

EPISODE 209

10 Ways We Help You Plan a Smarter UK Trip

The UK Travel Planning Podcast · with Tracy and Doug Collins · Approx. 24 minutes

In this episode, we're sharing 10 ways we help travellers just like you. Plan smartly UK trips through our podcasts, websites, products, expertise and community. Whether you're visiting for the first time or return and explore more of the UK, this episode will show you exactly where to find the help you need.

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Your host is the founder of the UK travel planning website, Tracy Collins. Each week, Tracy 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. 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 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. 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.

Tracy Hi, everybody and welcome to this week's edition of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Now, Doug's here again.

Doug Hello.

Tracy Can't get rid of him off the podcast these days. Honestly, Honestly. At the beginning he never wanted to do it. Now we just can't get him off the podcast. It's true. So this week we wanted to just do a little bit about us, about our background and about how we're kind of. How we're kind of qualified, I guess, with our experience to help you plan your trip to the UK.

Doug We do have excellent credentials.

Tracy We do. And some fantastic reviews and lots of experience. In fact, I was just saying, I don't think I know anybody else in the UK who's seen as much of the UK as we have between the two of us.

Doug No I can't think of anybody else.

Tracy Exactly. So between the two of us, we've covered a lot of ground in the UK. Obviously, there's still places we still want to see. There's always going to be. It's because we couldn't cover absolutely everywhere.

Doug I've been everywhere by train, though.

Tracy Exactly. Well, you have, yes, true. So let's talk a little bit about also. And there are some episodes. I think there's an episode a while ago where we did a Q A, which was. Was lovely and we shared a little bit about our background. But. So I'm Tracy. So I present the podcast. You'll have listened to me over 200 and some episodes. 208 episodes. If you've listened right from the beginning. So I was born in the UK. I was born in the Northeast, so I'm from Northumberland originally. Lived all over the world. I've lived in actually seven different countries. We're based a lot of the time in Australia, but we divide our time, so we spend time in the UK as well. Every year traveling around the UK. So we have experience both as British people who lived and been brought up in the UK, so have that knowledge of the culture and experience of being British, but also we experience it as visitors as well. So we kind of have it from both points of view. I've lived in a few different places across the UK. I've lived in the Midlands in the Northeast, and I've lived in London. And Doug comes with his unique experience of trains.

Doug Well, that's right. Anybody knows me knows I'm absolutely a train fanatic. So I was born in Burton, Odd train, which is in Staffordshire, but on the Staffordshire Derbyshire border. So railway has been my whole life. My father worked for the railway, so from a very young age we were out traveling by train all the time. And then as soon as I was old enough, I did an apprenticeship on the railway. So most weekends I'd be out and about traveling the entire length and breadth of the country. So learning all about the lines, we actually completed. Me, a friend of mine, we completed every single mile of mainline track in the UK. That is the truth. We really did. We marked it off and we did actually all. All lines in the UK. So from a railway career, just under 30 years, I did many roles. I was a testing, commissioning electrical engineer and then I moved the operational side. So a lot of experience on the west coast mainline. And then I moved back and then I was traveling the country doing audits. So I went everywhere.

Tracy Yeah.

Doug So there's.

Tracy You have a Lot of experience.

Doug I do have a lot of root knowledge and I keep in touch with the rail industry. So, you know, my friends tell me that I do have an excellent knowledge across the board of how the rail system works.

Tracy So how this all translates for you is that you have our expertise and knowledge about UK travel and our experiences through train travel for Doug, particularly as visitors and as Brits, which I think is unique for traveling the UK. So we can help you. Now, obviously, we are moving into a world where AI is kind of starting to dominate everything. And we'd be remiss to say or try to ignore the fact that we know that some of you are sitting thinking, I'll just put my itinerary into AI and it'll give me an itinerary and that's it, I'll be sorted. But we want to kind of in this episode just tell you how we, with our expertise, we, we can help you save time, money and stress planning UK trip. And we offer something unique that you will not get from AI, that we are here. We will listen to what you need, what your. What your unique wants are, what your travel style is, what you want to see, what you do. And we will be honest with you as well, when you're putting together itinerary, because everybody's different.

Doug Everybody has different wants, needs, expectations.

Tracy Exactly. And often when you're putting stuff in AI, you get it will agree with what you're saying, it will give you outdated information, it will provide. It will give you probably too much. In fact, overwhelmed. We've had people on a Facebook group say they've looked at AI and just went, oh, it's just too much.

Doug Yeah.

Tracy Actually, what we want to do is talk to a human being so that we can put an itinerary together. So now we can do that in a number of ways. And we're going to talk in this episode about how we help you do that. Now, we've had, and we had a complaint a few months ago by somebody who listens to the podcast and we did an episode about what Doug can do for you around train travel. And they were like, oh, didn't like that episode because it was all. It was just you guys promoting what you do. We have to promote what we do because if we want to continue doing what we want to do, if we continue providing the fantastic resource and information we do, we need to tell you what they are.

Doug Yeah, you have to showcase your skills.

Tracy Exactly. So that's what we're doing. So this is what this episode is about, is about what you can find from us and what we have that will support you. So the first way that can help you is when you don't know where to start. So we can help you create a plan because we know that planning a UK trip can feel overwhelming because there are so much, there's just so much choice, so many places to choose from. So you're England, you've got Scotland, got Wales, you've got London, you've got countryside, you've just got so many places to think about. Then you've got to think about how you're going to get around. Are you going to go right by train? Are you going to drive? Are you going to book tours or are you going to do a mixture? So basically the podcast obviously listen. The podcast now got back 208 episodes to listen to the podcast to help you and obviously our websites as well. So UK [travelplanning.com](https://www.uktravelplanning.com) London [travelplanning.com](https://www.uktravelplanning.com) as well they help by we've got lots of articles which will help you with your planning by breaking it down step by step. So lots of beginner friendly resources and planning frameworks. So do check out the website for that. So the second way that we can help you is when you're confused about UK train travel. So this is over to you Doug, for this one.

Doug Yeah, well first off I understand it's. The UK rail network is complex. The confusion of guards, tickets and passes, national rail cards, seat reservations, luggage. It's, it's not straightforward and sometimes there is multiple answers and it's all about what suits individuals in the best for the best fit really. And so I would, I do appreciate it. So on our website we have a whole section given over to train travel. UK train travel hub along there you can see is an ebook I've written a guide to UK train travel which gives you step by step instructions because all those things I've just said and there's itineraries on there as well actually to help you along choosing your, your direction to travel.

Tracy So we've got YouTube as well. YouTube as well.

Doug I almost forgot my YouTube channel. There's some videos on there already when I make, try and make it easier, try and talk you through exactly the problems we faced. It's, it's like a. Almost a fly on the wall. I'll do it exactly as I'm doing, doing the actual journey. So when somebody steps in my way, I'm sorry, I'm not going to go back and do it again. So it's actually live travel.

Tracy It is like how you do it. So how to get from London to Bath, how to get from London, Edinburgh, all those sorts of podcasts into London, those absol. Absolutely. And also you can actually access Doug as well for specific help around train travel, isn't that right?

Doug You can indeed. So I have question and answer sessions, we do video sessions and we also do the one to ones which includes chatting about train travel and where it fits into your broader picture of your whole trip.

- Tracy** Absolutely. So if you need help with train travel, come to us, come to Doug and he will be able to provide you with assistance. And now whether that's through the website, through his videos, or whether you have a consult or Q and A with us.
- Doug** That's right. And the feedback we've had from people have done that is very, very positive.
- Tracy** Yeah, absolutely.
- Doug** I'm a normal person, I'm easily head on with, so you know, I don't bite.
- Tracy** Absolutely. So point number three is the third way that we help you is if you're worried about wasting money, we will help you avoid costly mistakes. So that's what we can do. Basically we look at things like, you know, where to stay in London, checking that you haven't overpacked your itinerary, talking about the different, I guess we're talking about rail passes and rail tickets and.
- Doug** That's right. It's an investment you make to employers to go through your itinerary. And the feedback we've had from people is we have actually saved lots of time and money. Yeah, I've seen a concert we did a couple of weeks back where we saved them time when they were duplicating and doubling back and we actually managed to find an extra day for them.
- Tracy** We did actually, we managed to add York into the itinerary, which they, which they hadn't done. So we can kind of help with that geographically as well, how things make sense.
- Doug** I also, because I have such good route knowledge of the UK, where all the lines go and all the train routes go, I can actually bring that experience to actually streamline your, your travel plans by train.

Tracy Perfect. Number four way that we help you is when you want honest recommendations, because we only recommend partners we trust, we do. So I mean we personally experience lots of tours, hotels and the different services that we talk about, you know, and I do a lot of that outreach, talking to new partners, go meeting up with them and then we go on the tours we try out so that we know how good there's different services are, the different tour operators that, that we actually recommend to you guys I have to point out, Tracy's very picky. She's got people knocking on the door asking to work with us and. But you want to personally vet everything and everyone first. Absolutely do. I. I recommend companies because they consistently deliver great experiences. And that's what. That's what we want for you. We don't just list random stuff. We want you to experience the best, and so we partner with the best. And, you know, as I said as well, and the previous comment about saving money is that, you know, you will get discount codes as well, which will help promo codes, which will give you some, you know, off some of these chair companies as well, which will help you save. Save some money on things. Number five is that when you need some visual help, we have YouTube videos to show you what to expect. And I guess this is. At the moment, this is where Doug's excelling. I will. Will be on YouTube soon doing lots of videos with lots of advice. But at the moment, Doug is basically concentrating on trains.

Doug I am. I'm trying to work hard at this one. I don't have any formal training doing videos. I have. So each video I try and do is a little bit better than the last one. So apologies once and all. I do my very best, and I'm trying to deliver a better product every single time.

Tracy What are you doing? All right, we've got a couple thousand followers on YouTube.

Doug And I also, trust me, it's not nice. Listen to my own voice all the time. I don't like that.

Tracy But honestly, we know that, you know, some of you like to listen, some of you like to watch, some of you like to read. So we thought sometimes, and I know myself, I like to see things.

Doug That's right.

Tracy I think it helps as well. So we are really working on that.

Doug When I'm trying to do videos around some of the bigger London stations, they are big places, they can be confusing. So to see somebody showing the direction to walking and we're coming in from this entrance, you know, it just makes life easier.

Tracy Yeah. Because you're kind of familiar with it, aren't you?

Doug Visualizing.

Tracy Yeah. Yeah. So. And also we do have a shorts and I have reels, so you can check out on Instagram. And also, you know, we're sharing stories, so there's lots of things to. To see which will help. Point six is when you don't have time to research everything. She will find that our products will save hours of planning. So we have got some fantastic planners. Now, Doug has already mentioned his. Yeah. Guide to UK train travel.

Doug Yeah, that's right. A bridge version is exactly how the ticketing system works and the passes and the different train companies and how it all fits together.

Tracy Yeah. And absolutely essential tips, things that you need to know. Just like how soon to arrive at the train station, do I need to take food and drink?

Doug That's right.

Tracy All that sort of stuff included in that. It's actually our best seller. It, it's just sells so well and we've had some absolutely fantastic feedback about that. So if you're considering traveling by train, honestly, that is. That's the first place to start is to start with the Gu. We also have Best of Britain itinerary planners. I have a London map which is again, very, very popular, which shows you lots of kind of the best places to stay, the different guide to the different attractions and things to do in London. We have planners as well and toolkits. So I will share all those different products that we have. You know, our London planner as well is very, very popular. We're always putting together new products and what we can provide which will be helpful. And I know next year we're looking at doing some workshops on how to plan a visit to London, Edinburgh, York, Bath, Oxford. So those be individual workshops. Yeah, how to plan a train trip or something that you're going to do a workshop on. So those are going to be coming soon. So as I say at the moment our products are really popular. I will link to the different ones we've got, got a few for London. We've got a general kind of UK itinerary one and then we've got the train, the train guide. So point seven is when you want personal help. We offer services tailored to your trip, don't we?

Doug Yeah. Again, this is feedback we've had that people don't regret contacting us for us to go through their itinerary or help them to put together the itinerary in the first place.

Tracy Absolutely. So let's just talk through the different services we have. So I guess the first one we have is a one to one consult with myself and Doug.

Doug Yep.

Tracy So you can, can basically book an hour with us, go through your itinerary or chat through where you're at with your itinerary. If you even want us to kind of give you some pointers, to start putting it together. And we've done that before in the past with people. You basically book an hour, have that consult, have that chat. We can help you, you know, is to see, sometimes it is just to be able to start brainstorming yeah, yeah. So we could do that. We also do a video itinerary review. So if you put your, your itinerary together and you want us to have a look at it, we can do that. And so we have a look through itinerary, make some, make some adaptations if necessary, answer your questions and we send that back in a video. Actually that's the one that recently we got and we just kind of edited the, the itinerary and said look how you, you've given us plan A, this is plan B, what you think of this. And actually they're going to do plan B. They're really, really happy with that.

Doug Frees up time.

Tracy Yeah. And that saved them a lot of time as well. Obviously as well you've got the train plan and help with Doug. So you can book, you could any of those services, the one to one or the video, you can have that around train travel.

Doug Whether it's one specific question that you know it's going to take a bit of talking around or it's looking at different options or just actually clarify some points. But if it's pivotal to your whole trip, you know, and that's, it could be a sticking point for you. It helps sort of feel, you know, your whole mindset that it's going to physically work.

Tracy Absolutely well. You can but say there's a 30 minute Q A as well with doggerly. You can talk about, specifically about trains, about your train plan when you're putting it together. So if you prefer to do that. And there's also a new Q A where you can talk to myself and Doug. And it's, this is about your last minute questions because we know often, and then a few weeks before your trip's coming up, you've got all these questions and things going through your head and you're like, oh, I just want to, in fact we've just done that recently with somebody just answered questions. And again that's a 30 minute session. So you can book a, book that and go through those last minute questions, those things that you're not 100% sure about that you want to talk to somebody with experience and knowledge that we have that we can, we can do that. So we've done that round, you know, multi generational trips, first time visitors, if you got limited time. We've done it through some quite complicated rail itineraries, road itineraries, basically anything that you bring to us, we'll have, we'll have experience. All, all I've seen before. So it's not a problem.

Doug I can't think much. We've not come across.

Tracy Absolutely. So point is when you want advice from real travelers. So as well as our kind of advice and knowledge and experience, we do have some really good Facebook communities as well, don't we?

Doug Yes, that's right, we do. Yeah. We've got one specific UK train travel tips group which is a focus obviously on train travel.

Tracy Yeah, we've got London Travel planning group and a UK travel planning group. So all together we've got well over 30, 000 members. And obviously what's really good is you can also asking that from other people to get some other views, get practical tips from your reassurance inspiration, you know and again there's thousands of members so they can, can you can ask people's opinions as well or, or thoughts, you know, if maybe you travel into London, you've got a baby and you want to know a bit about how do we gonna get around London with a baby and somebody in the group may have experienced that. So you can ask those questions. So that's really useful. So worth joining if you're on Facebook. I'd recommend joining our Facebook community. So point number nine, I guess this takes back, come back to the AI I guess is when the Internet feels full of conflicting advice, we can focus on experience based information and that's what we do. Because there's a lot of generic content online, isn't there now?

Doug Oh that's right. It's not turning for your individual ones.

Tracy Exactly, exactly. Whereas I guess we're practical, realistic, it's all based on lived experience. I mean we've just spent, I've been in the UK last couple of months traveling around. You've been here for over a month now and we've been all over the place, haven't we? We do all of this research to help you guys. So we, we go to the places, we take the trains, we stay in, we take the tours, we, we leave, we found out about left luggage, we drive around, we do all of those things.

Doug Admittedly me traveling by around my train every day is not a burden.

Tracy I will confess that you do enjoy that. And so it's based on, you know, we're traveling around as you would be traveling around so we can share that. And again, I don't know anybody else that does that in the UK a lot. There are a lot of people out there that focus on specific areas years. Well we are the only ones that give you the entire UK and we'll show you how it all pulls together. Yeah, exactly, exactly. So we'll look at everything and point 10 is when you just want to enjoy your trip. Our goal is to help you travel with confidence. So we bring it all together, don't we? So that's right. Yeah. So it's about kind of less stress.

Doug That's right.

Tracy More confidence, better experiences and make the most of your time in the UK.

Doug We most definitely.

Tracy And I guess that's why we do this, don't we?

Doug We do it.

- Tracy** Yes, we do, because we. We absolutely love it. And we love. I tell you what, I love it when walk down the street. I walk down the road in London or Edinburgh, whoever, and we get recognized.
- Doug** Or Doug gets recognized by his legs.
- Tracy** Yeah, well, that's a story that. That's in Edinburgh on Edinburgh tram. That's a bit of a. You might have heard that in a previous episode.
- Doug** It's true, though.
- Tracy** But it's lovely. We love it when we meet you. We love it.
- Doug** Love it.
- Tracy** Yes.
- Doug** Of weeks back.
- Tracy** Oh, yes. On a train. That was amazing. We got on a train. Randomly jumped on a train. And where was it? Lucas. Yeah, I got on the train and this lovely lady called Rose. Hi. Rose. Was sitting on the train and she kind of looked at me, looked at Doug and she went. That might be a strange question. What are you. Tracy and Doug, you get travel planning. We're all. Yeah, yeah. And that was wonderful. So that was just so lovely. We love it. We love knowing how much we've helped you plan your trip. We love the emails we receive. We love the speak pipe messages that we receive. Our partners love the fantastic feedback that they receive from you guys as well. So, you know, it's just wonderful. I couldn't ask for anything better. So we just need you guys to continue your support. Listen to the podcast, read the different articles on the website, watch ducks, YouTube videos.
- Doug** Yes, please. And please give me some feedback on that. I have broad shoulders. If you could tell me how I could improve it and things to. To change, I would listen.
- Tracy** I think you're doing really, really well on that. Yeah. And our products and services are there to help you plan your best trip. We're real people with real lived experience and real knowledge that we have from years. I mean, I'm nearly 60. I shouldn't say nearly 60. Doug's not quite as old as I am, but we have just got so much experience and we really want you to access that definitely.
- Doug** So.
- Tracy** So start with one resource. Start with the one that appeals. Listen to more podcast episodes or go to the website or go to YouTube or go to Instagram or join our Facebook group. Choose one of those things that's a great place to start and start putting your you know, think where you are on your planning process at the moment, where you're up to, which part of what we offer can help you the most.

Doug Definitely so.

Tracy And if you know of anybody who's planned a trip to the UK, please share our resources, yeah. Website, podcast, etc. Etc. With them. Again, it really helps. Next week we'll be back talking about more travel in the UK, but until that point, Doug, should we say Happy UK Travel Planning?

CLOSING

Thank you for tuning in to this week's episode of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. As always, show notes can be found 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.