

## **Episode 183 - Planning a Trip to London in 2026: What You Really Need to Know**

Tracy Collins [00:00:00]:

Planning a trip to London in 2026 and feeling a little overwhelmed. London is bigger than most people expect. It takes longer to get around and small planning decisions can make a big difference to how your trip feels. In this episode, we're sharing what you really need to know before you go. Not a list of attractions, but practical planning tips to help you save time, manage your energy, control your budget and enjoy London without trying to rush through it.

Intro [00:00:24]:

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.

Tracy Collins [00:00:54]:

Before we get started, we'd like to thank our sponsor. Walks and Devour Tours. If you're planning a trip to London, you'll already know the challenge. There's a lot you want to do and only a limited amount of time to fit it all in. That's where the right tour makes all the difference. Because you want experiences that are the best use of your time, with more access, less waiting and a deeper sense of the city. That's why we recommend Walks and Devour Tours. They offer walking tours and food tours designed to make your time count, often with early or after hours entry.

Tracy Collins [00:01:24]:

You'll also be with exceptional local guides who add the stories and context so you leave with a richer understanding of what you're seeing and a trip that feels genuinely memorable. If you're visiting London as a couple with family or you simply prefer a more intimate experience, Walks and Devour Tours also offer private tour options. To learn more, you'll find the link in the show notes. Now let's get into this week's episode. Hi everybody and welcome back to the second episode of 2026.

Doug Collins [00:01:52]:

Wow.

Tracy Collins [00:01:53]:

Already I know Doug is here again this week and we're going to be talk about planning a trip to London. Now last Week's episode, episode 182 was all about planning a trip to the UK. So if you are planning to travel outside of London, which I sincerely hope you are, I have my fingers

crossed that you are planning to do that. Do take a listen to that episode because you'll find that really useful. But we thought this was a perfect time to record this episode. Obviously. Following on from last week's about general travel tips for planning a trip to the uk because we know that a lot of you will be planning, in fact, most of you will probably planning to include London in your trip. And I'm also planning my own trip to London at the minute, which is really exciting, isn't it?

Doug Collins [00:02:37]:  
Most definitely.

Tracy Collins [00:02:37]:  
Yeah. I'm very much involved in that moment. And Doug's just come back.

Doug Collins [00:02:40]:  
I did add six weeks there, traveling around by train, Underground trains, two trains, mainline trains, buses, and a lot of walking myself.

Tracy Collins [00:02:49]:  
You did a lot of walking. I know you. You had very, very busy days when you were. You were based in London for six weeks. And I'll be based in London for April, Quite a lot of May and hopefully June, as. Yeah, we have our own kind of knowledge and background of. Of living and working in London, so it's always really good to go and visit. So even though, I mean, we've got the decades of living there, working there.

Tracy Collins [00:03:14]:  
In fact, I remember the first time I actually went to London, I was about nine years of age, so we're talking sort of 50 years visiting.

Doug Collins [00:03:21]:  
I was a bit younger, actually went with my parents for days out.

Tracy Collins [00:03:24]:  
Ah, okay. So. So we've both visited, we've both lived and we've both worked in London. So. And we've seen a lot of changes, but. And we actually want to say that London keeps changing. So even if you've been before, and I find this every time, it always feels different. There's always new things, new things happening, new things going on.

Tracy Collins [00:03:46]:  
Obviously, a lot of wonderful, ancient, old, fantastic things to go and visit that don't change. But there are often just. I don't know, it just always feels a little bit different. Yeah, absolutely does. So this episode, we're not going to try and cover everything London has to offer because that would be impossible. We do have lots of other episodes in the podcast where we're talking about my favorite things to do in London, my favorite tours in London, and we'll share other tips. But this episode we're going to focus on what. What you actually need to know before you go.

Tracy Collins [00:04:14]:

The things that are going to affect your energy, your budget, your time, and basically your overall experience. Yeah. So we're going to kind of talk about why London feels bigger than people expect. Because it does, doesn't it?

Doug Collins [00:04:25]:

It really does. Yeah. It spoils.

Tracy Collins [00:04:27]:

It does. And it takes. It'll take longer to get around than you may expect. We're going to talk about how to think about where you stay where, what it's worth booking ahead because you really need to think about that and then just how to avoid the overwhelm that many visitors feel. And I will just say there is so much out there now in terms of resources, websites, podcasts, just YouTube, Instagram, TikTok. There's just so much out there. You can feel overwhelmed by all of that. And of course, now we've got chat as well, and all of the AI that's out there just bombarding you with information.

Tracy Collins [00:05:02]:

So we're hoping that we go through each of these points in order that this will help you. And of course, you can always check in the show notes as well. So I just sit back, enjoy the episode we're planning. This whole episode is about helping you plan London in a way that flows. Feels realistic and lets you enjoy the city rather than rushing through.

Doug Collins [00:05:21]:

Yeah. And give you food for thought.

Tracy Collins [00:05:23]:

Absolutely. So we thought what we'd do would be the best thing to do is to go through each of the different points. So we sat and kind of really had a good chat about all the things that. That we feel. That we get asked about or that we feel that really are important for you to know. And the first thing. And this is actually the first thing that Doug said to me this morning when we're talking about that is. And it's true, London is bigger and slower than you may expect.

Doug Collins [00:05:46]:

Yeah, it certainly is, because you're only in one place at a time. That's obvious. But it sprawls everywhere. It's just, you look at the train maps, you look at the tube maps, it just goes on and on and on and on. It covers such a big area that I think. I think people just don't grasp the size.

Tracy Collins [00:06:05]:

Yeah, London is huge. But a lot of the main attractions are kind of in the center of London, which does help.

Doug Collins [00:06:13]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:06:13]:

But I think it can get distracted. I think if you kind of. A lot of people will choose to stay further out of London not realizing that they're kind of too far away from those attractions.

Doug Collins [00:06:26]:

We understand that when it comes to budgets, you know, that's very important. And if you can get. Getting accommodations slightly cheaper and travel, it's that fine balance between, you know, what your budget says and wanting to see things.

Tracy Collins [00:06:38]:

Yeah, it's absolutely true. But I think it's worth. That is worth considering that it's just, you know, if you go too far out, you're going to spend a lot of time traveling in. And we will talk about that in a minute. But I think it's really. We don't want to say is that you can't you probably won't be able to see everything in one trip. I was in London the last time I was in London. I was based there for a few months and I had a massive, great big, long list of all the things that I was going to do, bearing in mind I was there for a few months, so we're not just talking a few days or a week.

Tracy Collins [00:07:05]:

And I didn't see half of everything I had on my list. Mainly because it's more tiring than you expect. It takes longer to get around than you might expect. You don't want to. I certainly didn't want to go out in rush hour because it was just crazy, crazy busy. You know, there's things like just the crowds and the queues to go into places.

Doug Collins [00:07:26]:

It's your energy levels. Your energy levels really can make a difference.

Tracy Collins [00:07:29]:

Yeah. So I think it's just important to, to realize that and that you can't. You will be more tired than you expect. You know, you start out at the beginning of the day. I know what I'm like. I'll be like a Duracell bunny. I'll jump, I'll be grabbing to go and I'll be on the tube and going to do all the things I want to go and do. This is how I start my trip.

Tracy Collins [00:07:48]:

And then usually by the end of the day I'll get in and I'll be absolutely exhausted. And this will carry on for about a week and then after that I'll liter even maybe three days. I don't know how much energy I'll have this year. But you will feel tired.

Doug Collins [00:07:59]:

You will feel tired. And one thing I found, I mean, I have pretty good energy levels when I'm travel, traveling. But even I messaged you a couple of times and said, look, I'm tired. I'm going to take tomorrow or half of tomorrow. I went to a football match instead, but.

Tracy Collins [00:08:12]:

That's right.

Doug Collins [00:08:13]:

But it's planning. I set my time limit to what time I was going to finish each day from traveling around.

Tracy Collins [00:08:20]:

Yeah, yeah.

Doug Collins [00:08:21]:

So whether that's 4 o', clock, 5 o', clock, and I sort of plan the day out accordingly to say when I've had enough, that's it, I've had enough.

Tracy Collins [00:08:28]:

Yeah, No, I think that's a good. I think that's a good plan because. And again, it kind of goes back to the things that London is bigger and slower than you may expect and it will take you longer to get around. It's stimulating, it's busy, it's physically demanding. The Amount of walking that you have to do, it just takes a lot of energy and it's fantastic, you know, and it, you know, it energizes me but also it tires me as well. So like you just have to think about that. And this is one tip that we did want to talk about was, and we were often asked about this actually in consults and helping people with their itineraries is do we do London first or do we do London last? And this has come from actually a lot of experience of talking to people from the trip reports and helping people with their trips. Is that actually you're better off doing London first?

Doug Collins [00:09:15]:

I think so. I think, I think for the overall experience from the beginning to the end of the trip, people give them better trip reports saying they did London to start with.

Tracy Collins [00:09:25]:

Yeah. Because by the end of the trip they're tired and you just haven't got that energy or that maybe that level of enthusiasm that you had at the very beginning of the trip. So that's one thing to, to consider. You know, if you're planning a multi destination trip across the UK or you're going to go over to, to Europe and do some more travels, we would recommend that you do start in London.

Doug Collins [00:09:46]:

Well, majority of people do fly into London. Not all obviously, but a lot of people do fly to London first.

Tracy Collins [00:09:53]:

But I know we have a lot of people who think about maybe going if they're flying and they want to do a couple of days in Paris, then getting the Eurostar over to Paris and then coming back or maybe starting in Bath and then traveling around. I don't know, it just, I think whatever suits, I just would say whatever you plan to do is think about including London first. First. And I

probably wouldn't, I wouldn't even head to Paris if you've landed. I wouldn't go straight to Paris and then come back to, to London. I would give yourself a good few days in London before if you decide you want to add Paris in for a, for a day trip is equally. Yeah. Busy and crazy.

Tracy Collins [00:10:28]:

Yeah, exactly. So it's, it's trying to think about how and. Because what you can do is you can build a few quieter days and potentially to London.

Doug Collins [00:10:35]:

I think it's a good idea.

Tracy Collins [00:10:36]:

Yeah. Okay. So that is basically going to influence a lot of other things that we're going to say is consider about the size of London. The second point we want to talk about with considering and knowing about is how to get around London and what basically and what not to do. So the first thing I'm going to say, please, please, please don't hire a car.

Doug Collins [00:10:55]:

Yeah, do not drive in London.

Tracy Collins [00:10:57]:

Do not drive in London. Absolutely. Do not drive in London. Do not hire a car in London. If you are planning to head out of London and do a road trip around the uk, head out to the airport, pick up your car from there, or head out to a city by train and then pick up your car from there. Just make sure if you're going to drop off at a different destination. And again, this comes up quite a lot. So for example, you're going to get the train out to Bath, pick up a car there.

Tracy Collins [00:11:21]:

You might want to drop off in York. You just need to make sure that when you book the car that you can drop it off at the, the corresponding destination at that point. We sometimes find it's easier with airports because there's a bit more flexibility there.

Doug Collins [00:11:35]:

Nothing with driving London, how good a driver you think you are and how experienced a job you are. London is different. Yes, hidden charges, there's different rules, it's just all together different.

Tracy Collins [00:11:47]:

Look, I, I drove in London in my 20s and I'm surprised I haven't got gray hairs from that. I haven't.

Doug Collins [00:11:54]:

I never uses horse and carts anymore.

Tracy Collins [00:11:56]:

Oh, you're so cheeky. No, I actually did drive a car, but I used to take the kids to, to this school, but to the prep school. But no, I just do not want to do that. I would not want to do that. I would not wish that on my worst enemy. So either, you know, there's other ways to get around London. In fact, London has got a fantastic public transport system. Just think about what you, how you're going to get around that.

Tracy Collins [00:12:19]:

It's going to suit you. So if you're going to use the tube, you've got a couple of options. You've got contactless or you can get an Oyster card. I am not going to go into a discussion in this podcast about which option is best. There is a lot of, a lot, a lot of stuff out there saying nobody ever uses an Oyster card, only use contactless. Honestly, if you want to use an Oyster card, use an Oyster card. I use an Oyster card. But weigh it up because contactless may work better for you.

Tracy Collins [00:12:46]:

You just have to look at the pros and cons. What we don't want to do ever, apart from sin don't drive in London is do this or don't do that. So when it comes to how you're going to pay for your transportation getting around London, you make that Decision. We have got an article on the website all about. Yeah. Oyster card and contact list. An article all about what an Oyster card is. So if you're not sure, then we have an article comparing Oyster card and contact list.

Tracy Collins [00:13:12]:

And we also have a recent article on the London travel planning website where I talked about London zones, which again, I'm not going to go into, but we were asked about what it meant about the zones in London. I will link to that in show notes. So if you want to know kind of what those zones are and how that impacts your trip. And I would look at that article.

Doug Collins [00:13:30]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:13:31]:

Now the nice thing about contactless Oyster card is that that basically there's daily caps. Once you get to that limit, you don't pay anything over that. And it will depend on the zones that you use. Yeah, but most people will. When you did it and I'll do it. We use all the different transport methods available.

Doug Collins [00:13:51]:

Well, you need, you need to, I mean, if you just solely using the underground, you're not seeing anything about above ground. You've got to use the combination depending where you're going. Depends on the weather, of course as well.

Tracy Collins [00:13:59]:

Exactly. But I mean, I enjoy taking the red London bosses around. I also enjoy the tube because the tube's quick. Walking, you're gonna walk.

Doug Collins [00:14:07]:  
I enjoy walking.

Tracy Collins [00:14:08]:  
I mean, I know I was there January last year and I took quite a few Ubers. It was raining a bit, so I just called an Uber from my hotel to the next destination that I was going to and I just took an Uber. Just be aware that if you take an Uber, it can be a lot slower. Annabus can be a lot slower than other transport, actually. Well, bus. Buses do have bus lanes, so they make them, they have that ability. And also I will mention this because there are the black London cabs as well. They can go in lanes that other Uber drivers can't.

Tracy Collins [00:14:42]:  
For example, other cars and Uber drive can't. So actually a quicker way to go around is going to be probably a bus or a black London cab for sure. And of course the cheapest.

Doug Collins [00:14:51]:  
Yep.

Tracy Collins [00:14:52]:  
But really walking is a part of the London experience.

Doug Collins [00:14:56]:  
I've done it several times. Great distances. Because I think walking is probably one of the best ways to orientate yourself to a particular small area.

Tracy Collins [00:15:04]:  
Yeah. And to. To see. And also just exploring areas as well. So you may, for example, choose one particular thing, main thing you want to do in an area, for example, I don't know, Buckingham palace or Westminster Abbey or Tower of London. But the great thing is just you're on your feet, go and explore the area. And we do have our London map as. So you could actually, if you have a London map, you can select for example the area of Westminster and it will show you all other major attractions to see restaurants, all the other bits and bobs you need to know for that area.

Doug Collins [00:15:33]:  
Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:15:34]:  
So that's useful. You can add that onto your phone. Yeah. So getting around London, really, I mean, you've just the options and Uber boat. I haven't even mentioned Uber boat.



Doug Collins [00:15:44]:

No, Boats is another option as well. It's not Uber. Conventionally Uber is the name of the sponsor.

Tracy Collins [00:15:48]:

Yeah. You don't call it like an Uber. Like you wouldn't call your boat on an app. Oh. I just also want to mention this as well. Well, honestly, really genuinely get yourself onto the Thames on a boat and do a boat trip because seeing London from the river is a completely different experience from walking around.

Doug Collins [00:16:04]:

It really is. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:16:05]:

So I'd recommend that.

Doug Collins [00:16:06]:

But it's that combination of everything as well. The pace is set by everybody in the travel group. It's whatever suits you.

Tracy Collins [00:16:13]:

Yes, yes.

Doug Collins [00:16:14]:

Keeps everybody happy.

Tracy Collins [00:16:15]:

Absolutely. Yeah. You've got to figure out there are lots of options. So just choosing what works for you. Now, when it comes from. For train journeys from London to places for. If you want to do a day trip, for example, you want to go to bath, Windsor, Oxford, etc. Doug is adding YouTube videos to our YouTube channel, UK Travel Planning, so you can watch how to get from.

Tracy Collins [00:16:39]:

For example, you've just added the one recently about getting from Paddington to Bath.

Doug Collins [00:16:44]:

Done that one as well. I'm just finishing hopefully today how to get one of the routes from London, Paddington to Windsor.

Tracy Collins [00:16:50]:

Yeah. So we are going to be adding more. More and more videos showing you how to get from London to a lot of the places for day trips.

Doug Collins [00:16:58]:

It is. And one thing I'll add to that is when I've done each of these videos, I'm trying to include a little bit from the London station itself. Just giving a bit of an orientation as around those busy London stations.

Tracy Collins [00:17:09]:

Absolutely. So point three that I really want to kind of stress is that where you stay does matter. It really does and you should really think about. And I know first of all, I am going to say know London accommodation is expensive, it's really pricey and it probably will be a major chunk out of your holiday budget. And there's nothing unfortunately it would be great if. But if it was cheaper, but it's not so. But really you need to think about your Locations that match the sort of things that you want to do. And the location really, really does matter.

Tracy Collins [00:17:45]:

For example, if you're going to be taking some early tours, for example, if you're going to go at the Tower of London for the opening ceremony, you don't want to be staying, or you could be staying in the opposite side of London, but you have to consider that you're going to get there. If you're taking day trips or you've got onward travel, your base really matters, doesn't it?

Doug Collins [00:18:02]:

It is. I was also going to add on to that the. It also depends on how long you're in London for. If you're only there for a few days and you want to see lots of stuff, you may consider more. More of a central location.

Tracy Collins [00:18:12]:

Absolutely.

Doug Collins [00:18:13]:

The longer you're there, you know, maybe a bit further out, because then you've got that time to spread across everything you want to do.

Tracy Collins [00:18:20]:

Yeah, yeah. Now that's a really. That's a useful point and I think it really does depend on what your itinerary is going to include. For example, if you're gonna, you know, if you're going to be taking some Eurostar trips, you decide you're going to go to Paris for a day or you're going to head to Amsterdam or whatever. You know, we usually try to stay very close to St Pancras, so do get the very early trains. I must say, you get the best.

Doug Collins [00:18:43]:

Deals if you're traveling on the early trains from the early, so you get the better deal.

Tracy Collins [00:18:45]:

So we tend to stay near San Pancra station. If you're going to head out to Bath, Oxford or Cotswolds, for example, for a day trip, it's easier from Paddington.

Doug Collins [00:18:53]:

Yeah. There's some nice budget hotels and some very nice hotels as well around there.

Tracy Collins [00:18:56]:

Yeah. So if you decide, and we do have actually have an article about where to stay in London, which breaks down all the different areas with some suggestions of different places. What I would say is that if you decide that you're going to do lots of different. Different tours and different day trips and they're going to be leaving from different stations, the main thing is that to factor in how long it's going to take you from where you stay to get to that train station.

Doug Collins [00:19:23]:

Yeah. And also factor in with those, because if you're taking the tour orcas in the Eurostar train, for example, is how much sooner before that planned departure time you need to be there.

Tracy Collins [00:19:32]:

Yeah, that's true. That is true. So you just need to make sure that you factor that in. I have to say that for me, absolutely, being near a tube station is essential. It really, really is. And I just know for myself, you know, at the end of a long day, and I know I've said this on previous podcasts, but really it's just heartfelt. By the time you get back to your accommodation, you really don't want to get off a mainline station, then hop onto a bus and then have a walk or, or even just a tube where it takes you way out and then you've got to catch a bus and then a walk or whatever. You really want to be thinking, really, really think about this, where your accommodation is in relation to a tube station.

Tracy Collins [00:20:17]:

So even if it's, you know, a five minute walk from a tube station or a 20 minute walk from a tube station, consider all of that. Because honestly, and again, depending on your energy levels, mobility, you know, needs of your party, but it really is important to consider this and it may be very tempting to go for something that is further out and, and involves a, a mainline train and then a boss or a bus and then whatever, a long walk, believe me, you will thank me. And I know, as I say, I know it's going to be a little bit extra on your budget to do this, but honestly, you will thank me.

Doug Collins [00:20:54]:

Yeah, you get back very, very tiny. You think now I've got to think about dinner.

Tracy Collins [00:20:58]:

Yeah, well, yeah, that's it. But honestly, it's this. Just the getting back, you'll be exhausted.

Doug Collins [00:21:04]:

So that's why I say that I planned my end of the day.

Tracy Collins [00:21:09]:

Yes, always.

Doug Collins [00:21:11]:

Because if I was at Northland, because I was staying in South.

Tracy Collins [00:21:14]:

Yes.

Doug Collins [00:21:14]:

South of London, and it could be upward of sort of 45 minutes to an hour to get back.

Tracy Collins [00:21:20]:

Yes. Yeah.

Doug Collins [00:21:21]:

So I always found once you reach that point and you know, when you're finishing, I could, didn't have to rush back because I'd allowed myself in that, my time schedule to do that.

Tracy Collins [00:21:31]:

Yeah, yeah, no, I agree. And I think it's, you know, if you've. Again, I'm going to talk about this next, actually about planning your itinerary by area, not attraction, and I will talk about that. But I think this also, you know, and exactly what Doug says as well, is when you're planning the itinerary, think about where you are at the end of the day and where your accommodation is in relation. Now, if you're in zone one, which is the central zone, where a lot of them, your main attractions are and your hotels, accommodations in Zone one, it's probably not too much of an issue, but if you're further out you go, certainly you're going to need to consider that definitely. So let's move on to point four, which is to plan London by areas, not attractions. Now, I know it's when you start, and I know the same. I kind of think these are the things that I want to see in London.

Tracy Collins [00:22:14]:

So, for example, this year I know I want to visit a lot of the museums that I haven't been to so far, and I've been to majority of the them, but I want to see some of the smaller museums this time. So what. What it is useful to do is to list all the things that you want to do. So whether that's an attraction, whether that's a museum, whatever that is, a landmark that you want to see, whether that's a tour that you're going to be on, is. I'd write those. Those down, identify absolutely things that you must do when you're in London and then start grouping those by right location. The reason to do that is because you may as well see things in that location. Rather than get on a tube, get on a bus, spend money on Uber or a black cab to get you to another side of London, which is again, going to eat up your time.

Tracy Collins [00:23:02]:

I'd also say just aim for two major attractions in a day, things that ideally close together. So, for example, you could do the Westminster Abbey in the morning and maybe Churchill War Rooms in the afternoon, so they're close together, so that sort of thing. So that you are not going from

one part of London to another, because, honestly, it is quite tiring. So, for example, you could see that some of the sites and around, like Westminster, Covent Garden, West, West End is another. City of London is another. So those areas. Now, on the London Travel planning website, I have got area guides to each of those kind of neighbourhoods in London. And I actually am going to be doing dedicated podcast episodes about each of those different areas as well.

Tracy Collins [00:23:50]:

So you can go and check out. Because also it's worth figuring out which of those areas suits you when it comes to choosing where to stay in London. Because they all have different personalities, don't they?

Doug Collins [00:23:59]:

They definitely do, yeah, that's very true.

Tracy Collins [00:24:01]:

Yeah. And I do have like a grid as well where you can kind of work out which. Which would suit your travel party best, which area, depending on, like, what are you planning to do or what you want to see. You know, do you want to be in a lively area with lots of restaurants and Theaters then peace.

Doug Collins [00:24:15]:

Peace and quiet.

Tracy Collins [00:24:16]:

Peace and quiet. Yeah. Or do you want to be near the. The museums in South Kensington? You know, I could live opposite the VA and be very happy. So when you plan your days around areas, it just becomes easier to navigate around London and less exhausting.

Doug Collins [00:24:31]:

I was just going to say if you're doing self catering, have a look on a map. See if there's a supermarket or something nearby as well. Makes life a lot easier. Then you haven't got to without a car is carrying banks of shop and back to your accommodation.

Tracy Collins [00:24:43]:

Yeah, that's a good point. And that is important. Yeah. Because you just mentioned that as well. Yeah. Okay. So point five is kind of budget realities and smart money tips. Because we know London is expensive.

Doug Collins [00:24:54]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:24:56]:

And. And it doesn't have to be break the bank. I think this is the thing because there was. There's a lot of free things to do, but then we'll talk about that in a second. But accommodation is probably going to be your biggest cost. Well, it will be your biggest cost. It just is so expensive. It really is.

Tracy Collins [00:25:10]:

Eating out every meal is also going to add on up to your costs. Yes. And also attractions if you try to do everything because there's just a lot to see and do. But the good thing is, and again, I've got an. I have actually got a podcast all about this and I've got an article on the website as well. There's lots of free things to do in London. So most of I would say majority of London's top museums are free and galleries are free. So you can go to the Natural History Museum, the V and A, the Science Museum, the National Gallery, the National Portrait Gallery.

Tracy Collins [00:25:44]:

Yeah, they're free. So go and see if. I know some of you may not be museum people, but honestly there's some wonderful museums in London, but they're free. If you're going to look at what sort of paid attractions you're going to do again, it's kind of working out what you really, really want to see. So you know, if you want to go to Westminster Abbey, if you want to go to St. Paul's Cathedral, if you want to go to Tower of London, if you want to go to Kensington palace, is work out what those costs are going to be and then work out, you know, be selective about the ones that you really want to do. Also worth looking at something like the London Pass, which includes a lot of the top attractions in London. I did a London itinerary planning challenge a couple of years ago which was great.

Tracy Collins [00:26:30]:

They gave me a three day itinerary and lots of different things to go and use my pass pass for. What I would say is that really is to work out what you want to do and see how much it costs and then if the London pass is going to save you money and then that's, that's something worth considering. Also walking will save you time and money. Well not necessarily time sometimes but it'll save you money.

Doug Collins [00:26:50]:

It can do, it can do. Because they're close together.

Tracy Collins [00:26:53]:

Yeah, very well. Example the Common Garden and Leicester Square. You don't, you don't take the tube between those two stations. You just walk because it's quick. But also if you can, if you can walk between the areas that's going to save you money on transportation. Well can I talk about my favorite meal deals? So lunch deals and set menus. There's also pre theater menus offer great like really good value. But let's talk about meal deals.

Doug Collins [00:27:18]:

Supermarkets are excellent.

Tracy Collins [00:27:19]:

Yeah, I love a good meal deal. So do you. I do, yeah. Now my favorite is Marks and Spencer's. I have to say I love.

Doug Collins [00:27:25]:

Wow, you're posh.

Tracy Collins [00:27:26]:

Well I love Marks and Spencer's meal deals and so basically what a meal deal is is where you get a sandwich a, or salad or a salad, a packet of crisps or a chocolate bar, piece of fruit and a drink. So you get one of the so three things basically. So you get either your, your main which will be either your sandwich or a salad. Then you get your kind of little snacky bit that goes with it. So that's going to be crisps, chocolate, fruits. I'll be eating the fruit this year she says and then you get an option of drinks so they'll be a set price. So they can be anything from 4 pound, 5 pound, 7 pound.

Doug Collins [00:28:04]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:28:05]:

Depending on what it is. Like my favorite sandwich of course is the most expensive which is the prawn sandwich from Marks and Spencer which is included in the meal deal.

Doug Collins [00:28:14]:

So just actually mine was part of the cheapest.

Tracy Collins [00:28:17]:

Yeah. Dugs are far better at budget than I am I have to say. Yeah. So the Sainsbury, Marks and Spencers, the Co Op, Tesco that all offer these meal deals.

Doug Collins [00:28:29]:

Greg's the bakery also does one.

Tracy Collins [00:28:31]:

Yeah. So you'll find a lot of the places offer those and so yeah that's a great way to save on money. Just go and buy that, have a picnic if the weather's good go and have a picnic in one of the parks.

Doug Collins [00:28:41]:

It is also on the go yeah, exactly. I was going to add take it to a park.

Tracy Collins [00:28:45]:

Yeah, absolutely. Yes. I will say that you do need to book ahead for restaurants, but I'll talk about that in a bit. Now, obviously, markets are really cool. I love heading to Borough Market. It's busy,

I will say that. But the markets also offer really good value and you can try lots of different things. There's also lots of great bakeries in London as well.

Doug Collins [00:29:04]:

Yes.

Tracy Collins [00:29:05]:

And afternoon tea. I can't not talk about afternoon tea now. It can be expensive, so I'm not going to say this is going to be a way to save you money, but do check as well because the prices do. There's just a huge variety from the cheaper to very expensive. So just have a, you know, choose if you, if you really want to do an afternoon tea, but you want to look for something a bit more budget and they are available. And again, I've got an article all about different afternoon teas.

Doug Collins [00:29:33]:

Yep. And for evening meals as well, I should say some of the supermarkets also do a similar. Like a group.

Tracy Collins [00:29:40]:

Yes, they do, yes.

Doug Collins [00:29:41]:

Meal deal for an evening meal.

Tracy Collins [00:29:43]:

Yeah. And I've got photos of that I have got on the London travelplanner.com website. I've got an article about where to eat and what to eat in London and actually have got links to. And to lots of the different restaurants. But also for examples of those meal deals that you can buy not only at lunchtime but also for dinner. So if you're, if you rent an apartment, they're a great option.

Doug Collins [00:30:03]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:30:04]:

Again, because you, you'll get a main. A starter. You might get a starter main, sorry, dessert and maybe a bottle of wine or a drink to go with it as well.

Doug Collins [00:30:12]:

That's also what one I did on for one of the supermarkets. It was, it was over several nights. So it was three evening meals. The price of two.

Tracy Collins [00:30:20]:

Yeah. Oh, yes, yes.



Doug Collins [00:30:21]:

Okay. We're talking oven, microwave, quick meal. But when you've been out all day, to be honest with you, you generally speaking want something quick.

Tracy Collins [00:30:29]:

Yeah, absolutely. And also if you're staying in a hotel, you'll probably get breakfast. So I tend to find that if I have a good breakfast and then probably have a meal deal 10. We tend to share one, to be honest.

Doug Collins [00:30:42]:

Or together. Skip lunch.

Tracy Collins [00:30:43]:

Yeah. And then just have something later on in the day. And there are lots of. There's so many restaurant options in London. It's crazy. There are just, it's. There are a lot. But I say on our London map, we have put in some of the, our favorite restaurants, obviously we can't eat in every restaurant in London.

Tracy Collins [00:30:58]:

Even though I'd love to have it, I'd love to have a go at that. So let's talk about money basics in London. So London is largely cashless. I can't remember the last time I actually saw any cash in London or in fact when I've been in the UK and really contactless is king. Did you use any cash?

Doug Collins [00:31:15]:

I didn't even use one pence.

Tracy Collins [00:31:17]:

Nothing at all. And actually some places don't accept cash at all. I know we are often asked about tips. So yes, if you want to tip, just take a small amount of cash that you can use for a tip. But otherwise you, chances are you're not going to use or need any cash. But I would just say that if you're gonna go outside of London and it's gonna go to some more remoter areas, and I know this is something that Sally Ann's mentioned for North Coast Explorer when we've chatted, is that sometimes when you go to places a little bit more remote and the machines go down, then you might be stuck and you can't pay. So if I would say in London, chances are you're not going to need any cash. But if you are going out of London, potentially just have a small amount on you, that would help.

Tracy Collins [00:32:01]:

I think, I think the thing is, is just to be, you know, have a bit of flexibility with your money. So if you've got your budget, just give yourself a little bit of wiggle room in that because you're probably going to buy things that you may not consider like.

Doug Collins [00:32:16]:

And you probably under. Underestimate the, the cost.

Tracy Collins [00:32:19]:

Yes, I think so. And like, honestly, whenever I go about this some there's, I just try to avoid the shops because it's, there's some really tempting things that I want to buy.

Doug Collins [00:32:27]:

Yeah, the prices are creeping as they are around the world.

Tracy Collins [00:32:30]:

Yeah, so, so that's, those are just kind of things that we want to say that would kind of possibly hopefully be useful for you for budgeting and yeah, those money tips. So point six is booking ahead versus staying flexible now. And I know a lot of people want to be as flexible as possible on holiday and I really do understand that. But honestly, sometimes you can't be, or you can be flexible and then what happens is you miss out. So this is what I'm going to say. If there are certain priorities, things that you absolutely must do when you're in London, then book those. Okay. You really, really should book those.

Tracy Collins [00:33:05]:

For example, if you want to go up the Sky Garden then book it three weeks before booking opens up. Popular afternoon teas as well can get booked up Buckingham palace when it opens to visitors get that booked. I remember I booked that a couple of years ago. It was. It was a bit pricey but again it's so popular it's only open for a short period of the time of the year. So everybody wants to go when they're there. So book that Warner Brothers Harry Potter studio tour again that gets booked up a long way in advance if you're going to go to the ceremony of the Keys at the Tower of London and you should again get that booked up up because those. Those tours get booked because they're so popular and they're really good and honestly some attractions can book out quite a way ahead.

Tracy Collins [00:33:48]:

Not that you'd expect but they can do the other thing to do as well if you're. And this is something that I'm doing at the minute is to check for anything temporary exhibitions that are on during the visit that you might want to book. For example, when I am over in. In May there's actually an exhibition in Bucknham palace of the late Queen Elizabeth II's outfits and I'm definitely going to go and book that and see that. I've also just booked tickets for the Chelsea Flower show so that for example I needed to book because that would be completely sold out definitely.

Doug Collins [00:34:17]:

So. And I saw one for later in the year the Bayer tapestries on display at the British Museum.

Tracy Collins [00:34:22]:

Yeah.

Doug Collins [00:34:22]:

September.

Tracy Collins [00:34:23]:

Yeah. So those aren't free. Those additional exhibitions you have to pay a little bit extra for. So. But I'd book those. I do have an article on what to put book how far in advance in London. I will link to that in the show notes. The main thing I want to say is like consider would it genuinely disappoint you if you missed that experience?

Doug Collins [00:34:43]:

And that's for everybody in the. In the group as well. The larger the group, the more difficult that would be to be honest.

Tracy Collins [00:34:48]:

Yeah. So just. Yeah. Make sure that you. If there's something you absolutely want to do, put that into your itinerary first. Get the tickets for that and then add in all the extra stuff that you may want to do. Okay. So we're going to look at point 7 which is opening tabs cues and all lines and pacing reality.

Tracy Collins [00:35:07]:

So I think it's worth. Because this. These sort of things sometimes knock people a bit. Is that the fact that shops often open later than you might expect in London.

Doug Collins [00:35:16]:

That's right.

Tracy Collins [00:35:16]:

And we've had that. Actually, a lot of Australians have commented that to us. Haven't they said that. Can't believe that shops don't open till 10am so just bear that in mind. If you're an early riser and you think you're going to get up at 7 or 8 and go out and do a lot of things won't be open, so you won't be able to too. Sundays are generally slower overall and there's, you know, transport a little bit less on a. On a Sunday. So it's just.

Tracy Collins [00:35:38]:

Yeah, just, just expect on Sunday things will be a little bit more chilled. Now, if you are planning a Sunday roast and we know how popular Sunday roasts are and it's a popular. For us Brits, we love our Sunday roast. They are popular, really popular and they will often will get booked out. So if this is a one meal that you want to experience in London, then book it. I know we did a consult recently and we were looking at all different places to. There's some fantastic Sunday roasting. Honestly, I'm choosing for myself at the moment, so, you know, I'm going to try some out, so I'll be able to let you know.

Tracy Collins [00:36:13]:

So. So book that. Also worth noting is that a lot of attractions may close earlier than you expect. So around five or six there will be a variation for seasons and also some places actually closed at certain times of the year as well.

Doug Collins [00:36:27]:

Well, yeah, for attractions, the last entry may be an hour or so before the actual closing.

Tracy Collins [00:36:32]:

Yeah, that's it. So they won't, they'll. They'll let people in, for example, at 4, but it'll close at 5 because they want to make sure that everybody's had an opportunity to go and have a look around. Now, even if you have a ticket, you might find that you're going to be in a queue because there's a security and timed entry for different places as well. And so you need to build that buffer time in. We often see itineraries where it's kind of 10 o', clock, I'm going to go here. 11 o', clock, I'm going To go here. 12 o', clock, I'm going T go here.

Tracy Collins [00:36:58]:

2 o', clock, I'm going TO go here. And you won't, because you haven't. There's no time in there to actually queue up, get into the. Into the attraction, have a look around, get out of it, get onto the. Whichever transport method you're going to get onto or walk to the next place. So you know, you really need to give yourself that buffer time.

Doug Collins [00:37:17]:

It does because it's a cumulative effect on the time time. Because Your ticket says 10 o' clock doesn't mean you can actually walk straight up the door. 2 minutes to 10 and walk straight because I'll be.

Tracy Collins [00:37:26]:

There'll be a line. I mean this is something that I really like when I book with tours where you have like skip the queue because it's really good. And I've done quite a few tours with walks in London where I've been especially Westminster Abbey as well. Always springs to mind because it's great because you kind of. You walk into a different entrance around the side.

Doug Collins [00:37:42]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:37:42]:

So you might have to line up for like, I don't know, 20 seconds, 30 seconds and then you go in and it just saves. And you feel like, like, huh. I didn't have to. In that big, long, long queue. I didn't have to stand up.

Doug Collins [00:37:52]:

So if you've got a big queue, make sure you take a drink with you in hot weather and a hat.

Tracy Collins [00:37:55]:

Yeah. Actually that also reminds me, we talked about fatigue but also like you might end up standing a lot more than you expect.

Doug Collins [00:38:01]:  
Cues are tiring.

Tracy Collins [00:38:02]:  
Yeah, yeah, absolutely. And you know what the last thing I want to do on holiday is stand in a great big long queue.

Doug Collins [00:38:06]:  
Well, you don't usually need to stand. You go and sit somewhere.

Tracy Collins [00:38:09]:  
Well, what, like get you to stand in the queue? Yeah, no, I try to buy tickets for things that I can get in as quickly as possible. So in the evening in London it's. That's a great time to have a walk around. You've got the theater, pubs more relaxed and I don't know London in the evening whether whatever time of year. I always. I love strolling around London. It's really good.

Doug Collins [00:38:27]:  
I like summer evening. Nice light.

Tracy Collins [00:38:29]:  
Yeah, the light evenings are really nice. But I, I've got some beautiful photos from last December when I was walking around London and the just the light was amazing. Looking over to Big Ben and the House of Commons and it just. Absolutely just beautiful photos. So it just really. It's also quieter.

Doug Collins [00:38:44]:  
Yeah. And if you're going out late in the evening, you may want to stagger your start time that morning, have a slightly later start and then you stay out later.

Tracy Collins [00:38:52]:  
Yeah, I'll go back to your hotel and have a couple hours break and then go out again because it's tired. Yeah.

Doug Collins [00:38:56]:  
All day. It is time.

Tracy Collins [00:38:57]:  
Yeah, it is. So let's talk about point 8 which is consider theater markets and parks now theater A lot of you will want to go and see some of the fantastic shows that are on in London. Absolutely the real highlight. I absolutely love going to London to see shows just to be aware that some do sell out in advance and that yes there are same day tickets that you can get which can be

cheaper. Cheaper but they are risky for some of the bigger shows. So you're not necessarily going to know until on the day what is actually.

Doug Collins [00:39:27]:

Available or the best seats. You may.

Tracy Collins [00:39:29]:

Oh you won't probably get the best seats. I mean it depends if you're not bothered you just want to go and see your show then you're probably going to have a. Have an option of what's available, what's available on the day but if there's something specific that you want to go and see then I'd book the tickets for that and think about where the location of the theater is as well so that you know a how you're going to get there and what you're going to eat. A lot of the restaurants around the theaters will have a pre theater set meal dinner that you can have and that's a lovely. Makes a lovely, lovely evening of it to do that. Also remember there's the matinee performances on us on a Wednesday afternoon and things Saturday, Saturday afternoon so they're all worth doing. Markets. Can't talk about London gone to London without talking about the markets because there's so many amazing markets to visit.

Tracy Collins [00:40:13]:

Again I've got an article about all the different markets. Just remember they don't operate. Not all of them operate every day. Weekends will be busier, it's more atmospheric for sure but it will be busier really busy. For example Borough Market. It's crazy busy week. I think it's getting crazy busy in the week to be honest. Weekdays are generally calmer and the markets.

Tracy Collins [00:40:35]:

But I would always check, check you open in days before planning and always, always and I learned this the hard way check if there's a particular. If there's a particular place that you want to eat then check that it is open. Right. Because I went to Borough Market to have raclette not the famous cheese toasty that this particular place is famous for. At Capucasin I went on a day that it was closed and I was gutted so I needed next time I went I made sure absolutely that it was open which tend to be thirsty. I forgot Friday Saturday so if you're going to go for the famous cheese toast here capacation Actually have the raclette. That's my tip. Just check.

Tracy Collins [00:41:15]:

But anywhere that you want to eat, check that the place that you wanted, the place that you've seen on Tick Tock, the. The strawberries and chocolate, whatever it is that you've seen that you want to eat, just check that it is open on the day that you want to go. But absolutely got the market, most definitely. There's so many and they do. They all have different things that they sell and they have different atmospheres. And then if you go on the.

Doug Collins [00:41:34]:

Tour as well, you get a bit of history as well about the area.

Tracy Collins [00:41:37]:

Oh, yeah, well, we. That's it. We did the. Oh, that was fantastic Food tour with Devour. Well, yes, I just thought I've done it twice at Borough Market. It's just fantastic. And actually, you know what, when you've done that, you don't need any food really for the rest of the day.

Doug Collins [00:41:49]:

That's the other thing. I mean, the, the tour guide as well, the one we had was absolutely.

Tracy Collins [00:41:53]:

Oh, Pete was amazing.

Doug Collins [00:41:54]:

He was absolutely out of this world.

Tracy Collins [00:41:56]:

Yeah. So if you do a food tour, not only to get. Do you get to learn about where the best places are to buy the food, we always do food tours, but you also learn about the history. And it's fantastic actually that the, that Devour tour around Borough Market, I've learned so much more about the history around that area and it's amazing. It's just. So don't just go to eat the, those, you know, the foods that you've seen on Tick Tock, but go and actually learn about the history as well because London is just so historic are steeped in history. Absolutely, absolutely. I can't also can't not talk about the parks.

Tracy Collins [00:42:29]:

Parks are such a large part of being in London and you'll find if you're there and it's a sunny day that it feels like most of the population of London are in the park with you. But they're lovely to stroll through whatever time of year. In winter they're just gorgeous in. In autumn, fall, the, the leaves are beautiful. Summer, they're. In spring, they're a great place to just sit and enjoy the flowers and just enjoy the. Just chilling out. They're all.

Tracy Collins [00:42:54]:

Again, the parks are all very different.

Doug Collins [00:42:55]:

They are indeed, yes. I mean, how many times have I mentioned about me liking a picnic in Greenwich?

Tracy Collins [00:43:01]:

Yeah, absolutely. It's one of your favorite things to do and it's a really good place to just sit between, you know, if you're walking between Attractions, for example, if you're going from St. James park, for example, if you, if you're Buckingham palace and you walk into Westminster Abbey or vice versa, you walk through St. James's Park. Great place to have a sit, see the pelicans. Oh yes. Bridge gives you a great view back towards, you can see the London Eye. But it's also just a great place to have a stroll and a chill out, sit down, rest your feet for a bit.

Tracy Collins [00:43:29]:

So, yeah, and if you've got kids that let kids run around for a bit as well, Kensington actually Kensington Gardens is lovely for that. Yeah. Some nice kids playground there as well. Which actually takes us on a point nine, which is managing your energy accessibility and overwhelm. And I will say, you know, London can be overwhelming. It's very, it can be very, very, very busy. Very, very, very noisy. I know you mentioned the noise.

Doug Collins [00:43:53]:

Well, that again, that's one of the reasons I like the parks as well. I like walking around Holland park, things like that, because it's peaceful.

Tracy Collins [00:43:59]:

Yeah, yeah, it is. But again, talking about just energy levels, it does involve a lot of walking. And as I just actually remembered before, actually it's thinking about standing those cubes. It involves standing. Yeah. So that can be really tiring. And again, I will talk a bit about kind of what to wear, but I always wear the most comfortable shoes that I have. I wear my trainers, I wear my Birkenstock sandals in the summer.

Tracy Collins [00:44:25]:

I just make sure that they're broken in that I'm not going to get. The worst thing I could, I can think of is having blisters.

Doug Collins [00:44:30]:

That's right. So I will also mention, don't underestimate the walking in some of the underground stations is particularly the main stations. There could be a bit more walking than you think.

Tracy Collins [00:44:39]:

Yeah, no, that's absolutely true. Yeah. So just consider, you know, if you're, if you're older, you're traveling, a family or you've got anybody with mobility challenges that it can be really, really tiring. So just, you know, add some slower days into your itinerary. You know, some downtime in there. Yes. Because you may feel at this time, because it's exciting, you're planning a trip to London and everybody's really excited. Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:45:02]:

And it costs, I understand that. But honestly, just give yourself that downtime. You will appreciate it, you will enjoy your trip far more without. Don't go with a whole list of things that you've got to take out, tick off because you'll just get burnt out and you won't enjoy it as much. You know, there's the cafes, there's parks, there's pubs. There's lots of places where you can just go and chill out.

Doug Collins [00:45:22]:

Well, I have to say I will point this out because I was trying on my own for those six weeks around London, a few places away from the main area. Years I went into cafes and had a cup of tea and a slice of cake, talking to such interesting people. You know, it was just. Particularly in



the cafes. Yeah, yeah, it was absolutely fantastic. You know, thinking, I know London quite well and you're talking to somebody that's like, well, I've never heard of that.

Tracy Collins [00:45:47]:

Yeah, that's great. I mean, that's London. Is it? It's like. It's. There's just. There's always so much going on and so much to do. Right. So we've got some everyday practical questions that we're always asked.

Tracy Collins [00:45:57]:

So we're just going to talk about a few of these. So safety again, we have a podcast on this and an article. Just be mindful of your phones and your possessions, especially in busy areas at train stations.

Doug Collins [00:46:07]:

Yes. They are notorious, particularly large train stations, because you're distracted easily.

Tracy Collins [00:46:13]:

Yeah. So just be mindful of your phone. I have it on a lanyard. Just keep it under your top. If you're taking photographs, you know, just be mindful what. Who's around you, what's around you. If you're going to be using your phone for directions, maybe try to stand against the wall or railings at stations.

Doug Collins [00:46:31]:

I always say, if there's more than one person traveling, is one of you looking at timetables, one of you just watching all your possessions?

Tracy Collins [00:46:37]:

Yeah.

Doug Collins [00:46:38]:

Don't send text or social media when you.

Tracy Collins [00:46:41]:

Yeah. Because you're not concentrating.

Doug Collins [00:46:42]:

Because you're not concentrating what you're doing.

Tracy Collins [00:46:44]:

Exactly. So just be mindful of that. All right. Well, always asked about toilets, restrooms, whatever you want to call them, we just recommend using a toilet finder app. So we've got a guide to apps. Apps which I will also link to. But generally there are plenty of cafes, there's McDonald's.

Doug Collins [00:47:01]:  
Train stations.

Tracy Collins [00:47:02]:  
Yeah, the train stations usually places that you can. Yeah, you can just access the. The toilet if you need it. Tourist traps. Again, this is really subjective, I think, talking about. Because I've heard people talk about the London Eyes, a tourist trap and I really love the London Eye, so I kind of don't agree. But some. One area I would say to be cautious around is maybe Leicester Square.

Tracy Collins [00:47:24]:  
Just, just. It's kind of I would talk. I tend to just go through Leicester Square on the way to somewhere else. I wouldn't hang around Leicester Square. And the restaurants around Leicester Square aren't particularly brilliant. Yeah, that's. That's a bit of a. More of a touristy trappy area.

Doug Collins [00:47:37]:  
Yeah, it depends. Yeah. So your interpretation of the word tourist. I mean, most people are visiting London to go and see the tourist sites.

Tracy Collins [00:47:44]:  
Yeah, I know, but I just. I don't know. Let's just go. It's not particularly. I don't know. It's never somewhere that I'm on the way to.

Doug Collins [00:47:51]:  
Covent Garden, usually.

Tracy Collins [00:47:52]:  
Yeah, yeah. Usually just walking through. Yes. Now, what to wear again, just mention comfortable shoes is really important. Weather changes quickly. Right. So I can't tell you what the weather is going to be like in London at any one time because I can't tell you for September this year. I can't tell you for next week.

Tracy Collins [00:48:10]:  
I could if I looked on an app, but I. It's just the UK weather is predictably unpredictable. I use that all the time. But it is. I go for layers that I can put on and off which.

Doug Collins [00:48:20]:  
Which you'll be grateful for because even in the middle of winter, if you're traveling on the underground, it can be very, very hot.

Tracy Collins [00:48:26]:  
Hot. It can be really hot. And I also will just say that summers can be hotter than you may expect. The underground, incredibly hot. It's just. I mean, they put more air conditioning, but

there's not a lot of air conditioning in London. Remember, these are old buildings, so museums and stuff like that don't necessarily have air condition. Don't expect it's getting hotter.

Tracy Collins [00:48:46]:

And I've been in London when we booked a hotel that didn't have aircon and we got a fan and it was incredibly hot. I've lived in London during those hot summers and it can be stifling. So I have a little handheld fan that I take with me as well. I always have that on the underground. Carry water, definitely. So with you as well. And honestly, in London it doesn't matter what you wear. Comfort matters more than fashion.

Tracy Collins [00:49:08]:

Just check if you're going somewhere posh for dinner or an afternoon tea that you. If there's a dress code, that's the only thing I would check.

Doug Collins [00:49:14]:

Yeah. And I would mention the hotels. If you. For whatever reason, you are required to ground floor because you can't. Unable to tackle the stairs very easily. You need to be contacting in advance.

Tracy Collins [00:49:28]:

Yes. Request that you want to be on.

Doug Collins [00:49:30]:

The ground floor because there's nothing worse than arriving in peak season and you're unable to take those stairs. You weren't aware there was no lift.

Tracy Collins [00:49:36]:

Yeah. And also we'll mention that we use the terminology ground floor, not first floor. So if you're used to first floor and you think that's the ground floor, I don't know how to explain this. It won't be so. So the first floor is where you need stairs or a lift to get to. So we have the ground floor. So if you want a room where you don't have to, you know, if there's no lift or elevator in where you're staying, then you need to ask for the ground floor. But I would always check the same.

Doug Collins [00:50:02]:

Floor where the entrance is. Basically.

Tracy Collins [00:50:04]:

Yes. I would always check whether your hotel has air conditioning and I'll always check if it has a lift. If those things are important to you. Definitely, definitely check before you book. That's something I would 100% recommend. The other thing we get asked about is typically.

Doug Collins [00:50:17]:

Yep.

Tracy Collins [00:50:17]:

Often it's added to the bill. We add like 12 and a half percent I think service fee in restaurants which will cover the tip. Otherwise you can just round up in like for example if you get a cab, just round it up to the nearest pound. So it's three pound 55 or whatever.

Doug Collins [00:50:33]:

It's unexpected.

Tracy Collins [00:50:35]:

Yeah. And if you wanted to tip a tour guide, again that's up to you. Five pound, ten pound, whatever. But really tipping is a nice thing to do. It's not, not as expected as it is in other cultures. But just be aware that in restaurants a lot will already have been added. Public WI fi I want to talk about. There is WI fi, a lot of public WI fi available in London, which is fine, you can use it, but if you are going to use it, make sure you use a VPN which is a virtual private network to protect your data because what you don't want to be doing is on your phone and somebody is able to intercept.

Tracy Collins [00:51:10]:

So we always use a VPN when we travel, always. So I can link to VPN that we recommend as well in the show notes. But there is a lot of public WI fi. I'm also can talk about e sims as well and I'll link to article about e Sims and VPNs in the show notes. Yeah, so you're going to be using your phone, whether you're going to be using it for navigation, for your tickets, for payments, whatever. But it'll drain your batteries quickly. There's nothing worse then your phone conking out. So make sure.

Tracy Collins [00:51:41]:

That you have a portable charger with you because honestly I, I don't think, I don't know. My phone never seems to last as long as I think it's going to last, you know. So just make sure you've got a portable charger with you. I think that's important.

Doug Collins [00:51:53]:

Yes, most definitely.

Tracy Collins [00:51:55]:

Oh okay. Point 11. Are you still with us? Is important dates that affect London in 2026. Again this is really important. We get this quite often in the Facebook group that people weren't aware of some of the major events that happen in London and they can impact, impact crowds, prices and transportation even if you're not planning to attend. So it's worth knowing and considering. A if you're arriving in London any of these days, how are you getting from the airport? B what you're going to be doing on a day that one of these events on. So are you going to be heading to that area or not and see whether you're going to be staying in accommodation that is near one of these areas areas or where these events are going to be held.

Tracy Collins [00:52:37]:

So the main things I just want to mention for this year is particularly the London Marathon. This catches everybody out every year it's on Sunday April 26th. Trooping of the Color is on the 13th of June and there's a rehearsal on the 6th of June. The Chelsea Flower show which I'm going to, I'm so excited for is the week before the school holidays which is the week I think roundabout I'm going on the 22nd so 22nd, 21st, 20th. So around about that 18th to the 22nd is 23rd that week for Chelsea Flower Show. Wimbledon's late.

Doug Collins [00:53:10]:

You haven't mentioned the month for the Chelsea flowers.

Tracy Collins [00:53:12]:

Oh sorry me, I thought I said me. Ah, Wimbledon is late June to mid July which is only going to be an issue if you're heading down to Southfields train station tube station because that gets incredibly busy and I know because I used to live beside it and yeah there'll be a lot of people ahead down there. I find the best thing to do with Wimbledon is to just go and either say Covent Garden or one of the pop ups and drink pims and watch it or head to a pub and watch it there. Then Notting Hill Carnival is held in late August and then remember, don't forget there's public holidays as well in, in the UK so you've got the regular obviously New Year's Day which is today when we're recording this Easter and Christmas and New Year obviously Mentioned those. But also there are public holidays called bank holidays in in the UK which also also see impact London and the main ones to consider are May. There are two. It's the first Monday and the last Monday in May and also the last Monday in August. So they will May.

Tracy Collins [00:54:14]:

It means that London will be incredibly, incredibly, incredibly busy because it's a long weekend. Also end of May is always crazy because the kids are off. Yeah, it's always really, really, really busy. Also check if there are any major concerts happening, sporting events UK and also European school holidays for example. April is always really, really busy because a lot of the European. Well, all the European schools are often there. Seem to head to London. It seems to be a popular place to come.

Tracy Collins [00:54:43]:

And any religious festivals. I know when you were over.

Doug Collins [00:54:46]:

Yeah. Duvali.

Tracy Collins [00:54:47]:

Yeah. In Trafalgar Square. So it's worth checking all of that. I will be putting an article on the London site but we do have a regular for every single month we have an article on what you need to know about visiting London in January, February, March, April, blah blah. Each of the months also has pictures of what I'm wearing. So if, if you're concerned and again because we get asked so often, you can see what I was wearing in each of those months as well. But again, I can't guarantee the weather is going to be always, always as it has been when I've

taken those photos. Now if you're short on time, I'm just going to mention there are some smart options.

Tracy Collins [00:55:22]:

If you're only going to be in London for a day or maybe a day and a half or two days, it's a stopover. Maybe consider a touchdown tour with Discover Real London Black Cab Tours. We recommend that it's just amazing. They will pick you up from the airport, take you on a tour of London and then take you back. Perfect. Perfect. You can also do a London in a day with walks, which is fantastic. I did that last year with my friend Melissa Jones and that basically puts the majority destinations in London in, in this one day with a tour guide who takes you around, which is absolutely fantastic.

Tracy Collins [00:55:55]:

So obviously that's got Tower of London, Westminster Abbey. You trip on the Uber boat down between the two, you see the, the changing of the guard. So a lot of the things that you may want to see if you're there for a shorter period of time. So they're really also very good to do if you're just want to orientate yourself as well.

Doug Collins [00:56:12]:

Yes.

Tracy Collins [00:56:12]:

And then you can decide what to return to later. If you do some of those as well. Well, okay, so we're nearly at the end. So we just want to give you kind of. Kind of a realistic London mindset. Right. So, like, not everything needs to be iconic that you do in London. There's just some of the best things just come from wandering around the neighborhood.

Tracy Collins [00:56:36]:

The pubs and the smaller museum.

Doug Collins [00:56:38]:

Couldn't agree more.

Tracy Collins [00:56:38]:

Absolutely.

Doug Collins [00:56:39]:

Honestly, just soak up the moment.

Tracy Collins [00:56:41]:

Yeah, Just wander around, enjoy it. Now it is normal to leave London feeling that you've missed things. I do this every single time. Every time I go, oh, I really wanted to go and do this, or I really wanted to go and do that. And then I'm like, oh, right, I need to add that.

Doug Collins [00:56:55]:

I'm willing to. Up there, we have a things we must do next time we visit London. Instead of the list getting actually smaller, it gets longer. It seems to grow.

Tracy Collins [00:57:03]:

Yeah, it just gets longer every time I try, I do a little bit more of what I want to add. You know, things are going to absolutely do this and absolutely that, but there's always things that just get missed out.

Doug Collins [00:57:11]:

Particularly if you like. I mean, you talk to people when you're there, there and you point out things you've not yet done. There's actually always new discoveries. There's always new things being added.

Tracy Collins [00:57:19]:

Yeah, yeah. I think that's the thing. It's like, I'll have. I'll have my list and then I'll have discovered something else and I'll go, I really want to do that and not manage to fit it in. Which, again, is giving yourself that flexibility, bearing in mind. I tend to spend months at a time, then I still kind of go, oh, my goodness, there's something I've missed out. So it's normally feeling that you've missed things. And honestly, London, you.

Tracy Collins [00:57:39]:

I don't think it's meant to be completed in one visit and you couldn't do it. You just couldn't. So as I say, it's. It's. You know what it means? It just means that you've got to go again.

Doug Collins [00:57:48]:

Yeah, that's right.

Tracy Collins [00:57:49]:

And I will say, do less and you'll have a better trip.

Doug Collins [00:57:53]:

Yeah.

Tracy Collins [00:57:53]:

Really genuinely, just do not what you think you're going to fit in. Genuinely, at the. You probably won't be able to. And honestly, I can say, hand on heart, I'm also terrible at doing this. I will sit and I have to think, no, I'm realistic. I need to know I won't be able to do that. I've got to pace myself. So.

Tracy Collins [00:58:12]:

And that's coming from me who's been living there and traveling around London and planning.

Doug Collins [00:58:16]:

Well, the amount of time I spend at train stations, you always think I want to spend longer here. I need to do this line again, I need to do that again.

Tracy Collins [00:58:24]:

Yeah, that's true, that's true. I always find it's. It takes time actually to plan I think a realistic London itinerary. I think so, you know. So lastly, if you want support with planning London, their options depend on how hands on you want to be. So on London travel planning we've got detailed area guides, transport advice and London specific resources to help your plan with confidence. There's also lots of London specific podcast episodes as well. We have some products as well as the website, we have some products that we sell which can also help you which are.

Tracy Collins [00:58:59]:

We have a ultimate London travel planning map. Brings together everything in one place, includes over 900 handpicked locations, expert tips and our local insights. And it's an all in an easy to use interactive digital map. So you can add that onto your.

Doug Collins [00:59:13]:

It is good because I use that when I was there.

Tracy Collins [00:59:15]:

Yes, A lot of people when they bought they can say oh wow, this is me.

Doug Collins [00:59:17]:

It is really good.

Tracy Collins [00:59:18]:

Now Whether it's your first visit, your 10th, the map will help you explore the very best of London. Honestly from must see sites to hidden gems. And I'm adding to it all the time so I will put a link to to get the Lord travel map plan a map as well in the show notes. Now if you prefer something more structured, we do have our London travel guide and itinerary planners and they're especially designed for first time visitors and they will walk step by step through your itinerary planning highlighting the key sites and some practical advice on transport, food and day trips so you can feel prepared before you arrive. And also we have, we have some services, we have a product but we also have services so we if you have an itinerary, we offer a personalized itinerary review. So basically you send us your itinerary, we'll go through it. So ask us any questions and we will basically adjust it, add to it, make some suggestions, suggest improvements on it. We recently did just, we've actually just recently done one from for London which had some gaps in and the lady wanted some suggestions so we're able to suggest based on her interests and what her, her travel party wanted wanted we would suggest lots of different options.

Tracy Collins [01:00:29]:



So that's a video consult. So basically that's if you Give us a rough itinerary, we'll go through it. If you, when you want that reassurance and some expert feedback in a personalized itinerary review video, then that's the option. But the other option we have is a one on one consult.

Doug Collins [01:00:43]:

Yep. And these are ones that we've had incredibly positive feedback from. We've been doing them a few years now and yeah, we've had people coming back for more than one.

Tracy Collins [01:00:53]:

Yes, I think, I think some people have done about three or four, three or four consultations now for every trip that they take back to the uk. So video consults work really, really well if you've, if you've already got a fair idea for what your itinerary is going to look like consultations, honestly, we can help you put together what you want to do. Obviously we only have an hour, so if you want longer. So if you're going to be in London for, for a month, you may want to do more than one hour but we can certainly answer questions and help you. You sort of put your itinerary together so it makes sense.

Doug Collins [01:01:23]:

And not just for London. They cover the whole of.

Tracy Collins [01:01:25]:

Yes, we cover the whole of the UK And Doug also offers a specific targeted one for train travel. So if you're planning a train itinerary as well now also for 2026, this is something brand new. We're offering a personalized itinerary planning service where we'll help you design your London trip from the ground up. So that's, we'll chat to be to you about what it is that you want and we will put a plan together for you so that you can book your hotels and tour occurs. Now some people love planning the trips themselves, whether that's to London or the uk, you know, so other people want guidance, reassurance or some expert input, whatever works for you because both approaches are completely valid. The main thing is, is that you end up with a London trip that suits you and feels enjoyable and not overwhelming. So we thought we'd end the episode with a bit of a kind of summary of the major takeaways that we wanted to kind of talk about in this episode or which we have talked about. So this is summary really.

Tracy Collins [01:02:18]:

So London is bigger than you think. It takes longer to get around than you expect. You won't be able to see everything and that's absolutely normal. Biggest planning consideration is try not to create an itinerary with too much in it. London really works best when you consider by area group things together and obviously just accept that sometimes doing less leads to just a much better experience. Consider where you're staying because that's more important than often people realize. Being close to the right transport links, especially tube station, especially honestly the end at end of every single day, you'll be really appreciative of that. Some things will need booking ahead.

Tracy Collins [01:02:59]:

Especially consider anything that you'll be disappointed to miss, really get those booked. A lot of things can be flexible and you know to be do be flexible, put a couple of main things in your day and then just kind of see how it goes.

Doug Collins [01:03:11]:

Yeah, yeah.

Tracy Collins [01:03:12]:

Also just that London, yes, we know in it's it is pricey but you can find some ways to kind of cut costs which include the free museums, walking between areas, rel transport, meal deals. Yeah, yeah, yeah. And really kind of considering which attractions you go to see. Just remember that London is not a city's rush. It rewards slower travel, curiosity and wondering. If you leave feeling there's more to see, then it just means you have experienced London properly.

Doug Collins [01:03:41]:

Agree more.

Tracy Collins [01:03:42]:

Absolutely. Absolutely. So, yeah, so that's, that's it from us, I guess for another episode of the podcast. Remember London isn't really difficult to plan, it just does reward planning done the right way. In the next episode we're going to be diving much deeper and getting around the UK and how to choose between trains and cars, which is a big decision for trips that go beyond London. Remember London, you don't need a car.

Doug Collins [01:04:05]:

You really don't.

Tracy Collins [01:04:07]:

Yeah. And then there will be 50 further episodes in the air where I'll be breaking London down at each of its different neighborhoods and chatting through that. But I think that's it for this episode, Doug.

Doug Collins [01:04:15]:

I think so too.

Tracy Collins [01:04:16]:

Yeah. So you can find links to everything I've chatted about in the show notes for this episode, which are [@uktravelplanet.com](mailto:uktravelplanet.com) forward/episode183. I will put links to other podcasts that we have about London as well and links to all the different things we chatted about in this episode. I think that just leaves myself and duck to say until next time week. 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](mailto: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.

Tracy Collins [01:05:01]:

But as always, that just leaves me to say until next time week. Happy UK Travel planning.