

Episode 108 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]:

So welcome to the UK Travel Planet podcast. This is episode 108 and this week I'm really excited then that I have an Aussie, a fellow Aussie on the podcast to do a trip report. So I've got Lauren, who you may have heard in episode 100, who was a fan of the podcast and she traveled to the UK last year. Last year? Was it this year, Lauren?

Lauren [00:01:03]:

March this year?

Tracy Collins [00:01:04]:

March this year. I should know that you traveled to the UK in March this year and who I asked if she'd come on and do a trip report. So, Lauren, it's great to have you on the podcast. Would you like to just tell us whereabouts you are in Australia to start with?

Lauren [00:01:19]:

Sure. Thanks, Tracy. It's great to be here. I'm from Ballarat in Victoria, Australia, so in the south of Australia.

Tracy Collins [00:01:27]:

And I was just saying to you, I'm actually recording this from Perth at the moment because I'm staying at my daughter's and I'm freezing to death. So I think that confirms me as a queenslander.

Lauren [00:01:37]:

It is freezing here also.

Tracy Collins [00:01:39]:

Oh, so cold. So cool. Okay, so Lauren, so tell us, how long did you go to the UK for? Who did you travel with? And give us kind of a brief overview of your itinerary.

Lauren [00:01:50]:

Sure. We went to the UK for two weeks as part of a bigger trip. The UK component was two weeks and I travelled with my mum, who has just turned 70. I'm sure she'll be thrilled with me for saying that. My partner and our three kids who are age 10 11 and ten, oh, we got twinsd, two stepsons and my daughter.

Tracy Collins [00:02:19]:

Ah, okay. Okay. So multi generational travel then, Lauren. So that has its own kind of challenges when it comes to planning a trip, that's for sure. So what was your itinerary like? I guess a good question asked as well because you mentioned the fact that you had your mom and your kids is how did you decide on your itinerary? So give us an overview of your itinerary. And I guess how did you manage to make it so that everybody was happy with it?

Lauren [00:02:44]:

Yep. So we had a week in London and then we had three nights in Bath, two nights in Oxford, and then we spent a week back in. Sorry, one night back in London before heading out on the Eurostar the next morning. As far as catering for everyone, probably the key concerns for us was restraining myself from packing too much in. If it had have been just my partner and I, that would have been less of a concern. But with the three kids, we didn't want to wear them out and have cranky kids. And then mum is fit and healthy but also conscious of, you know, stairs and things like that. So making sure that we weren't, you know, being ridiculous with, you know, stairs and, you know, thinking about, well, we'll catch a tube or get a taxi here or whatever, just trying to be a bit sensible.

Lauren [00:03:34]:

And probably the biggest thing I was looking at was a, like, if we were on the second floor or the third floor, did we have lifts? Was there really steep stairs, those sorts of things to think about because we had suitcases and things to lug around.

Tracy Collins [00:03:49]:

That's actually a really important point because I tell you, more than once we stayed at accommodation and ended up on the top floor. And then Doug, not me, has had to log a heavy suitcase all the way up four flights of stairs. And that's important. And that's not just actually in London, but in the UK, a lot of the accommodation is quite old, so you're not necessarily going to get a lift. You know, I guess that's something I think about less that Doug will tell me. It's like you have made sure to ask them that we're going to be on, like, the first floor or the ground. Ground floor, if possible, so that I don't have to look it if they don't have a lift. So that's a really good point, actually, to think about.

Tracy Collins [00:04:26]:

If you're listening, just check if you don't want to be carrying suitcases up three or four flights of stairs, just to check or request that you stay on the ground or the first floor. And I will say, in the UK, we start with the ground floor. On the first floor is the first floor. It's not the ground floor, if that makes sense, because I know in the states they start with the first floor and then the second floor on the third floor. And actually, where I live in Australia, where it's exactly the same way on the third floor, which technically would be the second floor in the UK. So that's always interesting.

Lauren [00:05:00]:

Yeah. We were lucky to avoid that confusion. Yes. Coming from Australia.

Tracy Collins [00:05:05]:

Yes, that's true. So how did you come up? So how long, first of all, I guess, how long did it take you to create your itinerary and kind of. How did you go about doing it?

Lauren [00:05:14]:

It was sort of an evolving process. We started planning in sort of midway through 2022, so we had a long lead up. I think it was about 20 months that we started throwing around the idea of going and then actually leaving. Part of that was financial, you know, five of us. It's expensive coming from Australia.

Tracy Collins [00:05:37]:

Yes.

Lauren [00:05:38]:

So we needed that time to save and probably the. Probably took six months to really hammer down sort of the main three cities that we were going to stay in. And then the rest of it was finer details as far as how we started. I just literally started Google mapping, just getting a handle on geography. I was a little bit embarrassed to realize how little I knew about where things were in the UK. So once I had an idea about London's here and Edinburgh is here and Bath is here and Oxford is here, we were initially looking at going to Edinburgh, but couldn't fit it in. And I just started a Google sheet and just started a big list of all the things that we might like to see and then just mapping out travel distance in kilometres and time and trying to group things together and trying to get a little bit more realistic from there. And I was fortunate enough very early on in the planning, probably the first month or two of hunting around, assembled across the Facebook page and joined there and then found all of your resources.

Lauren [00:06:46]:

And then I was really fortunate because I avoided a whole bunch of pitfalls and there was so much great advice around don't overpack your itinerary. Be aware that perhaps don't think about driving because we were looking at doing a hire car and those sorts of things to do more of the Cotswolds. And then we kind of realized that probably wasn't going to be a good option for us with a party of six and trying to hire a car and suitcases and things. So things just were naturally tailored down from that point. Yeah. And I think it was probably in the first six months, we decided on London, Bath and Oxford, and then trying to pick, you know, out of 50 million things that we wanted to do what was actually realistic.

Tracy Collins [00:07:30]:

That's so true. There's so much to do and I think that's a good point. You're saying about is like, try not to over once you've decided. And actually, I think that's a huge making that decision about where you want to go, knowing how long you're going for. And then where is it that you really want to see? Because there are so many places. And as you say, even when you've chosen the three places, three cities you want to go to visit, it's still, once you've narrowed that down, then you step, then you have to kind of go through the process again and then start looking at, okay, what are the things that we want to do with each of these, you know, three destinations. So you decided not to drive. So how did you, how did you.

Lauren [00:08:06]:

Get around just the train? Just great western railway we were on just with the three cities that we're in. Yeah, train and the tube and I think one taxi.

Tracy Collins [00:08:20]:

Yeah. And easy.

Lauren [00:08:21]:

Yeah, it was great. So I kept reading that the transport system was easy and in the UK and I was like, yeah, but is it because I don't really do public transport here because we're in a regional area. So I was a little bit nervous about it, but it was so clear and so brilliant. Like, the kids were having a great time, you know, on the tube, looking at the maps, figuring out how many stops we had to go from somewhere. And even my mum, who hasn't done any traveling, she was, you know, getting a handle on things and we're getting more and more confident. It really didn't take us that long to sort out the tube, like, like half a day.

Tracy Collins [00:08:56]:

Yeah.

Lauren [00:08:57]:

And then the great Western railway service we found super as well. So it was just, I don't know, all the, all the signage and everything was just so clear.

Tracy Collins [00:09:06]:

I think it's, um. I think it's easier than people expect. I think it's just if you haven't done it before, particularly the London Underground can feel a bit daunting. But actually it's really well set up and as Doug always says, people will help you out. You just have to ask. Yes, um, I just gonna. Did you buy Doug's ebook?

Lauren [00:09:24]:

Yes, we did.

Tracy Collins [00:09:27]:

Excellent.

Lauren [00:09:27]:

Yeah, yeah, we got, we got a few of the ebooks to begin with. Again, as I said, we were just lucky. We just started off on the right foot. We didn't, didn't make a whole bunch of errors in our planning, which was really nice. And we had their TfL go app as well. And we used trainline and we, you know, again, through Doug's help, we got the family and friends card and saved a ton of money on our tickets. And it's just really, really good.

Tracy Collins [00:09:54]:

Oh, yeah, absolutely. Well, Duke's just started doing itinerary consults, basically focused on train travel as well, which he's really excited about. He could talk trains all day, all night. And his knowledge of the UK train system, honestly, is like it's second to none. He just knows it so well. And he prides himself on the fact that he's actually done every single line at least once around the UK, which is pretty good. But I think he's pretty good at explaining it as well, how to, you know, what to do.

Lauren [00:10:21]:

He's super patient.

Tracy Collins [00:10:22]:

Yeah, yeah.

Lauren [00:10:24]:

Super kind. And doesn't treat anyone like an idiot, which is really appreciated when you feel like one.

Tracy Collins [00:10:30]:

Well, you know, it's like anybody going somewhere new or doing something new for the first time. You know, we all have those anxieties. We all have those things about. I was planning a trip to Japan last year, which really threw me, and I was like, I need a consult with somebody who knows all about Japan. I've got it. Few friends who do some fantastic Facebook groups and websites, but I was like, I actually want to talk to somebody about this stuff because I think that also helps. And we do find that when we do the itinerary consults, it's often. It's just allaying fears and just kind of fine tuning things to make it kind of better for people so that they have the kind of the best, the best experience possible.

Tracy Collins [00:11:08]:

So you went to London, you went to Oxford and you went to Bath. So I'm going to ask you what were your favorite experiences and places that you visited at each of those destinations?

Lauren [00:11:19]:

Yeah, it's hard. There's so many. We did so much. Even though I said that we tried not to overpack our itinerary, we did do a lot. So for London, I would say I took your advice, and our first day in London, we did the ho ho bus, which was just the best experience for so many reasons. I mean, we weren't too badly jet lagged because we'd arrived at nighttime and slept pretty solid 8 hours and woke up in the daytime, which was a good way to go for us. But just having that initial experience of driving around the grandest part of London and it was just everywhere you looked, it was just mind blowing. It was such a great thing to do.

Lauren [00:12:02]:

And we just had our jaws on the ground all day. Such a good experience. What else do we do in London? We did Harry Potter studios, of course, which was brilliant. Can't say enough good things about that. I could probably go on and on, but I'll try not to. My partner and I did big Ben, which was a real highlight. We did the big Ben tour, which was just fantastic.

Tracy Collins [00:12:25]:

That's quite difficult to get into.

Lauren [00:12:27]:

Yeah, it's quite difficult to get into. Stressful booking those tickets.

Tracy Collins [00:12:31]:

Did you have to climb up? Because I've not done it because I get claustrophobic and that does worry me. Is it kind of tight walking up the stairs, or is it.

Lauren [00:12:40]:

No, I. I didn't find it uncomfortable. I'm not great in tight spaces either. And I found it. I found it quite good. And they're funny because they send you emails leading up to like, that are quite intimidating. And they're like, you know, make sure you are fit enough and don't have any health concerns. And I'm like, God, you know, am I going to be fit enough?

Tracy Collins [00:13:00]:

Yeah.

Lauren [00:13:01]:

But the way that they structured the tour, there's so many levels with inside Big Ben, which I didn't realize. And there's different rooms that lead off the stairways. And you only do maybe 150 steps at a, like a manageable pace. And then you'll go into one of those rooms and they'll give you a talk about a certain aspect of Big Ben's history. And you can get your breath back. And then you're just getting up the stairs again. And then they stop again. So it was actually easier than what I thought it was going to be.

Tracy Collins [00:13:30]:

Okay. That's good to know. I'll have to put that on my list to try and get tickets for when I'm back in London.

Lauren [00:13:35]:

Not sure. Yeah. You just got to be organized to get them.

Tracy Collins [00:13:38]:

Yes. Yeah. I don't know. I'll have to set. I'll have to take your advice on that, I think.

Lauren [00:13:43]:

Yeah, yeah. So I think it's three months out on the parliament website, and then you have to. And they only put them up there once a month. And you have to know what day you want to go and what time you can go because the tickets were gone in about 15 minutes.

Tracy Collins [00:13:59]:

Yeah, that's always a problem with me.

Lauren [00:14:01]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:14:02]:

Because I'm never quite sure. I'm not sure. I might be back in September, October yet, so I'm still. But it's like trying to plan ahead when. When I'm never quite sure when I can fit it in back over. So what other things in London did you. Did you really enjoy?

Lauren [00:14:16]:

Well, it wasn't directly in London, but when we went to Windsor, St. George's chapel in Windsor was just amazing. Such a beautiful building and quite an emotional experience being in there. There's just an atmosphere about that building. And I think with Queen Elizabeth being the second, being buried there as well, you know, fairly recently. It's just a very serene, stunning building to be in. It just blew me away. It was really surprising.

Tracy Collins [00:14:42]:

It's really interesting. It is a really interesting chapel to visit, actually. And I was there in June and the queues. There was a lot of queues to go in and they do have to move people on because obviously a lot of people want to pay their respects to the late Queen. But, yeah, I agree. I think it's a very special place to visit. We've just actually, I put out a couple of articles about visiting Windsor, just to say to people to double check if you really want to go to see St George's Chapel, because it's not open every day and people want to be disappointed by that. And I actually just put a little video together on YouTube as well about.

Tracy Collins [00:15:18]:

About Windsor, because just to show people kind of what to expect.

Lauren [00:15:22]:

It's an amazing place to go.

Tracy Collins [00:15:23]:

Yeah, absolutely.

Lauren [00:15:25]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:15:25]:

I'm glad that you got out to visit. And it's easy to get to, isn't it?

Lauren [00:15:29]:

Yes. Yeah. We were staying in East Putney. It's a little way out, but. So we just caught the train directly from Putney, so it was like 40 minutes and there I'm back, straight forward.

Tracy Collins [00:15:41]:

Easy peasy. And then in bath, what did you enjoy?

Lauren [00:15:46]:

So we did a walking tour in bath and we found that so good. It was one of the blue Badge tours through get your guide. And we had. Our tour guide's name was Jim, and he was brilliant, he was so friendly and he adapted his tour for the kids, telling them all sorts of interesting stories and some toned down ghost stories, and went and found the vents in the road where the hot air comes out from the baths with the water running underneath the roads. And the kids were fascinated by that. And he was just brilliant. So that was a really good experience in bathe. And the Roman bars themselves was.

Lauren [00:16:30]:

I mean, I knew that it would be good. I had no understanding of how good it would be. The kids were so engaged. We got them the audio tour listening sets and that worked really well, particularly for the boys. They tend to learn better through listening rather than reading things. So they were just running around, soaking up so much information and coming back and telling us what they'd learned and the displays and the way that they've set up the

information and stuff. It's a beautiful display in itself, but it's so informative and interactive as well, which was just a really great way of spending a morning.

Tracy Collins [00:17:06]:

Oh, yeah, second that, actually. I took my mum last year for her 80th birthday. She hadn't been before and she was blown away by it. It's just fabulous. They've done such an amazingly good job of how they present that, uh, history. Yeah. And it's a fabulous place to visit as well. Honestly, you can't go to Bath without going to see the Roman baths.

Tracy Collins [00:17:26]:

You really can't. No, you just can't.

Lauren [00:17:29]:

I mean, you see that iconic image of the. But of the main bath itself. But there's so much more to it that you just probably. They probably don't show enough. I don't think. I don't think that they promote their museum underneath clearly enough, because it's so good.

Tracy Collins [00:17:43]:

Yeah, that's possibly true. Possibly true. And did you do some tours from Bath? I know you mentioned Stonehenge.

Lauren [00:17:50]:

Yeah, yeah. So we did a. No, no, we did a bus tour from Bath, which was a day tour. It's a combined Stonehenge, Avebury Stone circle, Lacock Village and Castle Combe. Castle Combe, perhaps. And then drive. Yeah. And then driving past, you know, Silvery Hill and the horse, the white horse, whose name I can't remember.

Lauren [00:18:17]:

Yeah. So lots of different things as well. Driving past as well. It was just a brilliant day. Stonehenge and Avebury Stone circle, that I can't seem to say properly today, were fantastic. And the kids loved that. They loved being able to run around the stones and, you know, touch them and hug them, and they sat in the devil's chair and were threatening to run a hundred times around anti clockwise to summon the devil. And they just had a great time.

Tracy Collins [00:18:43]:

That's Avebury. I will just tease an Ed. You can't do that. We'll be very happy.

Lauren [00:18:48]:

Yes, Avebury, you can't do that. Stonehenge. The Stonehenge was brilliant for its own reasons. The visitor center there was really, really good. And dressed warmly would be my tip there. It was pretty chilly on the hill.

Tracy Collins [00:19:03]:

Yeah, it can be. And I'm so. I'm really happy to hear you say this, Lauren, because often in the Facebook group, we'll get quite strong opinions. It's really funny. There's strong opinions about oyster card versus contactless on the tube. There's strong opinions on whether you need cash or don't. And then the third one that there's really strong opinions about is

whether you should go to Stonehenge or not. And I am a firm advocate for going to Stonehenge.

Tracy Collins [00:19:29]:

Why would you not want to go to Stonehenge? I just can't. I don't understand it. It's an amazing place to go and visit. The museum's excellent. And wow. I just go, wow. Wow. Every time I go.

Tracy Collins [00:19:41]:

And it doesn't matter how many times I've gone. I've been multiple times. I always just love going.

Lauren [00:19:46]:

Yeah. There's such an atmosphere about the place. I think if you go with the expectation that, no, you can't walk through the stones unless you go through on one of the tours, you can actually get a lot closer than what we expected that we could. You get right next to the heelstone. You know, we got photos next to the Heelstone and looking out over the plains where you can see, you know, the excavations and the old highways and things, you know, and there's a lot of really great signage. You know, the kids had plenty to keep them interested. And as I said, the visitor center was really, really interesting and really well done. I don't know.

Lauren [00:20:23]:

We had a great time. I recommend it to anyone.

Tracy Collins [00:20:27]:

Yeah, it's brilliant. No, I recommend. Absolutely. Absolutely. Second year on that one. So you went to Oxford as well. Oxford is another favourite of mine. There's always the Oxford Cambridge debate, because I'm kind of a little bit tipped by Cambridge.

Tracy Collins [00:20:42]:

I just love. I love Cambridge. Doesn't.

Lauren [00:20:44]:

It?

Tracy Collins [00:20:44]:

Don't mean I don't like Oxford. I do. Just. Just. I think Cambridge captured my heart a couple of years ago, and I kind of go, oh, but so talk about Oxford. What did you enjoy about Oxford?

Lauren [00:20:55]:

Yeah, so we had a couple of nights in Oxford. Unfortunately, when we were there, they were doing an alumni dinner for. At all of the colleges, so we couldn't get into the colleges themselves, which we were initially a little bit, you know, down in the mouth about. But we did do a walking tour through. Get your guide as well. And again, the tour guide that we had there was brilliant adapted things for the kids. I'm a writer, so being able to be, you know, standing in the footsteps of Cs Lewis and Tolkien and hearing those stories and seeing what

colleges they went to and seeing the inspiration for Aslan and, you know, the lamppost and things like that, that was fine tingling for me.

Tracy Collins [00:21:39]:

Yeah, yeah, no, I get that. Also, I remember standing there looking at me going, this is so exciting because I'm a big fan. Lion, the witch and the wardrobe. I mean, you know, one of those books, isn't it? So. Yeah. And that. That's the special thing about Oxford, I think there's obviously the Harry Potter connection that people always love. And it is a beautiful, architecturally, it's beautiful city.

Tracy Collins [00:21:59]:

It really, really is.

Lauren [00:22:00]:

There's so much history.

Tracy Collins [00:22:02]:

Yeah, absolutely. I'm glad to hear as well that you did. I always recommend as well, if you're listening, what Lauren's saying is correct about do these walking tours, and we do have links on the website to the tours that we recommend and that we've done in Bath and Oxford, because you will learn so much more if you go on a walk in tour than you will if you just try and wander around yourself using Google Maps. And they're not that expensive, but 100% worth doing.

Lauren [00:22:31]:

Yeah. And I would say that about Oxford, too. Oxford's quite. I guess it's quite understated in the things that it celebrates, in that it doesn't have big signs saying, cS Lewis stood here looking at, you know, the lamppost.

Tracy Collins [00:22:46]:

Yeah.

Lauren [00:22:46]:

You know, or it doesn't say, you know, Tolkien went to this college in a big, you know, black and white sign. You really need someone who's in the know who can point these things out to you otherwise. And I had done my research before, before we went, but I would have missed a whole lot of things if we didn't have the guide. So. Totally agree with what you're saying there.

Tracy Collins [00:23:06]:

Yeah, absolutely. It's 100% always worth doing it. And if you don't want to take a private one, a group tour is absolutely perfectly fine as well. I mean, I was lucky last year and I booked group tour in Cambridge and it ended up just being me and my friend Lucy. So we ended up on a private tour, which is amazing.

Lauren [00:23:23]:

Quite small. Yeah. I think there's maybe two or three other people plus us. So, yeah, perfect.

Tracy Collins [00:23:30]:

Perfect. Okay, so what sort of places did you stay in in the three destinations that you were at?

Lauren [00:23:37]:

Yeah. So because there were six of us, it was challenging in that regard to find a combination. It was an affordability question for us to stay, more centrally, because we were going to have to book two or three rooms potentially. We just couldn't find the right combination of, you know, bedding. So we stayed in Airbnbs every night in the UK, except for our last night in London, where we booked a couple of rooms at the premiere in. At Kings Cross because we were nice and close to the Eurostar then, but, yeah, stayed in Airbnbs. I know that there's been plenty of horror stories, but we had really great experiences with our Airbnbs when we were over there. So we were lucky.

Lauren [00:24:17]:

We were really happy with our location in East Putney. I know. Yeah. That sort of goes against the advice, because it's you know, half an hour or so out on the tube. But it worked really well for us. One of the bonuses, we thought we were staying right across the road from our primary school, so it's a really lovely neighbourhood. We've kind of felt like locals wandering up to the supermarket and the tube and the local parks and things. So you just see a different side of what life is like, I think.

Tracy Collins [00:24:46]:

And it's. It's really funny because actually, I remember, I'm sure you asked in the Facebook group about East Putney, and, you know, we do. If, if you stay in London for a short period of time and, you know, you're pushed for time, then staying in central London is always a good idea, I think, bought, and I will tap this. So we stay. It's very expensive. London is. Is incredibly expensive. And we know not everybody is going to swing, especially this, you know, six years ago, and it's.

Tracy Collins [00:25:12]:

It starts adding up. But actually. So I have a very good friend who lives in East Putney. I remember when you asked about that. So I tend to sometimes will stay in central London when I go back, but more often than not, we'll stay with my friend Terry. And it's very easy to get in. It is a direct tube line. But also what's really interesting, and I think you're right, what you've kind of, and I think that'd be great for the kids as well, is because you're slightly out, but you get to see normal life for Londoners and you're commuting in with everybody else who's commuting in.

Tracy Collins [00:25:44]:

That's the only thing I would say. Sometimes it can get incredibly busy at the commuting hours, getting seats on those tube trains in and out.

Lauren [00:25:51]:

We did try and avoid pay cow.

Tracy Collins [00:25:53]:

Yeah.

Lauren [00:25:53]:
Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:25:54]:
Because it does get really, really busy, but it is actually pretty quick to get in. But, yes, I was quite happy because I did spend a bit of time in the early nineties in East Putney, and now I go back quite often. So, yes, it is a nice place to go. I was glad it worked out. It worked out really well for you guys. And also having it. Yeah. And having Airbnb as well is what you could.

Tracy Collins [00:26:16]:
You could prepare your own food, which, again, helps with, like, costs and stuff because I know how expensive it is, which kind of takes me on to kind of the food question is, did you have any favorite foods that you tried when you're over? I know this is your. Was this your first trip out of Australia? I know it's your first trip to the UK. But was this your first?

Lauren [00:26:34]:
I've. I have been overseas to a couple of other destinations, but for the rest of my family it was the first trip.

Tracy Collins [00:26:40]:
Okay. So. And obviously there's a lot of close ties between Australia and the UK. So was there anything that you like, food that you particularly enjoyed? Like you didn't try any marmite versus vegemite?

Lauren [00:26:54]:
I didn't try any marmite, no. I think I have tried it before. Yeah. So we went to. We gave the meal deals a red hot crack, I will say, because with, you know, with kids looking for sort of familiar foods and then trying to save some money, that was a wonderful tip. Sometimes when we're out during the day, it was just a nice quick and easy thing to go and grab sandwich and drink, etcetera. And then some nights when we were just falling in a heap in our accommodation because we had such a big day, then throwing some things in the oven was nice and easy. So thank you for that.

Lauren [00:27:32]:
That was really, really handy to learn about as far as the kids, you know, the instagrammable, you know, chocolate covered strawberries. The kids loved them. They got them both at Borough Market and Greenwich market. Yeah, they couldn't get enough of them. And the juice bars that they have there as well with this, you know, freshly squeezed smoothies and things, they couldn't get enough of those either. I'm like, good, get some fruit and veggies into you because we're not probably eating the best. So, like, yeah, you can go get some smoothies, that's fine. We had a traditional Sunday roast and sticky toffee pudding, which was super yum.

Lauren [00:28:10]:
I got to try Yorkshire pudding that I'd been hanging out to try, which was really, really good. We had a Sunday lunch in Oxford at the angel and Greyhound, which I couldn't recommend

highly enough. They were brilliant there, their service. And they were so kind to us because we had all of our suitcases with us that day and they were so accommodating and called us a taxi and, yeah, they were just wonderful. And what else do we. So we went to the bath bun tea shop. I really wanted to go to Sally Lunn's, but we just couldn't make it work that day. But we really enjoyed that experience.

Lauren [00:28:44]:

It was a lovely little sort of quintessential English experience with fantastic service and, you know, English teacups and saucers and teapots. And the kids just thought that was it a bit. So that was a really great experience as well. Another sort of English experience we had was at the Raven in Bath. Our tour guide actually recommended the Raven to us, which they have a limited menu, but they specialise in bangers and mash and pies, basically, but they do them very well. They were super yummy. So everyone went home very full and very happy from there. And then in London, we went to the Serpentine bar and Kitchen in Hyde Park on our first day, when we were touring around on the hop on, hop off bus.

Lauren [00:29:28]:

And that was a really lovely experience. Really lovely food and coffee and sitting on the lake watching the white swans, because we've only got black swans in Australia, so that was pretty cool. And Harrod's food hall, of course, that was an experience. It is only takeaway, though. I will warn people that you can't prop in a corner and eat like we tried, because the security guard moves on. Yeah, we'll move you slightly.

Tracy Collins [00:29:49]:

But how busy was it in March? Because I do. I do kind of advise to really avoid it when it comes to it. Well, even last May, it was crazy. In June, it's been so, so busy. Couldn't get moved around. But it's. It's a lovely. I mean, I love.

Tracy Collins [00:30:03]:

I love food, so it's just really good fun. And it's so expensive, though. I think I bought, like, a croissant last year with avocado in it. It was delicious, but I think it was about six quid or something. Ridiculous. I was like, oh, even more, maybe even more so. I enjoyed every bite of that, I tell you.

Lauren [00:30:23]:

Yeah, it wasn't too crowded. It was. It was manageable.

Tracy Collins [00:30:27]:

How was Borough Market as well? How did you find that?

Lauren [00:30:31]:

Yeah, Borough Market was sort of verging on quite crowded. Like, we had to make a bit of a safety plan for all of us to make sure we didn't get separated and have some sort of rendezvous points, because it was pretty full on and with the younger kids, they were a little bit worried. We actually ended up enjoying Greenwich Market, actually more than Borough Market. Even though Borough Market was great, I'm really glad that we went. Greenwich Market still had a really great variety of food, was easy to get around, and they had all of the local artisans and market sellers there, which were great to talk to and they had lots of really

cool things to buy that were a little bit different, that we could bring home for gifts and things. So we spent quite a lot of time and money at Greenwich Market. It was really.

Tracy Collins [00:31:16]:

You spent a bit in Greenwich as well, didn't you? That was one thing I was going.

Lauren [00:31:19]:

To say, yeah, we spent the whole day.

Tracy Collins [00:31:21]:

Yeah, I love Greenwich. It's one of my favorite places to visit. And, you know, if you're in London long enough, really, Greenwich should be included in your itinerary. And also it's a bit different. You're getting out of kind of the centre. It's a little bit less crowded, less busy. You get the kids to run around in the park, so you've got the market. It's really nice.

Tracy Collins [00:31:42]:

Did you go by boat down to Greenwich?

Lauren [00:31:45]:

We did. We had the London pass, so we had the uber boat on that. And we got the ferry all the way from. Sorry, the uber boat from Wandsworth Pier, which wasn't far from our accommodation, which was super convenient. So then we got a river cruise on top of our day out at Greenwich as well, which was really nice to see. Things from different angle, gets in different photos, go under tower bridge, all those cool things. Yeah, yeah. So that was a really fantastic day out Greenwich.

Lauren [00:32:10]:

It was really good. We did the observatory as well, and the Cuddy sack and, you know, at times I thought, oh, I'm going to lose the kids. But as far as attention span. But they were really interested in everything. And the Karisak is really interactive, surprisingly. So the kids had plenty to do within the hull of the ship itself, which surprised us.

Tracy Collins [00:32:30]:

I think they do a really good job in the UK, actually, with a lot of their historic, kind of the way they display the history and the way they develop the museums. I went to see the Mary Rose in Portsmouth at the historic dockyard a couple of years ago, and I was absolutely blown away. You go back to the UK, I'd highly recommend. I reckon the kids would love it. How they have presented that is astounding. It's just. It's probably the best museum I've ever been to in the world. The way they've done it took them a long time to do it, but wow, it is fabulous.

Lauren [00:33:08]:

Yeah, yeah, they do do it well. We didn't see a disappointing display anywhere we went, really.

Tracy Collins [00:33:15]:

No, I think it's really well thought out how they do it, the curators and how they present it. They do just such a good job of it. And a lot of them are free, actually. A lot of places like the

museums in London, like v and a, which is my favorite. Everybody will know that if you listen to the podcast obsessed with the V and A, you know, the Natural History Museum, the science museum, the British Museum, all those. They're all free, which is great, you know. Yes, it's a fabulous day out. Okay, so, Lauren, you spent a few weeks in the UK.

Tracy Collins [00:33:44]:

There was your mom, yourself, your partner, three kids. Kai, you're gonna have learned a lot of stuff about you, thinking, okay, if anybody's traveling to the UK, what would be your tips of going for the first time, like all you guys will? What would be your tips that you'd share?

Lauren [00:34:00]:

Yeah. So probably three main tips, I would think. Of course, checking out the Facebook group, the podcast, and the website, because I'm not just saying that we were so fortunate to get in with those resources early. And I. I thanked you and Doug many, many times while we were away going. That is, you know, thinking, well, Tracey said that this is actually how it's gone and our day has gone to plan. We were able to just avoid a lot of hassles. We didn't miss out on the things that we wanted to do.

Lauren [00:34:33]:

We were prepared. You know, I just felt, I've discovered on quite the planner, and everything just went really smoothly because of those things. So I just can't highly recommend them enough and say thanks enough. So thank you. The other thing I would say around booking things, I wouldn't book more than one thing per day. And when I say book, I mean actually lock yourself in for a time slot more than one of those a day, because it just gets stressful and you're not.

Tracy Collins [00:35:00]:

Yeah.

Lauren [00:35:00]:

It doesn't allow that spontaneity to creep in. Or if you want to wander through a park or go and sit down and people watch for a while, you're taking away that freedom. Or if the kids get tired or someone gets unwell or whatever, it's just not allowing for that freedom. And then make sure you do your research on what you need to book ahead, because some things have plenty of flexibility and other things do not. Probably the three standouts for us for that in London was Harry Potter Studios, as you know, got a book well ahead for that and Big Ben. And what was the other thing I was thinking of? There was sky garden, so gotta be on top of that for those free tickets. And then probably a bit of a left field tip from my own personal experience is keep a journal while you're away, because you see and do so many amazing things. And for some people, it'll be the trip of a lifetime.

Lauren [00:35:55]:

And it's great, particularly if you're going with your family and the kids are younger, and we've had a lot of success with the kids writing their own journals. And then I kept a really detailed journal. We're able to revisit those memories and go, oh, I forgot that we did that. And wasn't that funny? And we're so glad we did that experience. And, yeah, so that would be, you know, a bit of a left field tip, I think, while you're away. Gabor Journal.

Tracy Collins [00:36:19]:

I think that's lovely. That's a really, really good idea, Lauren. So thank you so much for coming on to this week's episode of the podcast. It's lovely to talk to you.

Lauren [00:36:26]:

Oh, you're very welcome. It's been a pleasure to talk about it all with you again.

Tracy Collins [00:36:32]:

That's cool. And so all of the places that you mentioned, so the different restaurants and obviously the different destinations will be in the show notes for this episode. So it's going to be episode 108. So it'll be uktravelplanning.com episode 108. So you can catch up with Lauren's different tips as well, that she shared, the different places that she went, and a few photographs from your trip as well. We'll put in there in the show notes, if you don't mind, Lauren. That'd be great. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:37:04]:

Otherwise, as always, end the show with the same words every week. So I'm sure if you're listening, you're probably going to say them along with me. So until next week, happy UK travel planning.