

Exploring Bath and Beyond: Unique Tours and Tips with Daniel Hancock

This episode features Daniel Hancock of Bath Insider Tours on UK Travel Planning podcast

Tracy: Do you dream of visiting the beautiful English city of Bath? In this episode I chat with Daniel Hancock of Bath Insider Tours. From tips for first time visitors to unique experiences with Daniel in and around Bath, including Bridgerton and Jane Austen themed tours as well as day trips to Wells, Glastonbury, the Cotswolds and Stonehenge. This episode is packed with inspiration for your next adventure.

intro: Welcome to the UK Travel Planning podcast. Your host is the founder of the UK travel planning website, Tracy Collins. 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 towns.

Tracy: Welcome to episode 139 of the UK Travel Planner Podcast. This week I'm joined by Daniel Hancock of Bath Insider Tours for a fascinating chat about the enchanting city of Bath and its surrounding areas. Daniel is passionate about creating unforgettable experiences for his guests and in this episode he shares everything from his top tip for first time visitors to the unique highlights of his tours. We dive into his half day walking tours of Bath, including themed experiences perfect for fans of Bridgerton and Jane Austen, as well as his full day and multi day trips to iconic destinations such as Wells,

Glastonbury, the Cotswolds and Stonehenge. Daniel also shares some incredible unique experiences available on his tours, but stay tuned to hear all about them. Whether you're planning a visit to Bath or looking to explore the west country, this episode is packed with insights and inspiration to help you make the most of your trip.

Daniel was born and educated in Bath and now runs tours of the area

So let's dive in by asking Daniel to tell us a little bit about himself and his background.

Speaker C: So I'm basically a local. So I was born here in the city of Bath and went to all the schools here and then left to go to university is what we, what you typically did back in those days. And then I've moved around for my for my jobs. but Bath has always been home so my family's always been here and I've come back and forth to Bath but now I've settled back here again and are doing tours of the area and a bit about me. I'm sort of in my late 40s. I'm probably like many of the people listening to this podcast, I love to travel. You know, I've travelled extensively, around the World. I mean, there's still places I want to go and see. I haven't counted how many countries, but there's a lot. And as you know, we were speaking earlier, I started off this year by climbing to the top of Africa, Kilimanjaro, which was just incredible, and then fulfilled my lifetime dream of going on a safari because I love watching wildlife and, boy, does Tanzania have amazing wildlife. It's a fantastic place for that.

Tracy: You know what? I think you need to come on to the Global Travel Planning Podcast, my other podcast. I talk all about that, Daniel, I really, really do.

Bath has the country's only hot springs and is surrounded by countryside

So you were born in Bath, so obviously you love Bath, you're from Bath, you know, you're steeped in the history of Bath. I know, I know you're not. You're only late 40s, not. Not centuries old, but obviously this city itself is. So what is it that makes Bath such a special destination? What is such a wonderful place to visit?

Speaker C: Yeah, I mean, it's basically, it's a beautiful city. I mean, we have this amazing, lovely Georgian architecture when Bath, back in the day, was the place in the country to go and visit. So people from around England came to Bath to use the hot springs and to socialise, and that led to the city expanding and creating all this wonderful architecture that we have today. It has the country's only hot springs. so we have warm springs elsewhere, but not hot. and today you can actually utilise those. We have a modern spa, which has a pretty awesome small outdoor rooftop pool where you can enjoy the springs. And also we also have the remains of, a Roman, bathroom spa, basically, which people like to come and see. But it's not just that. I mean, this whole surrounding area is fantastic. We're surrounded by beautiful countryside. I think we're a bigger city than people are expecting, but nothing compared to London. So I like to say it's a small city surrounded by lovely countryside and there's lots of things you can see and do in the area. So you've got Bath, but then you also have the Cotswold, Stonehenge, many other things that you can do. So it's a great place to come and stay.

Tracy: It certainly is.

Dan Wilson started his own tour company after travelling around Southeast Asia

And so you have your own tour, company, you're a tour, guide. And, tell us a little bit about what inspired you to actually start your own tour company. And was there a particular moment where you went? No, this is exactly what I want to do.

Speaker C: Yeah. Ah. I mean, really, it stems probably from my passion of, you know, travelling. I Used to work for big corporations,

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Speaker C: usually doing market research. when I get bored, you know, after about four years, I'd quit my job. I travel for one year, come back to Bath, stay at my parents, you know, try and find another job. Ah, and then repeat. And after, it's probably my last big, big trip, which was nine months, going around Southeast Asia, I went up to, Everest, base camp and all around the valleys up there, which was just incredible. When I came back from that, particular travels, I said, I said to myself, okay, Dan, this is silly, you know, let's align your passion of travelling with your career. And I literally, I just googled travel jobs and a tour operator came up, near Oxford. So I, got a job with them. I took a pay cut because before I was actually working for a high street bank, and travel doesn't pay as well. But I was following my passion and so I worked for this tour operator for four years. and the last two years they actually had me based overseas. So I was based in Thailand and Indonesia where I was designing, unique and authentic experiences for their guests. And when I came back, I got everything I created set on their systems, I trained their sales teams. And that role then came to an end and I thought, you know, it doesn't get better than this. And I've given that company all my blood and sweat for not

much money. And I thought, you know, let's do something myself. And basically a friend there, he'd, he, quit and set himself as a tour guide. And he was saying, dan, you know, you'll be really good at this. And I have a friend in London who's a blue badge tour guide and he was, encouraged me to do this. So I thought, you know, why not? So I moved back to Bath. I say, well, my family are based here and did all the research and designed the tours and here we are, almost, you know, seven years later on. And I mean, I've been very fortunate. I've travelled around the world, I've had guides create wonderful experiences for me on my travels. And now I'm getting to do the same for people coming to my city, which is quite nice.

Tracy: It's amazing. it's the best way, isn't it? You've experienced the best and you then want to create the best in your own city and surround. So what could be better than that, honestly?

Daniel offers tours of Bath and the surrounding area

So let's talk about some of these tours that you offer. Daniel.

Speaker C: Yeah, sure. So I basically do tours of Bath and the surrounding area. So I do have a three hour Bath tour, for example where I show people all the famous bills and streets and tell stories about that and past residents. So some of your viewers may be aware of Jane Austen, she's probably one of our most famous previous residents. But I also talk about modern things as well. So Bath gets used for lots of filming. So again, if you've got any fans of Bridgerton, a lot of that have been filmed in Bath. So I show people where that was filmed. so yeah, I have tours of Bath and then I go further afield, so say a place like Stonehenge, which is probably the biggest attraction near

bath. It's about 50 minutes roughly from Bath. so I do tours out there. We're ah, on the southern tip of the Cotswolds, which is a very famous region, in the uk, renowned for its lovely countryside and picturesque villages. So I do a tour out to some of those villages but also other places like the City of Wales which has my favourite cathedral in the region. Absolutely beautiful. And near there we also have a village called Cheddar, which is where Cheddar cheese was invented. so I do a tour out there and there's also a gorge there which is England's largest gorge which nothing compared to possibly gorges elsewhere in the world. But it's very unusual scenery and it's actually one of my favourite sceneries in the region. So you know, I take people out there, out there as well. So yeah, I have half day tours, I do whole day tours, multi day tours. I can customise tours if it's on areas that I know. So I mean today, this morning for example, I was just customising a tour for someone who's going to be visiting the area. And actually I do also have an audio tour of Bath. Ah so if you have anyone come into Bath and sadly I'm not available, I've done an audio tour which uses your mobile phone which takes you on my favourite walk around bar. So we have a beautiful canal in the city which actually not many tourists know. They know about the river but they don't know about this lovely canal. So this audio tour that I've created takes, takes people along that and basically the GPS on people's phones, basically it would tell them where they are and then it brings them my commentary at the right moment. So that's another possibility for people coming to the, to the city.

Glastonbury is a hotbed for people interested in new age spiritualism

Tracy: Excellent. So you've got, you've got a huge variety of different tours. You Say from, from listen to your audio tour if you're not available, half day, full day, multi days, you can do back the surrounding areas. You didn't mention Glastonbury. I'm just going

to ask about Glastonbury.

Speaker C: Yes, yeah, yeah, yeah, I do do Glastonbury as well. which is quirky town. There's, there's really I don't think there's anyone else like it in the uk, so, steeped in legends, so about King Arthur and Chris Christian legends as well. Obviously today as well. It's a hotbed for people who are interested in new age spiritualism. Ley lines,

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Speaker C: energy lines. so it's where you have all the shops with selling crystals. You can buy wands. And these aren't toy wands, these are real ones. So yeah, it's a, it's a very interesting place.

Tracy: All right, so that sounds like a pretty unique experience.

At Stonehenge you can actually go inside the stone circle

What other sort of unique experiences do you offer?

Speaker C: Yes, I've got that one. I also, I mean not many people know at Stonehenge you can actually go inside the stone circle. So normally when you go to Stonehenge you're walking around the circle at ah, one point, you do get very close, just a few metres. but Stonehenge permits these inner circle tools when the set, well, when the site's closed to the public. So it's usually just after sunrise and just before sunset. It's not every day. So that is a pretty awesome experience where you can actually go inside and you get a really fantastic appreciation of how big those stones are. And also you

can see things which you can't see when you're outside. So yeah, that's definitely one of the unique tools. I also do a tour which is my bath tour and then we go for, well, we go to a non for profit falconry in the countryside around Bath and guests can then fly a hawk or they can fly owls, which is a really awesome experience. So yeah, that's another one.

Tracy: Oh, that sounds absolutely fantastic. Definitely something. Ah, I'd love to try that. I have to say both actually. I don't know falcons or owls. Both would be, would appeal.

How many people can you accommodate on your tours, Daniel

So let's talk about practicalities now. So how many people can you accommodate on your tours, Daniel?

Speaker C: Sure. So when I'm using my vehicle then I can take up to six people in my vehicle. if I am doing a sightseeing transfer. So sometimes I collect people from Heathrow for example, or I collect them from the cruise ships and they're Bringing luggage with them. in those instances I can only take a maximum of four because of the space for the luggage. So normally six, but with luggage it would be four people. if I was just doing a walking tour in Bath and we didn't need to use the car, to be honest. On my bathroom I actually use my car for a short section because I like to take them to a viewpoint to start the tour. But I can exclude that if there's more than six people and then do a walk in tour which probably up to about 14 people. I don't, I don't like to do more than that because I think it becomes too much of a handful.

Tracy: Yeah, definitely. And you do.

They do lots of film in Bath so we know there's filming going on

I've got to ask you about Bridgerton as well because I get so many, so many questions about Bridgerton. So. So you know where all the Bridgerton places are in Bath then? So you can.

Speaker C: Yeah, yeah, yeah. I saw them film. I mean they both Bath. They do lots of film in here. So, we're often looking out for the parking suspension signs and they normally have a, they have to state the reason for why they're, you know, they're shutting down the parking and it was say film crew or something like that. So we know there's filming going on. So yeah, I was there especially on the, I mean they filmed a lot for the first series in Bath so I've got photos I took at the time, you know, when they were filming that. the second series they really only use one location. The third series they're back in more locations and actually a new location for the bird series. And again I was able to see some of that and take some pictures. So yes, I do do like on my Bath tour I do cover a little bit of Bridgerton, but for people really into Bridgerton, like all the other guides in Bath, I now have a Bridgeton tour where I show you the locations where they actually film the series. Yeah.

Tracy: So that's exciting.

Bath hosts a 10 day Jane Austen Festival every September

What about Jane Austen? I always have to throw just Jane Austen in there as well.

Speaker C: Yeah, I mean she's probably so. She's one of our biggest, you know, almost famous residents really. So she lived in Bath for a number of years and if you've got any big Jane Austen fans and they know that two of her books are, you know, are based in Bath. So. Yeah, Northanger Abbey and Persuasion. So in Bath actually, if you, if you, if you, if you're a Jane Austen fan, we do have a Jane Austen Centre, where you can learn more about her life. And if you're a big, big fan, every year in September we have a 10 day Jane Austen Festival, where people from around the world come and they all come dressed up in the period costumes, lovely to see, and they go to talks and they go to dances and they have a promenade through town. So that's really big. And actually this year, will be the 250th anniversary of Jane Austen. So the festival this year will be bigger than normal. It's going to be, yeah. Bath, I imagine, will be very, very busy. So even if you're not a Jane Austen fan and you're coming to Bath in September, book your accommodation early, book your dinner reservations because I imagine the cities can be very, very busy.

Tracy: Oh, I can imagine. I'm going to put that in my diary, actually, because I'll be back over in the UK in, August, September. So that'd be something I'd love to experience.

What do guests need to know before going on one of M Me's tours

Now, guests who book with you, what do they need to know before going on one of your tours?

Speaker C: nothing really, to be honest with you. Just come with a smile and open mind. So that's all you

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Speaker C: really need to know. I mean, obviously, if you're planning the trip, then the sooner you can book the better because it is just myself, I don't have any other guys working for me, so I do get booked out. And, for Meals in Bath, for example, if you're coming to Bath and you're especially on a weekend, it's good to make dinner reservations in advance because the popular ones do book out. Lots of the restaurants are quite small and charming, they're lovely. But the really popular ones will book out especially on the weekend. So, that's really tips for Bart rather than for M Me. yeah, I mean, when you're coming on tour me, just come on tour with me.

Tracy: That's great. Well, I just know that there's going to be loads of our listeners right now who are going to be. Yes, we want to go out on a show with Daniel and I don't blame you guys, honestly, he's amazing.

How can listeners find out more about booking a Bath Insider tour with you

Now, how can our listeners find out more about booking a Bath Insider tour with you and get in touch with you. Where can they find you? I will put links in the show notes. I'm going to say that. But you can share it. Feel free to share.

Speaker C: No problem. So I have a website where people can read more about my tours and also book my tours. So that is www.bathinsider.com. That's I N M S I-E R tours.co.uk, but don't worry, you'll have the link there. so you can read all about my tools there. There's a way to contact me and to book the tours if you have listeners who are

into Instagram. I'm also on Instagram, so you can follow me there. And that's at Bath Insider. In fact, later on today, I will be publishing just a couple of photos from my Kilimanjaro venture. So, that will be going on there. and I'm also on Facebook, although I don't tend to use Facebook too much, but I do have Bath Insider tools on Facebook as well. but I'll probably say the website is the best way, if you like photos, post and every now and again on Instagram, so that's a good place to go.

Tracy: Perfect. And you're a member of our Facebook group as well, so I know that. Yeah. So, perfect. Now, it's been brilliant to talk with you, Daniel, but I always end the podcast with the one and only question.

Daniel: Stay more than one day in Bath is the biggest tip

So what would be the one tip that you would share with someone visiting Bath for the first time?

Speaker C: Stay more than one day. Okay, that is, is the biggest tip. So, most people say, I wish I had longer in Bath. And you do get a lot of people who do day trips, from London. I think a lot of agencies around the world tend to believe that people have to be based in London and then try and do trips for them from there, but then they spend most of their time travelling. Bath is a beautiful place to stay. It's not as crowded as London. we have lots of great accommodation options. So from Airbnbs all the way up to your five star luxury hotels, lots of fantastic restaurants, and as I said, there's lots of things you can see and do in the area. So Bath, more or less. You could probably spend a day exploring Bath. Depends upon your interest, with all the museums. But then we have all these amazing places nearby with the Cotswolds, Glastonbury, Stonehenge,

Avebury. That's another stone circle. So you can spend several days. So, yeah, my number one tip, stay more than one day.

Tracy: Perfect. And I 100% agree with you, Daniel. So thank you so much for coming on the podcast this week. As I say, it's always great to chat with you.

Speaker C: No, my pleasure. Lovely chatting to you.

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](mailto:uktravelplanning.com) if you've enjoyed the show, why not leave us feedback via text or a review on your favourite podcast app? We love to hear from you. And you never know, you may receive 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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