

Episode 135: Navigating London Airport Transfers - Expert Tips with Riz from XFA Cars

Welcome to episode 134 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast

Tracy: Welcome to episode 134 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. In this episode, I chat with our partner Riz from XFA Cars about London airport transfers and beyond. We'll discuss why we recommend private transfers, how to book and why this popular service has received outstanding feedback in our UK Travel Planning and London Travel Planning Facebook groups. So grab a cuppa, and join us for tips to make your UK travel even smoother.

Riz: Welcome to the UK Travel Planning Podcast.

Tracy: Your host is the founder of the.

Riz: UK travel planning website, Tracy Collins.

Tracy: In this podcast, Tracy shares destination guides.

Riz: 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.

Tracy: The picturesque countryside to seaside town. Hi everybody and welcome to

episode 134 of the UK Travel Planner Podcast. Now this week I am really excited to be talking to my mate Riz from XFA Cars. Now it is 12 months since Riz was last on the podcast and since then, if you know who Riz is, you're probably a member of our Facebook group because he is a celebrity in our Facebook group. Now Riz is our partner for our London airport transfers and beyond because he doesn't just do the airport transfers, he does much more than that.

Tracy says the quickest way to get a taxi quote is online

Now before Riz comes onto the podcast and introduces himself, I'm going to embarrass them now because we have had so many which I talk about you as a celebrity, Riz and you are, you are a celebrity in our Facebook group. I have had so many amazing reviews of Riz so I'm just going to quickly throw a couple of these out there. My husband and I just got back from an amazing time in London and it all started with a ride from Riz and his crew. They were so accommodating and the communication was key. Loved how Riz always let me know what he was going to do, where he would pick us up and communicate with me constantly. Our ah, ride into London from London Heathrow was super enjoyable and informative. Another one shout out to Riz and XFA Cars and our driver Hanif who we just arrived in London and our trip from London he throw to the hotel was flawless. I'm so glad we booked with them. Thank you Tracy and Doug. So those are just two of the many, many, many amazing reviews. So I'm so pleased to welcome you back onto the podcast. 12 months since the Last one. Would you believe it?

Riz: Hi, everyone. M. Happy New Year. First of all, thank, you, Tracy for having me back. yeah, can you believe it? It's been a year already. it's been a tough blood, sweat and

tears sometimes for me, including the drivers. all this communication does have a cost, and unfortunately, I'm keeping them awake through the night, constantly checking on them to make sure they are there to, you know, so that we're looking after people.

Tracy: But it's amazing, Riz, honestly, everybody who books with you, the reviews that we've had, the emails that we've had, have been absolutely outstanding. So I have to say, personally, from myself and Doug, thank you so much for the outstanding job that you do. Now, I said 12 months ago, and I'll say it again for me, when I arrive in a new destination or a place, I don't know, at an airport, I want to be picked up. I want to be taken to my accommodation. I don't want to stress. I really don't. Which is where you guys come in and where you have been doing a fantastic job over the last 12 months. And I know you've picked up hundreds of people over the last 12 months and taken them into London. You've taken them to other places as well. So chat to us about the process. When people actually do the booking, what sort of information do you require? How do you keep in touch with them? What happens when you meet them at the airport? Talk us through. Through everything that you do.

Riz: Sure. So that's a very good point. Tracy So the journey kind of begins from the initial communication I get. So if I'm honest, sometimes I'm on the road myself as well, which makes it difficult for me to respond to all emails within the desired 24 hours. I think if I could say the quickest way to get a quote would be online. The quickest way to communicate with myself, is There's a business WhatsApp number. My number is also advertised pretty much all over Facebook as well. So that's on the imessage. If you're not on WhatsApp. Ah. But like I say, the website is configured to give you the price where you find the price isn't there. Absolutely. Drop me a message. If it's an urgent inquiry, drop me a message directly on the way. WhatsApp or, on imessage. Otherwise I will respond by email as well. So there's no preferred way. The only one I'll say I'd avoid,

booking questions are, probably Facebook messenger. Because it's not the mainstream business sort of booking tool. However, it doesn't mean you won't get a response on it, it will just be a slow response. So, yeah, go online, get yourself a quote that you need and by all means, if you need to discuss the quote, if you need to discuss prices, if you've got questions about the quote itself, please,

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Riz: you know, by all means, pick the phone up, drop me a message, call whatever is easy for you, I'm available every possible way. The other thing I was going to add to that is when you're looking at quotes and, you know, people are often sort of thinking, ah, I want to book, but I don't know what time to put down, you know, my flight arrives at 6:00am do I give it half an hour? Do I give it 45 minutes? The answer is, is even I don't know how long you'll be. Once you've landed and you're taxiing and you're waiting for your gates, we do allow a generous 45 minutes, an hour, you know, for you to clear passport control, grab your luggage and then meet somebody at the other side who's waiting for you at the meeting point. And like you mentioned, you know, in line with the communication, I, share with you a small map, a picture and a video. And of course, me nagging you constantly, you know, hey, thank you for your book here. Looking forward to seeing you. And of course, you know, you've landed, welcome to London, you know, and then going to give us 10, 15 minutes and we'll be there. So I try and communicate as much as possible. By all means, if you have questions outside of that, I'm always happy to take any questions as well.

Tracy: So I think, I mean, the, the feedback that we've had, Riz, I have to say, is that, not only yourself, but your drivers are extremely friendly. They're punctual, they're on time. The communication is second to none from you guys. So there's no stress involved.

Once you've, you've got the booking with you guys from then on out, the communication is absolutely perfect and sound. And, and you do that.

Key information that you need from people booking is obviously how many suitcases

Now, key information that you need from people booking is obviously things like how many people, how many suitcases. And that is very important because you tailor the quote to them, don't you?

Riz: Absolutely. 100%. It's, you know, it's other things, like, for example, child seats, you know, that comes up quite often as well. Luggage is important for me because I've got to see you from a pricing perspective, there's not a huge difference between the types of vehicles, but of course I'd rather you have the one that's more spacious and a generous one for you to be, you know, to have a comfortable ride as opposed to sort of chancing it on the day. So, yes, it's important for me to know the number of pieces of luggage you've got, the space, in terms of. It'd be nice to know if there's adults or children involved, again, for child seats, as well as the type of vehicle you're going to get, because there is a MPV vehicle which is great for kids and adults, but not so much all adults. So then I'll try and give you the better vehicle. And dare I say it, if I've got a bigger vehicle available, I am always looking to offer the free upgrade, although I don't promise it. Although I don't, you know, give that as a, as a prior agreement. I do my best to see where I can help. so this is why it's good to know if you've got children involved on your journey or if it's just six adults, for example. So, yeah, so flight number is very important. So I can monitor your flight. There's no additional charges for this service. We will monitor your flight. We will make sure that, you know, coming in early or late,

someone's there waiting for you. And of course, you know, that is what's used to determine what terminal you're going to come to. Because I'll be honest with you, the number of bookings I get, let's say Heathrow Airport, and I have no idea which terminal at Heathrow Airport we're going to meet you at. And then the number of times I. It says 11:35, but the flight is due to land at 11 or even 10:30, some cases. And I'm looking for a flight that lands from particularly the. A place in the country, but I don't know which terminal you're gonna be arriving at. So, yeah, very important. If you could always make sure you're putting down your flight number. Don't worry about. We know how much time to give to come out because as I say, we'll monitor your flight and we'll give you ample time to come out and we'll be in contact anyway. So regardless. And, the other rule, I guess is sometimes people don't use WhatsApp. some people don't have roaming. I get it. And then there's a simple agreement, you know, we will be 45 minutes, an hour after your flight lands. That means somebody will be in the terminal between 30 to 45 minutes and we'll be there to take you away.

Tracy: I'm gonna say it's not, it's not always you. And I do, I think we do need to kind of say that because as you say, you are pretty much a celebrity these days and people kind of really want to be met by Riz. We get that so often. Riz, honestly, I know you're smiling, but it's so true. but we've had fantastic reviews back from, from about your team as well, so. And I think that's important to say. You may not have risk picking you up or dropping you off, but his team are all amazing.

Riz: No, I, I just have to say I think there are people that are far better than I am. they are much more capable than, than I am. They, probably have better jokes than me as well. but yeah, you know, honestly, I love to be everywhere and I love to meet everyone. I wouldn't go as far as saying I'm a celebrity, but I always try my best to be on every journey that I possibly can on. But of course, I just can appreciate it's not always going

to be possible. particularly I was a bit beaten up actually, the last, Boxing Day till New Year's. I wasn't well myself. And those would have been the days to be able to meet people because obviously festive time, everyone's happy and everyone would love to take some pictures. So apologies to everyone that thought I was going to be

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Riz: picking them up because even I thought I was be picking you up, but I couldn't. So, But yeah, these things sometimes are out of control. There are vehicle issues, there are bookings, there are, you know, just life commitments, things like that take over. But yeah, where possible, I'll be there. Otherwise, I'm sure the guys that you are going to be meeting with are going to be the ones that are as good as me being there. And if they're not meeting that standard, then, then they won't be working with me, let alone seeing you.

Tracy: I was going to say you're very, very high standards. you do have. Now, I know in episode 95, I spoke to Deb Pecker. Now, Deb was somebody that not only had the pickup from Heathrow, but you did some other, work with Deb when you were, when, ah, she was in London, didn't you?

Riz: Yeah, no, so, so she had to be at a certain sort of time. 9:00am actually, to be precise, from Tower Bridge to Guildford, which is quite a bit of a journey. And, and I guess this is a good sort of point to make is, Is, you know, we don't just do airport transfers. We will take you to anywhere to or from London. If your journey begins in London or ends in London. you know, I'd love to take that book in. Having said that, if your journey is not quite finishing in London or not ending in or beginning in London, I guess, you know, we're reasonable. 50 miles, 100 miles, whatever it is, we will price that

into the. Into the. In the quote. Of course, you know, I'd love to take you all over the country and pick you up from, I don't know, Bath to Scotland. Of course, it may not be practical, but. But if you're finishing in London or you're starting in London, please call me. I'll be more than happy to help you. I will also stress, you know, points of interest or places of interest. So. We're not tour guides. I wouldn't, you know, I wouldn't pass myself off as a tour guide. I wouldn't do anyone a disservice by boring you on a long day. So you probably regret being out there with me, but, you know, if you said to me, hey, can you pick me up? Take me Stonehenge. Absolutely. Take me to Bath. Absolutely. Tell me about the history, about what's happened here. I'd probably say I've got a cold and I'm going to keep quiet for about an hour.

Tracy: I think the important thing is that you can do the transfer if people need it.

Riz: Yes, 100.

Tracy: Absolutely.

So how many people can you pick up? Maximum? Tracy: Eight

So how many people can you pick up? Maximum? I know, I know. You've picked up one. I mean, you've picked up Doug a couple of times this year. You've dropped dug off at there for. You've picked me. In fact, you took me to Heathrow when I was going to India. You've picked me up earlier this year. I mean, I don't know how many times. In fact, you did a lovely trip for me. I was. I was staying at a friend's house in London and I needed to go to my mum's. And you did that before Christmas, took me and all my. My luggage to my mum's, which was fantastic.

Riz: See, Lemon Tower One, wasn't it? We didn't know we were going to see each other that day.

Tracy: It was, but it's always good. And obviously you take my parents to the airport when they, when they fly off and they go to South Africa in March and you'll be taking them on that, on that trip as well. So, obviously we're talking single and we're talking couples there. But you, but you do have families? yes. Yep. So tell me about last year then. What did it look like in terms of what, what your demographic was?

Riz: Oh, that's a good one. So it, it does begin, I say, going into Jan, Feb. I think I'll probably see more, couples, ones and twos. Then it starts getting through March, April, summertime, starts picking up with families if it helps in terms of the number of people we can pick up. So there are Mercedes veto's on the fleet. They are licenced to carry nine, people in total. So that's eight passengers and the driver. I personally have a Mercedes V Class which is licenced to carry eight, including the driver. Now the thing I'm conscious of is, is if I said to you we've got eight people and then we've got lots of luggage for eight people, it can and it can't work. And actually that takes me nicely on to the point of, you know, what people define as, checked bags. Carry on. For me, when I'm thinking carry on, I assume automatically it says carry on suitcase and actually most people are referred to a carry on backpack or a small bag, which is fine, there's absolutely no issues with. But of course when I'm sending a vehicle out, I'm assuming the worst because if I assume everybody has a backpack and it turns out to be a suitcase, we've got a bit of a problem there. So in terms of the vehicles, up to eight people, no shoes, up to, seven people, six people. If you are booking a MPV sized vehicle, I would say, you know, no more than four people in there with their luggage is fine. After that you go with a minivan. One more thing I've actually done is I've got rid of the what are, you know, streamlined. Some of the options in this there's like a small car,

like a solo passenger, one cheque bag, one carry on. Bearing in mind that's just one person and you've got all the boot to them, so that's great. Then it goes into the saloon or sedan, which is great for two people and a bit of luggage. But if you're two people with a lot of luggage, then you want MPV, I.e two cheque, two carry on suitcases at your own risk, you can book what you like. I'm not going to dictate which car you should book and you must have. But I will just say, I try

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Riz: my best to give you the guidance based on what I know in terms of experience. But, you know, you know your luggage better than I do, and if you feel like, you know, this could fit in a. In a boot because you've done the journey already, by all means, please, you know, override what I think, because my assumptions are based on large bags and, you know, things that will potentially cause problems if you get the vehicle wrong. And I obviously don't want to get it wrong.

Tracy: So if people want to book, do they have to pay everything up front straight away?

Riz: That's actually another. Where are you getting all these questions from, Tracy?

Tracy: These are really good questions.

Riz: So, I had a long, hard think about this one. So I thought, do you know what, Sometimes it's just one or two journeys and, it's quite inexpensive and you could just book it all in one go. Some people want to book in one go, some people don't. Some people don't even want to leave a deposit. So I get it. What I would do is, in order for me to secure the booking and assign a driver, an allocate driver with enough notice in

terms of commitment, in terms of making sure we don't get any hiccups last minute, we do need the payment up front. Now, that doesn't mean you have to do it there and then. So if you're travelling, I don't know, July, and you were looking at quotes today, and. And you're obviously more than one trip, and you have additional trips in there as well, and your total is quite a large one. By all means, I'm happy to agree. Things where you put a deposit down, we secure your bookings and then as and when interest free, you just keep making payments towards your booking. As long as we are clear before you've arrived or before that journey is due to take place, you know, we're happy with that. We can work with that. because it doesn't help me anymore by sitting on your money for a year. And also, if it makes easier for you to obviously spread the payment across multiple instalments, we're happy to work with that as well.

Tracy: That's perfect.

Doug says it's important to recognise that Uber is well priced

Now I'm going to. There's always an elephant in the room here. When people. People will say to me, well, there's a couple of things, actually, I want to mention. One or two. We've had people who said, oh, we didn't book, but then we did. And we realised just how much more superior the drive was with Riz compared to who we initially booked with. Or we've had people say, oh, I just booked and I decided to go with an Uber, or, you know, whatever. And we decided that's what we wanted to do. So that's not going to be particularly, necessarily a lot cheaper than you guys, because you guys are very, very reasonably priced for the service that you guys are providing. I have to say, it's outstanding. And if you are listening to this podcast right now and thinking, oh, no, I'm just going to get an Uber, honestly, seriously, take a look at our Facebook group of

people who went, oh, actually, I wish I'd booked with Riz, because there's a reason that we work with you, there's a reason why we promote you, and that is because you are one of the best, if not the best at, at doing this particular service that people need and making sure that people start their holiday the best way possible.

Riz: no, I think, Tracy it's very important to recognise that, look, Uber, is well priced. You know, they're shying away from it, but you do get what you pay for. And ultimately, for me to survive as a business, there are certain minimum, you know, points I have to sort of accept that I can't do it for less than that. And it just means that obviously, in order to deliver that great quality, that great service from the drivers, and as I say, if it's me, I could take the compromises all day, but I can't expect a driver to turn up and then tell them that you're going to pay less than the Uber price and give the service that's twice as, you know, better than what you would have got with Uber. So, yeah, everything does, sometimes it does come down to money and, the cost of it is important to recognise, but the value for service, I'll, be honest with you, sometimes even I look and go, oh, that's a bit, that's a bit steep. But then I look around and honestly, I look at the service, the like, for, like, equivalent options, which are not Uber. you know, and I don't want to name call anyone here because I don't want to be advertising anyone unintentionally. but if you did look around, I'm sure if you saw the services, there are business out there that will charge you twice the money you were charging. And I would like to say probably not as good quality of service as what you would get. I think that the word I like to Hear or see when I'm looking at feedback is something that sounds like personable. And, a lot of the businesses that are charging almost twice more than what we are charging are not giving you that personal experience. They're giving me great experience. I'm not going to discredit their service. but it's not personable and it's not someone you could pick the phone up to. And actually, I will say to people, even if it's not transfers related, if you have a question I can help you, please just ask me. you

know, even things like, you know, I'll even meet you with a SIM card if it helps. I don't think many companies would, so it's just that sort of stuff.

Tracy: Yeah. And, I think you're still in contact with quite a few people that you picked up last year on you.

Riz: Oh, we're sharing pictures. at least I think they're happy with them.

Tracy: Well, I think it's lovely because it's like, I think you, you approach, you approach it like Doug and I do, is that we, we want the best for people coming to the uk. We want them to have the best experience from the minute you get off that aeroplane to the minute you go back on the aeroplane.

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Tracy: We want you to have the best, best time in, in the UK and experience. Which is why, and I say this time and time again, and I say this in the Facebook group and I say it on the podcast. We genuinely only work with people that we know that we've met, that we've reviewed, that we know are the absolute best at what they, at what they do. And we get so many fantastic, you know, emails and reviews from people going, oh, thank you so much for referring us to Riz or to a particular tour guide or tour company, because they've had a fantastic experience and that is exactly what we're doing. And we know that that customer journey is so important for you as well. Riz.

Riz: I think I see it more than just journey. I think the word you use was experience. I like to really take that home and go, this is someone's first trip. This is someone's big occasion. They've been waiting for a while. Ah, sometimes. And these are expensive

trips. These are, people planning for maybe years sometimes. And I think lack of, oversight in some cases can really make or break someone's trip and really ruin the experience to begin with. Typically it'd be things like, for example, if you've turned up, and Airbnb is a good example. So You've booked, everything's great, we've arrived and there's a big disconnect between the instructions you receive versus where your keys are. And again, a typical Uber journey would be is they'll drop you with your luggage, it's raining, they're gone, and you've got no access to the property you're at. This is where I guess we know we are different. We will make sure that, you know, you've got your keys, you're comfortable, you're settled. Sometimes it may need mean that we need to drive around the corner to somewhere else, bring the keys back, we're not going to be one to turn and go, oh yeah, but you know, you booked A to B. This is B. Bye, bye. you know, so this is where we kind of like to go beyond just the journey. It's the whole experience. It's about making sure that you are fine, you're comfortable. there are even times, you know, when people have arrived really early in the morning, they've got cheque in quite late in the afternoon and they've got luggage with them, they need places to hold. And I'll be honest with you, as weird as it sounds, I volunteer to hold luggage for them once you go do your thing. As long as I haven't got a follow up booking. or at least, you know, we drive to somewhere where we can store your luggage or even your own hotel and drop you to another place, you get breakfast and do these things. As I say, it's, it's a, it's all about money, money, money. It's about doing the right thing. And I think I share that with a lot of the drivers. You know, we will do the right thing. And that's probably the secret of our success, which is we don't see it as, you know, a customer, we see as how would I treat my family member. But which is why it's very important to have that communication from the moment you landed. Because I know even when you arrive, Tracy I message you from the moment you've landed, not when you say to me, hey, I'm outside, I'm at W. Smith. So it's, yeah, it makes a difference.

Tracy: To me and I think that comes through and I, I hope, I Hope this year, 2025, we're going to build on the success from 2024. I'm sure we will. And if you listen to this podcast and you are arriving into London this year and you want that transfer, then I suggest that you contact, Riz and I will put the contact information in the show notes, which will be @uktravelplanning.com episode 134. You can also listen to Riz talk in last year's episode, episode 83 as well, if you want a double dose of Riz. But it's been great to chat with you as always, Riz.

Riz welcomes Tracey to the UK Travel Planning Podcast

and I've just talked to you now about picking my daughter up later on in the air, so. And you take a bit, my parents to, to their flight in March. So we, we see each other all the time, don't we? So that's absolutely fantastic. So, as I say, you're in our Facebook group, so if people also want to ask Riz any questions in the Facebook group, pop over there because Riz is in there. We also have a new thing called Speak Pipe, which means that you can actually leave a voice message if you have a message or something or a question about this episode, something that you want to talk to myself or Riz about. And you can contact us via that and we'll get back to you that way too. So that's a brand new thing that we're doing this year. But, otherwise, thank you so much, Riz, for coming on and chatting again about XFA cars and, and your, your service.

Riz: Thank you again. Thank you, Tracy for having me. Thank you all and wishing you all the best of 2025. And, let's see if we can get another one of these episodes out. maybe in the year.

Tracy: Yeah, maybe. Maybe see how things are going. And, and any more tips for

people when they're. When they're arriving in London as well. And, things to think about when you're arriving at the airport. and that, that we're really useful.

Riz: Yeah, absolutely. So, yeah, I guess the only one thing I will say is not just transfers any trip cheque online cheque on the website, the quote is there. you can book online if you have questions about the quote, whether it's the price, where the journey, whether it's changes to the journey, any stops you want to add in there, only then, you know, it may not always answer the questions. Otherwise, a straightforward journey, it's ready to book.

Tracy: Brilliant. Oh, thanks so much, Riz.

Riz: Brilliant. Thank you so much. Thanks for having me.

Tracy: Thank you for tuning in to this week's episode of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. As always, show

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Tracy: notes can be found@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 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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