

Episode 172 - Tips for Making the Most of a London Layover: Where to Stay, Eat, and Explore

Tracy Collins [00:00:00]:

Planning a layover in London. In this special episode, I'm joining my friend Kate from the Germany Travel Planning Podcast to share insider tips on how to make the most of a short stop in the UK capital. Whether you've only got a day or two, there's plenty to see and do. Welcome to the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Your host is the founder of the UK travel planning website, Tracey Collins. Each week, 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. Hi, and welcome to this week's episode of the UK Travel Planner Podcast.

Tracy Collins [00:00:52]:

Today's episode is a little bit different. I recently joined my friend Kate on her Germany Travel Planner podcast to chat all about how to make the most of a lay in London. Whether you've only got 24 hours or a couple of days to explore, we share lots of practical tips and ideas from where to stay and what to see, to some of my favourite food spots and ways to make the most of your time. So if you're flying through London on your way to or from Europe, this episode will help you turn that quick stopover into a mini London adventure. So let's dive into my chat with Kate from the Germany Travel Planner podcast, all about planning the perfect London layover.

Cate [00:01:27]:

Hi, Tracy. So excited to talk with you today.

Tracy Collins [00:01:30]:

Hi. It's unusual for me to be on other side of the mic, so it's lovely to see you again today. How are you doing?

Cate [00:01:36]:

Pretty good. Well, so let's start with your introduction. Go ahead and tell us a little bit about who you are and what you do.

Tracy Collins [00:01:43]:

Okay, so my name is Tracey Collins. I'm the creator and writer and voice behind the UK Travel Planning website and podcast and the London Travel Planning website. So basically, yeah, podcaster, content creator, lover of all things UK. As you can hear, I'm from the UK, so work with my husband, who's a train expert. So we do a lot of work around trains in the UK. So, yeah, we have a Facebook group and Instagram and YouTube as well.

Cate [00:02:12]:

Well, I'm so excited to talk with you today because I have used your website because Aaron and I have spent quite a bit of time in the UK recently in the last couple of years, and so I have used both of your websites and I know I've asked you questions. I've used your

Facebook group and everything is just fantastic. So the topic for today is doing a stopover in London because I know a lot of people that, a lot of clients that I've worked with, they do a stopover in London either on the way to Germany or on the way home. I've done that several times. So I thought let's bring Tracy on to, to talk about London. And you know, we're just going to kind of go back and forth and answer some questions so that anyone listening who wants to do a stopover, this will give you some ideas of where you can stay and what you can do and get some insider tips from Tracy.

Tracy Collins [00:03:04]:
That sounds good. Perfect.

Cate [00:03:05]:
Okay, so the first question is, do you have a favorite area that you like to stay in in London or is there a favorite hotel that you like or recommend?

Tracy Collins [00:03:16]:
Interestingly, we, we tend to stay in different parts of London mainly because we're trying out different hotels and different areas so that we can give kind of up to date recommendations. I used to live and work in London, so quite often when I'm there for a longer period of time I do stay down in East Putney because it's fairly easy to get up on the District line straight into central London. But I do recommend for first time visitors or if you're planning to do a lot in central London, which I imagine that's what you're going to be doing if you're visiting for the first time, only there for a few days, that it's actually easier to stay in zone one, which is kind of where all of the main sites in London that you'll want to see, like Buckingham palace and Tower of London and the House of Parliament and Westminster Abbey, they're all in that kind of area. So it depends really what you want and what you're after. So, you know, I, my preferred area, if I'm going and I go on my own and I'm not with Doug actually with him probably as well, he'd say the same is that we really like the Covent Garden area because it's, there's great restaurants, there's a great vibe, it's just some really good shops and it's just there's the theaters in that area. So it's a, it's a really good area and it's also obviously well served by the tube and public transport. So easy to get around. So that's one of the areas that we do enjoy staying in.

Cate [00:04:33]:
Yeah, I, you know, I can, I can recommend a couple of hotels. I think there that I've stayed in some of those locations as well. I was actually making a list before this and I was trying to think of all the different places I've stayed stayed over the years and, and it's been in lots of different locations and each one has had its pros and cons. And especially if you're just going to be there for a couple of days, staying like very, very central to where you can walk to everything is so great. I did that, I did that one time when I was in the UK for work and I stayed at the Lime Tree Hotel. I don't know if you've heard of that one, but it was really great and the location was fantastic because I could walk to Buckingham palace and everywhere else and it was just really nice. They had really good breakfast. And then recently we stayed at the Tavistock Hotel which is near the British Museum.

Cate [00:05:18]:
And the hotel is great except it does not have air conditioning in the summer. We were there in January, February. So it was okay. We stayed there because we had a lot of hotel points.

So our almost two week stay was free. So you know, I really like that hotel because of that. And the location was great. It was a little bit quieter and we could still walk to a lot of things.

Cate [00:05:38]:

And then I guess actually most recently when we were there for the Christmas season we stayed in an apartment near Borough Market because we had never stayed in that location before. We'd been to Borough Market several times and I really liked that too. But I wouldn't recommend it for just a short stay because it was, you know, it took us a lot longer to get places. But I loved being walking distance from Borough Market.

Tracy Collins [00:06:02]:

Oh yeah, that would be good. I'd enjoy that too. Basically. I think you just have to think about your, your travel style, your, your what, what do you need out of accommodation, what you want and then look at what you want to do and see in London and then choose that. We do have an article which kind of can match up like the areas and what would probably appeal depending on, you know, if it's, if you're a family, if you're traveling solo, depends what you want really. The main thing that we do advise is honestly is that you stay in central London, that you do not waste your time on public transport getting in and out of London. It's just, you know, you don't really want to be dealing with the rush hour getting into the center. I know I don't enjoy that.

Tracy Collins [00:06:39]:

So I, I wouldn't that you do that really.

Cate [00:06:42]:

Oh yeah, yeah, completely. We've, we've had times where we've taken the tube different places and we finally just left and walked because it was so crowded during rush hour, we could not get on the Tube and I'm very claustrophobic, so that also is not great. And we were like, no, we'll just walk for 40 minutes, that's okay. So being within walking distance is a really good idea. And I, you know, you mentioned some guides you have on your website. I will link to those because you have really, really great hotel guides and lots of fantastic information that will help people narrow down where they want to go, where they want to stay. And you also have a map that's similar to the map that we have in our Germany travel planner. Do you, you have hotels on that map, right, because you have one for London.

Tracy Collins [00:07:26]:

Yes, yes, we do, we have one for London and that does have hotels. And it's also, you can, you can go through the tags for the different areas and have a look at what hotels are available in that area with a kind of write up and have, and have a look at and, and see if that, that suits. And also we've got public transport so you'll be able to see how close the tube is because I mean I, I'm nearly 60 and I don't, this is an excuse on age, but I, I'm happy when I walk around London to do all the walking all day, but by the end of the day I'm starting to flag and I just, for my feet, I just know that I don't want to be spending an hour walking back to my accommodation. So I always look for somewhere that is about five minutes from a tube station because I just know that by the time. And I've done 20, 25,000 steps in a day, which you can easily do in London. I just, by that point, by the time I get back, I just want to get back to my accommodation and just chill out. And I don't want to be having

to, to consider how I'm going to get back. And I know we often do consults for people who, and I know London accommodation is expensive, don't get me wrong, I understand that.

Tracy Collins [00:08:30]:

But sometimes when you have to get back by an overground train, not even the Tube, and then you've got to take a bus and then you've got to walk, believe me, it's not, it's not fun. Maybe if you're in your 20s and got full of energy, but I just, I just know that's not something that I want to do at this point.

Cate [00:08:46]:

Oh yeah, totally agree, totally agree. Like when we stayed in Borough Market we thought we really liked it because it was a little bit quieter and we had, we were there for almost two weeks I think so we had plenty of time. But I definitely would not stay there for just a short stay because you'd be spending all of your time walking and public transit and that. Yeah, not be, not be as fun. So we mentioned Borough Market and I know we were, we were talking a little bit about this before we started recording about the fish and chips place there. And I'm not really, I don't love fish that much but I really like the fish and chips at Borough Market. We go back there anytime we're in London to get the fish and chips there. So let's talk about food.

Cate [00:09:27]:

Do you have a favorite restaurant? Do you have favorite food, something you really like to eat when you're in London?

Tracy Collins [00:09:32]:

Okay, this is a great question Kate, because I love to talking about food. So first thing I always do is I head to a Marks and Spencer's simply Food and I load up on the, the goodies that they have. I particularly like the cherry cake and, and the meal deals which are basically, you can get a sandwich and a drink and a fruit or pack of crisps for a reasonable price. They're really good. So we tend to do that. But when it comes to eating out, there's a few places that I really, really love and I think there's a bit of a cheese theme going on here. But anyway, so pick and Cheese which is at the Seven Dials near Covent Garden. It's basically like a sushi bar for cheese.

Tracy Collins [00:10:07]:

Honestly, it is the best. I absolutely, I always go back there and they pair the cheese with the most amazing, different, different things. It's like you just can't believe what they pair it with and it always works. So I always have a glass of port and then I just sit and do the, the sushi train but with cheese. So that's really cool. Another one I really like is Capacin which is in Borough Market, which is Raclette, which is Swiss. So the cheese and pickles and potatoes and it's really funny because obviously on Tik Tok they're quite famous for their, their toasted cheese sandwich, you know. And I get in the queue for the raclette and go, you guys are missing out, honestly.

Tracy Collins [00:10:47]:

So I would recommend that when you go back, Kate, is to go to capacin. It's amazing. It's really Good. And also, if you're in Borough Market as well, you should have a humble

crumble. They're not just in Borough Market, but if you're there anyway, definitely go and have a humble crumble because they are delicious, Absolute delicious.

Cate [00:11:05]:

So I have to interject here that I saw these places when we were in London and we did not stop at them, and I have regretted it ever since. So it is on my to do list. Like, we saw that cheese place. We stood outside and we're like, that looks fun, but we're not hungry. And then we saw the other places at Borough Market, and I was like, okay, we have to come back. So definitely stop at those places. They looked so good.

Tracy Collins [00:11:26]:

Yeah, no, absolutely. And then places to go that I always recommend as well. To go and eat Cafe in the crypt, which is St. Martin's in the Field. It's a church, so it is in a crypto. So the cafe is in the crypt of the church, and it's just off Trafalgar Square. So if you go to one of the museums, you got the National Portrait Gallery or National Gallery, then go and have lunch at the Cafe in the Crypt. It's great.

Tracy Collins [00:11:46]:

So always recommend that. And the other one, which I really love is the Cafe at the V and A Museum, which is actually the first museum cafe in the world. And it's Art Deco. So if you have. I love Art Deco. It's beautiful. It is the most beautiful place to just sit and have. Can go and have afternoon tea, or you can just go and have a sandwich.

Tracy Collins [00:12:06]:

It's. It's not cheap. I will say that it is quite expensive, but it's really worth it because it's just so pretty.

Cate [00:12:14]:

Oh, that sounds great too. Oh, I have to go back. I have to go. I. You know, I have to plan another trip to London because there's always, like. I have this ongoing list of things that I still haven't seen. It's amazing, like, how much there is to see there. So I can also add Gail's Bakery.

Cate [00:12:34]:

Whenever I see a Gale's Bakery in London. There was one in Brighton. I don't know if I've seen it anywhere else, but whenever we see one, we stop and we get something because they have the most amazing hot chocolate. It's not super sweet, and it's delicious, especially in the winter. And. And then all their baked goods are so good, their sandwiches and pastries and stuff. So we love that. And I think we could do a whole episode just on M S because their food hall is Amazing.

Cate [00:13:00]:

We eat there all the time. I mean like they have cookies and chocolates and like ginger, chocolate covered ginger cookies, I think. And Aaron loves the jelly babies and you know, the yogurts and I mean everything. And they have all the prepared foods. There's salads. We really like, we have meals that we really like that we, we go in and we get all the time. It is the best, it's the best place to go.

Tracy Collins [00:13:30]:

100%. Absolutely. Go into Marks and Spencer's and especially if you're staying in South Catering as well, just they have really good deals for dinners, for lunches. So. Yeah, and it's very nice food.

Cate [00:13:43]:

One more thing, since we're talking about food, of course everyone wants to do afternoon tea when they're in London. What do you recommend for that?

Tracy Collins [00:13:51]:

To be honest, the first thing I say is decide what sort of tea you want. So do you want a traditional afternoon tea or do you want a themed afternoon tea? So I, I am working my way around London trying afternoon teas because I have to do it, it's part of the job. So I've tried lots of different ones. I've tried some of the afternoon tea busses. So if you want to try one of those, you can go and sit on a bus and have afternoon tea while you're driven around London. That's really cool. If you want afternoon tea that's themed with a view. Peter Pan at the Shard is a very cool one to do.

Tracy Collins [00:14:21]:

Fortnum and Mason is very traditional if you want the traditional one. I actually did, I had the afternoon tea at the Royal Exchange which was lovely as well and beautiful settings. I will just mention, I forgot to, to mention this about food as well. If you do go to Fortnum and Mason, the one picturely Circus do go and have a Scotch egg because they are the inventors of the Scotch egg. Now I. Look, if you don't know what a Scotch egg is, it's basically a boiled egg and it's encased in sausage meat and then breadcrumbs and they are delicious. And the picky lily that goes with it there is amazing as well. They actually invented it.

Tracy Collins [00:14:54]:

So if you want to go and try something and honestly, it's really tasty, go to. I think it's the second floor on Fortnum and Mason, go and try that. But when it comes to afternoon teas, honestly, the London. Is this your oyster? There's so many to choose from. There are so many ones for kids, there's so many very traditional ones. There are so many Just fun ones. I've done Alice in Wonderland, there's a Charlie and the Chocolate Factory one. As I say, I've done the Peter Pan one.

Tracy Collins [00:15:22]:

I've done some traditional ones. There are just so, so many. So just think about what sort of foods you want. If you want the theme stuff, which is a bit more it's cute or do you want to go for the kind of very traditional one. And also I just want to say that afternoon tea, not high tea. High tea is something very different and that gets mixed up very often. High tea is a more a sit down, hot meal which is. Was it kind of a.

Tracy Collins [00:15:47]:

I associate with a north, a northern England and. But a lot of people around the world will call afternoon tea high tea, which is kind of a different thing. I even think stocks, some places in the UK are now starting to call it high tea, which is a bit sad because it's actually afternoon tea.

Cate [00:16:05]:

Well, if you ever need somebody to try out all the different afternoon teas in London, let me know. I will go with you.

Tracy Collins [00:16:13]:

Oh, absolutely. I often get invited actually to afternoon teas and I have to be careful because when you travel in such a lot, it's so easy to put weight on. So I tried to limit myself to like one a week really. But it's very tempting.

Cate [00:16:27]:

Yep, I know that very well. Okay, in between all the delicious food that you can eat in London, what is your favorite museum or site?

Tracy Collins [00:16:38]:

Okay, well, anybody, anybody who listens to the UK Travel plan podcast will know what I'm about to say at this point. I absolutely love the V and A museum and I always spend at least three or four hours there. And actually I have. I love the cast courts. So in the 1800s they kind of did casts of all these famous places and statues and buildings from around the world so that people in London could see them because obviously not everybody could afford to travel. And it's amazing because it's. It's not stuff that the British stole. It's not stuff that we took from anywhere.

Tracy Collins [00:17:09]:

It's just stuff that we made copies of and they're just. It's a wonderful. They're lovely to go and sit in as well because they're quite. I don't know if you've been the Cascart's Kate, but they're huge rooms, high rooms, because they can actually accommodate all these large casts of buildings. But I just sit in there usually for a good hour and just sit and enjoy looking. I don't know, it sounds a bit weird, but I just love it, then I go and have. Have a cup of tea in the cafe and then I'll go and choose a different part of the museum to go and explore because there's so much to see in the V and A. And honestly, it's a museum that I've only discovered in recent years because in the uk, all kids go to the Natural History Museum, the science museums next door, so you've got those three museums kind of all in a row.

Tracy Collins [00:17:52]:

Obviously, the British Museum is very famous. I went there again as a child and the VA always kind of escaped me. But since I've started going there, it's now an absolute must visit when I'm in London. So I highly recommend. They've got fashion through the ages, which is amazing. The jewelry collection is just beautiful. It's amazing. It's just such a fabulous museum.

Cate [00:18:15]:

I really enjoyed that one, too. I think that was probably my favorite one. I've been to the British Museum, I've been to a few other ones, but I was surprised how much I really enjoyed the vna.

Tracy Collins [00:18:25]:

Oh, yeah, absolutely. I really recommend it. It's. If you're going to. If you're into museums and you want to. Want to. Just some of the stuff they have there just blows my mind, really. It's just fabulous.

Tracy Collins [00:18:35]:

And then it's really interesting because I'd not been to Rosslyn Chapel, but I saw it at the VA and then I was living in Edinburgh earlier this year, I was doing a house sit there. And so we went to see the real Rosslyn Chapel and it's. And you can't take photographs inside Rosslyn Chapel. They're not allowed to. But it's really interesting that you go and see these things that you've seen or in the VA and then see them in real life. They've also got a statue of the copy of David and. And some of the things they've actually got, they made copies of, have actually been destroyed. So it's.

Tracy Collins [00:19:04]:

It's good that we have those copies.

Cate [00:19:08]:

You know, one thing that I really liked, I've done this twice, is Parliament. Have you done that? Where are you going to watch them?

Tracy Collins [00:19:17]:

Yeah, it was.

Cate [00:19:17]:

Yeah, I. I did that once because I had nothing to do. After I arrived, I couldn't get into my hotel room, so I was like, well, I'll go watch Parliament because I can at least sit down, you know. And then I went, had tea and a scone, and then I took Aaron on our last visit, and it was really, really interesting to watch them discussing things and just sort of seeing, seeing that in action. I really enjoyed that. And it was pretty easy to get in. Didn't take very long. And I was surprised at how easy.

Cate [00:19:45]:

And it was, you know, a little bit different from other things that we've seen.

Tracy Collins [00:19:49]:

Yeah, for sure. Well, I mean, we've kind of talked about museums, but there's so many kind of obviously landmarks and historic buildings to go and see. So I highly recommend that if you visit in London for a few days that you do not miss the Tower of London and please don't just see it from the outside, which I've heard people say, I've seen the Tower of London and how did. Oh, I just thought from outside. No, you need to go inside. You really need to go inside and experience it. It's a fantastic, it's a fantastic. The history of it is amazing.

Tracy Collins [00:20:17]:

And also I would say go into Westminster Abbey for sure. Take a tour, take a tour to these places, please, because you will learn more or read up before you go because otherwise you're just looking at, you're not going to know really what you're seeing, understanding any of it really. So Westminster Abbey, I would say is a must. St. Paul's Cathedral. It's also

beautiful to go and have a look at. I did Evensong just after Christmas this year at St. Paul's and it was lovely, it was very lovely experience.

Tracy Collins [00:20:44]:

So that's really enjoyable. So there's, there's a lot. Buckingham palace is amazing to go in. I did a small group tour of Buckingham Palace a couple years ago, just before actually the King's coronation. And that was, that was fascinating and really interesting as an English person to go in and see that because, you know, obviously I've seen all this all my life but had never actually set foot in it. So that was really cool. Basically a lot of places in, in London you'll find that you're walking in the footsteps of, well, you are, you're walking in the footsteps of hundreds of years of history. And it's, it's fabulous.

Tracy Collins [00:21:15]:

It really is.

Cate [00:21:17]:

Is there anything that you would think is kind of like a really unique experience that, that you would recommend?

Tracy Collins [00:21:24]:

Yeah, you know, I'm always recommending people go to Greenwich and I think it's often people, especially on a first time trip, they don't consider Greenwich at all in their itinerary. And I'm like, honestly, you're missing out. Greenwich is a fabulous place to go and visit. Get the Uber boat down to Greenwich, there's the Cutty Sark, there Which is a T Clipper. I think it's the oldest tea clipper in the world. I don't know. And then you've got the Greenwich Meridian, so you can go and stand with your foot in each hemisphere, which is worth going to see. And actually the observ on the top of the hill, it's a bit of a hike up there.

Tracy Collins [00:21:56]:

Greenwich park itself, you've got the Queen's House, which has got a good collection of some artworks in there. And the Tulip Staircase, which many people don't know about, which is so, so pretty to see. It's supposed to be haunted, apparently. And also there's a Royal Naval College there. And the Painted hall, which is just fabulous. I don't know if you've seen it, Kate, but the Painted hall is beautiful.

Cate [00:22:18]:

Yeah, I think so. Yeah. We went out there basically just so that I could stand on the line and fulfill my second grade dream of standing on the line and getting a picture. And then we did go into a couple. I'm trying to remember as you're talking. I'm pretty sure we did some of that. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:22:32]:

Like go to Green and go. Don't just go for the. The observatory, go for a plan. Plan most your day there. You can take a picnic. There's some really good pubs there. There's a good market on. So you can just go and have a.

Tracy Collins [00:22:43]:

Have a whole day in Greenwich. It's a lovely ride on the boat down there and back as well. Take that. If you've got kids, great. They can run around the park as well. Yeah. So definitely, definitely Greenwich. I think it's often overlooked and it shouldn't be, because I really think it should be a must.

Tracy Collins [00:23:00]:

And in anybody's London itinerary, to be honest.

Cate [00:23:03]:

You know, there's also a boat. We. I mean, we took the boat out, but we took the bus back. And it took us probably an hour to get back to where we were staying. But it was really interesting, you know, and just to kind of go through all these neighborhoods and that was really fun. So a boat out and bus us back in.

Tracy Collins [00:23:20]:

Yeah, that was really great. Yeah. We often say to people, it's like, don't just get the Tube because you're under the. You're underground, so you're not seeing anything. I mean, experience the Tube. I definitely would say go on the Tube, but buses are really good. You can walk. You just walk a lot.

Tracy Collins [00:23:34]:

You will walk. You will walk a lot in London anyway. But yeah, the public transport is. Is really good. Don't be Scared of it is another thing. We do have guides to all of the different. How to use the boat, how to use a, even a black cab or how to hail black cab, how to use the tube. And we're going to be putting more stuff on YouTube as well, guides of that.

Tracy Collins [00:23:51]:

You know, how do you get around, how to pay for it? Because we often get asked about that, you know, contactless or do I need an Oyster card, All that sort of those questions come up.

Cate [00:24:00]:

I know another experience you've talked about before is a black cab tour. And I know after I heard you talk about it, that's another thing that's on my list. Go ahead and talk about that a little bit because it sounds like so much fun.

Tracy Collins [00:24:12]:

Oh, it really, really is. And it's so popular. So many of the people on our Facebook group of the reviews are fantastic. So we partner with some, work with some very, very, very good companies and discover real London. Black Cab Tows is one of those. And they. You actually could do a touchdown tour. So if you're landing, they'll pick you up from Heathrow Airport and take you into London and give you a tour before you even get into your accommodation.

Tracy Collins [00:24:37]:

So if you're landing at seven and you can't get any accommodation until one o' clock or two o' clock, they'll pick you up and give you a tour of London and complete your intake year. You can go and see all the main sites. And the advantage of having a black cab is they can go places that nobody else can go. They can park outside Westminster Abbey. I've got a

picture of myself outside Westminster Abbey and I've got the black cab. There's the red London phone box, there's Westminster Abbey and there's me stand in front of it going like, this is amazing. These are like icons of London and I've all in one picture. It's.

Tracy Collins [00:25:07]:

It's amazing. And we've been dropped out. You can get dropped off just outside Buckingham palace and then take your photos and then get picked up a few minutes later. So because you're trying to get. Buckingham Pass is a bit of a walk. Like buses can't go near it and you can't, you know, that's your best way to get to it. If you've got any mobility issues as well, it's a really good way to get close to Buckingham palace and the guys can take you. You can say, this is what I'd like to see.

Tracy Collins [00:25:31]:

It's my first time. I'd like to go and see this do this, see this, and. And they can take it, and then they can take you to accommodation. They've actually just. I've only just shared it, my Facebook group yesterday, but they've got a Christmas lights tour as well, which I really want to do, because London at Christmas is one of my favorite times. So, yeah, there's lots of different tours that they have. So you can have a look on the website. You can contact Ollie, who runs Discover Real London Black Cabs, and.

Tracy Collins [00:25:57]:

And say exactly what you want, and then. And then he can. He can put that together for you. But it's. It's so good, it's so popular that I. Everybody raves about it. You honestly feel like royalty. You really do.

Cate [00:26:11]:

I know that's something I want to do so badly. That sounds like so much fun. But we'll put links to everything that you've mentioned in the show notes, so anyone listening, you can go check that out. And then we'll also have links to Tracy's website and podcast and everything so you can get more information. So the last thing that I want to talk about is something you just mentioned, which is London at Christmas, because we've been there at that time, too, and it was so much fun. It was just beautiful. And I love being places where, you know, I love being places around Christmas because, you know, Germany is the most amazing place for Christmas. And so if you're going to Germany for Christmas markets, stop in London, because I think it is also pretty amazing, but just in a little bit different way.

Cate [00:26:53]:

But I love the lights. Like, we made a point to go to as many of those streets that have these beautiful and unique light shows and, oh, it was so much fun. What do you like to do in London at Christmas time?

Tracy Collins [00:27:06]:

Well, I think you've actually hit the nail on the head there with what you said about the lights, because we, Doug and I did a trip around a lot of European countries last December, and Germany honestly has the best Christmas markets. They are the best. But the best Christmas lights that we saw and that we've seen anywhere are in London. They are fabulous and they have different themes. And like I mentioned about the black cab tour as well, the good thing about when you take one of those is that that's with a London black cab.

They've done the knowledge. They know the way around London. They know the side streets.

Tracy Collins [00:27:39]:

The best way to get you to those lights that will avoid the traffic. So, like, they know it like. Well, they have to know it like the back of their hand, because seeing all the lights there's, they're all over the place. And even last year when I was there trying to see all the lights, I was in and out and trying to, walking around, trying to do as much as I could and see them. So sitting in a black cab would have been the best way to do it, honestly. But I just love the Christmas shops as well at Fortnum and Mason Liberties when they have the Christmas shops. Oh, they're just, just, just so pretty, so beautiful. The atmosphere is amazing.

Tracy Collins [00:28:13]:

Covent Garden is beautifully decorated so you need to go to Common Garden as well. I, I don't know, I just think it's so magical. I've loved it since I was a child going to London at Christmas, it's just, there's so much about, it does get really busy, I will say that. So you need to be prepared and it can get a bit cold so you need to make sure that you, you know, wrap up warmly. I've done a couple of their Christmas like bus tours as well. So if you're sitting on the top of a bus and make sure you're wrapped up warmly. But it's just ah, for me it's like the best city in the world to spend in the, in the lead up to Christmas. I really enjoy it.

Tracy Collins [00:28:49]:

But I'd like to mix that up with the Christmas markets because honestly the Christmas, the German food and the, the atmosphere and then the Christmas markets in Germany was just. Excellent. Excellent. Yeah.

Cate [00:29:02]:

It was funny when we were there, you know, we were enjoying all of these really great things. But then we go to the markets and we're like, okay, we enjoy this. But yeah, Germany, that's where they really excel. But there are so many other things. I mean it was awesome. We loved it. I would absolutely go back in at Christmas time. I mean I'll go to London anytime.

Cate [00:29:20]:

But you know, Christmas time was. Yeah, that was really wonderful. Okay, well, Tracy, do you have any final tips you'd like to share for anyone doing a stopover in London?

Tracy Collins [00:29:30]:

Yes. First of all, say do not try and over pack your itinerary because we see that all the time. Don't underestimate how tired you can get actually walking around London. So. And I know we all do that, we all try to put too much in. Second, I just make sure you've got comfortable footwear. It's really important you think about that, that you pack layers. And the last thing I'm actually going to say is, is take a day trip out of London if it's your first time in and you've Got enough time do choose somewhere to go out because London is a wonderful city to visit, but it does not.

Tracy Collins [00:29:59]:

It doesn't encapsulate the whole of the uk. It doesn't represent whole the uk, that's for sure, or even England. So to take a day trip, you can very easily get to Bath. You could go to Oxford, you could go to Cambridge, you could go to Canterbury, you could go to Winchester, there are so many. Windsor is very close by. There's so many amazing places. So do consider a day trip as well.

Cate [00:30:19]:

Yeah, excellent. All right, well, thank you so much. Tracy and I will put links to your websites and to your podcast in the show Notes, but go ahead and remind everyone what your websites and your podcast. What, what are the names?

Tracy Collins [00:30:35]:

Okay, so our website is uktravelplanning.com and the podcast is of the same name, UK Travel Planning. You can find that on all of like Spotify and Apple. It's on all of the major players and we've just actually hit half a million downloads, which is very exciting for us. So it's doing very well. And also you can find our anything about London specifically. We do have London information on that site, but we do have a London centric website, LondonTravelPlanning.com too, which has got lots of information on that. We've got Facebook groups of the same name. We're also on YouTube@uktravelplanning.com and Instagram.

Tracy Collins [00:31:13]:

UK travelplanning.com so it's very easy. It's just UK Travel Planet London Travel Planning.

Cate [00:31:17]:

All right, thank you so much, Tracy.

Tracy Collins [00:31:20]:

Thanks for having me, Kate. It's been lovely to chat with you today. 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 favorite 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.