

Episode 215 - Walking Land's End to Bath: A UK Trip Report

Tracy Collins in conversation with Katherine Shield

In this episode Tracy chats with Katherine from Townsville in North Queensland, who walked 260 miles (around 420 kilometres) from Land's End to Bath with her husband Glen, the first quarter of the Land's End to John O'Groats route. This is an edited transcript of their conversation.

Tracy

Hi Katherine, and welcome to this week's edition of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. It's great to speak to you. Doug and I did an itinerary consult with you last year in June, so it's lovely to catch up and hear how the trip went. For listeners who don't know you, would you like to introduce yourself, tell us where you're from and who you travelled with?

Katherine

Hi Tracy, thank you so much for having me on the podcast, I've been a fan for a while. My name is Katherine, I live in Townsville in North Queensland, Australia, and I travelled to the UK earlier this year with my husband, Glen.

Tracy

You did, and yours wasn't the average UK holiday. Your trip was very different from anything we'd done a consult on before, so it was really interesting, and we know a lot of people are interested in the type of holiday you did. Would you give us a quick overview of what you did, because this was a walking holiday?

Katherine

Absolutely. I work as an administrator in allied health, so I was really looking for a total escape from my full-time desk job. We went on a long distance walk. We started our adventure at Land's End, the most southwesterly point in mainland England, and we walked for 420 kilometres, or 260 miles, ending in Bath in Somerset. The whole journey took about three weeks.

Tracy

It's amazing. As you know, I'm not really a walker or a hiker, so I take my hat off to you both. This is the first quarter of the Land's End to John O'Groats walk, from the southwesterly-most point of the UK up to the northernmost point at John O'Groats. What made you decide to do this particular section, and this type of holiday?

Katherine

Back in 2019, Glen and I did the Coast to Coast walk, which has recently been made a national trail, and that was one of the most incredible experiences of our lives. It was about 18 days. We always thought we'd go back and do another one, and then seven years passed. A lot has changed, our kids have grown up and moved away, and I was looking for something to look forward to. So I thought, we've gone across England, why don't we start at the bottom and go to the top? We're doing it in sections because there's only so much time you can take off. The clincher was that partway through we'll reach a point we crossed on the Coast to Coast, at Keld in Yorkshire, so I thought, that's it, we're going from the bottom to the top.

Tracy

That's so exciting. You've done the first quarter. Now, you booked an itinerary consult, and I'm well known as not being a hiker. What made you reach out and book the consult? We don't often get a lot of Australians booking consults, so it's lovely when we do.

Katherine

I first used your information when my mum and my sister were in the UK last year, going to York. I sat at a computer all day, so I did all this searching, found your podcast, listened to it, and sent it to them. Mum said they practically did every single thing on your list, and she raved about how up to date and current the

information was. An overseas trip is so expensive, it takes a lot of money and time, and there's only so much you can search on the internet and YouTube. I wanted to get it right. You don't know what you don't know, so I thought, between you and Doug, who know so much about the UK, what is it you can tell me? I was desperate to know if there was something I was missing, because I hate that fear of getting home and saying, we should have gone there.

Tracy

It was great to chat and go through your planned itinerary. A lot of people get overwhelmed because there's so much information out there, and there's only so much you can read and watch before you need to sit down, sift through it and decide what you're going to do. So it was lovely to help you with that. Now, you went through Discovery Travel, is that right? They booked your accommodation and moved your luggage around. That's a big question we get asked about walking holidays, how you carry your things from place to place. How did they help?

Katherine

That was great. The thing about long distance walks in the UK is they're so well set up for it, because of the right of way, there are paths where you're able to walk through places that are normally private property. And there are so many companies that do the luggage transfer. You take all your luggage with you because you need so much when you're going overseas, but you only carry a day pack, and they transfer everything from one hotel or bed and breakfast to the next.

Tracy

That's great, you don't have to worry about it. I've seen that in the Cotswolds, where we've stayed, because the Cotswold Way is quite famous, Doug wants to walk that for his 60th. There are lots of companies that will move your luggage from place to place. Did they also book your accommodation?

Katherine

They did. That's the other huge thing, because on a long distance walk you're often only staying one night, and it's very difficult to get accommodation for a single night, bed and breakfasts don't really like the bother. But if they know they're getting regular business from these companies, you get preference. I've read lots of threads where people say it's really difficult to book individually. We had to negotiate the dates a little, he asked the earliest and latest we could go so he could line everything up and get all his ducks in a row. At the end of the day it's like a bus tour without the bus, everything is planned for you and you just turn up.

Tracy

That takes the logistical challenge off your shoulders, especially when there's already so much thought going into the walk itself. Now, getting down to Cornwall, did you take the Night Riviera?

Katherine

We did. Oh my goodness, what a fantastic experience. I cannot rave about it enough. It was one of the suggestions you and Doug gave us, and I'll never forget, Doug's eyes just lit up. There's a beautiful lounge at Paddington Station where Queen Victoria used to wait before she caught the train, really stunning, with huge ceilings and comfy lounges. The staff on the train were so lovely, I've never been treated like such a VIP. We took off at quarter to midnight and arrived in Penzance first thing in the morning. It was just magic.

Tracy

If anybody listening is interested in that trip, Doug has a video on YouTube, and it's our most popular video at the moment, the Night Riviera train, because it's so popular. I still haven't done it, it's on my to-do list, so I'm a bit jealous.

Katherine

It felt like part of the whole journey, part of the experience.

Tracy

Doug always says the train trip is part of your holiday, part of the whole experience. Now, you got down to

