

Speaker 1 ([00:01](#)):

Welcome to the UK Travel Planning podcast. Your host is the founder of the UK Travel Planning website, Tracy Collins. In this podcast, Tracy shares destination guides, travel tips, and itinerary ideas, as well as interviews with a variety of guests who share their knowledge and experience of UK travel to help you plan your perfect UK vacation. Join us as we explore the UK from cosmopolitan cities to quaint villages, from historic castles to beautiful islands, and from the picturesque countryside to seaside towns.

Tracy ([00:36](#)):

Hi, and welcome to the UK Travel Planner podcast. This is episode number nine. In today's episode I'm joined by my friend, Karen and fellow Brit who's come to ask me all sorts of questions about my and Doug's travels plans for the UK for May, June, and July of this year. I know that lots of people have been really interested in how we planned that trip. So Karen has agreed to come and have a little chat with me today. So hopefully she can pick all my brains and get lots of knowledge about how we did that trip.

Tracy ([01:08](#)):

So, Karen, would you like to introduce yourself?

Karen ([01:09](#)):

Hi. Yeah. I'm Karen. I'm a blogger also at Smart Steps to Australia, a website to help families make the move to Australia. And I've been living in Australia for about seven and a half years now. And we haven't been back to the UK for a trip since we moved here. So I'm really looking forward to chatting to Tracy now to pick your brains all about your trip, because hopefully later on this year, we are going to be taking a big trip with my family and I. So we've got a lot to kind of cover, I think a lot of useful questions we can get in here.

Tracy ([01:39](#)):

Yeah. It's going to be quite exciting because obviously you're going to go over with your three kids as well, who haven't been back to the UK for quite a while, so.

Karen ([01:45](#)):

Yeah.

Tracy ([01:45](#)):

It's really a lot of fun. If you're listening for the first time or you're not part of the Facebook group, just to let you know that I do live in Australia. I and Doug live in Australia, which I think gives us a unique perspective because not only have we lived and worked in the UK, but actually we travel back to the UK as tourists as a well, so we have to go through the same process of planning our trip. Obviously we have a little bit more in depth knowledge of places in the UK to visit, but we also have to go through the same processes to actually put our itinerary together as well, which I think gives us a bit of a, as to say, a unique perspective.

Karen ([02:20](#)):

Yeah, and I know that we are in a big dilemma about all the different places we want to visit. So we've been busily reading your website and all of the content and listening to the podcast to try to get inspiration about some of the places we are going to go to.

Karen ([02:32](#)):

I think when you live in the country as well, you often don't explore it as well as you can. I think when you're a tourist, you kind of make more of an effort to go out there and visit more places. So we are definitely looking to visit a lot of the places when we go there too.

Karen ([02:44](#)):

Yeah. Do you want to tell us a little bit about your plans and where you are going and just kind of give us a bit of an overview how long are you going to be there for?

Tracy ([02:52](#)):

Okay, well, it's quite a long time that we're going back for. We're going back for 12 weeks. We're going in May. We'll come back to Australia in August. So we'll be in the UK for most of May, all of June, all of July, and a little bit of August, so 12 weeks. It's taken us quite a while to actually get our heads around, put all the itinerary together because there's so many places that we wanted to visit.

Karen ([03:18](#)):

I was going to say it sounds like a really long time, 12 weeks sounds like a big trip. And it is a big trip. But there's so many places and so much to cram into that time.

Tracy ([03:26](#)):

That's it. To be honest, it does sound a long time. And I mean, it is a long time, 12 weeks, and I know a lot, plenty of people would love to have that opportunity. But actually, there's so many places to visit that it's actually impossible for us to ... We really wanted to get over to Northern Ireland and we've not managed to fit that in this trip. We will do next time. And we're probably only going to do a couple of trips in Wales. So really this trip is primarily going to be focused on Scotland and England. Though we are planning a trip over to Paris for a day or two, because I know that's kind of popular day trip or a couple of day trip for many of our Facebook group and our community. So we want to take some video and answer some questions around how easy it is to do that trip on the Eurostar.

Tracy ([04:12](#)):

So basically in May, it's mainly Scotland. So we'll be traveling around Scotland by car, which is going to be really, really exciting. So picking up a car in Edinburgh, and then we are kind of doing a circuit, which will take us back to Edinburgh basically about three weeks later. So go into, oh yeah, you name it, basically we're trying to fit it in. We're actually doing a bit of a North Coast 500 as well, which we've not done before. So that's going to be really exciting. We're just hoping the weather's going to be good.

Tracy ([04:39](#)):

And then June is a lot of ... We're going to be based in the Midlands. So basically we've done, we've divided each month up into specific areas. We are looking at the Midlands for June with lots of day trips. So actually we are going to be also doing some extended day trips. So multiple multi-day trips. We'll be on the Lake District for three days. We're going to be in there Cotswolds for about five days. We are still firming up some of the details around that as well, because I wanted to fit extra time in London in June. So we've got some odd days down in London, but there's some specific things we want to do, and I'm trying to fit in as many afternoon teas as I can.

Karen ([05:23](#)):

I've seen that in the group. Every time anybody mentions an afternoon tea, Tracy's like, "I'm there."

Tracy ([05:26](#)):

I know. I try to fit as many afternoon teas in as I can. So that means I have to do as many visits, day trips to London, have an afternoon tea and then see a little bit extra of what we want to do. And there's so many afternoon teas to choose from. It's impossible. I reckon 365 days would not get me to [inaudible 00:05:42] afternoon teas.

Karen ([05:44](#)):

And what I'm loving is that this isn't a holiday for you. This is a research project. You're taking on board all of the questions that you're getting, and you're going out there to search out all those places to provide the answers in as much detail as you can.

Tracy ([05:56](#)):

Yeah.

Karen ([05:56](#)):

Including eating all the cakes and afternoon teas.

Tracy ([05:59](#)):

Well, that's the things I have to do, honestly.

Karen ([05:59](#)):

It's a hard life.

Tracy ([06:02](#)):

Yes. I'll be doing a lot of walking certainly around London and hopefully in Scotland just to kind of work off all those afternoon teas. So yeah, we have looked at where most of the kind interest and questions have come from in the group and obviously in our website as well. So we will be spending quite a bit time in London.

Tracy ([06:23](#)):

Also, Scotland is a major destination, Edinburgh. And actually, I would like to encourage people to get out of Edinburgh as well, go up the Highlands and do a driving trip or take the train, which we generally do. We're big fans of the Caledonian Sleeper, which we've talked about in a previous podcast. We love taking the train up to Fort William or Inverness and then hiring a car from there and doing a bit of a touring. But this year we're also going on the Jacobite, which we haven't done before, the Harry Potter train. So that's going to be amazing.

Tracy ([06:53](#)):

So yeah. So going back, I guess the Midlands in June, but with some visits to lots of other places as well, but we're kind of basing ourselves with some friends. So we'll be also going up to York, we're going to Whitby, we'll be in the Cotswolds like I said, we'll be doing lots of day trips as well. So possibly Oxford,

Cambridge, visits to London. I actually want to spend a whole day in London, just in Greenwich because I love Greenwich. And I think it's often overlooked by visitors, and it's just beautiful. So we're going to spend a whole day visiting Greenwich and visiting some of the markets as well.

Tracy ([07:32](#)):

So while we're doing that as well, I'm going to be doing a lot of Facebook Lives and we'll be putting YouTube videos as well to kind of show where we are and also sharing some tips, things that we've learned along the way. So that will certainly be useful for people who ... All the links to that will be in the show notes as well after this podcast.

Karen ([07:50](#)):

Do you have any tips for anybody when it comes to planning your itinerary? Because I know it can feel really overwhelming. Like I know the UK really well already, and I know we've got places like Whitby and York and things like that on our itinerary. We want to go to Stonehenge and here are a lot of the kind of landmarks that my kids have heard about as well at school, in their Australian school teaching here.

Karen ([08:10](#)):

Have you got any tips about people that maybe haven't been before to how do you pick where to go?

Tracy ([08:15](#)):

Yeah, how you prioritize. It's really difficult. We've actually got, because it is such a huge dilemma I think from people who are visiting if you've got a week or two weeks or even longer, it's actually choose and let go. And we went through the same thing. So we actually have a UK travel planning challenge, which I will link to in the show notes, which basically takes you through five steps. And it's about identifying the must dos and the would like to dos and then looking at a map. I'm very keen on ... I love maps myself. And I've always loved maps. So putting everything on a map helps me because it's very visual.

Tracy ([08:51](#)):

And then it's kind of looking at what works so that you kind of keep your plans around one specific area and see those places before you move onto the next. So it's kind of identifying those. And then how you're going to get around so that it makes the most sense, which is why we ended up doing the Scotland, Midlands, and actually then July we're going to be more down. We're going to be in London and then the south coast and then driving through to Devon and Cornwall before we'll head back to London and then hopefully over to Paris for a few days.

Tracy ([09:22](#)):

So that was, I think that's the best way to think about it, is to actually, especially if there's quite a few people in your party because you've got the kids going as well. It's kind of identifying what are the must do places that you really want to visit, and then looking at the map where they are located and then think about logistics about how you're going to get around, because you don't want to be spending all your time on public transport. If you're going to take the train, kind of work out if you can get the train to those places. And then if you're going to drive, kind of which is now that petrol is so expensive everywhere in the world, but in the UK it's very expensive, is working out the best way to get around.

Tracy ([10:00](#)):

So we did that. We kind of looked at the places we wanted to go. We looked at the ... We've sort of put them together by area. And then we thought how are we going to get around those areas, before then starting to look at hotels and then look at tours. We did the research and looked at which tours we thought would be of most interest as well to our community, who would be interested in looking at the different places that we're visiting and that we could recommend.

Tracy ([10:24](#)):

Yeah. So that was basically the way to do it. But I would always suggest to people, to do our five step itinerary challenge, because it will take you through, and the videos, so you can listen to the videos, watch the videos, and there's also a little work booklet as well. So you can download that. And it's got maps in it, lots of questions. And you can fill them in. And I love making these things. So you can fill it in. It'll just help you kind of focus and think about what your priorities are.

Karen ([10:48](#)):

Yeah, that's great. Now, when you are going to a lot of different places and you are all over the place, it can be really challenging trying to keep a handle on all of the bookings that you've got in all different places. How do you manage and track all of your travel plans?

Tracy ([11:03](#)):

Well, Doug's far more organized than I am with that generally. So he has lots of spreadsheets that he's using at the moment. And I've also just created a new product that we're going to be launching on the website in the next, by the time this podcast comes out. Actually that will be available on the website.

Tracy ([11:21](#)):

It's basically a UK travel toolkit, which has got checklists, it's got planning lists. It's also got ways that you can keep track of all your hotel bookings, your tour bookings. It's also got a travel journal in there. So there's a lot. So it's a great way to keep everything. You can download that, have that, take that and get that bound, take that with you. Or you can download it. We actually have got an editable PDF. We've had to do it in two parts, because it's quite a hefty download. But then you can use that. And that's split into that kind of pre-planning when you arrive and then you're traveling around so it's the different sections.

Tracy ([11:55](#)):

That's a great way of keeping everything together, because I'm not the most organized person. Doug's far more organized than me. So I thought I have to think of a way that will work for me. Because I find spreadsheets a bit overwhelming, especially when you're dealing with 12 weeks. It's a lot. So he has his system, and I have my system, which is a sheet for each thing that you're going to keep track of.

Tracy ([12:17](#)):

And that's got things like packing lists in it and how to keep in those key telephone numbers that you need, key email addresses, and also different hotels. As I say, it's got a page for each of those. And then if you download the printable, you just print out however many pages you'd need for each of those, just to keep track.

Tracy ([12:37](#)):

So yes, that will be available. Again, I'll put a link onto the show notes for that. But yes, that is a ... I think it's a ... somebody has to be really organized because trying to keep track of that sort of information can get quite difficult.

Karen ([12:50](#)):

Yeah. And I know in some of the travel apps that you might book your hotels with, they help you organize some of it by sort of ordering your hotel bookings and things in the order. I know when we've done road trips before that's been really helpful to use the apps.

Tracy ([13:04](#)):

Yeah, that is. But I found, so for some of our bookings, it's also keeping track of ... Most of our hotel bookings, you actually pay when you arrive in the hotel, but there are a few that wanted a little deposit maybe two weeks before, like when that free cancellation period ends. So because we're staying in, I don't know, 25 hotels, there's a lot of hotels. So I've now got a list of the hotel and then the date and how much will be coming out for each of those. So then I can also keep track because financially is I'll keep in track of how much spend over that period of time is also going to be really tricky, because we want to also keep an eye on that so we can kind of say to people what sort of budget, what sort of budget we've used, what we've spent to do the trip.

Tracy ([13:47](#)):

So I'm being really keen on, so I know exactly what's coming out and when, so it's not going to be a surprise. Yeah. So I've kept track of that with the hotel bookings. Most of the tours I've paid upfront, but there's a lot of the hotels I've left it to when we actually, hopefully when we check in. But sometimes a couple weeks before they're going to take that out, so.

Karen ([14:09](#)):

Yeah. So to have, to put your toolkit into like a binder or whatever and just keep it all together with all of your own printouts of all your confirmations you've got, it just seems like a really good idea to have it all.

Tracy ([14:19](#)):

Yeah. I think it's really useful. And I know I took my niece to Italy a few years ago for her 21st, and that's how I did that because we traveled from Rome. I actually went all through Italy and then through into Switzerland. And I did it that way. I had basically a printed out page for each hotel that I was staying in. We were taking trains. So I kept track of that as we went. And then I could just throw it away as we went. But I think Lucy kept hers because she wanted to keep it as a memento of the trip.

Tracy ([14:46](#)):

But part of the reason I did include a travel journal as well in this because I know you want to look back on your trip. And you might have photos, but it's like, so what was the most memorable part of that day? What did I really enjoy? What was the weather like? So there's the sheets in for that as well. So you can keep track of what you did, what you really enjoyed, what was the best things about the day, or what restaurant you ate at, how good it was. So you've got kind of a memento as well that you can bring back of your trip and keep.

Karen ([15:14](#)):

That's really good. Because when the first time we went on a really big trip, we started a travel blog, and that was what we used to kind of use to log all of that information. So it's really helpful just to have somewhere to just keep detailed notes of those things.

Karen ([15:27](#)):

When it comes to planning like where you're going to go in the country, I know we talked a bit about planning your itinerary in general, but say you've got more of a limited time schedule. You might be going for a couple of weeks. You can't go everywhere, can you?

Tracy ([15:40](#)):

No.

Karen ([15:41](#)):

So how do you decide whether to do Scotland and Wales and England, or whether to do the south of England, or whether to try to spread yourself in and do more traveling to visit more places, or whether like how to fit it all in, how to fit destinations in?

Tracy ([15:54](#)):

I think that is really difficult. And we do get quite a few emails and questions because quite often people are trying to fit in a lot into a short period of time. And part of going on holiday is also to have a relaxing time and enjoy it. So I think sometimes if you put too much in, it can be too tiring.

Tracy ([16:16](#)):

But then again, I guess it's based on what you can manage. But in terms of prioritizing again, I think if there's quite a few, it's kind of prioritizing what are the places that you really, really, really, really want to see. Then depending on your interest. So if you've got an interest in history, for example, you're a Tudor fan, you'll probably want to go to Hampton Court Palace. You might want to go to Hever Castle. And when it comes to actually London itself, if you've only got a couple of days in London, again, it's prioritizing those, what are the main places that you want to see? What are the main experiences that you want to have as well? Because it's not sometimes about just actually seeing somewhere. It's about what can you experience.

Tracy ([16:55](#)):

I know for us as well, we look to see what was on, what was anything specifically that we wanted to actually attend. At the museum, at the British Museum, there's a Stonehenge exhibition on that we're particularly interested in, so we've already booked that. And there's Superbloom on the Tower of London, so there's going to be there. The entire moat is going to be beautiful flowers. So spring flowers. That's in June on from ... I think is from the first of June onwards. And we're really interested in that. So I wanted to make sure that we could get into London for that. So I booked it for that.

Tracy ([17:32](#)):

I guess that's prioritizing if there's something specifically on that you want to go and see like Chelsea Flower Show that comes up quite often, that you include that in. If you really want to go up to Edinburgh, which comes up a lot, I'd say that probably you can go up to a brief stop off in York along the way. So try and add in some other places if you can. If you're going to do that trip anyway, you might as

well get off the train and have a couple of hours and walk around York, which again, we've talked about in the podcast and it's a beautiful city. So try not to rush around too much because you're not going to see anything.

Tracy ([18:07](#)):

There are also, I say to people, don't fly, take the train if you can take the train because you're going to actually see part of it. You're going to see the countryside and you're going to meet people rather than a lot of people said, "Oh, I might take the Fly from London to Edinburgh." I'm like, "No, why? Take the train. You're going to see a lot more," or, "Take the sleeper train up to Scotland if you want to save a night." But yeah, I think that choosing it. And then I just think it's not going to, hopefully not going to be your first. Yeah, it might be your first trip to the UK, but it won't be your last trip to the UK. So hopefully.

Tracy ([18:39](#)):

And yeah, just prioritizing what the people in your party want to do, and if necessarily splitting up as well, if you can. I know there's ... Doug's going to do some things in London that I'm not going to do, and I'll be going to places that he won't necessarily be interested in. So we're going to do a bit of that.

Karen ([18:56](#)):

I remember you saying in Edinburgh that he was going to do some of the ghost type tours that you're not going to be doing.

Tracy ([19:01](#)):

No. No. Yes, he's going to do the underground vaults and I, no. No, I'm not definitely, not going to do the underground vaults. I think I might do the Kirk Kirkyard to the graveyard. So the great fires. I'm interested in the aboveground. Yes. Underground, no. I also get claustrophobic. That sort of experience doesn't suit me at all. But Doug really wants to do it, so he's going to go off and do that.

Tracy ([19:24](#)):

But yeah. And also, actually I'm going to do a boat trip from Oban. So I'm going to go to Mull and I've got Iona and Fingal's Cave. And Doug doesn't really do particularly well on boats. So rather than subject him to like a 10-hour trip, he's actually going to drive up that day to Glencoe, a different way than we are driving the next day. So he's going to take some video and do that while I go off and do the boat trip because it's pointless.

Tracy ([19:50](#)):

When we talked about that, it was like, "Well, I really want to do that and I'm really interested in taking that." So that was the best compromise we came up with. And he was like, "Okay, that's great. I can go up to Glencoe a different way and take some videos of that way so we can share that."

Tracy ([20:05](#)):

But yes, I think it's that bit of compromise sometimes when you've got ... I mean, you have that with the kids-

Karen ([20:10](#)):

We all have that.

Tracy ([20:11](#)):

The kids, some of the kids are want to do some things and others won't want to do.

Karen ([20:15](#)):

Yeah.

Tracy ([20:15](#)):

Yeah.

Karen ([20:16](#)):

My daughter's obsessed with Harry Potter and my twin boys are like, no, they're just not interested in that. But I think they will have a great time when we go to Harry Potter and the studios thing. They'll really enjoy that anyway. So yeah, it's definitely going to be dividing interests and dividing and conquering sometimes where some of us go one way and some of us go another.

Tracy ([20:35](#)):

Yeah. And prioritizing and not putting too much. And I guess it's like, if you really want to go, so Edinburgh is always a classic one. It's like, Edinburgh is very popular. So yes, go to Edinburgh, but then try and fit something in along the way as well. And quite often, it's thinking, reading, I guess, on our website as well, some of the stuff that we'll share about places that may be not on the radar.

Tracy ([20:58](#)):

I'm from Northumberland originally. So I will talk quite often about the Northumberland coastal route. And we do itinerary reviews of people and that's often the way I've said, "Why, if you're going to go, if you're driving and you're going from Yorkshire up to Edinburgh, then definitely drive through the Northumberland coastal route because it's stunning and it's a bit of a hidden gem, I think."

Karen ([21:16](#)):

Oh, it's beautiful up there. I'm Northern too. It's not quite as Northern, I'm more Midlandsy, but I'm from south Yorkshire and then grew up in Lincolnshire. So we spent time holidaying up there and it's beautiful.

Tracy ([21:26](#)):

Absolutely.

Karen ([21:28](#)):

So we talked a little bit about train travel. You said that's a thing that you really love. And I know Doug's got a background in the trains as well, so that really helps. I think it's key what you were just saying before, about how, when you travel by train, you meet all kinds of people.

Karen ([21:42](#)):

I know when I was in the UK, I didn't drive till the end of my time in the UK. That's when I learned to drive. So I used to travel everywhere by train, and I met such colorful characters on the trains and have such good memories of hopping on trains to go to music festivals and visit friends and just travel all

around on trains. So is train travel the main way you're going to be traveling around or you'll be hiring a car?

Tracy ([22:07](#)):

We are hiring a car actually for three parts of the trip. So we're going to hire a car in ... We have traveled around Scotland quite a lot by train, but because we wanted to get over to the Isle of Skye, we thought, we just thought let's hire a car. And also because we talked to quite a few people who are doing that. So again, we want to video that and getting the ferry over from a Mallaig over to Skye. So we decided to hire a car and also do the North Coast 500.

Tracy ([22:34](#)):

But we'll be getting up there by train and we'll be coming back down by train. We'll be doing most of our ... So we're doing that, that we're visiting the Lake District and we're doing all of that by public transport because you can and there's a good bus network. So we felt rather than take a car somewhere at the Lake District, which I know they're trying to discourage, we would do that by public transport.

Tracy ([22:53](#)):

The Cotswolds, we are going to be hiring a car as well because it's better to get around the Cotswolds. Trains don't cover the Cotswolds. So you can get into the Cotswolds by train, but you can't get around the Cotswolds by train. So we're going to be hiring a car and drive around there.

Tracy ([23:08](#)):

And then again, we're going to pick up a car in Exeter and we're going to be driving around Devon and Cornwall, mainly just ... You can get, you can go down there by train and take tours, but we just wanted a bit more freedom to explore quite a few of the different areas. And again, because we're trying to put quite a lot into our itinerary, that felt to us the best way to do it.

Tracy ([23:30](#)):

Doug would quite happily travel 99% of the time by train. And yeah, normally we would, but this time we have included a bit more road tripping because of those reasons. But yes, most of the day trips we'll be taking obviously going out of London. I would never say drive in London. I used to have to drive in London when I worked there and I would not recommend it. Anybody British will tell you not to drive in London.

Karen ([23:53](#)):

Yeah, I was just going to say. Whenever we ever went to London, I don't think I've ever, apart from to go to the airport, I've ever been in a car to London because from anywhere in the country, you get on the trains to London.

Tracy ([24:04](#)):

Yeah, absolutely.

Karen ([24:04](#)):

So prebook your tickets. You kind of choose your ticket carefully so you know you're getting the best deal. But when we were living in Hampshire, when we moved over to Australia, which is we were on the

south coast and it was an hour and a bit into London. It was not worth driving or taking the car or fighting with it. And even from when I lived in the Midlands and Lincolnshire and Sheffield, we used to get the train for meetings in a day and back, and it was just much easier.

Tracy ([24:29](#)):

It's much, much easier. I mean, getting around London, you don't need a car anyway. We're actually going to do a future podcast about how to get around London on public transport because I know that's sometimes a source of stress. But you definitely don't want to be doing it when you are driving your own car, that's for sure.

Tracy ([24:44](#)):

Yeah. So majority of the time train, but yes, a few of the kind of times we're going to be we'll be in the car, but we'll be taking video of that as well.

Karen ([24:54](#)):

And what sort of accommodation have you booked? I know you're staying with friends for some of it. Is it mostly hotels? Is it apartments? What kind of accommodation are you staying in?

Tracy ([25:03](#)):

We're staying in hotels. I just prefer to stay in hotels. And I like to book with free cancellation if possible, because you just never know, if you get sick or you can't. I just don't want to pay for something I don't use. I mean, I've used booking.com for years. That's who we use for our hotels.

Tracy ([25:25](#)):

I prefer a hotel. I have stayed in some alternative accommodation like Airbnb in the past and they're fine. And there are lots of people, if they're traveling in the UK for a longer time, they're going to be looking for places to wash clothes. Whereas we've got the option of popping over and we're going to be staying with friends and we're staying with family. So we'll be able to do that. But I know that can, that's one advantage if you have an apartment, or if you go for something like a Vrbo or Airbnb that you've got the opportunity to wash your clothes. Well, I'm going to travel really light anyway. So hopefully I won't have to ... We'll have occasions where we'll have to do a lot of washing, but otherwise.

Tracy ([26:03](#)):

Yeah. I just enjoy staying in hotels basically. Always I've done. I'm a hotel person.

Karen ([26:11](#)):

There's nothing wrong with that.

Tracy ([26:11](#)):

No.

Karen ([26:14](#)):

So what tools have you got booked in? You've obviously locked in lots of different tools for all of the stay that you're doing?

Tracy ([26:19](#)):

Yeah. We have booked in quite a few bits and bobs. We've booked four tours in Edinburgh. So we've got Walk into, we've got two in the castle, Doug's doing the underground vaults tour. Then obviously we've got the boat tour from Oban. And then we've got some of our London tours already booked in and tickets. We've also bought some of the tickets. We've bought tickets for the London Eye. We've bought ... We've booked our tickets already for Tower of London, because I wanted to go to the Superbloom event.

Tracy ([26:48](#)):

Some of them, you can't book. For example, at the moment Westminster Abbey, you can't book tickets. Full booked. So I'm kind of watching that. And I'm also going to ... have to go on some tours with Walks. They're previously called Take Walks. So we're going to be doing some tours with them and hopefully in Paris as well because I really enjoy taking tours. I think if you do a small group tour or a private tour, and I know John England was on our previous podcast, episode seven, talking about his private ... He's a private tour guide. It's like, you learn so much more when you go with a tour guide, then you would if a) you do it yourself or b) you do it in a larger group because then you try and ask questions you feel sometimes difficult, and usually just one or two people tend to dominate that. So I kind of like that small group feel where you can learn a bit more about the place that you are visiting.

Tracy ([27:39](#)):

So that's something I'm always keen to do. And for example, with John, John England, he takes ... John England just takes you know. He'll pick you up and drive you. So if you want to go somewhere like Hever, he will pick you up, meet you at the train station and then drive you there. So you don't have that worry about trying to access these places. If you don't want to hang in the car and some of the places you can't get to in the big trip, buses can't get to, but he could take you to. And also, I quite like the idea of having a tailor-made tour with something a bit more specific to what we want.

Tracy ([28:11](#)):

I've also booked in actually a photographer as well who's going to be taking some shots, brand shots, I guess they're going to be UK Travel Planning in London that we'll be having on the website as well. So I think that's also a lovely thing to do as well if you're traveling with family to actually have a professional photographer. Because how often, I'm often not in the photo. I take all the photos. There's loads of photos of Doug and there's like one photo of me. So I thought this time I'm actually going to have a professional photographer come and take some nice shots of me and Doug in our t-shirts. And we've got a branded t-shirt at the Tower of London, Tower Bridge. So we are looking forward to that as well. So that's going to be a real treat.

Karen ([28:52](#)):

That sounds fab.

Tracy ([28:54](#)):

Yeah.

Karen ([28:54](#)):

Now we talked before about all of them, the afternoon tea, kind of really nice cakes and things like that you're going to be enjoying when you get to England. Have you made any restaurant bookings? How are you kind of approaching that? Are there any places that are like really hard to get into that you found that you need to pre-book or ... ?

Tracy ([29:12](#)):

So my feeling with this is if you can book it, book it, because the last thing I want is to be disappointed. I've already booked some restaurant in York. I've booked some afternoon teas in Edinburgh. So yeah, we're going to go at The Dome in Edinburgh for afternoon tea, which is going to be absolutely fantastic. I'm looking forward to that because you just know closer the time, people are going to be booking that. So I'd rather, with The Witchery as well. So we've got ... We're in Edinburgh for three days and we've got three afternoon teas.

Karen ([29:46](#)):

Oh, I love it.

Tracy ([29:49](#)):

Yeah. So that's going to be. And I hope in London, which it's even more difficult to choose in London, in London, in fact, I'm probably going to ask my Facebook group to choose, because I have got 10 potential afternoon teas that I cannot choose between. So I think I'm going to put that out to them and say, which ones would you like us to go and try for you, again, put myself out there, but sometimes you have to make sacrifices.

Karen ([30:12](#)):

It's a hard life.

Tracy ([30:14](#)):

So yeah. So I think I'm probably going to ask them to choose from the 10, because I genuinely don't know at the moment. At the moment, I think Fortnum & Mason is probably going to be a definite. I'm also very keen on trying out the Charlie and the Chocolate Factory at One Aldwych. So that's really high on our list. I think you've got the-

Karen ([30:34](#)):

Do that one because my daughter would like a review of that one. She would definitely like that one.

Tracy ([30:39](#)):

And there's also a Peter Pan themed one at The Shard at the moment, which I have my eye on as well because what a beautiful view you're going to get when you have afternoon tea.

Tracy ([30:48](#)):

I think the issue is you've got themed afternoon teas and then you've got traditional afternoon teas. So we want to a mix of both, but if I get back over to the UK, which I'm hoping later on in the year potentially, then I'll do even more afternoon teas. And The Ritz hopefully will be a treat for mom for Christmas. But don't tell her. Don't tell her. It's a surprise.

Tracy ([31:08](#)):

Yeah. So it's really difficult. I mean, and I get asked that quite often. So if you're going to go somewhere special, like an afternoon, book it, definitely get that booked. If there's a restaurant you have got your heart set on and you can book it, just book it because there's nothing worse to say than you get there and it's fully booked. You haven't made that reservation because everybody else has got there before you.

Tracy ([31:32](#)):

There's definitely lots of places you can pop into like pubs if you want to have a Sunday lunch. But even then, I would inquire if you need to make a book in. Places that you want to pop in for a coffee or cafes, I would say probably not. You could probably just pop in as you walk past. But there's lots of very famous places in London, whether they're Instagram worthy, for example, like Peggy Porschen. So we're going to visit there. So we're going to be trying out some of their cakes, but also taking some pictures of the beautiful shop. And it's absolutely gorgeous on the outside, and on the inside.

Tracy ([32:08](#)):

I guess it's prioritizing again, which restaurants you're particularly interested in. Is it because you're interested in the Instagram worthiness of it and the food, or is it a Michelin star restaurant that you really want to visit, or is it you just want to try traditional fish and chips because then if you, that's fine, you can just go to the fish and chip shop and order it.

Karen ([32:29](#)):

Depending on which fish and chip shop.

Tracy ([32:31](#)):

Well, that's true. That's true.

Karen ([32:32](#)):

Because when my husband and I went on our honeymoon, we knew we'd be very tired after the wedding. So we planned our proper honeymoon for the following year. And when we did a road trip up from the south coast all the way up to Scotland, to Edinburgh and around, and we came back down via Whitby and York-

Tracy ([32:49](#)):

You're going to mention Whitby, aren't you?

Karen ([32:51](#)):

I'm going to mention Whitby because I love Whitby. Yeah. And so yeah, that was our first introduction to a restaurant that was really over subscribed, and it was a fish and chip shop and then there was a queue-

Tracy ([33:03](#)):

That's going to be The Magpie. [crosstalk 00:33:04] That's going to be The Magpie which we will be visiting because that is world famous and like Pie in Whitby and we will definitely be having fish and chips from The Magpie.

Karen ([33:13](#)):

We lined up in the rain on that late night, just almost at closing time, really keeping our fingers crossed that we'd get in. We hadn't made a booking, and we were the last people that they allowed in that night. And we just got in and so it was very good and it was very worth the effort. But yeah, so even little fish and chip shops can sometimes kind of have long queues-

Tracy ([33:32](#)):

But worth checking I think with. We will put a link to The Magpie and Whitby into the show notes, for sure. Yeah. It's worth, if you can put in a list of specifically those, the ones that are famous or well known or that you really want to visit and then get it booked.

Tracy ([33:51](#)):

And I know we've paid some deposits for some of the afternoon teas, so expect you may have to pay kind of a deposit on that booking as well, which is fair enough. But yeah, I'm always happy when I've got those locked in and we haven't quite got the London ones locked in yet so I'm a bit nervous because I'm like I've got but at least there's lots to choose from.

Karen ([34:09](#)):

Yeah. You said you were traveling light when you were going. And I know I'm a big fan of packs. When we went backpacking, it was that whole idea of put everything on the bed, have a look at it, and then cut it in half. And my travel rucksack is quite tiny. So I tend to travel as light as I can, although it's much harder since having kids now to do that.

Karen ([34:30](#)):

What are you taking? What are you not taking? Have you got any tips for us to help with our planning for the UK? Because the weather can be very changeable.

Tracy ([34:37](#)):

Yeah, I think that's more the key for us actually this trip because we'll be in Scotland, and May can be still pretty cool. It's going to ... Well, the thing is the UK weather, you don't go to the UK for weather, do you really? You don't go for sunshine. Hopefully it will be sunny. Fingers crossed that it's going to be a lovely summer. But you just don't know. And the UK weather can change really rapidly.

Tracy ([34:58](#)):

But because we are in Scotland I'm more conscious that I will need warmer clothes and pretend ... Well, I will need warmer clothes than I'm going to need in London, because it's going to be ... it's always a few degrees warmer in London. So I'm going for layers. I have got a few pairs of jeans that I'm taking, got pairs of jeans, leggings. I love my leggings because they're just so comfortable. And then t-shirts. It's layering really. And I've got a couple of jackets that are kind the spring jacket. They're reasonably thick. Probably a little bit too thick for Australia, but warm enough for the UK. So not quite my winter coat, those really heavy coats, but I will take kind of those intermediate ones.

Tracy ([35:38](#)):

Doug swears by having a rain jacket. But I don't like them. They make me a bit just too hot and sweaty, but I'm going to pack them out because they would be really useful.

Karen ([35:46](#)):

An umbrella.

Tracy ([35:47](#)):

Umbrella. Yeah. And I know an umbrella in London is usually not recommended, and again, if it's windy, you can't use it. But I just, I can't do the packmack thing. But otherwise I'm thinking really carefully about shoes as well. So making sure that I'm taking comfortable sandals, but I'm also taking trainers, runners with me as well that are comfortable because we're going to do a lot of walking.

Tracy ([36:12](#)):

I do have a pair of boots that are already in the UK that I left when I was there last time. So I could always wear those. But I may potentially need those for Scotland. But again, it's just checking the weather forecast the week before, before you go so you can, if you are planning. Obviously it's a bit harder for us because we're packing for 12 weeks, but it's more that, think in layers, think in a t-shirt with a long sleeve jumper over the top, even if it's thin cotton type jumper and then a scarf.

Tracy ([36:43](#)):

And then I'm also going neutral colors. So lots of kind of blacks and then grays, and then I've got navy blue stuff and then, you can put a nice scarf with it as well.

Karen ([36:53](#)):

I was going to say things you can dress up to kind of go out and about.

Tracy ([36:57](#)):

Yeah. So I'm trying to minimize the amount that we take. I use packing cubes as well. I'm big fan of packing cubes because especially if you are traveling around, at least you can pack all your things for certain days and then it means you don't have to get everything out. So if you've got Monday's clothes and then Tuesday's clothes, then you just take that out. So I've got ... I don't know how many packing cubes I've got, quite a few. And I actually use packing cubes for my electricals. I use them when I go on the plane, because the last thing you want is to be rummaging around your bag, trying to find stuff. So I put everything into little packing bags, little packing cubes. I've got to say lots of them. I find them really invaluable.

Tracy ([37:34](#)):

We're also going to be taking lots of electronic, got our laptops we're going to be taking. We've got GoPro we're going to be taking. We've got a little pocket too that we use for recording. So we've also got a drone. So maybe we can get a little bit of shots in Scotland with that. So we've got a lot more electronic stuff.

Karen ([37:50](#)):

It's not traveling very light.

Tracy ([37:51](#)):

No, no. No, probably not on electronics, more on clothes. Yeah. But the thing is, I always think to be honest, you can always go and buy stuff off it. There's some nice shops in the UK to go and have a little look around.

Karen ([38:07](#)):

And actually I think when we go, we might take an empty suitcase or fairly empty cases with the view that we'll be bringing things back. No doubt.

Tracy ([38:14](#)):

Yeah, exactly. Well, to be honest, last time I did, I went into to Sainsbury's and I bought quite a few pairs of leggings, they're really cheap-

Karen ([38:21](#)):

I thought you were going to say sort of chocolate biscuits or food shopping or something that you were missing, the food you were missing from there.

Tracy ([38:26](#)):

No, I just went and bought some leggings because they were really comfortable. So yeah, that, I just think the key is to, is just to layout on the bed what you've got and if you can try and reduce that half of that because you just won't ... Even as strict as I am, you don't wear everything that you take. It's just ... I don't know. I don't know many people who do. I'd love to be able to just take carry-on and I've done that in the past, but I think for 12 weeks probably won't be able to do that this time. It's going to have to be a suitcase.

Tracy ([38:56](#)):

But yeah, we've already started kind of listing what we're taking and putting stuff out because obviously it's summer in Australia, so we're not wearing the clothes that we would be wearing taking to the UK. That's for sure. So I've already started to look and kind of prioritize what I want to take when I'm over there.

Tracy ([39:14](#)):

But the key is always layers. And even in the winter in London, when you go, I always find that you dress up, you go into London and you're dressed up with all your ... You've got your jumper on and you've got your jacket on, sweater on I should say. You've got your big thick coat, you've got a scarf, you've got your gloves, you've got a hat on. And then you're walking around and you get hot. Then you walk into a shop and the heating is blasting out, and then you have to take everything off, because you're just too hot. And then you are back out onto the street and then you're putting everything back on again.

Tracy ([39:45](#)):

So again, that layers really. And I always overdress, I think when I go to London. I'm trying to wear less and think I'm going to have to keep taking these things off. So I have a bag even that you can put those clothes in when you're in there.

Karen ([39:56](#)):

Yeah. And that's a good tip actually. When I used to do a lot of train traveling in the UK was take a cardigan or a jumper or something because even if it's hot and sunny outside, they can have the air con quite fierce on there. So there's quite a few times that I'd be sitting there, wrapped in my cardigan, just kind of shivering because it was so cold on the train.

Tracy ([40:12](#)):

That's it. And we've got like hoodies that we take as well that we kind of, we've got thin. I've got a really thick one I bought when I was in Canada, I was in Vancouver and did a boat trip and it was summer, but it was still quite chilly. So I bought quite a thick fleece kind of hoodie. But I've also got a thin one as well, which I'll take, which rolls up really small. So we'll definitely be taking that to Scotland. Yeah.

Tracy ([40:35](#)):

I think it's, as I say, it's thinking in mix and match as well. So thinking comfort, thinking what's comfortable. Shoes particularly is the one that I say you don't want to have one day walking around and then you found the next day you've got blisters and then you don't really want to go anywhere because your feet are hurting.

Tracy ([40:54](#)):

So don't think about fashion and necessarily looking the prettiest, but just think actually the shoes are practical and they're comfortable.

Karen ([41:03](#)):

Yeah. So what is it you are most looking forward to?

Tracy ([41:06](#)):

Oh, so many things. Just, oh, honestly so much. It'll be lovely to see obviously friends and family. But I'm looking forward to Scotland. I'm really looking forward to Scotland. I absolutely. My background is Scottish. So my maiden name is Scottish and my dad's family from Scotland. So I just absolutely love being up there. And Glencoe is one of my favorite places in the entire world. So I'm really excited to get back to Glencoe.

Tracy ([41:34](#)):

I'm also taking the Jacobite train is going to be amazing. Yeah, everything really. I know that sounds a bit trite, but everything, all the afternoon teas that we're going to do. Actually doing ... I'm actually looking forward to being able to do Facebook Lives and YouTube videos that I can show people when we're there, and share what we're experiencing and passing on kind of tips, then as we're actually there. So it'll be fantastic. We'll be able to be in Edinburgh and do a Facebook Live and YouTube video and give, pass out those tips while we're actually surrounded by that city.

Tracy ([42:10](#)):

That's going to be just fabulous. All of it. I'm looking forward to getting into Devon and Cornwall again. Oh, and I'm really excited about going to see The Mary Rose because I didn't see The Mary Rose when I lived in the UK. And I know the museum looks fantastic now. It's going to be a really exciting experience. We're going to be visiting with family who visited The Mary Rose a number of times, actually live in

Hampshire. So that's going to be ... I'm really looking forward to that. That's the historian. I used to be a history teacher. So I think that, yeah, that's a day that I'm really, really, really excited about.

Tracy ([42:46](#)):

But yeah, all of it, all of it.

Karen ([42:49](#)):

It's too hard to choose one thing. I know for us, we are finding like the logistical planning is huge. You've got to think about whether your house is going to be empty, who's looking after it, what you're going to do with mail, have you got any pets that you need to find. Like you've got ... There's so much logistics goes involved in planning a big trip away. And when we go, we are looking at probably a four week trip, maybe a five week trip. How are you organizing all of that side of things because we are trying to kind of get organized now and think which bills do we have that aren't on direct debit that we need to move over to direct debit so they just pay automatically while we're away and we don't have to think about it?

Karen ([43:28](#)):

Things like here in Australia, we've got a swimming pool, and how are we going to manage that being taken care of while we're away. And we've got a dog and all of those different things. So how do you plan all of the logistics of leaving your life behind for that-

Tracy ([43:41](#)):

I know-

Karen ([43:42](#)):

... length of time.

Tracy ([43:42](#)):

Well, we're looking ... In one respect of that, we live in an apartment, so we have a neighbor who's going to look after the apartment for us while we're away. And we don't have any pets at the moment. Previously when we've traveled, we've either, we've used, I'd have somebody come and stay at our house or we've put the dog in kennels.

Tracy ([44:03](#)):

What we actually do do which is useful and something I think is really helpful for somebody that's been away for even a short period of time is to actually have a house sitter. And we've actually, Doug and I have done house sitting before. So basically somebody who's gone on holiday, we've just gone and looked after the house, looked after the pets, watered the plants, kept everything ticking over. So that's a really good service to consider if you're going away, if you haven't got somebody that can stay, a family member that can stay or somebody to pop in. You could actually go through a house sitting service. We're trusted house sitters. So we do that. So that's a good way to kind of get that looked after.

Tracy ([44:37](#)):

In terms of bills and everything, we've sat down again, Doug with this spreadsheet. We've put a spreadsheet together so we know what bills are coming out and when. So we haven't got much on direct deposit, but actually so I probably will just be making sure that I know when what bill is going to

be paid when. So we do that. Otherwise, the car will stay in the garage and that'd be fine. And we've asked somebody just to turn the engine over kind of every month. So we've got friends to do with that.

Tracy ([45:05](#)):

But as part of the travel toolkit as well, I've got a page on that, which is actually for if you have house sitters or family, which has got all the important telephone numbers in. Because I think that's important as well. If you're away, if you have house sitters or if you've left your house locked up or you've got people checking on it for your post or whatever, is that you make sure that you give them a list of all the important information. So a copy of your itinerary. So we've got that. But also a list of all the telephone numbers that they can contact you when you're away if there is a problem.

Tracy ([45:36](#)):

Actually I remember a few years ago, we had friends in the UK who were visiting Australia actually, and we were looking after their house. And it was a very, very cold winter in the UK. And the pipes froze, burst, and flooded their entire bathroom and hall. Unfortunately, we had to get in contact with them, and it was the middle of the night in Australia at that time. But you never know. There can be emergencies and things like fire insurance details, it's useful to leave that information with people.

Tracy ([46:04](#)):

So, yeah, that is one part of it. And we've spent kind of a day going through that and working out exactly what we needed with that. But obviously, if you use a house sitter, then you put a pack together with information, but then they can potentially take care of your post, your pet, and look after your house as well. So that's a good system.

Karen ([46:24](#)):

Yeah, no, that sounds great. So it's been really, really helpful talking to you and picking your brain. Have you got any final tips to leave us with, just for, give us a bit more inspiration?

Tracy ([46:34](#)):

Well, this is the question I ask every podcast guest is what would be a one tip if you're visiting the UK for the first time. So my tip is going to be listen to our podcast. Look at our website. And if you're on Facebook, come and join our Facebook community because you'll meet other people who have been, recently been to the UK or planning their trip. Yeah, that's the best way.

Tracy ([46:56](#)):

We are a fantastic resource that we're putting together and we've been putting together now for two years. So come and read our stuff, talk to us, book our itinerary review service and listen to, obviously listen to our podcasts.

Karen ([47:07](#)):

And even though I'm from the UK and I'm planning my trip back there now, I find it really useful. There's so much information in there. It's really helping us to sort of work out what we're going to do on our big trip later in the year. So thanks so much, Tracy. That's been great.

Tracy ([47:23](#)):

This transcript was exported on Apr 09, 2022 - view latest version [here](#).

Well, thanks Karen. It's been really great to talk to you today, and yeah, can't wait to speak again.

Tracy ([47:30](#)):

So that's it for another episode of UK Travel Planning podcast. I would like to say thank you for listening. And if you've enjoyed today's episode, and would like to follow along on our UK travel adventure, you can find us via our Facebook group, Instagram, and YouTube channels. And also, you'll be able to find out which afternoon teas we end up trying out in London.

Tracy ([47:53](#)):

You'll also find the show notes for today's show at [uktravelplanning/episode 9](#). Again, thanks for listening and thanks to Karen for joining me today. Don't forget to subscribe on your favorite podcast app so you don't miss an episode and please do leave us a review. Until next time, happy UK travel planning.