

UKTP Podcast Episode #76

AI-generated Transcript

Intro [00:00:03]:

Welcome to the UK travel planning podcast. Your host is the founder of the UK travel planning website, Tracey Collins. In this podcast, Tracey 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 dress countryside to seaside towns.

Tracy Collins [00:00:40]:

Hi, and welcome to episode 76 of the UK travel plan podcast. Are you considering a road trip around England? Well, this week's guest planned a 2 week itinerary for himself and his family around England in the summer. In this episode, You will hear all about Matt's itinerary, including the highlights of the trip, how he found driving in the UK, favorite experiences for his family, And his tips for anyone planning a UK vacation and much more. I started by asking Matt to introduce himself, Charles where he comes from, and who we went with on this trip to the UK.

Matt [00:01:16]:

Sure. Thanks so much, Tracy. Yeah. My name is Matt Archer Beck. I live in Northern Virginia in the suburbs of Washington DC. And with me on my trip was my wife, and our 3 kids To our ages, 14, 10, and 7.

Tracy Collins [00:01:30]:

Oh, wow. Wow. So I bet they had a wonderful time in the UK. Was it their first visit?

Matt [00:01:36]:

It was it was their 1st visit, and for the well, for the youngest, it was her first time outside the United States as well. So it's and And and we haven't done a lot of international travel, but, yeah. So this is this is exciting, our 1st trip to to Europe.

Tracy Collins [00:01:47]:

Oh, that's fantastic. So would you like to give us a brief overview of the trip, Matthew, so how long you were there for and where you went?

Matt [00:01:57]:

Sure. Yes. So we we were there in in July for for 2 weeks. We flew into to London, to Stansted Airport. We were in London about 4 days, And then we went we we rented a car after we were in London. I went to the Dorset coast for a couple of nights. We then kind of drove through the Cotswolds to Stratford upon Avon. We're there a night.

Matt [00:02:22]:

We went up to the Lake District For for a few nights, and then we went to Hadrian's Wall and then kinda came back, south then went to to Chatsworth House, And then we ended up in, in Cambridge for for a couple of nights before before we left. So it was it was kind of a whirlwind trip.

Tracy Collins [00:02:39]:

And but I I love The destinations that you chose were fantastic. So, I've lived I lived in Derbyshire near Chatsworth House for For a few well, quite a few years. And I'm from Northumberland, so it just made my heart sing when I'd read that you'd gone to see Hadrian's Wall. It was amazing. So how did you choose the destinations that you decided to visit?

Matt [00:03:00]:

Yeah. Well, I think well, maybe not obviously, but we definitely wanted to to see London. And so we We thought we would either do that at the beginning or the end of our trip. We ended up doing it at the beginning of our trip. And then I think after that, We're kind of there are kind of some big decisions to make. I think the the first decision when, when we decided that we're gonna be about there, we only really had 2 weeks Based on our schedules and the kids' schedules, and so we thought, well, it might be fun to go to to Scotland, but I don't know if we can fit all that in. And so we decided that we wouldn't Do Scotland or Wales. We would just focus on England.

Matt [00:03:37]:

And then I guess the the next kind of decision of, well, do we wanna do other cities besides London to do I know a lot of People say York or Bath, and and that was initially, I was investigating that, but I think we wanted to kind of have some time maybe more in the Countryside are kind of enjoying nature a little bit more, and so we thought we would kinda divide a little bit that way. And so, I think besides London, the thing that everybody in the family was really excited about was the Lake District. We'd we'd we'd heard about that. We like to go hiking, and so We all were kind of on board with that, and then kind of realizing I think I didn't really exactly know how far away it was from London, but it's a it's a good distance. And so We're realizing, well, if we're gonna go to London and the Lake District, how how can we kind of create an itinerary that that includes both of those things? And so I I, you know, did a lot of research on the Internet, the books on the on, on, you know, the the Facebook and and site and, and the podcast to try and, you know, find out where some great good destinations were. And it's funny for me, one of the things that that was kind of in my head was that that there's the the show Broadchurch?

Tracy Collins [00:04:46]:

Oh, yes.

Matt [00:04:46]:

I don't know if you're Yes. Yeah. And and, you know, I like the show, but just the setting with that with that beautiful cliff, that that kind of features in the in the show, and I I didn't I had no idea where that was.

Tracy Collins [00:04:57]:

Yep. Yep.

Matt [00:04:57]:

And so I did a little research, and I said, oh, okay. Well, that's that's the Dorset coast.

Tracy Collins [00:05:00]:

Yeah. So

Matt [00:05:01]:

I, I thought that's that's a place that that was was kind of in my mind that I wanted to go to when I went to England. So I so that we we included that and realized, well, that's It probably makes sense to go there maybe first after we were in London to go kind of south, and then kind of then make our way up to the Lake District. And then so Another thing that kind of I wanted to do was maybe catch a play in Stratford upon Avon, and so, realized, well, yeah, that's kind of midway between, like, the Dorset Coast and the Lake District, we kinda fit that in, that way. And then, one of the things that the kids wanted to do was was to go see, like a castle. Castles would be Something they wanted to do. We knew that we're gonna go to the the tower, the Tower of London, but, you know, what other castles? And I realized, oh, Warwick Castle is just a very short distance from From Stratford upon Avon. So I thought that would be a good way to to kind of combine those interests. And so, and then I think beyond that, Well, I I I'm a Downton Abbey fan, and I want wanted to kinda go to a stately home.

Matt [00:05:59]:

We didn't actually end up going to Highclere Castle, but but I kinda wanted to go to, you know, a a a well known stately home.

Tracy Collins [00:06:05]:

Yeah. So

Matt [00:06:05]:

that's, and so Chatsworth House was was one that came to the top The list. Yep. We also end up going to to Longleat.

Tracy Collins [00:06:12]:

Oh, yeah.

Matt [00:06:13]:

And, before we went to the Dorset Coast, kind of on our 1st day out of London, we we were in we were at Longleat.

Tracy Collins [00:06:18]:

Yep.

Matt [00:06:19]:

And then I guess the the final maybe not the final decision, but but my daughter who's a teenager, was interested in maybe either going to To Oxford or Cambridge just to kind of see what the the the university towns were like. And so it kind of made sense when I looked at the map and everything that we since we were Coming and leaving out of Stansted, that's kind of closer to Cambridge there, so we thought we could end up in Cambridge. And so that's kind of how I kinda Shocked at the the the itinerary just kind of knowing that London and the and the, and the Lake District and then kinda trying to fill in the the gaps Oh, I

Tracy Collins [00:06:53]:

think you did a you did a fantastic job. Honestly, your road trip itinerary is excellent. It's really, really good, and it makes the use of, the interests that you say, the things that you wanted to see. You wanted to see the countryside and you did a great loop round, which was perfect. You know? So you saw all of those great places, and a lot of those places are but the peak district area is actually better to have a car or take a tour. And the same with the tools. You're better to have a car or or take a tour if you don't wanna do that. So you did a lot of really fantastic places that fitted in really well, not only for your interest, but the way that you planned it as well.

Tracy Collins [00:07:28]:

So, obviously, you you're a member of our, UK travel planner Facebook group. So so that was one of the you saw resources. So, I guess you used our website as well, and as you say, the podcast. So you found those really helpful for putting together your plans?

Matt [00:07:43]:

Definitely. And and I would you know, I there was even a couple times where I would ask, you know, ask questions in the Facebook group, like, what do people think about, You know,

is this too much to do in in in one day? And, for for example, we we did Stonehenge and Longleat all in one day, which was a little bit. That was a bit much, but I but I think it worked out it worked out okay for us. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:08:02]:

But also the time of year that you were there as well, you can take that into consideration because you would've got longer Daylight hours. So you can do more in those than that time of year. That's the advantage always of visiting over the summer is that you do have the ability to do that. So you can kinda stretch out things a little more.

Matt [00:08:20]:

That's very true. Yeah. Because we end we ended up kinda closing the place down at. We stayed until, like, you know, 7 PM. So that was, definitely, taking advantage of those of those, late later summertime hours.

Tracy Collins [00:08:32]:

Yeah. No. That's a that's a really Good, good use of time. So I've gotta ask you, how did Hadrian's Wall kinda fit in when you were doing the plans? Was it just that you because you decided you were gonna come back down that route, or Was there something about Hadrian's Wall? Were you interested in the kind of that Roman history? Or

Matt [00:08:49]:

We, yeah, we were we were interested in Roman history, Sri, and we, you know, and we thought that we definitely wanted to see some some Roman sites when while we were there. And I guess Because we were all the gonna be all the way up in the Lake District anyway, and it wasn't too much of a, of of an additional jump to go over there. I guess one of the other things, that That kind of drew us a little bit over in that direction as well, and this is a little bit idiosyncratic is that, you know, our last name is Archer Beck. And totally unrelated to us, there is a stream in Scotland that starts on the English Scottish border called Archibec. And we're like, well, we gotta go to Archibec if we're gonna go To England. And so that that was very close. That was, you know, kind of between the Lake District and Hadrian's Wall in a way. And so we we did that in the same day.

Matt [00:09:34]:

We went to To Archibec and saw the little stream.

Tracy Collins [00:09:36]:

Oh, perfect.

Matt [00:09:37]:

And then yeah. That's lovely. And then went to Hadrian's Wall.

Tracy Collins [00:09:40]:

Did he get a photo with With the sign? Was there a sign for the Archibec?

Matt [00:09:45]:

Yep. There unfortunately wasn't a sign, but, but we But we there were we saw on the map on the Google on Google Maps that there were 2 places where the road crossed the the stream. It was a it's relatively small stream, and it was It was different than I expected because there it was kind of farmland around it, which I was kind of expecting, but the actual Archer Beck is down kind of this very deep ravine. And so we we were lucky in that we were able to pull off the the road and kind of hike down to the stream, but it a little bit of hiking, and we when we got down there Oh, wow. My older daughter actually slipped in the mud when she was so she was like, I didn't have great feelings without the experience, but but it was kind of fun just to see it. It was almost like, I mean, this is maybe silly, but it's almost kind of magical. Like, it was very covered in in moss and and And and the trees were it was very darkly covered trees and to get down to the stream, and they're like, oh, this is this is our stream.

Tracy Collins [00:10:38]:

Oh, no. That sounds really lovely. I love that that that sort of story. It's just Just so nice. It makes it so special, doesn't it, that you could do something like that? So when you went to when you went to Hadrian's Wall, so you did that so whereabouts did you go? Because obviously, there's some good Takes along Hadrian's Wall, but did you go to any other kind of Vindolanda or, homesteads?

Matt [00:10:56]:

We yes. So we so we we we Started out after after Archibec. We went to, the the Roman army museum

Tracy Collins [00:11:05]:

Yep.

Matt [00:11:06]:

For for a couple of hours, and then we walked Or not walked. Then we we drove to, I think it's Steel Ridge.

Tracy Collins [00:11:13]:

It's the kind of entrance

Matt [00:11:14]:

by it. Yeah. The car parked there and then kind of walked along. We didn't walk all the way to the the terrible story of the the tree that had

Tracy Collins [00:11:21]:

been It's devastating.

Matt [00:11:23]:

After we were there. But, like, I just couldn't believe that.

Tracy Collins [00:11:25]:

Yeah. It's Devastating. Yeah. Really sad.

Matt [00:11:28]:

Yeah. We didn't make it all the way to to the to the Sycamore tree, but we walked a little bit along the the, The Wall There, and then we drove to, to Halsted's.

Tracy Collins [00:11:37]:

Yeah.

Matt [00:11:38]:

And they were actually that day, it it actually worked out, Again, kind of worked out really well. It wasn't initially in our plans, but the day that we had planned to be there was actually like a a special day at Halsteads where they had people there who are who are dressed up as as Roman soldiers and doing a presentation, and so the and so it was great that we were able to go on that day And and have, you know, a group of people who are, you know, doing a pre presentation about what it was what life was like, for for the for the soldiers who live

Tracy Collins [00:12:08]:

Oh, that's Fin. Yes. Fantastic. How good for the kids to see that as well, kinda see that reenactment of what it was like. It's

Matt [00:12:15]:

it's Right.

Tracy Collins [00:12:16]:

One of my Yeah.

Matt [00:12:17]:

Reenactors. That would be what I was looking for. Yeah. The reader.

Tracy Collins [00:12:19]:

I I love going because, obviously, that's, that's the part of the UK That I'm actually from. So, my dad was actually born, just outside Wallsend, which I guess you can tell from the the name of it, the end of the wall. So I kinda grew up always kinda Hadrian's always always there or it always will be. Obviously, we've just recently lost the the tree at Sycamore Gap, which is Just devastating. But their area's fantastic. There's some wonderful places to visit. And it's a bit of a hidden gem, and I don't really like that term, but it it a lot of people kinda Skip Northumberland. They might go to York, and then they go up to Edinburgh, or they might go from the, Lake District and then back Scotland, and and miss out, Northumberland.

Tracy Collins [00:12:59]:

So it was really good to know that that you had decided to include that into your itinerary. So were there any what were the highlights For yourself, for your wife, and the kids?

Matt [00:13:09]:

One of the highlights was definitely, our our 2nd day in London, I think, was was the day that stood out for me. I mean, it was a very packed day, but we We we saw a lot of great things. So we started out in the morning. We we actually walked from where we were staying kind of in the Blooms, very area, to Westminster area. And then, we did something I think that worked out really well for our family. We kind of split up. So my older daughter and I went to Westminster Abbey, and my wife and our 2 younger kids went to the Churchill war rooms. We we figured we probably all couldn't do both of those things, and and there's more interest on on on one side and and and the other to to do it.

Matt [00:13:48]:

And so we thought, well, that's okay. We it's okay if we don't all do everything together.

Tracy Collins [00:13:50]:

Yeah.

Matt [00:13:51]:

And so we split up, And my my, I had I've been to the to London once, but I actually didn't go to Westminster Abbey the first time I went there, and so that was very impressive. It was a, you know, great time with my daughter who who really wanted to see it, and so we we walked through, you know, maybe a little bit faster than you than an adult would, but but We spent a good couple of hours there, and then we met back up with with my wife and our younger kids, and then we walked through Saint James Park, and saw a little bit of the changing the guard. I mean, I think, you know, if if anybody's kids are like mine, they hate waiting around. Yeah. And so I I read about, you know, we you know, If you wanna watch if you wanna have good views of like the actual stuff on the court, then you need to show up

really early. And I said, well, I don't think that's really for us. And so it worked out really well for us that we were able to get to the mall by about, 11:25. Yep.

Matt [00:14:43]:

And then we could see, like, a you know, we could see a group of mounted soldiers coming in or down the mall towards the palace and then some, marching soldiers After leaving the and so we got to see kind of a little bit of taste of it, and I thought that was I thought that was good for the kids. And so we and we didn't have to wait around for several hours, To Do It.

Tracy Collins [00:15:00]:

So

Matt [00:15:00]:

that that worked that worked out really well. And then later that day, we went to the British Museum which I think was a was a highlight for us as well. We had, we had kind of prepared for, the British Museum by listening to the the podcast, The History of the World in a 100 Objects. Yeah. And so, Oh, we knew about we knew kind of the objects we wanted to see, and I I I actually gave the assignment to my younger kids like You you decide what we're gonna do and kind of chart out a path for us, and so that that that was fun for them to have kind of some some ownership over what we're gonna do with the British Museum, And they knew some of the objects that they wanted to see based on the based on the podcast, so that that worked out well as well.

Tracy Collins [00:15:40]:

That's perfect. That's really perfect. And I usually say if people are gonna visit the British Museum, they're best to go with an idea of what you wanna see because there's so much there to see that. That that and that's perfect. And including the kids in it as well, so they get To choose what they want. That's brilliant. Really, really cool way of doing it.

Matt [00:15:56]:

Yeah. Yeah. It it it yeah. And it definitely I I'm glad we did it that way because they're really I mean, as you say, there's just So much. Like, if you if you just went in without kind of a plan or even the thought of which I mean, it would do you would it would just be overwhelming, and it kind of was overwhelming anyway, but but at least we kind of had a plan, to to to to go where we wanted to go, and and and see the objects we wanted to see. And then we that that that day kind of finished, we we We had a dinner at an Indian restaurant, and then we went to a play, in the West End, went to the mousetrap Oh, good. Which, You know you know, it's the longest running play, and and and it kinda had a special place in my heart. I actually was in that play in high school.

Matt [00:16:36]:

And so and so and then my wife is a big Agatha Christie fan, and so it it worked and the kids the one thing they're really worried about, this is our 2nd day after, you know, An overnight flight to London, I thought, oh, they're not gonna be able to stay awake. But they actually did. They stayed awake for the for the whole play, and and we were really engaged by, you know, figuring out who, who who had done it? So it

Tracy Collins [00:16:56]:

Oh, so good.

Matt [00:16:57]:

That day altogether was just kind of a a perfect day of doing a lot of interesting things. A very packed day, but it was it it it was really fun day.

Tracy Collins [00:17:05]:

Were there any particular highlights of the trip for the kids that they've said, oh, we really, really loved that that part of the trip?

Matt [00:17:12]:

Yeah. I think for them, one thing we did in, in Longleat, was we we we kind of one of our little splurges was to get a VIP Safari tour, you know, they have the the safari thing there that you can drive through yourself, but you can also kind of rent a, have a guide Take you through in a in a Jeep. And so that was one of the things that, that we did a little bit of a splurge on, and that was wonderful. I mean, we got to see the animals more up Close. We saw lions and and tigers. We saw giraffe. We got to feed giraffe, and so that was that was a really fun experience, I think, especially for them. I I guess another highlight for for the whole family was the was the hike we did a nice hike in the Lake District where we where we kind of hiked about 6 or 7 miles along, Ullswater and then took a a a steamer back to kind of where we started, and so that was that was a lot of fun.

Matt [00:18:07]:

And then the last the last day we were we were ending with, I think, what for me was was a highlight, and I think for the family too. We we we, We spent a little bit of time this is when we we were staying we were staying in Cambridge, but I actually have some some family history tree in the Essex area. And so we we drove there, and there's actually a house that my ancestors lived in and, and owned, that's a now a national A national trust owns it, and so it's called Paycocks House. It's, like, probably a little bit off the beaten track. But we were able to go there and kind of learn a little bit about our family history there, and then that evening, we went back into Cambridge and we saw a performance of A Midsummer Night's Dream, at the Cambridge Shakespeare Festival. I was out out outdoors at Trinity College, and it was just so yeah. It was a great way to end our trip because it was just kinda ending it on a high note. It was it was wonderful.

Tracy Collins [00:18:59]:

Oh, absolutely. That sounds magic. That sounds absolutely magic. I love I love Cambridge. I could always I could spend days and days and days in Cambridge. It's amazing, but that sounds What a fantastic way to to end your trip. Totally amazing. So, obviously, you you drove around.

Tracy Collins [00:19:13]:

How did you find the driving? I just know how how was that for you? Were you okay with it?

Matt [00:19:19]:

I do think I adjusted relatively well to to driving on the the opposite side of the road. I guess what what What's harder for me was the narrowness of of many of the of many of the roads that we were on. I I started to crave being on, like, a lar larger road. Like, if anytime we were Getting on a a a a smaller artery. I was like, oh, no. Because the the very first day that we were, that we rented the car where we had to drive to the the place we were staying in in Dorset, Some of these little lanes in Dorset were just so I mean, I I'm sure that's the same everywhere, but we're just so narrow. I there was a 2, you know, a two way thing, and Barely 1 car could fit on this road, and I was just so nervous about, like, cars coming on and, like, where I would go. And and for the most part, I didn't have any problems with that.

Matt [00:20:01]:

There was one place in Dorset where, you know, a car came towards us and and they they had to back up a little bit, but but the narrowness of the roads was really more than anything else what what what really Got to me.

Tracy Collins [00:20:12]:

Yeah. They can they can throw people a bit, especially some of the if you you go Scotland's the same and then places like, Devon Cornwall and, The Cotswolds as well. You can get some really narrow, little, and high hedges, so you can't necessarily see who's around the corner. So it's always a little bit, oh. I have to admit, even though I drove for years in the UK, I do get up to drive now when we go back. I'm joking. Yeah. So what sort of accommodation did you choose, Matt?

Matt [00:20:40]:

Well, for the for the most part, we we did Airbnbs. So the basically, the first maybe 2 thirds of the trip, we were in a Airbnb. So in London, and through the, through the Lake District. And then the last part of the trip, After we were at Chatsworth House, we stayed at a kind of a lovely little inn that was nice, and we actually had a a dinner there as well, which was nice. And then In Cambridge itself, we stayed at at the Holiday Inn, and that that was kind of the end end of our trip. So it was kind of a mix, I guess, but mostly mostly Airbnbs.

Tracy Collins [00:21:11]:

And that's you saw me, obviously, when you travel with kids as well because you've got access to washing machine, you can get things washed and and sorted, especially you've got 3 3 kids that you're taking Around is gonna be, I guess, trying to pack for for I'm just at the moment, I'm packing for a trip, and it's, like, just for myself. And I I remember because I've I've only got 1 daughter, but I just remember Trying to pack for her as well and think, I don't wanna have too much luggage. So when there's 2 adults and 3 kids, I guess, when it comes to putting the packing together and thinking what you're gonna take, at least you've got an Airbnb, you know you can do some washing along the way.

Matt [00:21:44]:

Exactly. Exactly. So we we we planned that that we, you know, we wouldn't, you know, take closed for the whole trip that we would we would take enough that we the planning that we could get some get some laundry done, along the way. And so that was that was good. And and and Just having a little bit more space, in Airbnb where you have a place to kind of sit. And, we didn't end up doing too much, Like cooking in the Airbnbs when we were there. Although, like, maybe a couple nights we did, but, but it was nice also to have that option as well Yeah. Absolutely.

Matt [00:22:13]:

Have a have Kitchen. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:22:14]:

So, well, can I go into food? So how did you find the food? Were there any kinda standout, meals, restaurants, places that you ate, Different types of foods that you had.

Matt [00:22:24]:

Yeah. We we really we really like the food a lot. I mean, I think a couple of standouts, were When we were in London, again, they kind of a a splurge that we that my wife and I did. We we our anniversary happened to fall during our trip, and so we We went on a we went on a a date to a restaurant called A Wong, which is like a 2 Michelin star restaurant in London, a Chinese restaurant. It was and Just an amazing amazing food. So that definitely that definitely stood out. Another restaurant that we really that the whole family really enjoyed was in, in Keswick in, in the Lake District, a restaurant called Felpak what was had really good food, kind of variety of, of cuisines, but it was it was it was really good. But we also wanted to, you know, try a lot of traditional, British food while we were there.

Matt [00:23:13]:

So we, you know, we had fish and chips. We did afternoon tea In the Cotswolds, in in stow on the wall that Lucy's

Tracy Collins [00:23:19]:

Oh, yes. Room,

Matt [00:23:19]:

which was really Yes. Really good. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:23:22]:

I know Lucy's. Yeah.

Matt [00:23:24]:

We enjoyed that a lot. And then I I mentioned the the place that we stayed after we were at Chatsworth House. We did the a Sunday roast. Theirs as, as well. That was that was that was excellent. And then I, Something that I've heard heard from the podcast and and and and from you was that we definitely wanted to make sure we took advantage of a meal deal. So, actually, that That that last night where we where we went to see the play in Cambridge, we we went to Sainsbury and got our meal deals and did did kind of a picnic on the On on the grounds there. So that was that was really a good, experience as well.

Matt [00:23:58]:

Yeah. And a great a great bargain.

Tracy Collins [00:24:00]:

Yeah. Oh, absolutely. The the the great way to, to go and We we do that for every launch. We go to Marks and Spencer Stays with Tesco, whichever one we're beside, and we go and get a meal deal. So so if you're listening and you're not sure what a meal deal is, basically, you get a A sandwich, and you can have a pack of crisps or some fruit and a drink for a set price. And they're they're such a good deal, aren't they, Matt? This is such a good way to To, to save money.

Matt [00:24:23]:

It it really yeah. It really it really is. We, we, yeah, we we we thought it was great. And then, yeah, it's it's something, unfortunately, they don't really have in the in the in the States. So

Tracy Collins [00:24:33]:

No. Don't have it in Australia either. I wish they did because they they they are really, really a good bargain and it and, And get variety as well because we usually go and we choose different type of sandwich, and then we'll swap. So we'll have half

Matt [00:24:44]:

of 1 and I'll have

Tracy Collins [00:24:44]:

the other, and then you can have that variety, so it's really good. So I guess was there anything that surprised you about the UK? I know you said you've been to London before, but was there anything that, you went, oh, okay. This isn't what I was expecting. It was surprising in a nice way.

Matt [00:24:59]:

Well, one thing well, I guess we already talked about this. One thing was that was the narrowness of some of the roads kind of surprised me. I mean, I I thought in general, I mean, the the people that we encountered were were super friendly, but that wasn't very too surprising. I was kind of kind of expecting that, but but But friendly people everywhere we went, I thought. But not too many surprises, actually. I mean, I it it was Kind of met our expectations in in a in a in a good way. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:25:25]:

That's good. Yeah. That's good. I think we're I think we give lots of preparation to everybody for in the group or read our resources or listen to the podcast. We're kinda like, We're giving you all the stuff that you need to know if you're gonna go. So is there anything

Matt [00:25:36]:

That's right.

Tracy Collins [00:25:37]:

You're right. Is there anything that you would plan to do differently next time. Anything you change or, it just all went sounds like it all went just really, really good. So But but yeah. It went

Matt [00:25:49]:

it went really well. I think the the only thing that I would maybe change was maybe, give us a little bit more Discretionary time in, like, London, for example. We were we were really packed, and on the one hand, that was kind of needed because we if we wanted to see these things, we needed to kinda, Well, I felt like I and the kids were saying this, too. They they felt a little bit rushed, and so I think maybe, you know, putting a like planning a little time to just have To to kind of wander about a little bit more would have may maybe the next time I is something I would do. Yeah. A little bit more

Tracy Collins [00:26:21]:

I think that's always the thing with London. Everybody always tries, and I do exactly The same. I mean, it's I always try to do so much. Always there's so much to see, and you're gonna wanna pack it all in and and do it. So I think it's it's And and I think that's one of the most common kind of mistakes people make going to London is trying to just cram in as

much as you can. And then you also don't realize how tiring it is. I find London just tiring, getting around, walking. There's just lots of people.

Tracy Collins [00:26:45]:

It's just a bit busier experience, isn't it? Whereas you got the Lake District, and it's a bit more Relaxing.

Matt [00:26:52]:

Yeah. Yeah. No. That's true. And and I think I mean, I I definitely kind of knew that Coming in, and so I wanted to plan. You know? I I think initially, I had even planned more, and then I I tried to pare it down, and I think I would have even kind of pared it down just a little bit more even. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:27:06]:

Well, it sounds honestly, it sounds like you've had a a a fab fabulous trip, really fabulous trip. And you shared some wonderful photos in the Facebook group as well, which, And I remember just because it it struck as I say, it struck such a chord in me because you you'd been to Northumberland and and Hadrian's Wall, and that that always just makes me go, that's That's wonderful that you included that. So I always end the podcast with this 1 question, Matt. So what is the one tip that you'd give to anyone planning a trip to the UK for the first time?

Matt [00:27:35]:

Yeah. I think the tip that I would give, and this is kind of the a very broad tip, but But I I'm I'm definitely a believer in in in the saying. I don't I don't know if you've heard this. If you if you fail to plan, you plan to fail. This idea that that you really that planning really does make a difference. I know, you know, a year before we went to to the UK, we did kind of a big trip in the in the United States, a big road trip. And I I planned that really well because a prior trip, I I hadn't planned as much. And so I I think I realized the planning really makes a big difference.

Matt [00:28:09]:

I mean, just for example, like for food, if you Even if you just kind of do some research about the food options before you go, you're not just stuck at on, you know, on the evening and say, oh, what do we wanna eat? And then you kind of end up Eating something maybe that's not the greatest. It just a little bit of planning and and research into, like, what are the options? And then if you if it's something you really wanna do, then you make a reservation. Right? And so that That that that's that's definitely it. And then I think also along the same lines for the for the London sites, you know, booking booking in advance, and, even doing the time to entry, bookings really for us, it say it saves a lot of time. Right? Because you You you don't have to wait in lines. I mean, I think, you know, we did a lot of different things in London, but I think the amount and this was in in late July, so kind of a a busy time. Yep. And I think the total amount of time that we were waiting in lines was maybe half an hour or

something like that because we had the timed entry tickets, and so we were able to To get in pretty quickly.

Matt [00:29:04]:

I mean I mean, just as a a quick example with the you know, we did we decided to do the Tower of London, on a on a Saturday morning, and, and we got we got right in at the, you know, the 1st slot on Saturday morning. We did we saw what we wanted to see, but I was a little bit worried about About making it too close, but I I went ahead and made, an appointment to do the London Bridge experience as well about 12:30.

Tracy Collins [00:29:29]:

Tower Bridge

Matt [00:29:30]:

Or Tower Bridge. Sorry. Yeah. Tower Bridge. Yes. Yes. Yes. I I Tower Bridge experience.

Matt [00:29:35]:

Yeah. And so And it it it actually ended up working per perfectly because I think maybe we could have stayed a little bit longer at the at the Tower of London, but The amount of time it saved us to when we went to the to the Tower Bridge, there was a big line and and but because we had a we had prebook tickets, we just went right in and, it It saved us a ton of time. So I guess again, my I guess my tip is, you know, figure out what you wanna do, and then the the big things that are really important, to you, you know, book them in advance, get the time entry tickets. It gives you maybe a little bit less flexibility, but the amount of time that it saves you because you're not waiting in lines is is Huge.

Tracy Collins [00:30:13]:

Exactly. And who wants to wait in lines when you're on holiday? I don't. There's too many things to do. Exactly. Exactly. Absolutely. Oh, well, I have to say thanks so much, Matt, for agreeing to come on the podcast this episode and share your itinerary and tips from from your visit to the UK. It's been fantastic to

Matt [00:30:29]:

talk to you. Yeah. It's been great talking with you, and thanks so much for for the, the podcast and the and the Facebook group. It it was it was incredibly helpful for us to To plan the trip. So thanks so much.

Tracy Collins [00:30:41]:

Oh, thanks, Matt. Once again, thank you so much, Matt, for coming on to this episode of the podcast and sharing your itinerary and experiences of your trip to the UK this last summer. You can find links to places that Matt talked about in this episode in the show notes

atuktravelplanet.com forward slash episode 76, and I'd like to extend an invitation for you all to join our friendly Facebook community. You will find loads and loads of resources and advice, and friendly people are there willing to help you plan your trip. Until now, next week, all I can say is happy UK travel planning.