

Episode 106 UKTP Podcast Transcript

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

Tracy Collins [00:00:41]:

Hi. I'm Tracy Collins, and welcome to episode 106 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. My question to you this week, are you planning a trip to London and considering purchasing a London pass, A pass that offers access to multiple attractions in the city, or is this the first time you've heard of the London pass and would like to know more? Do you have questions about what is included, how to make the most of it, and whether it's worth the investment? Curious about discovering hidden gems and lesser known attractions? Well, in this episode, I chat with Daryl Bennett from GoCity who is the go to expert on everything London Pass. He answers all of your questions and more. And to make things even more exciting, stay tuned until the end to find out where you can find UK Travel Planning's 5% discount code for the London Pass. But let's dive into this week's episode. I started by asking Daryl to introduce himself and share a little bit about his background and his involvement with the London Pass.

Daryl Bennett [00:01:39]:

Hi. So my name is Daryl Bennett. I've got a ridiculous title of senior regional director for London and Dublin. That's a very fancy way to say I look after all of the London attractions and the Dublin attractions that we have on our London products. So, we're talking about the London Pass today. So I make sure that we have a really first class lineup of attractions, a broad range of attractions and experiences, and then I maintain the relationships with those attraction partners to make sure that they are continuing to be happy working with us. And so that I can, in all honesty, negotiate the best possible rates, for us so that we can pass on those savings to our customers to ensure that they get the best value from the London Pass when they're visiting London or any of the other cities that we operate. So, London Pass is owned and operated by a company called GoCity, And London is 1 of 30 cities that we, where we own and operate passes globally.

Tracy Collins [00:02:39]:

So that's exciting. So you're in charge of the London Pass and the Dublin Pass then, Daryl?

Daryl Bennett [00:02:44]:

Correct. Yes. So and it but it's a little bit it's a little bit of a weird 1. Within the company, there are 2 products, the London Pass and the New York Pass, which have kind of kept their old names. And then all of the other attractions kind of have go city in front of them and then insert name of city wherever it is you want to visit.

Tracy Collins [00:03:04]:

Okay. But so we are here to talk about the London Pass. So give us a brief overview of what the London Pass is and how it works.

Daryl Bennett [00:03:13]:

So in essence, the London Pass is it's an app based multi attraction product that allows customers to visit attractions using a single QR code. So as my job is to go out and curate and build up a product with as many attractions as possible. So in, London, for the London Pass, we've got 96 attractions and experiences. And the customer can choose to visit either based on a set number of days sightseeing for the London pass. We also also got the explorer pass, which sits with it, and that's a choice based product. But if we're just focusing on the London Pass because it's kind of the granddaddy of them all, Then the customer can select a set number of consecutive days sightseeing. And then during the course of that lifespan of the pass they can visit as many of those attractions that we've collected together without further payment. So the joy of the product is that we've kind of done a lot of the hard work and the research for you.

Daryl Bennett [00:04:22]:

We've gone out. I'm based in in London. I've lived here for 30 odd years. So I've been in the industry for most of those as well. So no London. No the London attractions landscape really well. And just try to make sure that we've got, as I say, kind of all of the key attractions, but some of the smaller ones, some of the slightly quirkiest ones, some of those that you'll only find in London. And then we present those to the customers on our website or the app, and then it's up to them to choose how many they'd like to visit based on, obviously, their budget, the amount of time they're gonna be spending in London, and just their kind of appetite for sightseeing.

Tracy Collins [00:04:58]:

And what would you say if somebody is considering buying the London Pass? So what would be the benefits for them of buying it? I mean, you've already kinda mentioned I mean, for me, 1 of those advantages is the fact that you you pay, and that's it. You've paid up front. You've you've got your pass, and you can choose from those 96 different attractions. So that's immediate, benefit.

Daryl Bennett [00:05:18]:

Yeah. Absolutely. So you've you've kind of as I said before, we've kind of got that research already done for you. You've then got all of those key attractions in 1 place. So once you've bought your pass, you sync it to our app, and then you use the app as your kind of city guide around London. But you've got then always got those 96 attractions in your back pocket that you can reference back to. You have ultimate flexibility. So wherever possible, we try to arrange so that our customers don't need to book in advance.

Daryl Bennett [00:05:50]:

We can talk a little bit more about that later. The pluses and the minuses, associated with that. But, you know, if you wake up in the morning and as it is today in London, it's bright sunshine, you might have been planning to go to 1 of the museums, and you suddenly go, well, actually, do you know what? It's a really nice day. Let's get out of the city even. Let's go

to Windsor Castle or let's go to Hampton Court Palace. And with the pass, you've got the flexibility to be able to do that because you haven't pre booked anything. You haven't kind of assigned a specific attraction for a specific day. It also gives you that opportunity because there's, in London, 96 attractions to choose from.

Daryl Bennett [00:06:31]:

You've got access to attractions that you might not have heard of before, or you might not have considered visiting before because, you know, it just wasn't on your radar. And so you've got that opportunity to be able to kind of dip into experiences and attractions, that you hadn't thought about doing before. And the other I think the other benefit is that the app actually just works as your city guide. So it has a brilliant function that it knows where you are in London. And, again, going back to that point of visiting attractions you might not have before, it will tell you what your nearest attraction is. So you may have been planning to go to, I don't know, let's say, Westminster Abbey. But at Westminster Abbey, you've also got the Jewel Tower right next to it. It's operated by English Heritage.

Daryl Bennett [00:07:17]:

It's part of the old Westminster Palace. And as the name suggests, it's where the jewels were kept before they got moved to the Tower of London. So do you know what? It's 50 yards around the corner. It's not 1 of those where you kind of Google things to do in London and the Jewel Tower comes up top. But why not? You've got a brilliant piece of history right next to all of the pomp and pageantry associated with Westminster Abbey.

Tracy Collins [00:07:44]:

So that's perfect. So, obviously, you've mentioned a couple of the main kind of, big attractions. But, so so what attractions I mean, because things that all spring to mind, you know, are gonna be The Shard, Tower of London, Westminster Abbey. Yep. So so all of those are included in the London pass. What else have you got included in the pass? And some of those lesser known ones, I'm also interested to

Daryl Bennett [00:08:06]:

know. So we've essentially got all of the key paid for attractions. So what you won't find on our London Pass is all of the museums and galleries because in London, all of the major ones are free, Where we've managed to kind of secure some kind of offer for our customers, then we will include them. So for example, the Natural History Museum, our customers can get a free souvenir guide, from the Natural History Museum if they want to visit that. Or at the Science Museum, there's an IMAX cinema in there that customers can visit that without further payment. And we're constantly working with all of the attractions where that we're not featuring to try and figure out a way of getting 1 to the pass. As far as the key attractions, yeah, the Tower of London, Westminster Abbey, St. Paul's Cathedral, The View from the Shard, they're all there.

Daryl Bennett [00:08:53]:

London Eye, Madame Tussauds, all of the attractions in Maritime Greenwich. So the Cutty Sark, the Royal Observatory, And that's just a fantastic day out, and a great way of getting out of the city and getting a view of the city. We use the hop on hop off bus services of Big Bus. We use the Uber Boat Thames Clippers. That's a brilliant way to get around

London, just and and a great way to see London from a slightly different perspective. Shakespeare's Globe, the London Bridge experience, if you want a fright experience,

Tracy Collins [00:09:34]:
it's

Daryl Bennett [00:09:35]:
been voted the scariest experience in in the UK for the last 20 years, I think. So, yeah, I'd have you lunch after if you go to visit that 1. A couple of my little kind of favorites, I guess, it's a fairly new attraction to London called Frameless. It's up by Marble Arch, for those of you that that know London. And it's an immersive art gallery, that features 4 galleries. It's it's you've I think it's kind of quite well known product universally. So you go in, and you are immersed into the picture. But it's it's of all of the ones I've ever done, it's the best, kind of experience that I've had.

Daryl Bennett [00:10:20]:
It's been, you know, really well executed. Wow. That fun? It's it's really good fun. And, you know, I I'm really lucky. I get to go to almost every single attraction experience in London, and you can get quite jaded. I'll be really honest. It's like, oh, here we go again. Another new attraction.

Daryl Bennett [00:10:37]:
I'll give it 15 minutes, and then I'll come out. I was there for an hour and a half,

Tracy Collins [00:10:40]:
and I didn't wanna leave. Wow.

Daryl Bennett [00:10:42]:
It's fantastic. I am also often asked which is my favorite attraction in London, and that's why I can't pick my favorite children. But the 1 that I always quote or or give back to people is Absley House.

Tracy Collins [00:10:57]:
Right. I haven't been I haven't been there. Uh-huh. Right.

Daryl Bennett [00:11:01]:
So you should go so it's it's the address is brilliant, number 1, London. Yeah. It used to be the home of the Duke of Wellington. And it's just got the most fantastic collection of silverware, of China ware, of armory. And, you know, it's quite an imposing house right on Hyde Park Corner, but it just doesn't kind of look as if it's gonna give you all of that beauty and and history and fascination. So yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:11:27]:
Wow. That sounds fantastic. So are there any exclusive experiences or special access provided if you've got the London pass?

Daryl Bennett [00:11:35]:

So so this is a short answer. Sadly, it's no. So this what we what we do offer though, is there are a huge number of attractions that we have on our past products that, our, let's say, competitors don't have. So there are other pass products out there. You know, other supermarket brands are available. But we have a huge number of attractions on there that don't feature on on any of those other passes. So that includes Tower Bridge, Westminster Abbey, St Paul's Cathedral, all of the English heritage attractions. So that's Apsley House, Wellington Arch, so most of the attractions in Greenwich.

Daryl Bennett [00:12:14]:

So in terms of exclusivity, it's kind of they're exclusive to us, if you like. But with the attractions that we have got, there's a lot of additional discounts or special offers that London Pass customers can receive. So, you know, you might be able to, just get a 10% discount in the gift shop, or a discount in the catering outlet, just by showing your London Pass because you're a London Pass customer. So, yeah, we're and and we're again constantly trying to evolve, those offers so that we are offering our customers an even more additional value.

Tracy Collins [00:12:49]:

I think that's excellent. I mean, having you've already got a massive choice of attractions, but also having the, you know, if you go in and you you're with your family, with your kids, and you're buying some of those things in some of those museum shops as soon adds up. So if you're able to get a 10% discount because of London Pass, that's asset need nothing to be sniffed at for sure. So it's kind of talking about, money and budget. And I know this is a question that we we get asked quite often is is is it worth it? Is it cost effective? So how does that compare if I wanted to purchase individual tickets?

Daryl Bennett [00:13:23]:

Sure. So there's the the another short answer to that 1 is yes. It is worth it. Absolutely. So our, our most popular product in London for the London pass is the 3 day pass, and that currently retails for a £164. Now when you say that number out loud, it does sound like quite a lot of money. I'll be really honest. But then if you just break that down, that's £55 more or less per day for sightseeing.

Daryl Bennett [00:13:51]:

The range of prices for the big attractions, and let's face it, if you're doing a 3 day pass, you probably wanna get in as many of the big attractions as possible, between £25.45 per person. So you just need to do 2 or 3 attractions per day, and you've made your money back. We actually give a a sample itinerary on the London Pass website just to demonstrate the savings that you can make. And we've looked at it really carefully to say, is this practical? Can you do this? You know, you we don't wanna say, you can save money by visiting 24 attractions on your 1st day because you can't do that. No. So the the example itinerary that we give is that on your first day, you'll do a hop on hop off bus. You'll do Westminster Abbey, Tower of London, and London Eye. All that's all perfectly doable on your 1st day.

Daryl Bennett [00:14:49]:

You might need a little bit of a break on your 2nd day, so maybe take the river up to Greenwich. Yep. Do the Observatory, the Cutty Sark, or the Old Royal Naval College. Shout out to the Old Royal Naval College, by the way.

Tracy Collins [00:15:01]:

I love it. I'm always shouting out, actually, for Greenwich. I'm a huge I love Greenwich, so I'm always in a field where you need to go to Greenwich. So yes. Yeah. And I love the Old Naval Hall. Wow. I go every time I'm in London, I go to Greenwich, and I go to that hall, honestly.

Daryl Bennett [00:15:16]:

Oh, yeah. For those people who haven't been, it's the it's the painted hall, and it's a baroque masterpiece

Tracy Collins [00:15:23]:

It is.

Daryl Bennett [00:15:23]:

In an extraordinary building in Greenwich.

Tracy Collins [00:15:26]:

It is. Stunning. Yeah.

Daryl Bennett [00:15:27]:

Yeah. Absolutely. And then on your 3rd day, you kind of wanna ramp things up again. Madame Tussauds up the road to London Zoo and then across the park to Kensington Palace. Look. They're all big hitters, and they're all things that people will get to experience London and and the different types of experiences and attractions that you've got. If you were to do all of those individually, current prices, it's gonna cost you over £320.

Tracy Collins [00:15:54]:

Wow.

Daryl Bennett [00:15:55]:

That's if you were to just walk up to the Yeah. Gate by a tick on the day. So you're I mean, this is crazy, but that's a 50% saving on 10 sightseeing attractions.

Tracy Collins [00:16:08]:

And and and ones that people wanna go to see, the the the ones that we hear about all the time.

Daryl Bennett [00:16:14]:

Exactly. Exactly that. So, you know, that that's a demonstration of of of the value of the past is that it's it's a value proposition for the customer. And we're really careful when and I I kind of need to just think about the attraction partners that we work with here as well. We're really careful when we talk to them. We always show what the retail price is, of the attractions themselves so that the customer can make their own decision as to whether or not this is value. But we're also never in a position where we're devaluing the attractions proposition as well. So we wanna always make sure that, like, we're not going in saying save 75% at Tower of London.

Daryl Bennett [00:16:55]:

That's not what we're about. It's we're putting all of this together. The customer makes their choice, and they can see what it would cost them ordinarily.

Tracy Collins [00:17:03]:

Yeah. So it's a good idea to kinda work out what you wanna go and see. If you wanna spend the time working out how much it's gonna cost, which you can obviously you can do, you can sit and work it out, but say there's there's an example on on your website so you can have a look, work out the cost, and then compare it to how much the London Pass is. And then when you go, actually, I think I'll buy a London Pass, it sounds like that's gonna be the best option for us when we visit London. So how far in advance do people need to buy the London pass?

Daryl Bennett [00:17:31]:

So they can buy it on the day that they're planning their first visit, or they can buy up to 2 years in advance. So if I was to buy a London Pass today, it would still be valid on the 25th June 2026. The the average lead time at this time of year is probably about 2 to 3 weeks. So that it it it tends to be a little bit longer at the beginning of the year in January February when people are really in that kind of planning phase for their summer holidays. Apologies to anybody in the southern hemisphere if that is the other way around.

Tracy Collins [00:18:06]:

Yeah. With the holiday.

Daryl Bennett [00:18:09]:

The only thing I would say is there are a few attractions on the London pass that absolutely do require booking. So the further in advance that you buy the pass, the the longer lead time you have in terms of making a reservation at those ones. And if they're on your kind of must see bucket list, then I would recommend booking a little bit further in advance or buying the pass a little bit further in advance. And we shout out on the website and the app which attractions require reservations, so that, again, you can help to plan your time.

Tracy Collins [00:18:42]:

Okay. And, I think that's important because, again, I think it's something that that we we do often get asked, do I need to make a booking before for some of the, you know, like the Shard, for example? And it's we always say check on the website because you have the up to date list of exactly what needs to be booked and and how far in advance and when. Yeah. So we always kinda point people back in in in your direction. And I I think that's a really valid thing to think about is, like, if you are planning, and some of those sites that you wanna see do require a bit of advance booking, particularly at times a year like now, June, July, August, when when the peak time is that you do need to be thinking ahead because you don't wanna get it, and then you you've left it too late to book anything. You know? Those particular things.

Daryl Bennett [00:19:28]:

And, like, the the of the key attractions that absolutely need to be booked in advance are the London Eye, Madame 2 Swords, and The View from The Shard. So all of those are reservation essential. And then unsurprisingly, the walking tours, most of those require

booking in advance because the tour guides need to know how many people are gonna turn up so that they need to know and can work out whether they need to turn up.

Tracy Collins [00:19:55]:

Yeah. No. Absolutely. So, let's move on to how the London Pass is presented. So I know you've mentioned digitally. Is it also in a physical format, or is it all digital?

Daryl Bennett [00:20:08]:

It is all digital now. So pre COVID, we had, physical, London passes. They were kind of like little, plastic credit cards, but we're helping to save the planet. So, we've gone digital now. So once someone has purchased a pass either from our website or our app, then they send an email confirmation with their order number, and then they link that order number to our app, and then they delivered a QR code. And that's 1 single QR code per person, per pass

Tracy Collins [00:20:40]:

Right.

Daryl Bennett [00:20:41]:

That is used to access all of the attractions. So we provide all of our attraction partners with the wherewithal to be able to scan and validate those QR codes. So when the customer arrives, they just have to show the QR code to the admission staff at the ticket desk or the booth, wherever that that is. And, again, all of that information is on the website about what you do when you get to the attraction as much as we can because sometimes it changes. So we make sure we keep that as up to date as possible. So, yeah, the customer just shows their QR code. It's scanned. It validates it to say, yes.

Daryl Bennett [00:21:16]:

This is, this is indeed a London pass, not just a QR code from a box of cold flakes, and in you go and enjoy your experience.

Tracy Collins [00:21:25]:

So that's perfect. So, what should visitors be aware of to ensure they get the most out of having their London pass? So I would say plan. Just have a look at all

Daryl Bennett [00:21:37]:

of the attractions that are are on there. There's an an option to be able to filter by map view so that you can kind of see which attractions are close by because, you know, you might have 2 really favorite attractions that you think you can do in 1 day, and, actually, they're on completely the opposite sides of London. So I would just say just plan and be realistic that it takes a little bit longer to get around London than than you might think, especially if you're traveling by kind of road. You know, if you're using the bus to get around, you can get stuck in traffic. So I would just say plan, leave enough time between attractions to be able to get from 1 to the other without panicking because there's nothing worse when you're going, I've got to get especially if you've got a reservation somewhere. It's like, I've got to get to the London Eye for 11 o'clock, and it's half past 10, and I'm still in London Zoo. It's like, well, you're never gonna make it. So just I think it's just just plan your day, give yourself the space to breathe because you can then enjoy the experience, and you can enjoy London while you're getting from 1 attraction to the other.

Tracy Collins [00:22:50]:
Oh, absolutely.

Daryl Bennett [00:22:51]:
I think the other thing, kind of a little bit of advice I always give to people is see if you can walk between the 2 because it's often quicker, easier, nicer, less stressful, and you get to see London while you're doing it. So, yeah, I think that's, you know, a key takeout is just to just to plan your day. You know, you've got all of the information that you need in front of you so you can figure out the your best routes and and your best options for each day. And maybe just kind of keep a spare in your back pocket in case the weather changes and, you know, suddenly you want to be outside or you need to be inside. Again, the the pass gives you the option to be able to just have that flexibility.

Tracy Collins [00:23:34]:
Oh, that's perfect. So what kind of customer support is available if you have the London Pass?

Daryl Bennett [00:23:40]:
So it's all available on the app. There are different options and different means and ways of contacting us if you have any issues. We provide all of the information as well to our attraction partners. So if there's a if there's an issue for whatever reason at the gate, they're able to provide that information to you. But we've got a call us function. We've got a WhatsApp. We've got a chatbot. I think we're about to launch a new 1 soon, that's a little bit more, intuitive.

Daryl Bennett [00:24:09]:
Numbers to call depending on where you're calling from as well. So all of that's available. And there's an email address, if you need to get in touch with us. So we we've given everybody as many different means of communication to get hold of us should they have any problems. But, hopefully, because you bought the London Pass, there won't be any.

Tracy Collins [00:24:26]:
Exactly. Exactly. Well, it's been fantastic chatting to you, Daryl, and and finding out all about the London Pass. I know I I asked in our Facebook group and our UK travel plan and Facebook group what questions people had and so I'm sure they'll be really happy to listen to this and all other listeners around the world that are interested in buying the London pass to find out as much information as they have from this episode. So that's fantastic. But I always end the episode with the same question for every single person. So the question I'm gonna ask you is predictable for all our listeners, they'll know, is what is the 1 tip that you would give to anybody visiting London for the first time?

Daryl Bennett [00:25:04]:
Oh, you need me to narrow this down to 1 tip. I do. Well, I've kind of hinted at 1, which is walk. My 1 tip am I allowed to?

Tracy Collins [00:25:14]:
Oh, go for it. Go on. Go on.

Daryl Bennett [00:25:16]:
No. Okay. My 1 tip is look up.

Tracy Collins [00:25:19]:
Yes.

Daryl Bennett [00:25:19]:
Because there is so much to see that you don't see if you're kind of buried in a a guidebook or it or I shouldn't say this, but buried in the app. But, you know, you need to check your app and then look up. And if you can use the river.

Tracy Collins [00:25:33]:
Oh, absolutely. But, thank you so much, Daryl, for coming on to the podcast this week. It's been fantastic

Daryl Bennett [00:25:43]:
my absolute pleasure, and thanks for letting us have the opportunity to talk a little bit more about this fantastic product.

Tracy Collins [00:25:50]:
Oh, what a fun and informative episode that was. Thanks again, Daryl, for coming on to the podcast and sharing your forward slash episode 106. But that just leaves me to say, as always, until next week, happy UK travel planning.