

# **Family Fun in England: Trip Highlights with Heather Welday (Episode 116)**

## **Welcome to episode 116 of the UK Travel Planner podcast**

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.

Tracy: Hello and welcome to episode 116 of the UK Travel Planning podcast. This week, I chat with guest Heather Welday, who appeared in our, celebratory 100th episode a few months ago. In this episode, Heather is here to share her trip report from her family trip to England in June 2024, as well as sharing a wealth of information and travel inspiration. Spoiler alert. They stayed in an apartment four doors from where Shakespeare was born in Stratford Ponghaven. But I particularly loved hearing Heather's favourite souvenir and now plan to start collecting that particular item myself to find out what that was.

## **Heather Welde traveled to the UK with her husband and two children**

In the episode, I first asked Heather to introduce herself, where she lives in the world,

and, who she travelled to the UK with.

Heather Weldate: Hi, my name is Heather Welde. I am from southern California. We live about 50 miles east of Los Angeles, and I traveled in June with my husband, Jason, and then our two children. Our daughter is 15 and our son is 13.

Tracy: And was this the first time that you visited the UK, Heather?

Heather Weldate: It was, yes. But as many other people will have already mentioned in their podcast or on the website, it was kind of a long time dream, and, I'm so happy that it finally was fulfilled, but it was one of those things I had thought about a long time, and the kids were old enough now where it seemed like an appropriate time, and I just thought, let's do it. also, I'm a librarian, so I obviously love books and history and all of that, but, one of the book groups that I'm in, they were playing Regency bingo on the map, and so they were naming all of these places that you had to fill in, and it just really, like, sparked my imagination. I thought, what is lower slaughter? I would love to know about that. so, honestly, between those two things, like, it kind of came to a head. And then once I started doing research, I think I googled first and found your website, and then from there found the podcast and then found the Facebook group. So it just kind of snowballed once it became a real thing.

Tracy: Oh, that's brilliant.

## **How long were you in the UK for? Was it a ten days**

And so how long again were you over in the UK for? Was it a ten days?

Heather Weldate: it was, I'm trying to think. We left on June 8, and we came home on the 20th. So about twelve days ish with travel on either end. So, yes.

Tracy: And, would you like to give us a brief overview of your itinerary? What did you include? And that's always the hard thing, isn't it? When you sit down thinking, I've got this many days, what can I include? It's probably the hardest thing is what do I leave out, isn't it? But, so what did you decide that you wanted to include in your itinerary?

Heather Weldate: So the original plan was to do, like the whole shebang. And then I quickly realized that was not realistic, and so I narrowed it down to England. And then kind of the southern half of England, I suppose. We did a little triangle. So we started in London for about four and a half days. we went to Stratford upon Avon via Oxford. So we had a detour in Oxford. we were in, Stratford for a few days, then we went down to bath, and then from bath we came back to London for another couple days. So we bookended it with London, but we did kind of a little triangle, if you look at it on the map. So, yeah.

Tracy: Oh, good. And then how did you, once you decided those places, how did you decide how you were going to get around? So did you use public transport? Did you hire a car? What did you do?

Heather Weldate: it was all public transportation, so we already knew in London 100% don't have a car. I've heard it enough times, I read it enough times. And then regarding being outside of the city, my husband, who's a pretty confident driver, didn't want to drive, and I thought, if he doesn't want to drive, like, I'm certainly not going to try that myself. so quickly it became, we're going to take the train, try to use the train system. and he is a civil engineer, but like, a lot of those science y type people, I'll say science y,

like, trains are really interesting to him. And so, like, that seemed like a good idea. It seemed like a great idea. And so we thought, oh, they have a great train system, we'll, we'll give that a try. so I kind of started investigating that, too. And clearly, there were trains that went to all of those places, so it worked out for us.

Tracy: Yeah, perfect. Yes, it is a pretty, kind of easy kind of route to plan, actually, with the train. So that's good, good.

## **You used a variety of resources to help you plan your London trip**

So, what resources? Because, obviously,

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you already mentioned that you found the websites and the podcast, and, you joined the Facebook groups. That's brilliant. So, using. Because we have a lot of resources. So, which did you find particularly the most helpful, or did you find all of those were pretty good to help you put your plans together?

Heather Weldate: They were all helpful, but I would say the podcast was the most helpful. I think, partly just hearing different people's perspectives, I think, is helpful. But then you have such a variety of podcasts. So some of them are, you know, how you do something or, you know, all these free things that you can do in London or to hear different families say what they enjoyed, things that I had never thought about before, maybe didn't even know existed. And then, really, I became an aficionado. So when I first found it, I kind of listened here and there, and then I thought, oh, man, I need to

hear all of this. So I went back to the beginning and listened all the way through, and then there were certain people I just kind of gravitated toward. Like, I've heard Rob runs. I've heard Katherine's a few times, like, it sounds embarrassing, like I'm a stalker. But honestly, it was just, they were very easy to listen to, but also to kind of get their perspective on things. So, some of them I've heard more than once. I've heard some of your tips and tricks more than once.

Tracy: So, yeah, I've heard that a few times, that there's, the certain episodes of people. Okay, this is just perfect for what I'm gonna do. So I'm gonna listen to that a few times. And when I do that with podcasts, there's some podcasts I'll listen to two or three times, and I'm like, oh, I missed that first time around. So that's brilliant information to have. And I know you booked a consult with myself and Doug, as well, so that was lovely, because we got to meet you and, go through your plans.

Heather Weldate: no, that was really neat. It was helpful, because I think even if you're a planner, like I am, just to have somebody have fresh eyes on it or people have been there before. And really, the thing that I was most concerned about was just that sense that you don't know what you don't know. So even if you've planned, like, you know, in the back of your mind, well, I haven't actually done it myself before, so what is this going to turn into? So, I think that was helpful. And just having, like, heard you for so many months and you kind of feel like you get to know a person. so that was really lovely just to have the conversation, I think. And Doug was in on that one, too, for a bit. So, you know, to make that connection, I think, was really wonderful. But honestly, if you're not a planner or if you feel unsure, I would recommend it. and if you are a planner, then it doesn't hurt to have a second opinion, honestly. So.

Tracy: Yeah, no, it's true. Because sometimes you don't know what you don't know. And,

you know, even when I was planning on our trip to Japan last year, I was like, I really could do with a consult with somebody because I've never been to Japan, and I'm not. It's the little things that I wanted to check out. I kind of Washington about quite a lot of it, but I was like, I just want to find out about this or that or, again, the things that you don't know. So it was really cool to, chat with you guys and help me with your itinerary.

## **What were some of your favorite experiences and places that you visited**

So, should we talk about kind of what your favorite experiences and places were that you visited?

Heather Weldate: Oh, goodness, yes. So there were a couple things. one, I really liked Stratford upon Avon, and I don't think I was expecting that to be my favorite of, But really, it just was a comfortable place to be. we, will talk about accommodations later, probably, but I will tell you this. We were four doors down from Shakespeare's birthplace, like his back garden, and we could see his garden from our door. So, that was really neat. And the day that we happen to go there, they do little vignettes, of people doing, reenacting Shakespeare. They have a couple of actors there. So my daughter got to see the Romeo and Juliet balcony scene, and they had just read that in school. It was the last novel or play, but the last thing they read, so for her, that was exciting. And then when we came out after the tour, they were starting a new section. Ah, there. And they asked for a volunteer. So my son got to be Polonius. Oh, that's cool. Yes, it's awesome. I have the video, but, in his best terrible british accent, oh, I am slain. And then dramatically falling to the ground, it was okay. so I have things like that that I think are particular to my family. But, the day that we went to Stonehenge, we took a

tour for that. We were the first people up there. So all of my pictures, there aren't people in the background. It was wonderful. And then when we came, there were, like, back, there were, like, 50 coach buses. And I just knew, like, it would have been a completely different experience had we not got there first, honestly. But it was magical being there, like, with nobody else around. So those were two highlights. when we were in London, we took the verger tour at Westminster Abbey, so we got to sit in the pews. He let us sit in the pews. That was so cool. I think my voice just rose a little there. I was so excited. so it was. But I didn't expect that. I mean, I had heard, you know, they'll show you places that you can't see otherwise, which was really neat. But, he kind of stopped us, had everybody file in, and you could see the other people, like, looking around, like, what are they doing? This one lady, like, tried to go up, and he was kind of like, no, that's.

Tracy: You're not part of this term.

Heather Weldate: so,

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Heather Weldate: it was little things like that. I think it was the small things. the day that we went out with Victoria, we went to Hidcock Garden, which wasn't really, thought we wound up in the northern Cotswolds because we were in Stratford upon Avon. So a lot of those things that you typically think of, like, still on the wall and all of that, which I missed, and I'm bummed about, but she planned a lovely day for us. And those gardens, I'm just telling you, like, the wind rushing through the trees, like, it could not have been more peaceful or beautiful. So what stands out in my mind mostly are kind of like the little vignettes like that, I think.

Tracy: Oh, no, that's lovely. Oh, and, hidk is gorgeous, isn't it? I I don't care when I go there. I just want to wander around hid kit and just, I just love it. That garden is fantastic. The arts and crafts garden, and, kiffsgate across the road. I don't know if you managed to get to see Kiffsgate, which is the opposite, because that's got roses and that. Oh, my goodness. I could spend my whole. I think it's a week just strolling around those two, because they're very close together, so they're lovely. So it was nice to know that you. I know you went out with Victoria. That was actually kind of.

### **Your next question is about the tours you did in Oxford and Bath**

My next question is, the tours that you did, who did you do them with? How did they go? because obviously, I know you went out, with Victoria, as I say, from, Cotswold teacup tours, who, we work with in the cotswolds, so that's good. but who else did you go out with and how did they go?

Heather Weldate: So we did a walking tour in Oxford with, footprint tours. and that was, it was nice. I mean, I felt like the better part of that was their customer service. So the day that we went, which we'll talk about later, was the date my husband was starting to get sick. And then the next day, he was very sick. But, the day that we went, I had emailed them about something else and mentioned luggage where needed to find a luggage place, which Doug had, like, said some things, and he's like, oh, we have luggage here. And they gave us a discount on holding our luggage. And so we take the walking tour. It's a couple hours. And the gal was real sweet. She was an alumni and alum, I guess you'd say. and then when we came back, I had told the kids when we were in Oxford, they could buy a sweatshirt, like a university sweatshirt. And so we go in to retrieve our luggage, and they had a little shop in there. And to me, I thought the



sweatshirts look very reasonably priced. And so I was like, well, we're here, we can get it. And he's like, oh, you went on the tour, we'll give you a discount. It was just, they were so lovely start to finish from that. So, I just had a positive experience with them. and then we took Victoria's tour, and then when we were in Bath, we did the free walking tour. That's a couple hours. They meet outside of the roman baths, and that's city sponsored, I think. So they had, I think, like five different tour guides because the group was quite large, but they broke us up into about groups of 15. So that was really neat because we got to see most of the highlights there. So to see the royal crescent and the circus and all of those things. and then the day after bath, we took the Mad Max tour. So that's when we saw Stonehenge and Avebury and Lacock and Castle Combe, which is the most charming little village you'll ever lay your eyes on.

Tracy: Oh, it's so popular. Castle Combe is so, so popular. And that's in that I've actually just done a podcast episode, with Lisa from Go Cotswolds, who's based in Stratford. And, we're just saying it's that a lot of people ask to go down to Castle Combe when they're north in Cotswolds, and it's actually quite a long way. So it's actually a better way of doing it is to do Castlecombe when you're based in Bath, because it's much closer.

Heather Weldate: Yes. And it was one of those. I had heard about it before. I don't think that I was like, oh, we definitely have to go. But it was part of the tour they offered. And really I was doing the tour. Tanya was the one who had mentioned it on her podcast and I wasn't sure how else we would fit Stonehenge in there. And I thought, well, we'll do it. It's affordable. And it took off from Bath and honestly, super close to our accommodation. And so it was just an easy day for us. And so we were able to, like I said, be the first ones into Stonehenge, which was really cool. And then see Avebury and the driver stopped along the way so we could see the chalk horse on the hill. And, we talked about that a little bit of, And then my daughter liked Lacock because of the

different movie connections, so she's really a person, but her favorite places were all things that she could kind of make a connection to. My son is more like, he likes the museum and will read every placard if you allow him to. So I have two different kiddos that way. but she really enjoyed Lacock largely because of that, because she could really, you know, see, oh, look, there was the pub where Dumbledore and Harry went and all of that. So that was pretty neat to her.

Tracy: Yeah, yeah, it's nice. I think Lycock's definitely worth visiting, actually. It's a, it's a lovely. Not only just Abbey, but just the village itself is fantastic. so I'm going to.

## **Your husband got sick on your trip to London**

Because you mentioned that your husband got sick, so. And I know that part of your trip didn't, didn't work out, as you'd hoped for. So I think, let's kind of talk about, guess what

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went wrong on the trip, because it wasn't all kind of roses around the door. You did have some issues when, when you were over there. So your husband got sick. So what happened?

Heather Welfate: well, to begin with, I was sick a few days before the trip and I actually was quite concerned that I would have to send them on ahead of me, but my fever broke and I thought, I'm just going to take the cold medicine and hop on the plane. And so I did. So be that as it may, I'm sure people might look askance at that, but it was the choice I made. I was like, I don't have a fever. I'm going to do it. So, and the other thing

that had happened right off the bat that was a challenge was when I had booked our plane tickets. I went through virgin Atlantic because I heard great things about them and coming back, we had a fantastic time with them. But, I wanted a direct flight. And through their website, the only way to get the direct flight at the time, I wanted, for the price that I could afford, I had to use their Delta partner. So. Okay, well, I'm just going to make that choice. Well, a couple months after we booked those tickets, I was getting some emails from them. They had to change our flight from a direct flight to, indirect. Like, we had to fly up to seattle and then over. And the craziest part about that was we were going to get to Heathrow at the exact same time, down to the minute as the direct flight would have been. It was the weirdest thing, but it meant we had to shift our time back to leave from lax to get up to Seattle. It was, and they changed it one more time after that. So we already knew going in, like, okay, that's a little squirrely, but whatever. so when we go to check in the day before, it wouldn't allow us to. And then we thought, oh, no, so we need to go to the airport early. So then, of course, now we're leaving even earlier than we originally planned. And, we get there and it took them over an hour to straighten it out. They could see that we had purchased tickets. They could see the seats that we were in, but there was some glitch in the computer system that they cannot print us boarding cards. And so Delta is on the phone and they were trying to make it happen, but we had bought through virgin Atlantic, so they sent us over to Virgin Atlantic and Virgin Atlantic's like, no, it's a Delta problem. And, I mean, it was, yeah, I could tell my husband's getting a little testy there. And I was like, oh, goodness, this.

Tracy: Like, yeah, not a good start. Bit stressful start. Right? Start off the bat, wasn't it?  
Oh, no.

Heather Weldate: And I'm like, you know, have cold medicine running through me and I

was just, oh, yeah. So already I kind of felt like slightly unprepared because really, like, the packing. I was packing, like, groggy and all of that and knowing that we were up against this, so. But we finally managed to get there after hour and a half of them going back and forth with this. so it took us some time. So we get on the flight, and it was an overnight flight, which worked out pretty well. And then on the descent, and my daughter got air sick, which has never, ever happened before. So right away then we're like, okay, now we've got to get everything cleaned up. And then as people are kind of shuffling off, we're in the restroom, which thankfully, I had made everyone take a full change of clothes in their backpack. So.

Tracy: Always a good idea. Always a good idea.

Heather Weldate: But that meant that she used one of her very minimal outfits, because we'll talk about packing in a little bit. But I guess, so it just felt so heavy at the outset. So then it felt like anytime there was like a small disappointment, it just felt really big. the other thing that happened that was kind, ah, of a challenge, well, we had a few wifi and tech issues, like, my phone was having some issues, so we only put, like, the full wifi, like the international package on my husband's phone, which was okay, other than I had been the person planning the trip. So, like, I had all the apps and things like that. So, okay, you need to download this one or can I see your phone? It just. That was a little wonky. But, But the day that we left Stratford upon Avon and went to Bath was a Sunday, and I already knew that travel on a Sunday via train is a challenge. And I had been checking ahead of time. There were no strikes on or anything like that. So I thought, it's gonna take three, three and a half hours. We will be fine, though. Except they had some sort of employee thing going on. They didn't have enough people and they canceled three trains. So what should have been a three, three and a half hour journey was a seven hour journey. So we lost half a day in bath. And so, so even though

that day we were in bath, we crammed in so much like we never got to see Pulteney Bridge or some of those things, which I kind of felt like had we had that other half a day, we done something with it. Even if we laid low and did the hop on, hop off bus, which it looked like they had a great one there.

Tracy: it's always a thing that Douglas talks about so often, and I know sometimes it's really hard when you've got night and week to not have that Sunday travel when you've got short, days. But Sunday, it's always such a risky day,

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Tracy: because of if there's no staff, then they'll have to cancel trains. And for some people, like, it can be absolutely fine. But it's one of those days that if something gonna go wrong, it can go wrong. Which obviously it did impact and say you lost part of your time at Bath, but thank God that you got there. Thank goodness that you got there. But 7 hours is not great, especially when you've got kids as well and you hadn't been feeling.

## **A huge mistake that I made personally was buying rail cards before we came**

Was your husband still not feeling great at that point, or had he kind of got over his illness?

Heather Weldate: It was the tail end of it. So the day before, on Saturday, about noon, we went out and he was able to do some stuff. But I mean, you know, it takes you a few

days. And I, we had left the VRBO and walked to the train station, so we were there a little early, but right away there was no staff, so we had to find the little coffee shop and had our tea and coffee and all of that. but they didn't have a train for the first one, and they were sending a bus instead. So, which I was like, okay, it'll be fine. Like, I mean, train, bus, it'll go to the first stop and they'll hop on the train. But they didn't send a coach, they sent more like a city bus. So when everyone got crammed on there with their luggage, like you were holding it in your lap, there was this group of college students together. I don't know what they were, but a couple of those girls had huge suitcases that were just. I know it was uncomfortable for them, it was uncomfortable for us. So it was just one of those things. Like, part of you is like, okay, well, this is an adventure, but the other part of you is like, seriously, we're doing this right now. So a lot of it is your attitude. I know a lot of it is your attitude, but like I said, then, if you have, like, a smaller disappointment, then you just feel like it just feels that much bigger. So, So those were kind of the big ones. A huge mistake that I made personally was I had been investigating rail cards, and I didn't buy it before we came. I started to that night, ah, before which I wasn't feeling good, but I got mostly through the transaction, and then the transaction failed. And so then I thought, well, it's fine, we don't need the trains till we're a few days in London. I'll buy, buy it then. And I had put it off until the night before, and then it looked like it was going to complete the transaction. But it said something about 72 hours. And then I thought, wait, can we not use these for 72 hours? I don't know. So we wound up just paying for our tickets. But, I know that cost us money, and that was a mistake on my part by waiting for that, I guess don't wait would be the lesson learned.

Tracy: There was, it was, it was, It a rail card that you were after or brick rail pass that you were buying, Heather?

Heather Weldate: the Brit rail. But there's one, I'm, trying to think what it's called. It's one that, like, the farthest reach is like Stratford and Bath. So it's like the southern.

Tracy: Yeah, yeah.

Heather Weldate: Yes.

Tracy: I don't know what it's called, but I know which one you mean. Yeah, it doesn't, it's like, does that triangle. So covers that area? Yeah, yeah.

Heather Weldate: So it looked like it was affordable, and had I been wiser and done it earlier, it probably would have worked out smashingly. But that was a, live, and learn like you. I paid for procrastination on that one, so.

Tracy: Yeah, yeah. But also, you got sick as well, so don't, don't beat yourself up. You got sick and, you know, I do the same. I'll leave a few things to, like the last few days before I sort that. Sort that. And you don't know you're going to get sick. So it's one of those things.

**So, accommodation, let's talk about accommodation that you stayed in**

So, accommodation, let's talk about accommodation that you stayed in. So what were the standouts for you? Which would you kind of say to people? Yeah, this is a fantastic place. And the one in Stratford sounds really cool.

Heather Weldate: That was the best one. not only because of location, although location, I mean, we really couldn't have been any better. Like I said, you could see the iron gate of his back garden. And, if you. Well, you've been there before, but for your listeners, kind of right beside it is a little alley that connects the streets behind, up to Henley street. And so all we had to do is walk up the alley, and we were on Henley street. So that was awesome. but it had been, it was a two bedroom flat, a ground floor flat, and it had been refurbished, so the bathrooms were nice, the kitchen was nice, and we really did take advantage of it. we went to Mark's and Spencer's and bought meal deals for dinner a couple days, which we'll talk about meal deals. Goodness gracious. We lived off those things, but particularly in Stratford, because we had the kitchen. we took advantage of that. So it was nice to take a breather, that was where we landed when Jason was sick, so he missed the day with Victoria, but at least he could, like, rest, it was quiet, I mean, you're not dealing with a hotel or anything like that, so that was really good, but it was clean, it was comfortable, it was, I mean, there was everything about it was just lovely, so I really, liked that one, that was the standout we had in bath, we had a basement apartment, and it was just, if you can imagine Sally Lunds in your mind, there's the street that he's into it, it was like the next building down from that, so places so close to everything, and that was another

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Heather Weldate: one where, like, it was all about location, the flat was nice, it wasn't as nice as the Stratford one, but it was still a two bedroom, it met our needs for that, but just the location on that, because, I mean, literally, you're right around the corner from everything, so it was awesome, and then when we were in, London, we stayed in a travel lodge, so what's, what's interesting about it was the first time we were there for, like, the four nights, we had a family room, and it was much bigger and more



comfortable than I expected it to be, honestly, it looked refurbished, and when we went back, we were on a different floor, and the room was so tiny and didn't look redone, but it was still labeled a family room, and I thought, like, if I had went there the first time, I wouldn't have known any different, but thank goodness, like, the bigger portion, we were in the comfortable room, but it was shocking, I thought, like, it's the same, like, supposed to be a family room, we paid the same amount of money for it, but it's clearly a different accommodation, so, was it.

Tracy: The same, travel lodge in the same location in London? Yes, ah, so did you ask them if you could move to the room you had previously? I would have been going downstairs and.

Heather Weldate: Going, we didn't, but, I thinking back on it, I'm like, man, I kind of wish we would have done that now, but we kind of liked that location, we were not that far from, St. Pancras and Kings cross station, so it was less than a ten minute walk, it was like between seven and nine minutes to get back and forth from there, and then they have, like, the tube access there, and so, honestly, it was, you know, it's a lived in neighborhood, so it wasn't high end, but for what we needed it to be, and where it was like, honestly, it worked great for us.

### **London in particular moves so fast, which surprised me a lot**

And I think the other thing, too is, like, for us, one of the things I had mentioned in a post is, like, London in particular moves so fast. I don't know why I was not mentally prepared for that. Or maybe I heard it, but, I mean, it is like, you've got a hustle. Ah. And so that surprised me a lot. So if you ask something that surprised me, that probably

surprised me the most. there was a point to that story. Oh. That, particular part of London, though, like, was doable for us. Like, when we went to Westminster, I think that, like, especially, like, I kind of was like, okay, we're going to the most touristy spot I know how it's going to be. The rest of my family, I think it kind of, like, shook them a little bit. And so had we been closer to maybe some of the action, so to speak, I think that would have been a little too much. So. So where we were was good for us.

Tracy: Yeah, no, I get that. Because sometimes it's nice to have that bit of breather, especially when you've been, you know, exploring London for the day, is just to give yourself something that's a little bit quieter. So. No, I totally get that.

### **I cannot wait to get to marks and spencers. In supermarkets, the sheer variety of sandwiches**

And, talking about food, then, obviously, the nice thing about when you had your apartment is that you could make your own food. so the fact you've mentioned, I cannot wait. I can't tell you how that cannot wait to get to marks and spencers. It's. It's the joy when I get back to the UK, wandering around and looking at the variety of variety sandwiches, because I don't do sandwiches in Australia. In the supermarkets, the sheer variety of sandwiches, the fantastic meal deals. I've just shared a whole load of pictures in their Facebook group and they always get. Go viral in there because everybody's like, oh, this is amazing.

### **Tell me about the meal deals you enjoyed during your trip to London**

So tell me about the meal deals. What did you enjoy?

Heather Weldate: It was so, we discovered them, I think, on our first full day, which I need to keep a lookout for. We had visited, ah, the British Museum, and then on our way back to the hotel, we had found, like, an Instagram bakery. And I just had a pastry, but we saw the Sainsbury local on the way back. And so we wound up, getting our first meal deal there. And my daughter, it makes me laugh, but they give you so many varieties of what you can choose for your three items. She had sushi, like three or four times, and it just kind of made me laugh that she's eating like convenience store sushi, but she really liked it. And so we had sandwiches and wraps and salad and then, at home we eat like a lot of fruit. Like, my husband eats a lot of fruit. It's a long story, but, it was so nice to have like fresh fruit that was washed and cut and ready to go. One day, I think, when we were at Westminster, the kids had donuts as their side dish. I thought that was kind of funny. But I, that you could have like a candy bar if you wanted or whatever. It happened to be like. I don't even think we had crisps until the end because we, there were so many varieties of things to choose from. And then when we were in Stratford, ah, upon Avon, they had like the full size Marks and Spencer's, so they had a Tesco Express there, which I went into. But then, I wanted to see what Marks and Spencer's was like. But the first night we bought a meal deal at dinner it was twelve pounds. You got two steaks, a side of mashed potatoes, and then we would call it gravy, but like a steak sauce type of thing. For twelve pounds, I couldn't believe it. And then the next night we did one that was, pizza. And then

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Heather Weldate: we had like mozzarella sticks and chicken wings or something with it. and that was less than twelve, if I remember correctly. So just the fact that those

sandwich meal deals, most of them were like three pounds 50. And then the dinner to not be more than twelve was. I was in shock. And then the nice thing about the large marks and Spencers was they had other things. They like, had clothes before you got back to the grocery store?

Tracy: Yes, they do.

Heather Weldate: My pants were a little loose. I wound up buying a belt there. So there's a picture of my husband and I in front of the Shakespeare statue. And you can see my m and s bag and there's a belt in that bag.

Tracy: I always go to. Honestly, the food bit is my first bit, but I also look at the clothes, and just, also just a shout out, from Marks and Spencer's underwear, which is a strange thing to mention. But honestly, I only ever buy my underwear from Marks and Spencer's in the UK, so it's really good stuff. and yeah, I mean, Marks and Spencers are not paying me for this, I just mentioned. I just absolutely. And my mom also loves my and Spencer's, so, we know. We absolutely love it.

## **Did you eat out at all or did you self cater**

So did you eat out at all or did you kind of majority of the time, kind of go for the meal deals and kind of self cater.

Heather Weldate: So, mostly it was meal deals. Usually we would do a meal deal once a day and typically it was lunch. Although we did have the two dinners there. And I think one time we were in London and just the way the day had worked out, I think maybe the

day went to Harry Potter studios on the way back. We did like a meal deal, but it was like a sandwich kind, but for dinner. So the day that we arrived was a Sunday afternoon and I had booked at, Kings Cross station. They have a pub there, parcel yard, and it's a fuller's pub. It took me a while to realize that fullers must be a brand name and each of the pubs have a different name to them. so I had made a reservation, which was nice because we got our Sunday roast. So that was experienced, that I was very glad. but if you're going to ask about, like, our favorite things, in bath, there was a pub called Westgate pub, which has been around since 1677. And that was probably my favorite meal. Jason had steak and ale pie and then the most amazing green peas. And then I had the best macaroni and cheese I've ever had. It was so good. And it had like a side salad, like an arugula kind of salad. So I ate his peas and he ate my salad. but the peas were perfect with that macaroni and cheese. But it was so nice because I feel like a lot of times if you have macaroni and cheese that it breaks down and it's oily and you feel kind of gross. But it was not, it was so smooth. Like, I ate it and felt just fine. I was like, it's delicious and I feel okay. That's pretty good. that was a really nice one. the hotel we like, as part of the hotel, we like, paid for the breakfast because the kids ate free. So it wasn't like spectacular. It was hotel food, but, it was one we didn't have to think about in the morning. And they had all the makings of a full english and then, pastries and things like that. when we went to Harry Potter studios, the kids got butterbeer, so I got to try butter beer, of course.

Tracy: I was going to ask you, did you enjoy Harry Potter studios? It's so good.

Heather Weldate: We were there 6 hours, so I know it's like three dozen stay at six. I mean, we had a break in the middle at the back lot, but yeah, it was a full day for us there. And then in the cotswolds and in bath, we had fish and chips twice. and then in Lacock just at the little shop there, we had pasties and my daughter and I had the

cheese and onion one. I think that's what it was. They were so good. So I'd say the pulp meal and that pasty were like probably two of my favorite things.

Tracy: Oh, that's brilliant.

Heather Weldate: And then when we made our way to borough market, which honestly completely overwhelmed us, so we didn't wind up eating there. But we did find those strawberries on Instagram and I will give a plug. It was the best strawberry ever had in my life. we bought two. We bought one with chocolate and one without. And so I tried the non chocolate one first and it was everything you imagine a strawberry should be like. The texture, the flavor. I don't know how they grow these things, but it was amazing.

Tracy: Well, I'll have to try them. I've been to borough market so many times and I look at the long line and I go, no, I'm not gonna stand in that line to get strawberries, but I'll try them next time for sure. I'll be back over. I'll probably be in probably by the time this podcast episode comes out, actually, I'll be in London. So hopefully I'll have had a chance to try some of those strawberries. That'll be good.

**So let's talk about packing. Um, so you didn't pack your pack lightly because that's**

So let's talk about packing. so you didn't pack your pack lightly because that's a good idea when you're traveling on the trains. We always say that, the more you take, the more stressed you get.

Heather Weldate: Well, I've been jokingly saying that I'll probably be the only guest who

says, I wish we would have packed more, but that's, ah, only half. It's kind of a half joke because I really like how we packed. I just, I wish we would each have had one more outfit. so we each had 19 inch suitcases, which is pretty small. they're cases that we've had since the kids were old enough to kind of roll their own. So they're old. but the newer one that I had bought for a trip last year was going to be

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Heather Weldon: like slightly too big because of the wheels. And so then I thought, so even though on our tickets we technically could have checked it back, I didn't want to, which didn't work because that crazy delta flight we talked about, they made us check out the gate, anyway, so it was, yeah, it was, but what I did was, I made each of us pack a full outfit in our backpack, which worked out really well for us, like, as I said, with my daughter kind of having her issue on landing, so at least she was taken care of, but essentially, what we each had, we each had three pairs of pants, five shirts, two pairs of PJ's, undies, and then each of my other family members wore a sweatshirt, I kind of had a lighter one, but I usually wear like a little cardigan over my t shirt, so they pack up real small, so I had a couple of those, and then the rain jacket. So, honestly, it worked out well as far as what we could fit in the suitcase, I had chosen the five t shirts because I knew we would have laundry in the middle, but that was another hiccup, because the stratford one didn't, have a dryer, it was only a washer, but I had brought a laundry line, I thought ahead, I recommend that, another little tip, and I thought, if they have a washer, they have to have a drying rack, which they did, but the problem was, when we were there, it was kind of like off and on rain, and you never knew when it was going to start, so I had the kitchen looked like an old fashioned 18 hundreds laundry with it spread out, and it just, it took a while for things to dry, yeah, so before we left, one of the things I bought at, Marks and Spencer's were like Ziploc baggies, and then I

made us all the outfits I could out of what we had to see what we would need, so that when we went to bath, I was only washing the necessities. So that's why I think, like, one more outfit would have been helpful, but I'm thankful that, you know, when you're dragging your suitcase down the cobblestones of Oxford and it starts raining, that, you know, that was all we had to worry about, that and the backpack, so it really was traveling light, I think that was helpful, and a couple of those trains that were really packed, we were standing in the luggage compartment, and so to be able to stand there with the suitcase, I was just thankful it wasn't more than that, so.

Tracy: Yeah, it's always a fine balance for the UK, because, if you're traveling by train, to take as minimum as possible, because I just know personally, the more I have, the more stressed I get, but also the difficulty, and this comes up so often as well, like trying to get things dry in the UK, so often you'll get a washer. Dryer combined with a dryer isn't particularly great. And I know when I lived in the UK, I used to just dry everything on the radiators if it was on. In winter, you struggle, which is fine. In winter, you can get stuff dry that way, but in the summer, if it's not warm, it's not that easy to get things dry quickly. So that's definitely something. And I always carry, I've got a little portable, washing line as well. When I was in India, I used that all the time. It was great. That stuck that up because it was warm, so I could get things dry really quickly. so that's absolutely great tip there.

### **Heather, you had minimal luggage so collecting souvenirs may have been difficult**

so, Heather, did you buy any? I know you had minimal, amount of luggage, which meant, I guess, that squeezing any souvenirs in may have been difficult. But, I know



you did buy some really interesting souvenirs. So tell us what you ended up collecting when you were over there.

Heather Weldate: I will, although I will caveat this to say I did have a packable duffel. So we had expansion room going back. So, aside from good planning books that my kids, bought, because we're big readers, my souvenir of choice was Christmas ornaments, because I collect Christmas ornaments in general. But when we go someplace, I usually get something. So I think I got three different of those. But what turned out to be the hit of the trip was we started collecting the little rubber ducks. So I don't know if you've seen them before dressed up as different characters, but our first one was, at the Winston Churchill, Churchill war rooms. In the gift shop, my daughter found a churchill, so he was our first. And then. So as we went around, at Shakespeare's birthplace, we have a Shakespeare duck. Now, Jane, Austen center and Bath, we have Jane Austen. And then we rounded it out our, last day. After Tower of London, we went to Tower Bridge. And so we now have a duck in front of tower Bridge. It's kind of positioned either side of him. So we have a little collection of ducks on one of our bookshelves.

Tracy: Oh, that's so cool. I love that. Well, I'm gonna be. I'm gonna start collecting them when I go back. That's just such a cool thing. I have looked at them in the past, and now you mentioned it. I'm like, oh, you know, and there's a Henry VIII one. Oh, and definitely know there's a Henry VIII rubber duck as well. Yeah, because I've seen that. So I'm gonna get those ducks. I think that's. And that's just cool, cool thing to collect. And, if you can take a photo of the little rubber ducks in a row, that'd be really cool. We could put a photo in the show notes to show everybody what they look like because they are really cool.

Heather Weldon: Yes. Glad to do it.

## **Heather shares her tips for anyone planning a visit to the UK**

Tracy: but I guess we're going to wrap up now. So we've been talking for ages. It's great. It's been lovely having a chat with you, Heather. so what would be, because you know what I always asked at the end of a podcast, because you're a regular podcast listener and everybody, if you're listening, you know

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Tracy: exactly what I'm going to ask. Heather, what would be your tip for anyone planning a visit to the UK for the first time?

Heather Weldon: Oh, I've got so many things running through my head. well, I've got two. A general one just for all. Travel is kind of know your family's travel style and go with that because, you know, I've heard other people say, you know, they just will go until they drop and I might be willing to do that. My family's not. And so you kind of have to go with it. you know, some of the things that I kind of had to let go of, like, I knew ahead of time we couldn't do certain things, like we couldn't do Windsor, Hever Castle. I think the bigger things I was disappointed with were, like, things in London that we didn't make it to. But I just, like, I wasn't going to crack the whip and make them go any faster fit in anymore. so just know your travel style and be fine with it. But I think a practical tip, especially in London, but it worked on our tour too, is for the most popular attractions. Book your ticket first thing at opening, because at Westminster we were the first time slot and, there was already a queue going and we were like number 15. So I

was able to get that verger tour. So when I walked in, I asked right away and I could get the verger tour for us. when we went to Tower of London on our last day, we went straight to the crown jewels, as we were told, and the queue was probably only 20ft to the door. And by the time we left, just a couple hours later, it snake to, you know, all the way practically over to another building. It was insane. So, like I said, stonehenge, first ones out there, beautiful pictures. so if I just had one very practical tip, it would be like, book early for the most important things, like the very first opening time slot, if you can. Other things, like Churchill war rooms we were able to get into. I had tickets ahead of time, but later in the day, just if we had had to stand in the line for it wouldn't have been the end of the world. But those very popular ones, I mean, it's just a different experience if you're not in there without the masses.

Tracy: Oh, yeah, no, absolutely. They get so popular and so busy and especially those kind of top ten kind of places. It's really, if you want to go and see them, book them, because there's nothing worse. When you go all the way over to London to see something and, oh, you go and there's no tickets because you haven't booked it, or you spend 3 hours in a line when you really could be doing other things in those 3 hours. That's the other thing I kind of said. Do you want to spend your time in a line on holiday? Because it's not much fun. And absolutely the tarot of London, those crown jewels, honestly, get in there and get straight to them because you will be amazed at how, how quick that queue builds up. It can be crazy. But it was great to chat to you and catch up with you all about your trip.

Heather Weldon: Yes. Thank you so much for having me. It was so fun. I mean, just, I was just looking at the calendar and it was almost exactly a year ago that I started listening. It was like right at the beginning of August and so which we're recording this on July 31, so tomorrow will be just about one year. So to be able to chat to you after

having you've been a virtual friend for so many years, but even the consultation, April and all of that. So just super grateful. Thankful for your work. I'm sure many people would echo that. Like, we're super appreciative of all you do, but I'm thankful that you had me on and that even just the time we got to chat was super fun. So thank you.

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