wow. Yeah. So we're leaving 19th of October and we're actually heading to Japan. Then we go to South Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Thailand, and then fly from Thailand. I know everybody's going, Oh. Then we go from Thailand to the UK. So we land back on the 11th of December. At Heathrow? Yeah. Yeah.

[00:17:50.270] - Deb Blazer

Wow. Very excited. Oh, wow. We all need to see pictures.

[00:17:55.570] - Tracy Collins

Oh, you will. There's going to be lots of pictures. There'll be lots of articles. There'll be the podcast to go with it as well, talking about our experiences. Because really what I want to do is inspire people, not only inspire people, because we can always read things that inspire us to go to places, but also help people to actually turn that dream of traveling to a destination into reality. So given not only the will, inspire it to go, but also the practical information and tips to get there to how to plan it, because that's.

[00:18:26.040] - Deb Blazer

Ultimately the logistics. And that's honestly what people need, because I think a lot of people think, Oh, I want to travel there, but it's so intimidating.

[00:18:34.260] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, and it's a way to start sometimes like, Oh.

[00:18:36.970] - Doug Collins

Yeah. It presents challenges.

[00:18:38.550] - Deb Blazer

Along the way. With your podcast.

[00:18:41.040] - Tracy Collins

Yeah.

[00:18:41.370] - Deb Blazer

Absolutely.

[00:18:41.870] - Tracy Collins

That's where I started. Listen to our podcast. Yeah, absolutely.

[00:18:47.090] - Deb Blazer

On top of the podcast, the website, and the Facebook group, you also give itinerary consultations. We do. What exactly does that involve and how does that work? And why would you recommend that to somebody?

[00:19:00.690] - Tracy Collins

We do itinerary reviews. We offer an hour service with myself and dog too. People can buy more than one hour, but often purchase the first hour and we ask that people send us their itinerary. So we expect that itinerary to be put together to have an idea of what you want to do when. And then we spend some time before the actual meeting, we go through that. We set up a Google Doc, which we then share with the people we have the meeting with. And then we spend an hour, we set up a Zoom meeting, and we have an hour and we chat through the itinerary and any questions that they have. So the main aim really is to review it to try and look at ways that we can make it improve the itinerary, maybe help them save some money.

[00:19:47.560] - Doug Collins

It reduces a lot of their anxiety as well, because like you say, some people are very anxious about the

trains, some people are anxious about the driving. Whatever those anxieties can be and whatever the nature of the anxiety, we can do our best to alleviate that through answers, responses, and sometimes just grouping things together. Quite often, and it happens to everybody, is you try and squeeze in too much. So you've got to step back and say, Oh, I'm on it. You might need to take a few of those off, or in some cases, most of.

[00:20:21.530] - Deb Blazer

That off. Yeah, we could have used you. As wonderful as our family trip was, Oh, my gosh. I needed a vacation from my vacation.

[00:20:28.870] - Tracy Collins

Exactly so, yeah. So we're not travel agents. We don't book anything. We just literally will chat through and advise you and answer those questions. It's the same. We're planning a trip, as I say at the moment, and I've spoken to my friends who are experts on Vietnam. I've got a friend who's an expert on Japan. So I've been asking them for those. And you know something? It's the little things that you think, Oh, what money should I take cash? Can I get it out of the ATM? How do I get from the airport? How do I get from Tokyo? Into Tokyo, Anita Airport into Tokyo? It's those questions that you think-

[00:21:04.070] - Doug Collins

The same ones we get asked about the UK.

[00:21:06.010] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, exactly that we also need to ask. So chat to our friends about, Okay, so what is it we need to know? And it's those basic questions that just reduce your stress because, Can I fit this in? Is it worth going to this place? That's another thing that's worth knowing as well. Or how much time do we actually need to go to that place? So it's that thing. So we do that. And then after the session, we send the... Well, we update the Google document with all the information we've talked through as well. And we're actually thinking about asking people if they want it videoed as well. We don't do video at the moment, but it was something we're talking about because obviously in an hour we talk about a lot of stuff.

[00:21:51.500] - Deb Blazer

Yes. So the new podcast you're starting, is it going to be called the Worldwide Travel Group?

[00:21:59.380] - Tracy Collins

No, it's going to be called... Well, since I have UK travel planning and London travel planning, it has to be global travel planning. Oh, nice. Yeah. So it will actually be on the tracystravelsintime.com website. And that's Tracey, without any, I will say, tracystravelsintime.com. So it's going to be hosted on that website. But the podcast is going to be called Global Travel Planning, I guess, with Tracey's Travels. But hopefully ultimately it'll all evolve into Global Travel Planning. So the trailer is actually out and available at the moment. I've just had notification. It's been listed on quite a few of the podcast apps. So the trailer is there. The aim is that that will go live completely with three episodes on the fourth of October. So they are nearly ready to go. And then after that, because obviously the UK Travel Plan one is every week, which is a lot of work, it's going to be every two weeks to start with global travel planning with a hope that at some point next year that will go weekly. I'm hoping that people that listen to the UK Travel Plan and podcast will go, Wow, okay, let's hop over and- I'll.

[00:23:10.310] - Deb Blazer

Be.

[00:23:10.520] - Tracy Collins

There. And listen on Global Travel Plan. So obviously I've got loads and loads of amazing friends who are experts who travel a lot as well. So they'll be coming on and talking about their respective destinations, whether that's a city or whether that's a country, sharing their stories as well. And I'm hoping when we travel to actually talk to people as we are moving around the world and bringing local voices on as well, because I think that's really important.

[00:23:38.060] - Deb Blazer
Oh, that would.

[00:23:38.670] - Tracy Collins
Be interesting. Yeah. So that's the aim. As I said, it's just a baby. It's just starting out. But I just felt that it would be the next place for us to go. And also because I wanted to do something with Tracy's Travels in Time website as well, because it's the first one I started and I feel that there's lots of potential there to share knowledge about all over the world.

[00:24:01.450] - Deb Blazer
Do you think eventually you will start a global travel Facebook group like you have for the UK?

[00:24:07.780] - Tracy Collins
I could do. At the moment I've got a page for Tracy's Travels in time and potentially we'll start a group of that. That's something that I will look at doing definitely. It's a little bit more difficult when it's global travel because obviously you're going to have questions from all over the world. But I think, yes, it'll be a good place to go. And even if it's just also pointing listeners in the direction of other people that know who've got that level of expertise, it would be good as well. Yeah. Right.

[00:24:39.110] - Deb Blazer
So you told me before that you've lived all over the world.

[00:24:42.550] - Tracy Collins
I have.

[00:24:43.280] - Deb Blazer
So where was your favourite place to live and why?

[00:24:47.810] - Tracy Collins
Oh, that's such a difficult question. I'll quickly run through where I have lived. So I guess that'll help in terms of... So born in the UK, grew up in Southern Africa, between Southern Africa and the UK. My first major move was after university and I moved to France. From France, I moved to Canada, lived in Switzerland for a bit, was back actually in the UK, lived in London for a bit, lived in Botswana. And then now obviously we're in Australia. So I think it works out as seven countries. Canada, I lived in Canada as well. I don't know if I mentioned Canada. I lived in Toronto. So seven countries at the moment. Favourite? It's really difficult. My favourite really is truthfully where I happen to be where I'm living at the moment. That because you have to embrace when you move, you have to embrace the country and culture and language and food and everything around the country that you're in. I'm now Australian, proudly also Australian and British. I have Australian citizenship. We love Australia, don't we both love Australia?

[00:25:48.320] - Doug Collins
We do, yeah.

[00:25:49.080] - Tracy Collins
In terms of what changed my life, I think, when it came to travel, it's probably France. I moved to France, I was 21, I'd finished uni, and France completely opened my eyes to just culture and food and language and beauty. I lived on the Lake Geneva, on the border with Switzerland. I lived with a family who spoke French. I learned French within six months. I was actually fluent, which was- Oh, Yeah. I'm a bit rusty now, but it's not too bad when I'm back. And I think it was that. It was just living with a family who were French. So I immersed myself completely in the culture and that made a difference to me. And that's why when I travel, yes, I like going to sea places, but I actually travel to meet people. So that's a huge thing for me. And I've got friends all over the world. We've got friends all over the world, haven't we? Most definitely, yeah. Yeah, definitely.

[00:26:45.320] - Deb Blazer
So, Doug, did you grow up in the UK or where did you spend most of your life?

[00:26:49.000] - Doug Collins

I grew up in the UK, right in the middle of the UK in a town called Burton on Trent, which was a mention. And yeah, I traveled around the UK, most things have evolved around trains. I've worked on the railways. I travel by train everywhere in Europe, really. Most of my travelling around was by train. So a bit boring, really, I suppose, when you look back on it. But it did give me a lot of experience, a lot of knowledge about how training networks operate in different countries, because they are all a little bit different. No matter where you go, there's lots of little changes and little tweaks that you need to get your head around if you're advising people.

[00:27:33.640] - Deb Blazer

So are you going to ride the bullet train in Japan?

[00:27:37.080] - Doug Collins

Almost definitely.

[00:27:38.120] - Tracy Collins

At least once. Oh, yes.

[00:27:39.990] - Doug Collins

But we've been reading upon that. Again, perfect example. Little things are how to work. Where do you store your luggage? How soon you need to be there? Reserving seats. It's all those same questions appear wherever you're travelling by train. Same was in the States when we were on the young train.

[00:27:56.290] - Deb Blazer

And they're all a little different.

[00:27:57.020] - Doug Collins

Like you said. Yeah, you've got to get your head around it and embrace the differences, not to say anyone's better than another.

[00:28:03.710] - Tracy Collins

It's just different. Yeah. I will say that when we first got married the first two summers, because I was a teacher, so at the time often, Doug worked at his shift. We actually backpacked with my daughter around Europe by train. Oh, wow. Yeah. So we did that two years. And then the second year she went, I'm rather doing that again, Mum.

[00:28:24.240] - Deb Blazer

So have you hiked Adrian's Wall?

[00:28:27.470] - Tracy Collins

Oh, no, I am not. Right. I have to make sure it's absolutely totally clear. I'm not a hiker in any way, shape or form. It's the one thing. You know, when you get in your 50s, you can go, Well, I just don't... Well, I know you haven't got your 50s yet, but believe me, when you get into your 50s.

[00:28:41.860] - Deb Blazer

There- I'm close.

[00:28:42.590] - Tracy Collins

You get to the point where you're like, You know what? There's things I don't want to do, and I'm not going to do them. Interestingly, because my daughter loves hiking. We had a conversation in New Zealand last month, because I just don't like hiking. There's a very famous hike in New Zealand called the Hooka Valley Trail, which is at Mancook, Iraqi. We decided that we're going to hike this. This is about a three-hour hike, 11 kilometres, something like that. Fairly flat, but it's steps. My daughter was like, I don't think you'll do it. I don't think you'd do it. You know what? Not only did I do it, I totally got why people hike. It doesn't mean I'm going to do much more in the future, but the end of this hike was the most beautiful. Exhilarating. I've never seen anything like it, honestly. It was New Zealand

absolutely blew me away that it was so beautiful. And I will put a picture in the.

[00:29:36.240] - Deb Blazer
Show notes. New Zealand.

[00:29:37.380] - Tracy Collins
Looks amazing. Fantastic. Absolutely fantastic. So I did a hike. So I'm not a hiker. I haven't hiked Adrian's walk. In fact, the last time we went, I went with my sister and Doug and her actually did the walk up from, I can't remember the park now. You did the walk and I just watched. Steelrig. Steelrig car park. And we walked a little bit, and then you walked up the hill. I was just like, No, I'll just video you climbing up that hill, and that's what I did.

[00:30:05.280] - Doug Collins
I'm a fine weather walker. I walked for a few hours, but I'm not going to get soaking wet. I'm not going to get muddied up. I'm a fine weather, smooth track walker.

[00:30:16.880] - Deb Blazer
My boys wanted to hike all over Glencoe when it was raining, and I was like, No, we're not doing that.

[00:30:24.130] - Tracy Collins
They'll have to wait.

[00:30:24.980] - Deb Blazer
Till they get a bit older. I love you. You can come back and do this some.

[00:30:28.210] - Tracy Collins
Other time. Yeah, absolutely.

[00:30:30.040] - Deb Blazer
So, Doug, where's your favourite place to visit?

[00:30:35.540] - Doug Collins
In Europe, anywhere by train, just straightforward. Where the trains run. Because I do enjoy every single journey. Right. Within Australia, I absolutely thoroughly enjoy the road trips to the Outback. We've had some fantastic journeys, and every one of those has.

[00:30:56.380] - Tracy Collins
Been special. Amazing. I love the Outback. The outback is something else, and we will be talking about that in the other podcast.

[00:31:02.790] - Doug Collins
Actually, the recent trip to New Zealand blew us away.

[00:31:06.470] - Tracy Collins
Yeah. And in the UK?

[00:31:08.040] - Doug Collins
In the UK. I have special preferences. Early in the year, I was made so welcome the weather's beautiful I went to North Wales, and I thoroughly enjoyed every single second of it. And fully enough, not a lot of trains other than steam trains and heritage railways, but I use public transport. But everybody was so kind and friendly and helpful. But when we go back to Scotland, there's always a sense of belonging when we get to Scotland. Tracy's heritage is a Scottish based. I don't think mine is. I'm not sure. But I worked a lot in Scotland, and I always enjoyed every single time we were up there. I've got some family who moved up there, not Scottish, but every time I've been there, it's always a sense of comfort, if that makes any sense.

[00:31:59.170] - Deb Blazer

Yeah, we felt that too when we were there. I loved England. England was gorgeous and amazing and the Yorkshire, Dales. It was a special place in its own, but Scotland felt... I don't know. There's something.

[00:32:16.950] - Doug Collins

About it. There is. I think as much as anywhere else in the UK, you feel part of history there. Yes. There's a lot of places that you visit are actually historical sites, which adds to that feel, but you just seem to be part of it. I don't know. It's more embracing than I think than some other parts. But the one with the driven the North Coast 500 was very, very special.

[00:32:42.200] - Deb Blazer

Oh, I want to do that so badly.

[00:32:44.280] - Doug Collins

Yeah. And everywhere by train, the great places to visit, because obviously you've got great scenery.

[00:32:52.210] - Deb Blazer

How long do you think would you suggest for somebody to take to drive that north route?

[00:32:57.980] - Doug Collins

It depends what time of the year that you're doing it, because the daylight hours. And it's a difficult one to answer because obviously stick within the speed limit. But some people want to stop off more often than others. Some rest breaks people need more than others, that thing.

[00:33:13.510] - Tracy Collins

And there's a lot of things to see along the way. But there is- We did it far too fast. We said that afterwards. We'd do it far slower next time.

[00:33:20.990] - Doug Collins

Yeah, I think you could easily spend a month doing it comfortably, and that's in the summer.

[00:33:25.610] - Tracy Collins

Oh, yeah. I'd do it a lot slower last time. I think we did it in a few days, but I think probably a week to two weeks you could do it in, really. And include... I mean, we went to Orkney, which was- I was just.

[00:33:36.770] - Doug Collins

Going to say, you could step away from the track. You can do a little bit of extra light, the Orkneys or the Shetlands or wherever you wanted to go to. Yeah, if you really wanted to. But it depends on your budget and time, et cetera, et cetera.

[00:33:53.310] - Deb Blazer

So where's your favourite place to go to the UK together?

[00:33:58.140] - Tracy Collins

I think we were talking about this, and it was, I would say probably Scotland. But it's really difficult to choose because we also had a love... I mean, we also love Cornwall, we love London, the peak district, Derbyshire, Yorkshire, Northumberland, obviously, where I'm from, the Lake district. I mean, you can go on and on and on and on to be honest, Wales.

[00:34:21.090] - Doug Collins

Yeah, and I think it's different answers to what's your favourite area to visit and what's your favourite single place. I'm from close to the Peak district and there's something very ancient about visiting those areas there, and very English like Chatsworth. That area is just so quintessentially English, I always think.

[00:34:45.720] - Tracy Collins

And we both love.

[00:34:46.600] - Doug Collins
The Cotswolds. We both love the Cotswolds as well. Yeah.

[00:34:49.910] - Deb Blazer
That's on our list for next time.

[00:34:52.630] - Tracy Collins
Yeah. Well, I was insistent on our itinerary that we would get to the Cotswolds December.

[00:35:00.560] - Doug Collins
So overall, to answer your question, I love visiting York. I've worked in York as well, and I've been so, so many times. I have pretty good road knowledge of York and areas to visit. But it's different working somewhere to visit than as a tourist. It's completely different. But yeah, there's always a sense of warmth there because it's got the trade museum, which is also great for me. National Royal Museum, should I say.

[00:35:28.950] - Tracy Collins
And you've got the thing is you've got the Coast, you've got the- Doug, you might.

[00:35:35.470] - Deb Blazer
Say you've got a one track mind.

[00:35:37.920] - Doug Collins
I saw what you did there.

[00:35:41.230] - Tracy Collins
Very good.

[00:35:42.000] - Deb Blazer
Is Doug going to also help with the global travel?

[00:35:50.520] - Tracy Collins
Yeah, he will be. He's coming on this next trip with me because obviously there'll be a lot of writing to do. We'll be podcasting about it as well and taking video and photos. So Doug will be coming along on most of this trip. He actually comes back to Australia before I do because I'm planning a trip to India for February. Oh, wow. Yeah. But I'll be going. I'm actually hoping to meet another friend in India. Actually, my step-brother and sister-in-law and family live in India. So I'm going to visit them as well. So that's hopefully going to be February. That's fantastic. Yeah. And then I'll be back to Australia because there'll be a lot of work to do, a lot of writing up to do and a lot of updating. You'd have a rest. No, I know.

[00:36:38.060] - Deb Blazer
Let's see.

[00:36:40.520] - Tracy Collins
The thing is, when you do something that you love as much as this, it doesn't feel like work. I'm very much preferred to... I like to work for myself. I like to know what I'm doing and... Doug will probably laugh, but just like to know what... Make my own decisions and decide this is what we're going to do today or this is what we're going to do.

[00:37:03.470] - Doug Collins
She likes to be in control.

[00:37:04.850] - Tracy Collins
That's.

[00:37:05.270] - Doug Collins
What she's.

[00:37:05.800] - Tracy Collins
Trying to say. I was trying to go around the houses to that, but yeah, I like.

[00:37:09.580] - Doug Collins
To- That's what she means.

[00:37:11.040] - Tracy Collins
-but control over what we're doing.

[00:37:13.080] - Deb Blazer
That makes good business people.

[00:37:15.530] - Tracy Collins
Well.

[00:37:15.850] - Doug Collins
Good, good, good.

[00:37:17.140] - Deb Blazer
So how long did you teach?

[00:37:20.380] - Tracy Collins
I didn't actually teach in the classroom for a huge amount of time because when I qualified, I always wanted to work with the kids with special needs, and in particular, actually, the kids that have struggled in school in terms of, I guess, just coping with school. So I specialised in supporting those kids. And then I think I was probably about eight or nine years in school. Then I worked for the local authorities and I was an advisor working supporting schools around with kids that were struggling to stay in school. Effectively, that's what I did. And I absolutely loved that job. It was fantastic. We had a lovely team and a fabulous county. So yeah, I did that. But they get to a point in life where you go, Okay, I've done that for 20 odd years. I want to do something different. My mom always jokes that I'm going to be in my 90s. I'll be still travelling around the world. She's like, You'll never stop. And she just said to me, she said, It's about time you actually did something about the travel because I've been obsessed with it since I was really quite small.

[00:38:26.190] - Tracy Collins
I used to go up to people when I was about three and say, Hi, my name's Tracy. What's yours? So they wanted to meet people, so it's always been there. Yeah.

[00:38:33.860] - Deb Blazer
Do you think living in a number of different places made you feel braver about going out there and traveling?

[00:38:43.690] - Tracy Collins
Yeah, I think so. I remember when I moved to France, bear in mind I was 21, I'd finished uni, different continent to where I'd been living, grown up. So I remember, this is going to sound really bizarre, but I remember when I moved to France thinking, Okay, maybe I've got to meet about 10 people that 10 new people. It's only going to be about 10 new people, and then that'll be fine. That's all I need to know. Obviously, you meet hundreds of people. But that was the way that I dealt with it in my mind because I just thought, It's just going to be me. I don't know anybody at all. But I've always made friends really quickly and got on with people really quickly. And as I say, I find a lot about people and how they live and just the nitty gritty of how our lives. We're all the same, but we're all different. And it's like how it is different. How they experience their life, that's probably the best way to put it, and how we can all learn from that as well and share that about each other. There's lots of horrible things that go on in the world.

[00:39:44.370] - Tracy Collins

I think if there's a bit more understanding between people about that we are ultimately all the same, we may be different in the way that how we speak or how we live or what we eat or whatever. But fundamentally, we're all the same and we should all be... Oh, God, it sounds like you know what I'm saying? We should all get on. That's what I would like. We're fighting against each other. What's interesting.

[00:40:05.980] - Deb Blazer

It's interesting to travel and see that everyone's core values are generally the same everywhere.

[00:40:13.370] - Tracy Collins

Oh, yeah.

[00:40:14.150] - Deb Blazer

Everyone just wants to live a happy life and love their family and their neighbours.

[00:40:20.260] - Tracy Collins

Exactly. The kindness and help that you get from people around the world is just amazing. Oh, yes. Somebody said to me once that I always look at the best in people and I do. I always expect and hope for the best in everybody. I think that, again, is just from travelling so much and meeting so many people all over.

[00:40:46.300] - Doug Collins

Teaches you tolerance.

[00:40:47.710] - Tracy Collins

To people's differences. Yeah, tolerance and understanding. And that we're all to say we've all got little quirks and differences. But fundamentally, like you say, we all have the same values, we all want the same things. So for me, that's it. Let's go out and travel and experience the world, but do it in a good way as well, in a thoughtful way. Actually, the first episode of the Global Travel Podcast, our interview chat with Amanda Kemdell, who her podcast is the Thoughtful Travel Podcast. I talk to her about how we can all become better, more thoughtful travellers. I thought that was the best way to kick off the entire series, and that'll be out next week. So that'll be a really good one. It's a really thoughtful way to just think. Yeah, we can all do to just think, make it better, be more thoughtful when we travel. So yeah.

[00:41:38.340] - Deb Blazer

When we went over, everyone was so kind in the UK. Everyone was so helpful. That just that blew us all away. And I think that made us want to go back so much more because everyone was so welcoming and so helpful.

[00:41:55.570] - Tracy Collins

Yeah, that's good. It's always lovely here, isn't it? Yeah.

[00:41:59.620] - Deb Blazer

Is there anything else you want to touch on?

[00:42:02.790] - Tracy Collins

I don't think so. I think you can... Oh, I think Doug just did want to mention for anybody that's travelling by UK, train.

[00:42:11.090] - Doug Collins

Yeah, we've got the normal Facebook group, TravelPlanning, but there's also the UK Train Travel Tips Facebook group, which is quite new-ish, but that's obviously the focus on train or station or ticketing, or anything related. And so that's UK train travel tips.

[00:42:35.930] - Deb Blazer

We talked about, that can become very overwhelming very quickly, especially if you're not familiar with it. Oh, absolutely. So I think it's valuable. It's so valuable to read up and get as much knowledge as you can.

[00:42:46.980] - Doug Collins

Before you go. It is. I mean, I spent so many years working on the railway, many different sides of the industry. And my train route knowledge is probably my own tool, but it's quite good. I'm not too bad at all. I have traveled on every part of the track network in the UK at some point, sometimes twice. In my younger days, just travel by train every single weekend from finishing work on a Friday until late Sunday night. And then I went home to see my parents, last at dinner and go to bed. But I did. I used to just travel by train because I was to be in part.

[00:43:26.170] - Deb Blazer

Of the industry. Is that something you've always loved?

[00:43:28.790] - Doug Collins

Well, my father worked on the railways for many years as well. He didn't use his train travel very often, because I used to get travel through him. So as soon as I was old enough, I disappeared. I just went disappeared. I don't use the term train spotting, but I'm a rail enthusiast. So I used to go to various of the big stations at the Kings Cross because that was a good place to go. I liked the trains that ran on there. I won't bore you with the types. But I used to thoroughly enjoy that. Believe it or not, I used to talk to other people who did the same thing, and that was always good fun.

[00:44:08.960] - Tracy Collins

I have to say, Deb, I love the fact that the last question you're going to ask is the question that I always ask.

[00:44:17.530] - Deb Blazer

It's the question you always close with. It is. I had to. I know.

[00:44:23.000] - Tracy Collins

So do you want to go for it?

[00:44:25.100] - Deb Blazer

Yep. The last question. What's your number one tip for people travelling to the UK?

[00:44:32.140] - Tracy Collins

Well, I'll go for this one. You can go for that one. Use our resource, uktravelplanning.com, londontravelplanning.com, our ebooks. So you've got our websites, our ebooks, our podcast, all our resources, the Facebook group. We do have an Instagram account as well. We are on YouTube, which we are going to try and build that up. So there's everything. So if you're somebody who likes to read, you've got the websites. If you like to listen, you've got the podcast. If you like to watch, yes, we are going to be building YouTube up. We are on Instagram and we have Reels and things like that on there. So we try to cover every type of learning style. I guess that's a teacher of me. So just use our resources. They're all there. They're all free. Obviously, we do sell some ebooks, but majority of it, 99% of it, it's there, it's accessible. So use it, please.

[00:45:22.310] - Deb Blazer

Yes, I agree. I can vouch for that.

[00:45:26.200] - Tracy Collins

So, Deb, thank you so much. Do you want to say something to the door?

[00:45:30.360] - Doug Collins

Thank you, guys. I was just going to say the one good tip would be, embrace your own uniqueness for your own travel plans, because everybody's travel plans and expectations are so much different.

[00:45:42.340] - Tracy Collins

That was it. Okay, good. Sorry, it does- That was me. I would let you talk then. I guess I should wrap up and say thank you to you to come on to asking us the questions.

[00:45:56.510] - Deb Blazer

Oh, no, thank you. I think being part of your viewer and listening group, we're also grateful that it was nice to just learn a little bit more about you and how you form this whole community.

[00:46:12.450] - Tracy Collins

Oh, well, it was just lovely to talk to you. And I'm... Well, hopefully people listening, if you're listening, this has answered some of the questions you might have about us and why we do what we do. And it was a lovely suggestion of yours, Deb, to do it. I really appreciate that you came on and spent the time and come up with the questions and to chat to us today.

[00:46:32.620] - Deb Blazer

Thank you. It was great fun.

[00:46:34.170] - Tracy Collins

Oh, great. So for listening, so obviously we will have any links to some of the information that we've talked about in the show notes for this episode, which will be at uktravelplanning.com. I just want to say I think we should all say it this week because we have the at the end of a podcast, we always say the same thing. So I think we should all say it. From myself, from Doug, and from Deb, until next week, happy UK travel planning. Happy UK travel planning.

[00:47:01.240] - Deb Blazer

Thank you. Thank you.

[00:47:02.980] - Tracy Collins

Thank you.

[00:47:03.810] - Deb Blazer

Thank you. Thank you.