

Explore the Cotswolds: 5 Unforgettable Experiences for Your 2025 Adventure

The UK Travel Planning Podcast helps you plan your perfect UK vacation

Tracy: Dreaming of a trip to the Cotswolds but not sure what to include in your itinerary. In episode 136 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast, I chat with Lisa Benjamin from Go Cotswolds who shares her top five must do experiences, from exploring charming villages to uncovering unique traditions. Plus, we answer listener, questions about visiting the Cotswolds, giving you even more insider tips to plan an unforgettable trip.

intro: Welcome to the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Your host is the founder of the UK Travel Planning website, Tracy Coll. In this podcast, Tracey 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 town.

Episode 136 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast features Lisa Go Cotswolds

Tracy: Welcome to episode 136 of the UK Travel Planning Podcast and this week I'm really excited to be talking to Lisa Go Cotswolds Benjamin again for the third time. Now,

Lisa has been on the podcast with me twice before to talk all things Cotswolds. And if you haven't heard episodes 107, 115 and are not familiar with Lisa, she's also in our, UK Travel Planning and London Travel Planning Facebook groups and is very active in the groups. But if you don't know Lisa, would you just like to give us a quick introduction to who you are?

Lisa Benjamin: Hi, yes, I'm, glad to be back on the podcast. Tracey. My name is Lisa Benjamin, as you said. I am, one of the owners of Go Cotswolds along with my husband Tom. We run a small group guided tour company. We're based in Stratford Upon Avon, just on the edge of the Cotswolds, and we take visitors from Stratford Upon Avon and also from Morton in Marsh on the beautiful day trips upon.

Tracy: And you've taken quite a few of our listeners and group members on tours already and we've had some wonderful feedback about your tours.

Lisa Benjamin: We have. It's been a great response to the previous two podcasts that I recorded with you. and yeah, lots of UK Travel Planning fans have been on a tour with us which has been absolutely lovely.

Tracy: And I asked my Facebook groups last night for questions for you. So at the very end of the episode, after I ask you the obvious question of what your top tip is, we'll go through the questions from our Facebook group members and I also have a message also Somebody left via speak pipe. Laura. I'm just going to name drop there and at the end of the episode we'll go through those and we'll have a Q and A session. So stay tuned to listen to all of, Lisa's pearls of wisdom about visiting the Cotswolds. And thanks guys for leaving those, messages for Lisa as well. That was great. Right, should we head straight into it?

The Cotswolds National Landscape is the third largest protected area

Would you like to introduce the Cotswolds and explain what makes it such a special place to visit?

Lisa Benjamin: I'd love to introduce the Cotswolds. The Cotswolds is an area of England. It's the, third largest protected area of England. So, after the Lake District national park and the Yorkshire Dales national park, the Cotswolds National Landscape is the third largest protected area in the uk. By protected area, we mean that it's a, conservation area. So building is very limited. New building is very limited in the Cotswolds. And, there are special rules on what you can and can't build, what you can and can't build with. And also lots of environmental conservation protection of this area as well. It's an absolutely beautiful area of England. There are places in the world in England or Britain that have far more spectacular, dramatic scenery. Places like the Lake District spring to mind, or, the Highlands of Scotland. But the Cotswolds is that kind of very quintessentially English countryside. The kind of countryside that you've seen in those British rom coms. The rolling hills, the sheep in the fields, ah, cute little chocolate box, picture perfect villages, that kind of thing. So the Cotswolds is a very, very special place. I absolutely love it. And, yeah, lots of people who visit love it as well.

Tracy: Lovely people in the Cotswolds as well.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, yeah, there was everybody. it's a really agricultural area in the Cotswolds. So you'll find that a lot of the are very, you know, salt of the earth, very down to earth, very genuine people. They love a chat and yeah, it's just a really, really friendly place to be.

Tracy: It is. And it's a place that I continue to go back to over and over again because I love the Cotswolds.

You recommend to truly immerse yourself in the Cotswold

Now, the theme of this episode, because we've talked about the Cotswolds a couple of times before, is actually the, the experiences that you recommend for people to, to have in the cozzle. So I kind of asked you your top five, five experiences. So let's start with the first experience. You recommend to truly immerse yourself in the Cotswold.

Lisa Benjamin: So I thought long and hard about this, but I think really the best thing to do when you arrive in the Cotswolds is just hang out.

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Lisa Benjamin: I was listening to one of your, Trip Report podcast episodes recently and it was a lady called Krista, I think an American lady who'd been to the Cotswolds with her family and she said one of the things that they did, partly because they had children with them was they didn't try and do too much. They didn't run around trying to see everything and tick off every single box that they possibly could. But they just spent a lot of time hanging out in parks or in bars or restaurants or pubs and got to have very authentic experiences with local people, talking to local people. And I think that was a really good tip. Actually my top tip would be go to a village. My personal favourite in the Cotswolds is the small, town of Chipping Camden. It's not too touristy, it's a very genuine local town. There's loads of pubs, which is great if you like to explore the local ales and local wines. And there's lots of little independent shops. There's not really

many big chain stores or no huge supermarkets and things like that. Lots of little independent boutique shops, local crafts, handicrafts and it's just a really great place to hang out. There's a great playground for children, there's lots of historic things to see and do. The architecture is spectacular. Chipping Camden reportedly has the, prettiest high street in England. So that's a nice place. Just a really great place just to wander and mooch about and pop into a tea room or pop into a pub and just kind of have an authentic experience of what it's like to live here in the Cotswolds.

Tracy: Ah, brilliant. It is lovely. I have to say I also agree, I love Tripping Camden. It is a lovely little small town to visit. Now if you enjoy exploring what would be one outdoor or scenic experience that.

Lisa Benjamin: People shouldn't miss, the Cotswolds is pretty much synonymous with walking and hiking. So as well as probably the two things that the Cotswolds is best known for are, the beautiful villages and the countryside, but also walking. It's mass in the Cotswolds. There are longer walking trails you can do here. So, there's a 600 plus mile, walking path called the Monarch's Way which passes through the Cotswolds that was the escape route of King Tower of II as he was fleeing from Oliver Cromwell's army. But also there's the famous Cotswold way, which is 102 miles national walking Trail, which goes from Chipping Camden that I just mentioned, and goes 102 miles south to Bath, or vice versa from Bath to Camden. So people come to the Cotswolds to do walking trails like that? some people will just do little sections at once. They'll maybe do a few miles a day and then carry on the next day, or they'll do it over a series of weekends or just come in and out and do little bits of the Cotswold Way trail. There are running events where people run the whole thing in one go, which is kind of bonkers. The record, I think, is about 19 and a half hours from start to finish. This guy ran the entire Cotswold Way in less than one day, which, is great. You don't have to do that, of

course. Even going for a short walk is really good for the soul. I think it's getting out in the countryside. It's completely different pace of life from if you've only visited London or big cities in the UK. It's just completely different. It's relaxing, it's calming, it's beautiful. And, yeah, we're so blessed in the UK to have thousands and thousands of miles of public footpaths and I think us Brits take them for granted and we hardly ever use them or, you know, we don't use them as much as we should do. But those rights of way and those rights of access over farmland over, countryside, really amazing. And so, yeah, that's my absolute top tip would be just go for a walk. It doesn't have to be a long one. There are specialist walking tour companies that can arrange long hikes for you. We've got a kind of what we call an entry level walking tour, which is great for beginners. Going with a guide is really good if you, aren't confident with map reading or, you know, never, never done it before, or perhaps you're on your own and you don't fancy going for a walk on your own. But yeah, there's so many lovely walking trails that you can do. So, yeah, highly recommended.

Tracy: And, because I'm not a hiker, as I'm sure most of our listeners will know, but one thing I do enjoy doing is walking around of the Cotswolds Gardens and my absolute favourite. So my idea of just having a wonderful Day at the Cotswolds is to go to Hidcote and then go to Kiftsgate, just opposite each other. So they're really easy to do in the same day and. Oh, my goodness. Oh, just wonderful. Yeah, I agree.

Lisa Benjamin: Hidcote is my favourite garden in the Cotswolds as well. Of the ones that I visited, there are so many, I'm sure I haven't visited them all. Hidcote is beautiful. It's any time of year as well. It's so nice. There's different displays, different foliage, different flowers are in blossom at different times of year. So it's wonderful. It's not too big, it's not daunting to walk around. It's lovely just getting outside. It is.

Tracy: It is really, really special

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Tracy: place to go.

There's no actual one speciality of the Cotswolds

Now, what about a must do experience for foodies out there? So, food and drink lovers, where should they head to in the Cotswold?

Lisa Benjamin: That's a really interesting question because, the Cotswolds. Because the Cotswolds is such a large area and I talked about that, before. It's 800 square miles. It covers, five or six different counties. There's no actual one speciality of the Cotswolds. Like, there's no, you know, if you go to Cornwall, you're going to have to have a Cornish pasty. Or if you go to, Leicestershire, you're going to have to have a pork pie. The Cotswolds, we haven't really got that, but we're just known, here for just being very good at producing food. It's a really agricultural region still and has been for centuries. So producing food is something that we're really good at. There are amazing fruit and vegetables. asparagus in the sort of, ah, northern tip of the Cotswolds is massive. If you visit the Cotswolds or visit the North Cotswolds around May, asparagus will be everywhere, which is really, really delicious. We've got places like, I'm sure, listeners will have heard of, Diddley Squat Farm Shop, Jeremy Clarkson's farm. There's also another one called Daylesford Organic Farm. These are, farm shops that are, there so much more than farm shops. Just kind of like whole lifestyle destinations where you can just have the most amazing food and drink. There are restaurants on site, so, yeah, it's kind

of a foodie destination. But there's not one thing I would recommend you to try, with the exception being, the local gin. There's quite a few Gins around Cotswolds. If you like a gin and tonic, then Cotswold Distillery produces whiskey and gin. There's, also another little distillery in Burford called, Copper Lion Distillery, which produces delicious gin. and, oh, yeah, the other one I was going to mention was, there's a village called Guy Ting Power, where there's a little delicatessen shop called the Cotswold Guy. So if you want to try David Beckham's favourite sausage rolls, then that is the place to go. David Beckham has a very fond love of this particular sausage roll that they make at the Cotswold Guy, which is a little deli. So, yeah, there's lots and lots of things.

Tracy: Oh, well, there's loads of possibilities there to add to, each list in the Cotswold, that's for sure. One thing I did try when it was the, lavender fields. I think they do lavender ice cream.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, they do, yeah. It's very nice. Very nice.

Tracy: That's something slightly different if you're there at the right time of year. I guess we're going to see the lavender fields as well because they are really pretty.

Lisa Benjamin: Yes, they are. There's a short window of opening time for the lavender fields. They're only open when the lavender is actually in bloom and then they close it because they have to harvest the lavender for their products and their ice cream and things like that. But, yeah, the lavender fields are gorgeous.

On Maybank holiday, there is this event called the Cotswold Olympics

Tracy: Now, can you suggest an experience that showcases the history or culture of the Cotswold?

Lisa Benjamin: Okay, my top tip for this would be if you visit the Cotswold and Bank Holiday in May, go to Chipping Camden and, you can hike up the hill to Dover's Hill. And there is this wonderfully bonkers festival that happens, on Dover's Hill. So Dover's Hill is just, a hill, really. There's a lovely viewpoint. You can see over the valley of the Vale of Evesham. You can see for miles and miles on a clear day. So it's a beautiful place to go anyway. But on, the Maybank holiday, there is this event called the Cotswold Olympics. And it's kind of inspired from the Greek Olympics. And the Cotswold version of the Olympics has been running for over 400 years. And, it's completely bonkers. there are lots of sports, as the Olympics, is known for. There are sports to participate in, but they're traditional sports. So things like, tug of war and there are running races. Traditionally, there would have been things like hair coursing. Don't do that so much anymore. Stick fighting, other things. But the piece de resistance of the Cotswold Olympics is, the sport of shin kicking, which is, kind of a primitive form of wrestling whereby two people, two, usually men, I don't know if any women have actually taken part. I don't think women are that stupid. but two men will grab each other by the lapels and basically kick each other's legs until one of them falls over or can't take it anymore. And it's really, really funny to watch. It's very painful to watch. and it's been going on for hundreds of years, so that is crazy. And that is followed the next day, usually the next day in Chippingham, Camden, by something called the Scuttlebrook Wake, which is, like a procession where there's a queen of the Scuttlebrook Queen and her attendants. And it's. Yeah, just a big fun party in Chipping, Camden. So that's brilliant.

Tracy: That sounds a lot of fun. Now, if people aren't visiting that particular time of year,

because that's a very short window of opportunity to be able to see that. And I've not. I've not experienced that. I shall add that onto my bucket list of things to do. Yeah, so that one. Lisa.

There's lots of Arts and Crafts history in the Cotswolds

So what other, kind of historic. I mean, there's, I think,

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in kind of castles or any kind of particular monuments or buildings that people should see.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, there's loads, Loads of historic places in the Cotswolds. The ones that spring to mind are Sudeley Castle, the, royal home, former royal home of Catherine Parr. It's beautiful. And the gardens are great as well. Broadway Tower is another place. There's not a lot there once you get there, but it's quite a quirky, interesting place to go. It's this tiny little castle on the hill. And it looks ancient, but it's only actually a couple of hundred years old. And there's some really fascinating stories that go with that. there's lots of Arts and Crafts history to discover in the Cotswolds. So the Arts and Crafts movement was this kind of artistic period in the late 19th century where, you know, we had the Industrial Revolution. Everything was machinery and heavy and dirty. And this group of artists, wanted to kind of bring back the art of handicraft and making things properly and making things that were functional things like cutlery and furniture and textiles. They wanted to make them beautiful rather than just kind of churning out this kind of mass produced stuff that started to happen at that time. So again, Chipping

Camden was a bit of a centre for arts and crafts. There was a chap called Tower of Ashby who set up his Guild of Handicrafts in Chipping Camden. Other famous names that you may have heard of. William Morris was a famous textile designer. He was based in the Cotswolds for some of his time. And also Gordon Russell, a furniture designer, was probably one of the most famous people to live in the village of Broadway. So there's lots of lovely, small but very lovely and really interesting little museums and galleries and it's quite a bit of an artistic hub as well in the Cotswolds. So that's really interesting as well.

Tracy: definitely. And it was William Morris of course who described Byberry or Arlington Way as the most beautiful road or street.

Lisa Benjamin: Arlington Road, yeah. It's William Morris's fault that it's so popular and so busy.

Tracy: Yeah, we can blame him. We can definitely blame him.

What about hidden gems in the Cotswolds

What about hidden gems? And this is a difficult thing to say because obviously the Cottaws are very, very popular. But what about a lesser known experience Experience or something that you know, I hate the term hidden gem but I'm going to use it that people may be aware of in the Cotswolds.

Lisa Benjamin: Well, there's loads, there is lots and lots and lots of hidden gems. when people think of the Cotswolds they only usually think about a handful of really popular

villages. But as I said, it's such a massive area, there's lots and lots to discover. One of my favourites is a bit random, it's a bit funny, but we have a little mini Stonehenge in the Cotswolds. it's called the Rollright Stones. it's kind of located near to a village called Long Compton. Great Rollright. Little Rollright. Wonderful names, wonderful English village names. And it's three Neolithic sites. So there's a stone circle. I mean I say it's a bit like Stonehenge. You'll be underwhelmed if you've been to Stonehenge, but it's a little stone circle of little ancient stones. And then there's also a couple of other sites where there are some standing stones and some of those stones. This is the fact that always blows my mind about the Rollright Stones. Hardly anybody has ever heard of it, but some of these stones are ah, actually thought to be older than Stonehenge. So that kind of blows my mind. A little bit. The fact that the Cotswold's history, it's not just we talk a lot about the Wall Trade, the mediaeval period on our tours and the history of Victorian period and later on. But the Cotswold's history goes right back to Neolithic times which I find absolutely mind blowing. So yeah, I highly recommend the Rollright Stones. It's a really fun place. It's a nice place to take children. You can wander around the Stones. there's a legend that apparently it's impossible to count the same number of stones around the stone circle twice and if you do then you will get your heart's desire. Something like that. There's some really fun myths and legends associated with that place as well.

Tracy: Oh that's right. That's really cool. That's a really cool thing to know.

There's lots to do in the Cotswolds at any time of year

Now what about unique seasonal experiences in the Cotswolds?

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, there's lots going on. I already mentioned the Cotswolds Olympics which is in May. there's cheese rolling which is another bonkers thing that happens in the Cotswolds. They're day events. There's lots going on. There's. I'm trying to think that we've got Being as the Cotswolds is a big agricultural area. There's the Morton show which is a big agricultural show that happens in the Cotswolds which is a really fun day out as well really. We call it a really village experience. There's lots of animals. Farmers come to show their animals and to have prize winning sheep and prize winning cows and all that kind of stuff and lots of fun activities for families and children. There's an opera festival in Lomborgh. Ah we have quite a big music festival in the Cotswold. It's called the Big Feastival which is kind of a cross between music festival and the food festival

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Lisa Benjamin: which is very cool. I mentioned Sudley Castle. They have fabulous events throughout the year. But my favourite one is the winter light trail around Christmas time. It's absolutely beautiful. And then the Cotswold Gardens again at any, pretty much any time of year they're absolutely beautiful because they're different in different seasons. So I really love Batsford Arboretum or Westonburg Arboretum especially in autumn. Beautiful colours of the trees and the flowers in spring and yeah, just lots and lots to do. It's definitely not just a summer destination. There's lots to do in the Cotswold at any time of year.

Tracy: Yeah, I totally agree with you. It doesn't matter whatever time of year, we absolutely love it and we visited like every season. Very happy to visit the Cotswolds in any season.

There's something for everyone in the Cotswolds says tour guide

What kind of travellers are the Cotswolds kind of best suited for? Do you think? There's a particular. I know you're going to get into the fact that it's kind of associated particular maybe with a one particular type of traveller. But I know you feel, and I agree, the Cotswolds is for everybody.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, I would say so. On our, on our tours that we run, our typical customer is a couple who perhaps from North America or Australia, in their middle to senior age and they're after a tour of the Cotswolds. They're not so keen on driving around the Cotswolds and so looking for driver or transport around the Cotswolds. And I would say that is the kind of classic customer that we get. But I think it's ah, wrong to sort of think about the Cotswolds as a place that only older people like or only older people will enjoy because there is so much for people of all ages. I've got a seven year old daughter, obviously she's a bit biased because her mum and dad run a Cotswolds, tour company, but she, she, we take her out on tours, you know, sometimes we've got spaces in the school holidays and she absolutely loves just being out in the countryside. She loves riding on our minibus and there's lots and lots for children and for families to do. So I definitely want to challenge the stereotype that the Cotswolds is this very sedate sort of, thing that only older people will enjoy. Or, we get lots of women on our tours more than men as well, which is another interesting thing. But I think, yeah, there's something for everyone in the Cotswolds. History buffs will absolutely go mad. It's lovely sightseers, obviously, people that love architecture and art, and history. Walkers, runners, cyclists will all love the countryside around here. Car enthusiasts is one that I've sort of started to wake up to recently. I'm actually planning a private tour for a family at the moment and they're big into vintage cars and there's actually quite a lot of things to do, in the Cotswold. Sport for car enthusiasts. a motoring museum.

There's a classic car hub, there's places where people meet in their classic cars and their vintage cars and get together and talk about classic cars. So there's lots and lots to do. And also, I was going to say the other thing is, one thing that Cotswolds doesn't have is a coast. We don't have a coastline. We are landlocked. We don't have any ocean or beaches. Apart from at the Cotswolds Water Park. There's a big area in, the southern part of the Cotswolds called the Cotswolds Water park, and it's former quarry that has been filled in and turned into beautiful lakes. And it looks lovely, it's a nice place to go. But they have lots of quite adventurous and adrenaline sports there, which is quite interesting. It's not what you would associate with the Cotswolds. So you can go wakeboarding, you can do this big inflatable assault course thing, you can go kayaking and do lots of adventure stuff. So that's something that you probably wouldn't expect to associate with the Cotswolds, but definitely shows that there's something for everyone.

Tracy: I'm going to say that definitely, definitely. I'm going to repeat, yes, something for everything, for sure, in the Cotswolds.

Public transport in the Cotswolds can be very difficult

What about, practical tips for anybody planning to visit?

Lisa Benjamin: I think I've touched on this before when we've spoken, but public transport, or transport in general in the Cotswolds, I think this is probably the number one question that we get asked as, as owners of a tour company, how easy is it to get around, especially if you don't have a car? And the answer is it's not very easy to get around. It's possible there are buses, there are trains, but they tend to only go to a limited selection of places, and you're beholden to very infrequent timetables. Some

villages only have, like one bus a week, for example. So if you happen to stay in that village and you haven't got a car, then you know you're not going to be able to get anywhere by public transport very fast. And the other thing, I think, again, people that have perhaps only visited cities in the UK kind of expect taxis and Uber to be everywhere and it's not. There's basically no Uber in the Cotswolds. Sometimes you can get lucky and get one, but it's kind of the exception rather than the rule. And a lot of the taxi companies in this area are, sole traders, very small companies. They only have one car or a couple of cars. So

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Lisa Benjamin: if you want to go somewhere and you call their company and you say, hey, can you give me a ride? And they're like, well, no, sorry, I've got another booking. So, you have to keep going through a long list of taxi operators to try and find one with any availability. So pre booking taxis, if you're going to use taxis, is definitely something that you need to do. There's no Uber and, yeah, transport can be quite difficult. Difficult. So our suggestion obviously is to join a tour of the Cotswold or to have a car as well.

Tracy: Perfect.

There are certain places in the Cotswolds that everybody wants to go to

And also, I know you've mentioned about adding other places rather than the most popular places into your itinerary.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, exactly. There are certain places in the Cotswolds that everybody wants to go to because they are beautiful. They're the places that you've seen on the Internet, on Facebook, Instagram and so on. So I'm talking about places like Wharton on the Water, Bybury Castle Combe, Stow on the Wold even. And they are very, very popular places. They're busy. They're popular for a reason, because they're beautiful. But they do get very, very busy. They're like the honeypot destinations that draw the bees in. And, Yeah, so they can get very, very busy. I'm not saying don't go to those places, but there are lots of places in the Cotswolds that are worth seeing. We have a secret Cotswolds tour that we launched last year, which has been really popular, getting people a little bit off the beaten track. Not going to completely quiet places, not going to places that have no soul or completely dead, but going to places that are real, genuine places that perhaps visitors wouldn't go to because they haven't heard of them. But there are still wonderful.

Tracy: And I did the. I did your Cotswold in a day to, this year, I think. Yes, it was this year. And I did the, I enjoyed the secret village, which I'm not going to reveal on my Instagram. I kept very stumm about where I was. But you do actually get a secret village on your. On your Cotswolds and a day tour as well, which is fun.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, we call it a secret village. I mean, it's not hard to find out where it is. But yeah, we'd like to try and keep that little bit of mystery. Just say that the hordes of. Of, other tour companies and other cars, you know, people travelling in their cars, don't congest that little tiny village because it's really small and it can't cope with massive numbers of tourists.

Tracy: Absolutely.

Lisa Stone shares her top tips for planning travel in the Cotswolds

So before we go on to the Q and A, I'm going to ask the one question I always ask at the end of every episode, which everybody is always expecting. What is the one tip you'd share with someone who wants to experience the Cotswolds for the first time?

Lisa Benjamin: Well, I've been, running our guided Tour company for 10 years, so I've had lots and lots of big inquiries from visitors over the years, that they want to try and do too much. And I don't know if this is necessarily a Cotswolds tip, but it's a tip for planning travel in the uk. and that is just try not to do too much. It's really tempting to try and see everything, to tick every box, but I think box ticking can ultimately be unsatisfying. in the Cotswolds, there's loads to see, there's loads to do. And we've mentioned it before before, it's a massive area, so it's. You can't. Although we have a tour called Cotswolds in A Day that is slightly tongue in cheek, it's not possible to see the Cotswolds in a day. So I would say slow down and also be present. Don't look at everything through your camera experience. Don't just see. and that's where coming on a tour with us, for example, is a really good thing today because, all of our guides are locals. And so you've got that, ah, interaction with a local person who can, you know, talk to you about how it is, what life is like here and you're not just looking at everything through your camera or through a big coach window. So I think that's my top tip. Slow down in Cotswolds. Cotswolds is countryside. It's rural. It's a much slower pace of life than big cities. So do as the locals do and take it a bit more slow, slowly.

Tracy: definitely. And if, if you're considering, you know, if you've been in London for a few days and you, you considering going somewhere to have a bit of a slower pace and, and a bit of a chill out after the hectic time we've had in London, the Cotswold is the perfect idea.

Lisa Benjamin: Absolutely, yeah. I saw recently on, I think it came up on Facebook or something. I think it was an advert for some kind of AI programme on Google something, and it was a video of, this young man, he, was staying at a youth hostel In London. He was an American guy staying at a youth hostel in London. And it was this video was demonstrating how amazing this AI app, was on his phone. So he's walking around London and asking his phone, hey Google, or whatever it was, what's that statue? And the AI would tell him what the statue was, hey Google, what's that museum? What's that building? And he was just walking around London just talking to his phone. And part of me was thinking, well, it's amazing what AI can do, what AI knows and what AI can tell you. But also this guy hasn't spoken to a single human being on this whole trip. And I thought that was really quite sad. And it can be quite difficult to, you know, go and walk into a pub. You can't just randomly go

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Lisa Benjamin: and start talking to someone. Might be a bit weird, but like coming, going on a tour or meeting local people, being where locals are is such an, nice way to get to know a place, I think.

Tracy: Oh, absolutely. Amateur. I love tours and I've been out on a few your tours now and your tour guides are amazing. They're so friendly, so knowledgeable, they're so funny and they're just, I mean I, I just have had so much fun. so, you know, I highly recommend booking it, going out with, with you guys. Go Cotswolds. I'll put a link in the show notes and we have got a 5% discount code as well, which I, which I'll add in as well. if you're booking with Lisa, definitely, go and cheque out the link, inquire with Lisa and get yourself booked in for at least one tour. You can do a couple of tours with you guys. You don't just offer Cotswolds in a day. And the secret Cotswolds, you kind of,

you're growing and doing, doing more and more, aren't you?

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, we are. We've. We have a Bath and Stonehenge tour. We've got a Walks and Villages tour I think I mentioned earlier. And if you stay tuned in the next week or so. So we're about to launch another tour which is Bath and Southern Cotswolds as well. So stay tuned for that.

Tracy: So exciting. Now I'm going to go on to the Q and A, which comes from our, I don't know if you've had a chance to look at them. So these might be just going throw.

Jordan Elizabeth Wilkins asks about things to see and where to eat

Okay, so let's start. So we've got a question from Jordan Elizabeth Wilkins. Thanks, Jordan. she Says she's already booked tickets with you guys, so that's fantastic. And she's going to stay in Morton and Marsh, so she's wondering about things to see and where to eat in Morton and Marsh.

Lisa Benjamin: So Morton Marsh is one of those towns I mentioned right at the beginning. It's a good idea to just hang out in a town. So Morton Marsh is, a very genuine working town. and it's got a lot of. It's got a few hotels and Airbnbs and accommodation because it's one of the few towns that has a train station, so it's very easy to get to. And so consequently, people are visiting from London or Oxford or other parts of the UK find themselves in Morton Marsh. Morton Marsh itself has got lots of lovely independent shops and, tea rooms and bakeries and cafes. So it's a great place to wander and window shop and have a cup of tea and have a cream tea. In terms of places to eat. Oh, that's a good question. There's my favourite for an evening meal is a

pub called the Black Bear. there's also a really good Thai restaurant called Siam Cottage. And, the bakeries are great. There's one called Otis and Bell, there's one called Linwood and Co. There's some really amazing artisan bakeries. So, yeah, that's my tips.

Tracy: Fantastic. So that's excellent.

Karen Lee asks Isa about finding parking in Cotswold villages

Now, I've got another question from, Karen Lee. So thanks, Karen, for this one. So she wanted me to ask you about the better days to visit for Isa Parking. Now, I know she wants to see quite a few of the Cotswold villages and towns, such as Burford, Boughton on the Water, Cirencester, Stowe on the Wall. Now, she hasn't mentioned what time of year that she's planning to visit. but I know she. She was planning to visit. She was hoping to visit midweek in her itinerary, but she's thinking it. It may not. It may be a weekend. So she's kind of asking about parking. And I know that's a bit of a nightmare already.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah. so if she's travelling in the winter, or spring or the autumn, she probably won't have a problem parking at all in any of those places. The very popular villages and towns like Stowe on the Wold, like Boughton on the water, they have big car parks, so usually parking isn't a problem. The only caveat to that is if you are travelling in the summer on a weekend, particularly on a bank holiday weekend, then you may Struggle to find parking. Boughton on the Water is particularly challenging. It gets very, very busy with people coming in their cars. There was unfortunately a recent, change that, Boughton on the Water no longer allows coaches to park in the village.

There was previously a big coach park which was very well used by day trippers, but they have, no, they no longer allow coaches park in the village. So consequently that's caused a few problems because now everyone comes in their cars. So it gets very, very busy with cars. And, the other problem it has caused is that it's pushed the coaches to other villages that nominally have coach parking but perhaps don't have such big coach parks. And so tiny little villages like poor Bybury, are getting overwhelmed with coach tourism. I don't have any answers to that. We like to be part of the problem. We have small minibuses. We can use coach parking. we can use ordinary car parks as well. So, yeah, it's challenging. I wouldn't worry about it too much. As long as you're not visiting on a bank holiday weekend in the height of summer, then, yeah, cars are normally fine. You might find that you need to park on street parking. You might need on street parking. pay attention to the signs. Double yellow lines mean you cannot park there. Some people don't realise

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Lisa Benjamin: that when you come for, from abroad and there are sometimes ticket, machines or parking metres and that sort of thing. Usually it's not too much of a problem.

Tracy: Yeah, you just have to keep an eye out. I'm just thinking, last year I was in bribery at this time of year and on a Sunday morning, not the best time to decide to go and visit. We, we gave up, we ended up driving and went and drove out again because it was, again, it was a lot of. There was just so. So it was a lovely winter weekend, but again, weekend and it was just. It was overwhelmed, actually. And I was with my friend, we drove through, went back out again and went, no, let's not. And Lower Slaughter, I also find can be sometimes difficult.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, yeah. Lower Slaughter doesn't allow coaches or even minibuses of our size through the village. So again, you don't get their big coaches blocking the roads, but you do get, lots and lots of cars. yeah, I do feel very sorry for poor Bybury at the moment. It's, The problems in Born on the Water have kind of moved the problem somewhere else. and I'm not really sure what the solution to that is other than just don't visit and don't park like an idiot.

Tracy: So, yeah, it could share with you guys and then it's. It solves. I think it's a bit like, I think about the Lake District now and how 10 years, 20 years ago in the Lake District, I remember we could not get parked driving around there. And now we don't. We wouldn't even consider taking a car to the Lake District because the public transport is amazing.

Lisa Benjamin: Yeah, that's the problem that we have in the Cotswolds. The public transport is definitely not amazing. So, yeah, quite often in bribery these days, in the summer, we will drop our customers and go and then come back for them later. That's kind of the only way we can get around it. Yeah.

Tracy: But I say that that's the advantage in the Cotswolds where, say, public transport isn't good, is if you don't want to drive and you don't want to go through the, you know, the hassle of maybe not being able to get parked is, is to. To go with you guys. And also that has a less of a impact because you have, you know, 15 people or 16 people maximum in your Mini boss, so that they think about amount m of cars that are off the road when they go out with you guys. So, yeah, m. Yeah.

One question through speak pipe from Laura Deltz from

Massachusetts

Right. I have a one question through speak pipe from Laura Deltz and I'm gonna play this. So thank you so much, Laura, for this. Let me play this. See. Hopefully this will work. Hi. If you were going to speak stay several days in the Cotswolds, where would you recommend someone stay to have the best access for all the places to go and see? Thank you. From Laura in Massachusetts.

Lisa Benjamin: Oh, thank you, Laura.

Morton in Marsh is one of the better towns for public transport

Well, I've kind of already mentioned it. My, my top pick for somewhere to stay in the Cotswolds, is Morton in Marsh. As I mentioned earlier, the Cotswolds has only a handful. There's only a handful of train stations in the Cotswolds, like maybe four or five, six different villages have train stations. And Moreton in Marsh is one of those towns. So the really good thing about that is that there is a direct train line from London to Morton in Marsh. You can also get from Oxford directly to Morton Marsh. It only takes half an hour from Oxford. It's really, really close, really quick. And, so it's easy to get to Morton Marsh, especially if you don't have a car. It's also one of the better towns, for public transport. If you're comparing the Cotswolds to London Then overall, the Cotswold's public transport is shockingly bad. But Morton in Marsh, being that hub with the train station as well, does have a few useful buses that you can take to get to various places of interest, including Bourne on the Water, and, Stone. the Road and Chipping Norn you can get to as well. And Blockley for the Father Brown fans. and, Chipping Camden

as well. So that is a good place to stay with my biased hat on. It is also the place where we pick up our passengers for our tours of the Cotswolds. So it's a really good place to stay. Other places you could stay in the Cotswolds that, particularly if you have your own car, I would recommend Broadway. It's beautiful. I think it's. It's a bit quieter than some of the more popular villages, but it's still a popular village. So there's, lots of really, really good museums. The Broadway Museum is fantastic. There's also the Gordon Russell M Design Museum. There are amazing restaurants. There's a brilliant. If you like burgers, I highly recommend Flip side Burgers in Broadway. And the Liggan Arms Hotel, which is like this incredibly old coaching inn. It's a amazing. So Broadway is a really lovely place to stay. Not so well connected by public transport, but it is a good base if you've got your own car. And, the other one I would suggest would be still the Wold as, well, for similar reasons. Lots of. Lots of places to visit, lots of accommodation options, lots of restaurants, pubs, etc.

Tracy: Perfect.

Lisa from UK Travel Planning answers your questions on this week's podcast

Well, thanks so much, Lisa, for answering everybody's questions and for again agreeing to come on the podcast. Third time now, honestly. So if you're listening and thinking, I've got a question, I'd love to. I'd, love to connect. Then you can leave a message on Speak Pipe, you can join our Facebook groups. Lisa's in our Facebook groups. And obviously

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you can message Lisa if you want to start. you're inquiring about booking a tour with her, this year or next year. She's very responsive. She'll get back to you and she'll let you know what's available. So thanks so much, Lisa.

Lisa Benjamin: Oh, you're welcome. It's nice to speak to you again.

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