

The Tower of London Revealed: Must-See Sights and Essential Tips

UK Travel Planning podcast helps you plan your perfect UK vacation

Tracy: Are you thinking about visiting one of London's most iconic landmarks?

Tracy: In episode 142 of the UK Travel.

Tracy: Planning Podcast, I'm, diving into everything you need to know about the Tower of London.

Tracy: A place packed with history, intrigue and.

Tracy: Must see sights from the Crown Jewels.

Tracy: To centuries of royal stories.

Tracy: I'll help you make the most of your visit.

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.

This podcast dives into the fascinating world of the Tower of London

Tracy: Hello and welcome to this week's podcast episode. In today's episode, we're diving into the fascinating world of the Tower of London. As one of the most popular attractions in London, this historic site draws over 3 million visitors every year who are captivated by its rich history, iconic sites and, enduring traditions. Now, over the years, I've had the privilege of visiting the Tower of London many, many times. In fact, I don't think I could actually count up how many times I've been. And, each visit reveals something new to see and learn. So in this podcast, I'll guide you.

Tracy: Through everything you need to know to.

Tracy: Make the most of your visit to.

Tracy: The Tower of London.

Tracy: You'll hear about must see highlights like the Crown Jewels and hidden gems, such as the prisoner graffiti and the Beauchamp Tower. I'll also give you my tried and tested practical tips for navigating this remarkable site. So grab a cup of tea, get comfy, and let's explore why the Tower of London remains a must see destination.

The Tower of London was built by William the Conqueror in 1066

The Tower of London is more than just a historic fortress. It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site and one of the most iconic symbols of London and of the UK. It was built

by William the Conqueror.

Tracy: In 1066 and it served many roles over the centuries.

Tracy: It's been a royal palace, a prison, an armoury, and even a zoo.

Tracy: Today, it stands as a testament to.

Tracy: Nearly 1000 years of British history and is home to the Crown Jewels and.

Tracy: The famous Yeoman Warders.

Tracy: Also known as Beefeaters.

The Tower's history is as fascinating as it is complex

The Tower's history is as fascinating as it is complex. Filled with tales of intrigue, betrayal and.

Tracy: Power struggles, it's a place where royalty.

Tracy: Lived and events which shaped England's history unfolded. Anne Boleyn, the second wife of Henry.

Tracy: VIII, is perhaps the most famous of those who met their fate within these walls.

But the Tower has also seen prisoners ranging from princes to political figures to spies.

Walking through its gates is like stepping.

Tracy: Into a living storybook with where every stone has witnessed centuries of drama and intrigue.

First and foremost highlight of Tower of London is the Crown Jewels

Now let's talk about must see highlights.

Tracy: When you visit the Tower of London.

Tracy: It's important to know that the Tower.

Tracy: Of London is not just one building. Inside the Tower's exterior walls there are.

Tracy: Lots of individual buildings. So the first and foremost highlight of the site are, ah, the Crown Jewels of the British monarchy. So these priceless items are housed in the Jewel House and they're not to be missed. You'll see dazzling crowns, sceptres and orbs which are still used by the British royal family today.

Tracy: My tip for visiting the Crown Jewels is to visit early in the morning.

Tracy: Or late in the afternoon to avoid the longest queues. It's one of the most popular attractions on site, so the lines can get.

Tracy: To get into the Jewel House can.

Tracy: Be very long, particularly in peak season. And I know I've been in.

Tracy: To see the Crown Jewels and come out of the Jewel House and can't.

Tracy: Believe how, how quick the line has grown. So it's really important to get in there first. If you can get into the Tower of London, early in the morning when it first opens, go straight to see the Crown Jewels. That's the best thing to do. Or later in the afternoon anyway. Another highlight is the White Tower. This central military keep dates back to Norman times and it's the oldest part of the Tower of London complex and houses fascinating exhibits such as Henry VIII's, armour and a collection of mediaeval weapons. So you can actually see how Henry VIII got slightly larger by looking at the different his armoury because it also gets larger. Now don't forget to visit the Chapel of St. Peter ad Vincula. Now this serene chapel is the final resting place of some of the Tower's most famous historical figures, including Anne Boleyn, Catherine Howard and Lady Jane Grey. It's a poignant reminder of the Tower's darker history and it's really a must see for, history enthusiasts. Finally, I recommend making time for a Yeoman Warder tour. Yeoman warders, more commonly known as Beefeaters.

Tracy: Are the ceremonial guards of the Tower of London and are famous the world over for their red and gold tunics.

Tracy: And floral black hats. Though you're more likely to see the warders in Their day dress, which is a black tunic with red piping. The Beefeaters have been served in the tower since 1485 and it may interest you to know that to be a Beefeater, you must have served in the British Armed forces

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Tracy: for at least 22 years. The Beefeaters live on site, so they know their home very well. And there are currently around 32 ex service men and women serving as warders at the Towers. Beefeater led tours are free with your entrance ticket and don't need pre booking. They depart every 30 minutes from near the Tower entrance and, I think they offer an entertaining and insightful look into the Tower's history. And I find them funny, engaging and full of insider stories you won't get anywhere else. And I think those tours really bring the Tower's history to life. So if you can, don't miss, one of the Yeoman Warder tours.

The Tower's black ravens are considered vital to the kingdom

Now, the Tower of London isn't just about its big ticket items. There are some hidden gems to discover too. One of my favourites are the Tower's black ravens. Now, legend has it that if these birds ever leave the Tower, the kingdom will fall. So as a result, the birds are well looked after. They're cared for by a dedicated Raven master who gives each bird a name. The current Tower of London ravens are, Jubilee, Harris, Poppy, Georgie, Edgar, Branwyn and Rex. And the Raven Master ensures they're well fed, healthy and happy, so their presence is considered vital to the kingdom.

Another unique experience at the Tower of London is the Ceremony of the Keys

Another unique experience at the Tower of London is the Ceremony of the Keys, when the Yeoman Warders lock the Tower each night. It's a nightly ritual that has remained

unchanged for over 700 years. Now, tickets for the ceremony are highly sought after and must be booked well in advance. Now, I've been lucky enough to attend, a couple of times actually, and I promise you it's absolutely amazing. I've been very lucky to have been invited by Walks Tours to go to the VIP Ceremony of the Keys tour, which basically, gives you access to, Yeoman Warder for about an hour, I think it is, before you actually witness the ceremony. which is amazing because you get in a small group, you get the opportunity to actually chat with the Yeoman Warder about living in the Tower, about the history of the Tower. They share loads of things with you that obviously they can't do in the, when they've got the larger groups because the free Yeoman Warder tours are excellent and you do get them. As you know, they're free as part of Your ticket to go into the Tower of London. But you can find that they're really crowded. There could be a couple hundred people. I've been before. And so you can't get that individual attention that you can do if you do something special like the, the walks, VIP Summary of the Keys church. I'd highly recommend that. But however you do, however you attend the Summary of the Keys, honestly, believe me, you will never forget it. You're not allowed to take photos, you're not allowed to take videos. This is extremely solemn, ceremony which you know and you are taking part in history. This is something that's gone on for 700 years. So it's amazing to actually be privileged enough to attend that as, well as the closing, ceremony. There is an open ceremony as well each morning. And that's also worth considering, because that event sees the yeoman warder and military personnel actually open the tower gates, marking the start of another day at this historic site. And, again, I've managed to attend the opening ceremony. I've been invited to that with another tour, with walks, tours in London, so you can go and with a small group of other people, actually observe the opening ceremony, and have a tour guide as well who kind of explains what's happening. You do spend some time with a yeoman warder who also, he will take you and show you where to stand. And then after that you have a tour of the, Tower of London as well. So that's also excellent and worth

doing that there's a review of that, both of these actually on the website. So you can have a look at, my photos and my comments about both of these, chairs that I have done, which, are excellent. Now for a more sombre experience, I recommend visiting Tower Green. This quieter spot is a really a place of reflection where you can learn about the famous figures who were executed here, which of course includes Anne Boleyn and Catherine Howard. If you have time, don't miss the Tower Dungeon and, the graffiti left by prisoners on the walls of the Beauchamp Tower. It's a haunted reminder of the tower's darker past as a prisoner.

Make sure you leave adequate time for your visit at the Tower of London

Now let's think about practical tips for your visit. So planning ahead is key to making the most of your time at the Tower of London. There's a lot to see and a lot of ground to cover, so make sure you leave adequate time for your visit. So genuinely, I recommend allocating at least three hours for your visit. Please don't think you can Go to Tower of London and experience it and see it all in an hour. Because that's not going to happen. The Tower of London can get quite busy, especially during peak time. So I do recommend booking your tickets online in advance. It will save you time on the and ensure you've secured entry for your preferred date and time. Now, when you book online you'll need to select a date and a time slot.

Tracy: It's important to stick to this time.

Tracy: As entry before after your time slot is not guaranteed. Now you can arrive within 30 minutes of your allocated ticket time and there.

Tracy: Are price concessions available.

Tracy: For children under 17, students with ID and seniors over 65 and ah, children.

Tracy: Under 4 do go free.

Tracy: Now you can make changes to your.

Tracy: Booking up to three days before your.

Tracy: Scheduled date, though you'll be charged an amendment fee. and note that re entry is.

Tracy: Not permitted

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Tracy: so make sure you see.

Tracy: And do everything you want to before you leave the grounds. Now the Towers opening hours do vary.

Tracy: Slightly depending on the season.

Tracy: So Generally it's open seven days a week, in the winter months from 9am to 4:30pm, but that closing time.

Tracy: Is extended till 5:30pm in the summer. However, the last time you can enter.

Tracy: The tower is 3pm in the winter and 4pm in summer. And the last Yeoman Water tour which is included with the ticket is at 2.30pm the tower is closed on certain.

Tracy: Holidays including Christmas Eve, Christmas Day and Boxing Day.

Tracy: But I do recommend checking the official website before you visit for most up to date information. and the Tower of London. The entry to the Tower of London.

Tracy: Is included in the London Pass.

Tracy: If you're considering buying a London Pass.

Tracy: Now the Tower of London sits on the banks of the Thames in East London adjacent to Tower Bridge and you.

Tracy: Can get there by tube. It's a five minute walk from Tower Hill tube station on the District or Circle Line. or for a more impressive arrival, why not arrive by boat on the Thames? When it comes to timing, aim to arrive early opening time if possible or even before to join the queue.

Tracy: Alternatively, go later in the afternoon.

Tracy: If you visit these times, you'll be rewarded with smaller crowds.

Tracy: Now, be prepared for school groups if you visit during UK school term time.

Tracy: And be prepared for lots of families in UK school holidays if you're travelling with kids.

Tracy: The Tower puts on special events for.

Tracy: Kids during UK school holidays and these are usually included in the cost of your ticket.

Tracy: You can buy a multilingual audio guide with your ticket to explore on your own or as I mentioned earlier, try.

Tracy: To join a Yeoman Warder tour, but.

Tracy: Note that those tours are only in English.

Tracy: You can also use a visual British Sign Language guide if needed. Guide dogs and other registered assistant dogs are welcome at the Tower, if you are a wheelchair user. Due to the historic nature of the building, there are a number of difficult stairs, passageways, steps and cobbled surfaces, which does make access difficult. There is an official access guide to the Tower of London and I, ah, will include a link in the show notes.

Tracy: Wear comfortable shoes. There's a lot of walking involved, including uneven cobblestone paths, so, watch your.

Tracy: Footing as there are steps around the site.

Tracy: There's also little shade in the outdoor areas of the Tower, so you may want to bring a sun hat in.

Tracy: Summer or a raincoat in winter. Now, you can take photos inside the.

Tracy: Tower, but in some rooms, such as the Crown Jewels, it's strictly forbidden. Look out for the signs. You aren't allowed tripods or selfie sticks. There isn't luggage storage on site, so you'll have to carry what you bring. Large backpacks and bags bigger than cabin.

Tracy: Carry on are not permitted.

Tracy: There are two cafes on site, one indoor and, one outdoor, serving hot foods and snacks, plus a couple of kiosks for snacks and drinks.

Tracy: But note, food and drink is not.

Tracy: Allowed inside any of the buildings or around the complex unless at a designated site. So if you buy a Tower souvenir, there are six shops to choose from. And finally, consider taking advantage of combination tickets or passes. As I mentioned before, the London Pass includes entry to the Tower of London and other major attractions. So if you're planning to visit multiple.

Tracy: Sites in London, the London Pass may.

Tracy: Well save you money.

Tracy: So do check that out.

Tracy: And there you have it, your ultimate guide to visiting the Tower of London.

Tracy: So whether you're a history buff, a

Tracy: Royal enthusiast, or just curious about London's past, the Tower has something for all interests and ages. If you only have time to see a handful of London attractions, I think.

Tracy: The Tower of London should be on your list. If you found this episode helpful, don't.

Tracy: Forget to subscribe to the podcast. Leave us a review and share it with fellow travellers. And, if you visited the Tow of Thunder before, I'd love to hear about your experience. Drop me a message via the Speak Pipe link in the show notes or share your thoughts in the UK Travel Planning Facebook group.

Tracy: Until next time, though. Happy UK Travel Planning. 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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