

# **Essential Tips for Planning Your Cotswolds Adventure with Lisa Benjamin - Episode 115**

## **UK travel Planning podcast helps you plan your perfect UK vacation**

intro: 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.

## **Lisa Benjamin from Go Cotswolds joins UK Travel Planning podcast this week**

Tracy: Hello, everybody, and welcome to episode 115 of the UK Travel Planning podcast. This week I'm really excited to have once again, Lisa Benjamin from Go Cotswolds come on to the podcast to talk all things Cotswolds with us now. Lisa was at episode 107 and was talking about her and her husband's company, Go Cotswolds. So I would pop back and listen to that episode if you haven't already, but Lisa has come on this episode and agreed to talk with me about things that you need to know before you plan a trip to the Cotswolds. Because believe me, Doug and I get asked more often than not things about the Cotswolds or Cotswold, as we get told quite often, I'm going to the Cotswold, so I thought this would be a fantastic topic for an episode. So. Hi, Lisa.

Good to have you back on the podcast. Would you like to give everybody kind of a quick synopsis of who you are, ah, what you do, and a little bit about your company? That'd be great.

Lisa Benjamin: Sure.

Tracy: Yeah.

Lisa Benjamin: Hi, I'm Lisa Benjamin. I'm the one of the owners of Go Cotswolds. I run the company with my husband, Tom. We've got a small team of local guides. We live in Stratford on Avon, just on the edge of the Cotswolds. We have a small team of local guides and we have some minibuses and we drive our, visitors all around the Cotswolds.

Tracy: And you do some fantastic tours because already quite a few members of our Facebook group have been on tours with you. And we've had some lovely comments over the last week or so since the podcast came out with everybody saying, oh, I went on a tour with go Cotswolds. It was fantastic. It was so good. We only booked on one tour and came back, and then we managed to get onto the secret Cotswolds tour and it was brilliant. So we're not going to spill the beans about what's on the secret Cotswolds tour, and hopefully I'll get on that tour as well when I come back. I know, you invited me to go on that, Lisa, so I'm very excited about that. but I thought, as I know people will be going, okay, Cotswolds. I'm going to England. I really want to go to the Cotswolds. What is it that I need to know when planning a trip to the Cotswolds? So that is exactly what we're going to tackle, aren't Melissa?

Lisa Benjamin: Yes. Great. Yeah, there's lots of things that people are perhaps unaware

of when they're planning a trip to the Cotswolds. And, yeah, hopefully I'll be able to fill you in.

Tracy: Perfect. So we have, we've been brainstorming all week, so we've come up with 1212 points that we think would be very useful for you to know. So, I'm going to be really unfair to Lisa and I'm just going to give. I'm going to say a few words and let Lisa go and explain why you need to know about these things.

## **The Cotswolds is the third largest protected area in England**

So the first thing that we want to mention is that the Cotswolds is a large area. So, m. How big is it?

Lisa Benjamin: Often people think that the Cotswolds is one village or a small collection of villages, but the Cotswolds is actually a whole region and it covers, around 800 sq mi or 2000 square kilometres for the metrics among us. it's massive and it's a big rural area. so it can be difficult to get around, the distances between, north and south. People don't realise how far apart some places are. So, yeah, it's a big area. And because it's rural, there aren't many major roads. it's slow going, let's say.

Tracy: Certainly is. And it's the third largest protected area in England.

Lisa Benjamin: It's huge.

Tracy: It is huge.

Lisa Benjamin: I got that slightly wrong in my last podcast. I said it was the second largest. yeah, it's the third largest protected area in England. So after the lake District National park and Yorkshire Dales National park, the Cotswolds national landscape is the, third largest protected area. So it's massive. And it's a very important area as well.

Tracy: And also important to just say that it's Cotswolds, not Cotswold. It's the Cotswold.

Lisa Benjamin: The Cotswolds. It's a. It's a funny one. Yeah. C o t s w o l d s. There's various spellings I've come across in my time. yeah, the Cotswolds. It's the Cotswolds area of outstanding natural beauty, as it used to be known. It's kind of rebranded. It's now the Cotswolds national landscape. so, yeah, it's the Cotswolds. And Cotswolds comprises numerous Cotswold villages.

Tracy: Absolutely. And it's also spread over quite a few counties as well. I, will just mention that as well because, we'll often, we'll talk about the Gloucestershire Cotswolds or the Oxfordshire Cotswolds or whatever. So that's another way to think that this actually spread over quite a few of english counties.

Lisa Benjamin: So, yeah, it's not just one county, it's not just one small area. It spans, five or six different counties. So, yeah, it's a big old place.

Tracy: Brilliant.

## **Driving in the Cotswolds can be tricky for visitors**

Okay, so that's

00:05:00

the first thing. Second point, and I think this one comes up quite a lot as well, is driving. Driving in the Cotswolds is fun.

Lisa Benjamin: It is fun. I love it. I love driving around the Cotswolds in the great big mini bus, but it's not everyone's cup of tea, especially for our visitors who might not be used to driving on the left side of the road or, on sort of narrow country lanes. I know driving in America, driving in Australia is very, very different. here in the UK, well, here in the Cotswolds, we have lots and lots of very narrow single track lanes with high hedgerows you can't see around the corners. And more often than not, there's a massive tractor about to come around the corner on these single track lanes.

Tracy: Ah.

Lisa Benjamin: And that can freak a lot of people out. If you hire a car or, you know, you're not used to driving in that sort of environment, it can be quite scary. So, yeah, bear that in mind.

Tracy: Absolutely. It's really funny because I actually put a reel on my instagram not long ago, which is just literally of recording of us driving through Cotswolds Lane. And it was such a popular reel and loads of people have looked and went, whoa, wow. And I didn't on that. I didn't actually show, I think. I don't know where we were. We came through one village and we literally had to back up. We backed up about 200 metres because we just. There was nowhere for this other cart to pass, so one of us had to move back, so we had to do that. So, yeah, that is, something that I think surprises people if they're not used to it. And I know if you used to drive in the states or used to drive in Australia,

and obviously, which we do because we live in Australia, quite a, you know, it's so different. You cannot really explain it until you get onto those roads and you start driving and go, oh, okay. And also animals. You can get the odd kind of, you know, sheep in the middle of the road, usually.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah. If you're driving around Minton Hampton, you might come across a herd of cows wandering down the middle of the road. and, yeah, literally yesterday I was out, in the minibus, and I had to back up down a little narrow country lane because there was an enormous tractor with a great big plough on the back of it, coming at me with like a 16 year old boy driving it. It's quite funny. but yeah, we're quite used to doing that. But obviously, other people might not be. So horses as well. There's lots and lots of horse riders around the cotswolds. You've got to be super careful. Hikers, people out for run, people out for walks. and because of these high hedgerows that we have, it makes very, very beautiful, but it's difficult to see. So, yeah, it's can be tricky.

Tracy: Yeah. You don't get anywhere fast, do you?

Lisa Benjamin: No. And although nominally the, the roads have a 60 miles an hour speed limit, there's no way really, you can do that, do that sort of speed. So not safely anyway.

Tracy: No, and that's actually something interesting because quite often we'll get people saying, oh, I'm going to go from, I don't know, stow, in the world, and I'm going to go down the bath. And on Google it says it's going to take me excellent amount of time. I'm like, you know what? Double it. Double it, because that's what Google Maps might say. I don't think that's necessary. How quickly you'll do it.

Lisa Benjamin: No, Google Maps bases the sort of, the travel time based on the speed limit of the road. So it's assuming that you can travel an average of 50, 60 miles an hour. But absolutely not.

Tracy: No, definitely. And also you want to stop off along the way as well. But just one thing I will put in there as well. If you are going to hire a car to get around the Cotswolds, which is a good way to get away, I'm not going to hide that. If you are, into doing a road trip, then, and opt for driving in the Cotswolds, honestly, it is a beautiful area to drive around, but if you're going to book accommodation, make sure that you do get parking included with that as well. So you know where you're going to park because you don't want to be in one of these popular villages and you find that you have nowhere to park your car at night.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, absolutely. the villages themselves, as well as the roads, are very small in many cases. So, your accommodation may not have a driveway, it may not have a parking car park. So, yeah, that's something to be aware of. So you might need to get very good at doing your parallel parking on the side of the road. Parking in general. Parking in general can be tricky in the Cotswolds. Popular villages do tend to have larger car parks because they're, catered a bit more for tourists. But in many of the smaller villages, there's nowhere specific to park. You might just have to kind of dump your car on the side of the road, but then you have to be mindful of where you're parking. Are you blocking someone's driveway? Are you, you know, in the way of someone, else's entrance and exit?

Tracy: Yeah. People not been able to get past. I know I was in, Bybury in January, so I went to stay in the Cotswolds with, one of my very closest friends, actually. We decided we'd have a girly weekend away to the Cotswolds. And, I love Byberry. So I was like, oh,

let's go to Bybury weekend. Probably not the best idea anyway. But this was January, end of January. We could not get parked. We had to drive. We drove through, and then we drove back again, and then we drove back again. And then Kim went, Tracy, I know it's really beautiful, but we can't get parked. So.

### **Poor little Byberry does have problems with parking and stuff at the moment**

So, yeah, so, unfortunately, we missed out on January. And that's, as I say, January. That's not even in the peak season. And it was.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, no, that's true. Byberry. Poor little Byberry does have a few problems with parking and stuff at the moment. Byberry has two coach parking bays. And because it's such a popular place, lots of coaches come there. And, the coaches all line up along the road. People, can't get in the car park, so they all line up on the road. A couple of years ago, I think it was just after Covid, you know, when everyone was escaping and getting outside for the first time.

00:10:00

Lisa Benjamin: time. there was. There were. I think there were actual fist fights between locals and tourists, because tourists, well, visitors were parking on people's driveways. And blocking their exits and entrances and. Yeah, it caused a real issue. And on a, on a popular sunny summer Sunday or some sunny weekend. Yeah, parking is tricky in Bybury particularly.



Tracy: Yeah. Yeah, definitely. Well, as I say, that was end of January. We couldn't get parked. So I do feel sorry for the people who live in Bybury and, and maybe we should tell people not to go to Biobury. Well, I'm not going to say that because I do love biography, but just keep that in mind.

## **There is public transport in the Cotswolds but it is limited**

So let's talk about public transport because that's another popular question we get. Well, okay. I don't want to drive. Fair enough. Can I get public transport around the console? So can I?

Lisa Benjamin: You can. You've got to become a master of, understanding bus timetables and train timetables. there is public transport in the Cotswolds, but it is fairly limited. If you have come from London or you're used to city public transport, things are very, very different out here in the Cotswolds. in London you've got buses that go 24/7 tubes, you know, trains go everywhere. M most cities have trams and or bus. Bus, systems. In the Cotswolds there are a handful of buses that go anywhere useful. I always recommend people to stay. If people ask me where should I stay in the Cotswolds? Moreton in Marsh is a really great place to stay because it is one of the best towns for public transport. And when I say best, I mean on Cotswold standards.

Tracy: You mean it has a train station.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Mort Lynn Marsh is one of the very few Cotswold towns with a train station. There are only five or six train stations in the entire 800 sq. Mi of the Cotswolds. and ah, Morton Marsh has ah, a link to London and Oxford, which is

handy. It also has a couple of buses. There's one, the 801 bus is quite useful, that can take you from Morton and Marsh to places like Chipping Norton and where else does it go? It goes to stow on the wold and Boughton on the water, nice places that people want to visit. it also has a bus that goes to Stratford upon Avon and Chipping Camden, so people can visit those places as well. if you want to stay anywhere else in the Cotswolds, then you're going to struggle, to be perfectly honest, other than perhaps the larger cities like Cirencester or larger cities, they're still very small towns. But, the larger towns like Cirencester or Cheltenham. The villages have very, very little public transport. some villages have, like, one bus a week, which is ridiculous. That's crazy. There'll be one bus on a Thursday in the morning, so you can go to the big town and do your shopping and then one bus in the afternoon to come back again. And that's literally it. some towns have one bus a day and those tend to be geared around school time so that children can get to their secondary school, which might be in another town or village. and some villages don't have a bus service at all. So, if you want to visit somewhere like Snow's hill, for example, which is very, very beautiful, there's no bus that goes there. You cannot get there by public transport, so you either have to drive or take a tour.

Tracy: What happens if I decided I want to take a taxi? Could I take a taxi? Is there a taxi? Is there Uber?

Lisa Benjamin: no. This is one of the questions that we get asked a lot. Oh, it's okay. I'm going to stay in snow's hill. I'm just going to get an Uber. No, you're not. Sorry. taxis. There are taxi companies in the cotswolds, but out here, a lot of the taxi companies are run m by sole traders. So you've just got one man in his car, and he runs a little taxi service. So if he's fully booked at the time, you call him up and you say, hey, I want to go somewhere. Then you have to move to the next taxi operator on the list. And if

they're fully booked, you need to move to the next one on the list. And the next and the next and the next. I've honestly heard about people, arriving at Moreton and Marsh station. a popular sort of route that people need to do is to get from Morton Marsh station to chipping Camden to start the Cotswold hike. And I've heard so many stories of people arriving at, Moreton in Marsh expecting that there will be a taxi just waiting in the cab rank. And they've literally waited for hours before they could get a taxi. so that's why I always recommend the bus service as well, because there is a bus service. It's fairly infrequent, but if you can time it right, then there is a bus between Morton and Marsh and chipping Camden. And it only costs two pounds as well at the moment. there's, a government subsidy thing happening at the minute. So any public bus service, two pounds per person, one way, anywhere you want. To go. So it's super cheap and pretty reliable, so I always recommend that as an option. By contrast, a, taxi from Morton and master shipping Camden, which is a journey of 15 minutes, costs about 35 pounds. So it's very expensive.

Tracy: That is expensive. Wow.

Lisa Benjamin: So if you're going to stay somewhere that has very limited public transport and you don't have a cardinal, then you're going to be spending a lot of money on taxis and probably getting quite frustrated with the lack of availability of taxis as well.

Tracy: Yeah. And also just not being able to

00:15:00

Tracy: get around to see the best of the Cotswolds, are they? If you're going to have to

wait around for a bus for a week, you're not going to get very far or even, even one a day, or three a day. You're going to have to think very clearly about logistically, how you're going to get around. And you probably won't necessarily get around to see all of the places that you might want to get to see.

## **There is more to the Cotswolds than Bolton on the water**

Now, I know you've just mentioned stow, mentioned chipping, Morton and Marsh, Byberry, Boughton and the water. So let's, let's talk about. Because I know whenever I talk about the Cotswolds, the first places that people will usually mention to me are going to be stowe, on the road, Barbary, the slaughters, born on the water, Broadway, and I love all those places, I'm going to admit it. So what area of the Cotswolds are those? Because they're in one particular area, those aren't spread all over. So I think that's, as a thing, I think it's worth probably talking about that there is more to the Cotswolds, for a start off than Bolton on the water, because that's the first one that comes to mind. But also the fact that these villages are spread out. But you can, if you think really carefully or go through a tour company like yourself, actually see some of those popular villages, in a kind of logistically kind of way that makes sense, if that. If that makes sense, what I've just said.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, I think it does, yeah. Yeah. So, broadly speaking, the Cotswolds is divided into the north and the southeast and, the north Cotswolds, that's where we tend to base our tours. The villages in the north Cotswolds, many of them are considered to be those very, very pretty villages, the ones that people, have seen in photographs and they want to come and visit. So places that you mentioned Broadway Byberry well, Byberry is kind of the furthest south of the north, if you see what I mean. Born on the

water, still on the world. Those villages, those towns are all in the north Cotswolds and I. The, distances between those villages are actually very, very short. They're only about 510 minutes between villages. The south Cotswolds is kind of a little bit geographically different. It's much sparser, much more, open, lots of, common land and agricultural land, and far fewer villages. They're much more spread out. the other very popular village that everyone wants to visit is Castle Combe. And Castle Combe is right down in the very south of the Cotswolds. So if you're planning a trip, if you've got limited time and you want to see as much of the Cotswolds as you possibly can, we always recommend ditch Castle Combe. I know it's beautiful. I know you've seen pictures of influences twirling on that bridge over the river, but it's a long, long way away from everywhere else in the Cotswolds. We often get asked about it on our tours and we say, well, we would have to drive. It's basically an hour drive from all, the other villages in the north Cotswolds to Castle Combe, and then an hour drive back. And there's not much in between. There's not really anywhere to stop on the way, other than views of countryside, which, you know, after an hour there and back, you're going to get a bit samey. So we always recommend, if you've only got one day in the Cotswolds or a very limited amount of time, stick to one area and don't try and dart all across the Cotswolds and do lots of different, places that are, ah, far, far apart from each other. It's just a bit of a waste of time. And you'll have a much better experience by seeing a lot more places that are closer together.

Tracy: Yeah, and I think that's a really good point because Castle Combe comes up all the time and it's. It is. Castle Combe's lovely. If you can get parked, that's another place we struggle, like. I think actually it might have been Castlecombe, where we ended up doing a massive reverse. I have a feeling that's where it was. We came through Casacombe and couldn't, and it was crazy busy, crazy. In fact, it was. It's the most I've seen anywhere, I think, that went in the Cotswolds it was just so busy. And again, it's

that kind of influencer twirling around on the bridge in a, in a hat and a long skirt dress thing, you know, I mean, I'm way past that, thank goodness. But. But I think, unfortunately, it does draw people. but I think that explanation is perfectly so about just how far that is from the beautiful part of the northern coastals, which, which is where I am. I think my heart's there. Absolutely. You can't go wrong. I mean, there's so much to see and do. I mean, just thinking of the gardens for a start off. I mean, I think that's also worth mentioning. There's beautiful houses to go and see, there's the gardens to go and see. you know, it's not just the villages are beautiful, but there's other things to do as well. I'm just thinking about the Cotswolds lavender. I mean, that's another beautiful thing to experience.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah. There's so much more to the Cotswolds than just. Just looking at villages. there's lots of sort of, tourist attractions as well, especially if you've got kids. There's places like the Cotswolds farm park and the Cotswolds wildlife park. There's Birdland and, a, model village in bought on the water. There's lots of attractions, but, yeah, the stately homes, castles, gardens are, ah, stunning. yeah, lots and lots and lots. See, it's not just, wandering around, looking at people's houses, which is.

Tracy: Which is still pretty good, though, I have to say. I look around and go, well, if I ever win a billion, I'll buy that cottage. That's always my thing when I go around that particular cottage there with the roses around the door. Yes, I'll have that one. The wisteria. If you're there at the right time of the year for wisteria, it's just. It really is wisteria hysteria for me.

Lisa Benjamin: I just kind of go in. May

00:20:00

Lisa Benjamin: is beautiful. Spring flowers as well. In spring. That's lovely. Oh, yeah, all sorts of stuff.

Tracy: Oh, absolutely.

## **Getting a taxi is difficult if you're not confident with driving**

So, tell me about why a tour, is a good option. Because obviously we talked about public transport is difficult. Getting a taxi is difficult if you're not confident with driving. Then again, this is an area of the world that may be restricted to you, and I think that's a good point to say is that, but it's not. If you want to go and do a tour, which Lisa's now going to talk about.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah. And when we started our tour company, like Tom and I, my husband and I run the company. We hate guided tours, which sounds a really odd thing to say because we set up a guided tour company. But, our tours are not that kind of tour where you're following a guide with an umbrella in the air, following around like lemmings. We like slow travel. We like to experience and explore. We give lots and lots of free time to our guests to explore the different places that we visit during on a particular itinerary. so a tour is a really great way. I'm going to be biased and m say my tour. Our tours are a really great way to explore the Cotswolds because, there is a lot of free time built into the day, so you're not stuck with the guide, you're not making awkward small talk with other people. you have lots of free time to explore the way you want to explore each of the stops of. But also we give you that itinerary so you can visit places that are inaccessible by public transport or difficult to line up those bus timetables, or places that you know you can't get to if you don't want to drive. So that is

a really good way. In fact, I saw on the UK travel planning Facebook group just the other day, there was a comment from someone, I think, someone had written a lovely comment about having been on one of our tours and someone else said, oh, I was so happy to read this because I didn't think I could visit the Cotswolds because I haven't got a car. I don't plan to drive when I'm in the UK and I wasn't sure if I could get around. So it is difficult to do it solely by public transport. But that's where tours come in, useful because you can visit other places that you might not be able to see otherwise.

Tracy: Definitely. And then m we know you also, you've got minibuses, so they can go lots of places that the larger coaches can't get to.

Lisa Benjamin: Yes, absolutely. Yeah. The massive sort of 70 seater coaches that come up from London, they are restricted to, driving on the major roads. I put that in inverted commas because there aren't any motorways in the Cotswolds. But, you know, the sort of the bigger, wider roads, that can accommodate bigger traffic. and they're also restricted to the places that have designated coach parking spaces, too. So you're only going to be able to go to the very touristy, popular places which are going to be very busy at some points of year. and full of other coach parties as well. So taking a minibus tour, we can park. We have the advantage of being able to use coach parking spaces. That's a nice little perk of having a minibus PSV licence. But, our minibuses, believe it or not, although they are much longer than a car, they're only the same width as a car. So we can park anywhere on the side of the road or across two normal sized car parking spaces. and, we're absolutely fine. So we can go anywhere a car can go, which is great. And you're a bit higher up. Your seats are higher up, so you can see over the hedgerows and that's really great too.

Tracy: Yeah, exactly. The thing is as well, is that, you know, if it's, if you're going with



your partner, you can both enjoy it, rather than one, one person driving and the other person navigating, or in my case, shouting at the other person, I'll be talking. Or stop, stop. I want to take a video or stop, stop. Or watch as a cow or watch this. You know, that's, that's usual with. It's funny because we just planned a trip for September and we're going to be driving around Scotland and we're going to Skye and Doug said to me, who's driving? And I went, will that be you? I'll be navigating as usual. So he's just like, yeah, that awkward.

Lisa Benjamin: Conversation about who's driving and if nobody has to drive, you can also stop in the pub and have a nice drink at lunchtime, it's absolutely fine.

Tracy: Exactly, exactly.

## **Cocots worlds have a number of different tours available to customers**

So I'm just thinking, just, in case, if you're listening to this and thinking, oh, I'm not sure what tours do cocots worlds offer, so I'm going to ask lisa to do a quick synopsis of the tours that you have.

Lisa Benjamin: Sure. Yeah. So we have our Cotswolds in a day tour, which I say very tongue in cheek because you can't see all the Cotswolds in a day. I've just told you, it's 800 sq mi. But, we focus our tours on the beautiful northern Cotswolds part and showcase, six different stops, which we think kind of encompasses the cotswolds in a day. so that's our kind of best selling tour. We've also launched this year a secret Cotswolds tour, which we, decided to launch as a kind to kind of complement the

cottage in a day. So you can see cheque off all the highlights on one day and then on maybe on day two, or if you've already been to some of those highlight places, you can, take our secret cottage tour, which gets you a little bit more off the beaten track. we go to a couple of better known, places, Broadway and Burford, because we still need to find places to have coffee and lunch. But, we go to some other, very, very small villages that are, a bit quieter. Very, very beautiful places that you won't necessarily

00:25:00

Lisa Benjamin: see girls, twirling on bridges.

Tracy: You also got a new Stonehenge one, isn't that right?

Lisa Benjamin: Yes. We launched a, Bath and Stonehenge tour earlier this year as well. and that was purely in response to customers asking us, do you go to Bath? Do you go to bath? Bath is a long way from where we're based. So this tour, involves a bit more of a drive, but it's again, a very scenic, beautiful drive. and we can take you down to Bath and Stonehenge, and then the other one we have, which is in the summer, is a walks and villages tour, which again, gets you a bit off, literally off the beaten track. You can experience some of the, countryside footpaths and beautiful countryside walks that the Cotswolds has to offer with the safety of a guide who knows where they're going.

Tracy: Perfect. Perfect. And I haven't actually been numbering these as I've been going through, but I know I have in front of me.

**Take the train out of London when planning a Cotswolds trip**

Number eleven. Take the train out of London. That's one tip when planning a trip to the Cotswolds. So why should somebody take the train out of London? Lisa?

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, I mean, it's slightly biased because obviously we want people to take our tours out of, not the ones that depart from London. But honestly, we think that taking a train, if you're going to visit the Cotswolds, don't fall into the trap, necessarily of taking those big coach tours from London. They might seem convenient because they have a pickup point close to where you're staying, but a significant proportion of your time on that tour is going to be spent getting out of London and then getting back into London. So that really reduces the amount of time that you have to spend in the Cotswolds. And often these great big coach tours include the Cotswolds as part of a bigger, crazy itinerary. Like, you might go to Barstonehenge Oxford, Windsor Castle and the Cotswolds in a day and things like that.

Tracy: Edinburgh. Sometimes I think there is actually a.

Lisa Benjamin: Tour out there called England in a day, which I think is hilarious, but it's very, you know, it's impossible to see England in a day. It's even impossible to see the cottage in a day. But, yeah, so your travel time is you're going to have a lot of travel time on those big coach tours, whereas if you take the train out of London, you're going to skip all that London traffic. You're going to be sitting in your train, seat, looking out the window. Beautiful countryside. You can have a little drink on the train if you want to. You can just put your feet up, relax, read your book while you, while you're taking the train out of London. And you can arrive in Moreton, in Marsh, in just 90 minutes. So an hour and a half's journey. Very relaxing journey. And yes, I think it's a nicer way. And then you arrive in the Cotswolds and you're ready to start your tour and then you've got more time in the Cotswolds to explore.

Tracy: Absolutely. And stay over. I'd always recommend staying over as well.

Lisa Benjamin: Stay over. Yes.

Tracy: Such a long place. And, ah, number twelve, don't try to pack too much into a day. So this is a good reason to stay over. Don't try to pack too much into a date because less is more.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, and I just touched on that now, like, attempting to see England in a day, I think is crazy. I'm sure there's a time and a place for it. If you're on a one night stopover on the way to somewhere else, then perhaps that might tick some boxes for you. But, yeah, less is more. We get a lot of inquiries from people who want to try and cram, I think, too much into their itineraries and all they're going to be doing is driving and box ticking. And I think what makes the Cotswolds so special, it's beautiful to look at, but it's also wonderful to experience and explore it and pop into the local pub and have a drink in the local pub, get chatting to the barman, go to the local coffee shop, not the Starbucks or the Costa coffee, and talk to the guy who serves you a coffee and, visit some of the local attractions that aren't massive, great, biggest, you know, touristy things. I think that's what really makes the Cotswolds very special. So if you're, whizzing in and whizzing out on a, on a big coach tour or just, you know, spending just one day here, you're not really going to get that sense of community and the sense of, the friendliness and you're not going to meet people, and I think that's a real shame. So staying over is definitely a top tip. I would definitely spend time here in the Cotswolds. You just get so much more out of your experience than just whizzing through and ticking off sights and, you know, just seeing everything through your camera lens.

Tracy: Oh, absolutely. I 100% back you up. But anyway, it was lovely, to chat to you

again, Lisa, and I'm looking forward to meeting you, probably not too long after this podcast episode comes out. Hopefully we'll get to meet in person rather than, across the water on the podcast.

Lisa Benjamin: Look forward to it.

Tracy: thanks so much, Lisa, for coming up the podcast again. It's always so good to chat to you, and as I say, I can't wait myself to get back to the Cotswolds.

Lisa Benjamin: See you soon. Yeah. Thank you.

## **UK Travel Planning podcast is now available on iTunes**

Tracy: Thank you for tuning into this week's episode of the UK Travel Planning podcast. As always, show notes can be found [@uktravelplanning.com](mailto:uktravelplanning.com) if you've enjoyed the show, why not leave us feedback via text or a review on your favourite podcast app? We love to hear from you and you never know. You may receive leave a shout out in a future episode, but as always, that just leaves me to stay until next week.

00:30:00

Tracy: Happy UK travel planning.

00:30:02