

Driving the UK Like a Local: Expert Tips from Tripiamo's John Cortese (Ep 112)

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.

Episode 112 of the UK Travel Planning podcast features John Cortese of Tripiamo

Tracy: Hi and welcome to episode 112 of the UK Travel Planning podcast. Today, I'm excited to chat with John Cortese of Tripiamo. Now, Tripiamo's mission is to transform the way you travel by providing comprehensive professional guidance for self driving around the world, and that includes the UK. Now, much as Doug and I love train travel, we will say that for those of you considering road trips in the UK, self driving does offer unparalleled flexibility and the chance to explore areas that can be inaccessible or just more tricky to get around by public transport. But we also know that driving in the UK can feel intimidating due to unfamiliar rules and customs and the potential challenge for some of you driving on the opposite side of the road. This is where Tripyarmo comes in,

offering an innovative online guide designed to help you navigate these challenges. Now, we believe Tripyarmo is a brilliant product and since our first podcast episode with John, which was episode number twelve, we have had fantastic reviews from readers, listeners and members of our UK travel planning Facebook group. And this has completely backed up our belief about Tripiamo Honestly, it's excellent. So it was time, 100 episodes later, to chat once again with John about Tripiamo. So let's stick around to the end of the podcast, also where I reveal a special discount offer exclusive for UK travel planning podcast listeners.

John Cortis is the founder of travel company Tripiamo

I started the chat with John by asking him to introduce himself and share a little about his background.

John Cortese: My name is John Cortis. I'm the founder of Tripiamo. and I started Tripiamo actually, during the pandemic. So a few years back now. so a quick background on me. I'm an italian American. and ever since I was a young guy, I've loved, loved, loved travel. And it really started when I was, a kid and I got to visit some of my family in Sicily, Italy. I loved looking out at the beach over the Mediterranean Sea and then thinking about that, right? always thinking about what was behind that and what was beyond that. And so kind of over the next several decades, I've really been spending a lot of time traveling for work, business, pleasure, leisure, everything in between. And fortunately, I've had the chance to go to about 60 or so countries in the last 15 years. so I've had the opportunity to live across the world in different countries, on different continents, and it's brought me to kind of be where I am today and starting and running tripiamo. and kind of before that, background wise, I also, prior to starting

Tripayamo, I worked in the travel industry, related to finance as well. I worked at both Visa and Mastercard, and I led at Visa, their economic trending for the travel and tourism sector. So, that's a quick background on me.

Tripiamo helps travelers feel confident to drive anywhere in the world

And if you want, Tracy, I could go into talking very briefly about Tripiamo, too. You want?

Tracy: Yes, please do. Yes.

John Cortese: Yeah. So, Tripiamo is the first service that's solely focused on helping all types of travelers feel confident to drive and self drive anywhere in the world, like a local, so that you can adventure safely, travel confidently, and roam further. That's our mission. so we create virtual online guides by country that you can take at your own leisure, at your own pace, on your phone, your desktop, your laptop, and we give you all the fundamental and foundational information, verified and certified by driving schools in each country on everything you really need to know to effectively drive in those places. So one point, just want to mention, too, we're kind of like a supplement in addition to your Google Maps or your ways when you drive abroad. So those are excellent solutions to help you with navigation and direction. We're that foundational knowledge to make sure you know what you're actually doing when you drive in those countries. So that's what Trip Yama is in.

Tracy: A nutshell, and absolutely invaluable because I, know after episode twelve, which honestly can't believe that so long ago, there's been so many fantastic reviews of Tripiyama in our Facebook group and also on our podcasts. and Rob runs, who's

actually one of the moderators in the Facebook group who we met because we did an itinerary

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Tracy: consult for him. We recommended Tripiamo And he actually says in his podcast, which is episode 18, if you'd like to listen to that, just how invaluable it was for Tripiamo to help and prepare to drive in the UK. So, we're going to talk about specifically because we know you cover lots of countries, and we're going to be talking in a bit on the global travel Planner podcast. So, if you're planning to do some travels and other destinations around the world. episode 27 of the global travel planning podcast is the one to pop over and listen to John all about the other countries that he covers.

How does triple armo prepare people for driving in the UK

But let's chat about the UK. So anybody planning to drive in the UK, how is triple armo going to prepare them?

John Cortese: Yeah, well, I can talk a little bit, about different ways in which we prepare, but our sole focus, like, I'll say it again and I really tell everyone this, it's based on our mission. It's threefold. We're going to make sure that you adventure safely, so that you can go all across the UK, Wales, Scotland, England, Northern Ireland, anywhere across them. so you can, like I said, adventure safely, travel confidently and roam further. So what are people looking at? What are they getting when they access this guide? It's going to be in about an hour or so. Everything, all virtually. That's going to basically make sure you know what you need to know to drive anywhere across those

places. So we really break down our guides into kind of three sections. And so through that you're going to kind of understand how you're going to learn and get information from this. So the first is we have a section of what we call expert instructional videos. So these are again verified by the driving schools in the UK. We marry them with all of our driving manual knowledge from different countries and around the world to make sure we prepare you for the differences. So these expert instructional videos are kind of micro videos, anywhere from two to five, six minutes that cover all the main topics that differ between countries.

Tracy covers driving etiquette, particularly in the UK

So let me talk about a few of them, particularly as they relate to the UK. and I know, Tracy, you know this as well, but driving etiquette, particularly in the UK, and what it's like and how it changes across different areas, so we cover that. So you know those differences. what it's like as an american, I'll consider it this way. what it's like to drive on the quote unquote opposite side of the road. so how does it feel? what are the differences that you need to remember? What are some simple key tricks so that your brain doesn't get tripped up while you're there? All of those types of things, road signs, road rules, road markings, parking, how to effectively navigate roundabouts for certain countries, it's, people coming from certain countries, it's a bit different. So we cover all those main key topics so that you already know what you need to know before you get there. The next piece that we really focus on is we have a series of what we call, 360 degree driving tours. So we have a patent pending on these. And essentially what these do are provide you real life footage and real life examples of what it's actually like to get behind the wheel in the UK, across all different areas of the UK before you actually get there. So we have a team of videographers that film across the UK. We look and focus

on specific types of scenarios that foreigners generally get tripped up with so that you actually have the practice and can go through them. You have the practice of knowing and getting a feel and sense of what it's like to drive on the opposite side of the road, to navigate those roundabouts, to see different signs and road markings, how other people are driving and interacting. So all of that, and then we also have a series of, kind of on the go materials for emergency information, just in case you don't remember your road signs or what to do in a situation. You can print it out, you can keep it on your phone, your laptop, whatever. and also right now, we also have, access for one year to travel and leisure magazine, if you're familiar with them. They're a major publication, in the United States. And so, that's a free access for one year. You also get with the access to tripiamo. So that's a little bit of what you get with tripiamo.

Tracy: Wow, that's amazing. Honestly, the amount that you cover and the preparation in terms of being able to sit and watch the videos and get yourself familiar with, as you say, driving etiquette, what it's actually like to drive in the UK. Now, I'm going to say hands up on this. Like, I drove in the UK for years, but I haven't driven very much over the last six years. And I found your videos incredibly helpful. Even though I'm used to driving on the left hand side of the road, because honestly, you get used to driving in the country that you're in, which happens to be Australia for us at the moment. and actually, there are changes that you don't necessarily, you know, if you're not driving in that country you're not aware of, you don't keep up with. So it's incredibly useful, even if you drive on the left hand side of the road normally, to still do your course because it gives you such a

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Tracy: good refresher. Or if you've not driven in the UK before, you know, talking about

road signs and expectations and etiquette, which are different in different places around the world.

John Cortese: Absolutely. And, you know, one of the things also that we've really done, I know since we've, spoken 100 episodes ago, a few years ago now, we've actually recognized and taken feedback that we've gotten, although it's been absolutely positive. One of the things we wanted to continue to build on is giving more examples, across different parts of the UK. So, we're now introducing, driving and what it's like in places like the Highlands in Scotland and in areas of Northern Ireland and other parts of England. Not just maybe, the outskirts of London, London and other places in that surrounding area. So we really want to make sure, regardless, of where your trip is across the UK, you're prepared. Right. And that you have those experiences beforehand. I like to think about it this way. I'm very much a applied learner, so it's really great to listen to what theory is about driving in a certain place, really in a fun and engaging way. That's not necessarily you're taking a driver's ed course. This is something that's getting you excited for driving and going on vacation. but like I said, it's really helpful to see those expert videos that I mentioned we have, but I really want to focus in on those and emphasize those 360 videos because we have few different ways that we show those videos. We have some that are inside the car behind the wheel. So for those of you that aren't familiar with the steering wheel on the right hand side of the car, you're getting used to seeing the surroundings. You're getting used to actually feeling like the car you're driving on the right hand side of the car. But also, like I said, we also provide urban, rural, suburban, all types of environments so that you really get prepared for all different situations.

Tracy: I think that's essential as well, because, you know, the most common question we get, I guess, is around roundabouts. And we say, yeah, once you've done a

roundabout and you figured it out, yes, they're going to be some complex roundabouts where you have multi lanes going off into multi lanes. but also it's things like those rural roads. yes, there might not be a lot of traffic on those roads, but you also, you have other things. I was just talking to somebody the other day, you know, if you're there in April, for example, April, may, in far north of Scotland, you're going to have animals on the roads. So there's other things that you've got to be thinking about. So I think anything that you can do to prepare that will make it less stressful. I know when. When we drive, I tend to. I say we drive loosely because I tend to let Doug do the driving and I do the, navigating. And I hear that very often one person will be the designated driver and somebody will be the navigator. And I know it's less stressful. Believe me, if you are prepared and you have an idea of what to expect, it's less stressful, less chance of having an argument. Not that I'm saying that I argue when I'm navigating. I'm not putting my hands up and saying anything, but anything that you can do that will reduce that level of stress and make you feel more comfortable has got to be invaluable. Absolutely invaluable.

John Cortese: Yeah. First of all, driving, and I know you can attest to this depending on where you are in the UK. UK is one of those countries that has some excellent public transportation, whether you're in a city or going intercity. but driving, as you know, can provide an entirely different type of experience, for a place like the Cotswolds or the Highlands in Scotland or so, there's so many incredible places to see, but making sure you're prepared for it. even for someone like myself that's been traveling for so long in so many different countries, I still get small little anxieties before my trips, even things like, okay, I'm going to pick up my rental car at the airport, or maybe at, a rental car place in the city center. But when I'm going to all these other places, where am I going to park? I don't know necessarily what the parking signs mean, what the restrictions are. I've heard stories of people getting their cars towed because they just follow what

other people are doing, but don't really know what they're doing. So it's really a way to mitigate those anxieties pre trip, but it's also an excellent way to make sure you have peace of mind while you're on the trip and make sure things go smoothly so that you don't have any problems and you can actually spend time vacationing, not worrying.

Tracy: No, absolutely. And I actually did, a podcast last year, and, ah, I remember it was Deborah who I spoke to, and she said after, she said, one of the things I wish that we had done is the Tripiamo course. so, you know, if you're listening to this podcast and you're kind of wavering, thinking, oh, I don't know, I'm pretty confident driver or my husband's going to be doing the driving and he's pretty confident. Honestly, I would highly recommend, I don't want you to get back from your trip to the UK and go, oh, I wish I'd taken the Tripiamo

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Tracy: course. because honestly, it is absolutely worth doing.

Tripiamo helps you prepare for any kind of driving trip

So if anybody wants to do the course, do they have access to that for a specific period of time? How does that work, John?

John Cortese: Yeah, so all of our guides, we, think about what your travel experience may look like. So once you purchase, it's for a full one year, 365 days of access, as many times as you'd like.

Tracy: Okay, that's perfect. And so, obviously, if I was to purchase it, then obviously Doug can also log in and he can go through as well. So you can share it, you can both have a look at it. Both be prepared, whether, you know, whether it's just one of you who's going to do the driving or not, I still think it's useful because if you're navigating, it's good to know what the signs are as well and be aware of, like, what's coming up, so that you're aware of kind of your surroundings and it just makes it easier.

John Cortese: Absolutely. And honestly, not to, like, kind of. Obviously, I'm working on Tripiamo myself, but I was in the UK about two months ago and I've driven across the country several times. But even, used as a refresher, as someone that's driven there before, like you said for yourself, right. Even just getting used to driving in Australia, it's so helpful just to watch these things right beforehand because it just reorients your brain. It's kind of weird, but it just kind of works in that way.

Tracy: Yeah, 100%. I was watching the videos and I was like, yeah, that's what a UK road looks like, because you don't wherever you're driving. So whether it's Australia or New Zealand or Canada or the States or wherever in the world that you are, it will not be the same as the UK. And as I say, like, driving in the Cotswolds is very different from driving up in Northumberland or driving into the city of Bath or driving in the Highlands of Scotland. It's very different. So being able to have a look at the different scenarios really, genuinely is just the best way to prepare yourself if you're thinking about that driving trip. and obviously, I mean, you're doing so well.

John Cortese: I was. Well, thank you very much.

Tracy, where's your favorite place to drive in the UK

I was going to ask you a quick question back. Tracy, where's been the best place you've driven in the UK?

Tracy: Oh, I love Scotland. And, it's really funny because we'll be there in September. And Doug and I sat and we were like, okay, so where do we want to go? And I cannot resist going to Scotland. I love Scotland. we're going to drive to Skye, but on the way to, we're going to go to Inverness and catch the Caledonian sleep bed out of London. And Doug and I sat the other day and were like, we really enjoyed applecross. So, I can't pronounce, I should be able to pronounce the proper word for it, but it's called the road to applecross, which is just an incredible, incredible drive. And, so we looked at our videos from last time we did it and, we've decided to do now that is not a drive for the faint heart. Even last time when I was recording that drive, I was like, oh, it's a bit scary. Scary. I would not do it if it's wet. And it's certainly. That road is closed in the winter quite often. I think it's generally closed from a period of time because it's not safe. but wow, a fantastic drive to do. So that's probably our favourite. But I say, I would not recommend that unless you prepare.

John Cortese: Absolutely. And some of those passing places that people may not be familiar with too, particularly on some of those country roads in Scotland. I know.

Tracy: absolutely. I would say, honestly, my favorite places to drive will be, probably the trickiest in terms of, unexpected events. For example, if you're in the Cotswolds or down in Cornwall, you can't see what's coming because the hedgerows are really high and you can literally go around a corner on a single lane and there'll be a tractor in front of you. and actually, I was talking about this yesterday. Then, this happened. We went around the corner in the Cotswolds. There was a tractor in front of us and we had to back up on this single lane, little lane way for about 200 meters because the tractor had

to get into the field. we've also driven through, I think it was Castlecombe, actually got to through Castle Combe. And again, they're very small lanes and there was cars coming, so we had to back up. So you need to feel confident about what you're doing because a who has the right of way, what the etiquette is because you don't want to get into an argy bargy with somebody on one of these lanes. But also, you just need to be aware of what potential, you know, people, cyclists, people, on walks, you know, tractors that are going to be on those roads. you know, like I've mentioned before, you get. You get the animals that could be on those roads. So it's preparing for that. And those roads like Cotswolds, Devon, Cornwall, Scotland, you know, I think they can be trickier in some ways, than some of the cities where you're going to be, you know, going slower, I would say. though, of course, you still need to be aware because there are things like in the bus lanes, that if you get into a bus lane, you're going to get a fine. There's box junctions. If you get into a box junction in summit, they'll take a shot of you and then you're going to get a fine. So it's those things. There's so much to be aware of, to be honest. that's why I say, that's why we feel that tripurama is such an essential resource for anybody that's planning a drive in trip to the UK,

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Tracy: whether honestly you're from North America or whether like, oh, so we drive in Australia, but I still think, if you have never driven in the UK before, honestly take the course, it's just 100% worth it.

John Cortese: Absolutely. And for those in Australia or New Zealand or South Africa, potentially using it, it also can help. And I know we'll talk about this, Tracy, but for other countries where they do drive on the opposite side of the road to where you may be used to as well, but we can get into that later.

Tracy: One, hundred percent. Yes. Well, we're talking about that in a second on the.

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As I say, we'll mention that again, actually, because I know a lot of our UK travel planning podcast listeners, obviously are going to be traveling lots of other destinations in the world. So do pop over and listen to the global travel Planning podcast, episode 27, where I talk to John about all the other countries that they cover as well in the world. but for this episode, it's brilliant to chat with you, John. I am just going to say that we have got, you have kindly given us an exclusive, exclusive 10% discount for UK travel planning podcast listeners, which is fantastic. Thank you so much for that. And this is valid until, September 30, so you need to pop over to the show notes, which will be [uktravelplanning.com / 112](https://uktravelplanning.com/112). And click through the link to [tripiamo](https://tripiamo.com) and use the promo code UKTP 2024 for that 10% discount until September 30. So thanks very much for that, John.

John Cortese: Yeah, yeah, absolutely.

Tracy: Oh, thanks so much for that, John. It's just really generous. And I think, you know, you guys do such. It's such a good product. It's not an arm and a leg. That's the other thing I want to say to people. It does not charge an arm and a leg for this product for peace of mind. Honestly, it is worth every cent, every penny of the course.

John Cortese: Thanks, Tracy. Yeah, I agree with that. We really try to make it a, product that's really accessible to everyone, and we think about it as something less than the

cost of a potential parking ticket that you may get. Right. So it's almost, a, no brainer. That's what we want to make it for everyone.

Tracy: Yeah, absolutely.

What would be the one tip that you would share with anybody planning to drive in UK

Now I'm going to end the podcast and end the chat with you today with the question that, always ask everybody. And I'll have asked you this in episode twelve. I can't remember what you said, but episode 112, what would be the one tip that you would share with anybody planning to drive in the UK?

John Cortese: So this may have been the same one I mentioned before, but I'll give a second one just in case. But I still really feel this is very important, particularly those that are driving on the opposite side or used to driving on the opposite side compared to the UK. So, in places like the US and Canada, you're very, very used to making small rights and large lefts. Just plant in the back of your mind that it's the opposite. Just remember, small lefts, larger rights, that's huge. And that will go really far to getting you to really reorient your brain for driving in the UK. The other one that I'll point out, that I think we do point out a lot of other things just like this in our guides. But particularly, cameras in the UK are way more ubiquitous than you may expect. And I from your home country as an example, there are even new cameras that are tracking if people have their seatbelts on while you're driving. Maybe 60, 70. Thanks, Tracy. Have a great rest of your day. Home country. So there are a lot of things to be aware of and to know, and we cover all of them.

Tracy: Perfect.

John: Tracy, thank you so much for being on the podcast

Well, my number one tip for anybody planning to drive in the UK, whether it's the first time or not the first time, it doesn't matter, is to get the trippy armor guide. So thank you so much John, for coming onto this episode of the podcast. Hopefully you'll be on episode 212.

John Cortese: I think I would love to. Not I think I would love to. I can't wait for it. Tracy, thank you so much for the opportunity.

Tracy: That's, brilliant. I will put you down for episode 212 and catch up on how things are going then, but thanks so much for this episode. It's been brilliant to chat with you.

John Cortese: Thanks Tracy. Have a great rest of your day.

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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 ah, a review on your favourite podcast app? We love to hear from you and you never know. You may receive a shout out in a future episode. But as always, that just leaves me to say, until next week, happy UK travel

planning.

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