

UK TRAVEL PLANNING PODCAST

Episode 214 – London Q&A: The 10 Questions We Get Asked Most

Tracy and Doug Collins

Tracy and Doug answer the ten questions they are asked most about visiting London: how many days you need, when to go, getting around, Heathrow into the city, the UK ETA, what to budget, favourite day trips, where to stay, free things to do and where to eat. Plus the launch of the monthly London bonus episodes.

Tracy: How many days do you actually need in London? What's the best way into London from Heathrow? And what's actually worth adding on as a day trip? In this episode, Doug and I answer the ten questions we get asked most about visiting London, so you can stop guessing and start planning.

Tracy: 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.

Tracy: Hi everybody, and welcome to this week's edition of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. I'm your host, Tracy Collins, and this week, as usual these days, I'm joined by Doug.

Doug: Hello!

Tracy: Doug is here this week because we thought what we would do is a kind of rapid-fire Q&A, but I have a feeling we're probably going to chat about some of these questions a little bit more than that.

Doug: Most likely.

Tracy: Rapid-fire, not so much the answers, but the questions. Part of the reason for this episode as well is to say thank you to all of you who are using our resources, checking out the website and listening to the podcast, because it really, really helps us. And it's getting tougher these days, isn't it?

Doug: It certainly is.

Tracy: We know there's AI out there and a lot of people use AI, which we understand. However, we also want to say there's a huge argument to be made for people who actually know what they're talking about, rather than something that's been scraped by AI and given to you when you're not exactly sure whether some of the information is true.

Doug: So thank you to the individuals out there who still want to have a human opinion to count on.

Tracy: Yes. People who want to ask humans with experience for their opinions. So we're sharing that. One thing I did want to do in this episode is announce a new bonus episode that is coming soon, at the end of this month, but I'll tell you more at the end of the episode.

Doug: Suspenseful.

Tracy: You need to hang around to the end and I'll tell you exactly what is coming and why you will want to tune in for that new series of episodes. Also, just to say, everybody knows about the

uktravelplanning.com website, but we also have the londontravelplanning.com website, which has taken us a lot of time and a lot of research to put together. We spend a lot of time in the UK and in London doing all this research. So the London website has a lot of very useful information on it if you're planning a trip to London.

Doug: Great content.

Tracy: Absolutely. So londontravelplanning.com, please do go and check out the website. There is a freebie as well if you want to sign up for our newsletter, which is a 101 London Tips Cheat Sheet, which is absolutely free.

Doug: That's easy to say.

Tracy: It wasn't that easy to say. You'll get fuller information about some of the answers we're going to go through today. So if you enjoy reading, check out the website, because you'll get some fuller answers, and we cover things in the cheat sheet that people possibly haven't considered.

Doug: True.

Tracy: Right. So, are you ready to go, Doug?

Doug: Yeah, let's get moving.

Tracy: Okay. The first question we get asked: how many days do you need in London?

Doug: That's a difficult one to start with. Thanks for dropping that one on me.

Tracy: Do you want me to answer it?

Doug: It depends, doesn't it? I'll do the easy ones, you can do the hard ones.

Tracy: Oh, thank you. Well, to be honest, if you're a first-time visitor to London, I would say four to five days is probably the sweet spot. If you're going to go at a whirlwind pace and you haven't got a lot of time, then maybe two to three days to see some of the highlights. If you want to go deeper and experience more of London, six to seven plus days is the way to go. The reason I say four to five days is that in that time you can experience quite a bit of London, some of the highlights, the main attractions and landmarks, and you could probably fit in a day trip as well.

Doug: That's true. Would it depend on what time of year you go, for daylight hours? Would you need an extra day or two when the daylight hours are shorter than you would in summer?

Tracy: Well, some things aren't necessarily open that you might want to go into in the winter. For example, Buckingham Palace. A lot of people want to go and see Buckingham Palace, but it's not open for entry in the winter. You're cheating in a way, because you're going into the next question.

Doug: Whoops, sorry.

Tracy: To answer the question of how many days you need in London, which is what we're supposed to be focusing on, Doug, it's really four to five days. We have an article on the londontravelplanning.com website about how many days you need in London, and I'll link to that in the show notes. One thing I will say is please, please, please don't spend your entire time in the UK just in London.

Doug: No, most definitely not.

Tracy: Now, I love London, I absolutely do. But there's a lot more to the UK than just London. London is a wonderful city, and for a lot of the people we talk to it's their favourite city in the world. But if you can go out on a day trip, which is something else...

Doug: Trains, trains and trains.

Tracy: I knew what Doug was going to say. I'm cheating myself because that's another question coming later on. But the second question we get asked about is the best time of year to visit. Now, this again is very subjective.

Doug: Oh, did you just?

Tracy: So I would say, times to avoid. For me, the times to avoid are the school holidays. Easter time and the summer holidays.

Doug: School holidays.

Tracy: End of July and the whole month of August, I try to avoid London completely. Easter: I have spent the last few Easters in London, and it's incredibly busy as well, because a lot of the schools in Europe are off too, so a lot of people from mainland Europe come over to London, and April in particular seems to be very busy. I also find it gets very hot in July and August if you visit London, so that's worth considering.

Doug: We've had a hot summer this year.

Tracy: Yes, a hot and dry summer this year. I asked a question on our UK Travel Planning Facebook page about things people pack and haven't used, and the first thing people said this year was a raincoat or umbrella, because it's been so dry. But trying to figure out when to visit is a big question, and it may depend on when you get time off anyway.

Doug: Yeah, that's true.

Tracy: For me, my favourite time is probably September. The kids have gone back to school, it's generally a bit quieter, and the weather has been pretty good the last few Septembers.

Doug: Well, I was there last year in September into October, and October for the start of the autumn colours was absolutely stunning. But I will add to that, the weather then changed quickly.

Tracy: That is one of the things about the UK. The weather, and I say this all the time, is predictably unpredictable. You never know what you're going to get. If you've got a specific interest, for example if you're a tennis fan and you've got tickets to Wimbledon, you're obviously going to go in July.

Doug: Or the Cup Final if you want to go in May.

Tracy: Oh, I was not going to mention that.

Doug: Football.

Tracy: There are plenty of singers with concerts on, there are lots of things on, so if it's a specific interest you'll build your trip around that. For me, another favourite time of year to go to London is the festive season. I love London in November and December because the shops are fantastic. The way the shops get decorated for Christmas is fabulous. I just love wandering around, going to Liberty's and looking at the Christmas shop, Fortnum and Mason's Christmas shop.

Doug: Kew Gardens, I enjoyed it.

Tracy: Yes, Kew Gardens for the festive lights walk, which is always really good fun. We have guides on the website for each season, so we've looked at spring, summer, autumn and winter. For me, spring is a lovely time of year to go because you've got the flowers, it's lighter because the clocks spring forward at the end of March, and things start to feel like they're coming alive again.

Doug: Yeah, it is. It's a new season.

Tracy: Summer is a great time to visit for the outdoors. Again, it can be really hot though, so if you're planning to visit in summer, and this is a huge tip, if you want a hotel with air conditioning, make sure you look for one when you book, because not all hotels will have it. They've actually started putting more air conditioning on the Underground.

Doug: That's right, because the trains can get incredibly hot. And travel light in summer if you're travelling around.

Tracy: Take a fan with you, take a bottle of water.

Doug: It's physically and mentally exhausting. Or can be, I should say.

Tracy: Absolutely. Autumn: you were there in September last year, the weather was really good, and you have some beautiful photos of the autumn leaves changing colour.

Doug: Little Venice area.

Tracy: Yes, really good. Winter: one of the things we will talk about when it comes to packing is to make sure, specifically in winter, that you have layers you can take off. Take a small backpack you can put things in. I've got a puffer jacket which folds down to nothing, because when you go into the Underground or into some of those shops it's so hot.

Doug: And if they're busy as well, it's even hotter.

Tracy: Absolutely. Winter is quieter once you go into January and February. Expect it to be a bit more rainy, and you may get some snow if you're lucky, or unlucky, whichever way you look at it. But January and February are the quieter months. Again, we've got an article about the different seasons, and we've also got podcasts about visiting the UK in autumn, winter and summer, each with a London section in it, so those are worth listening to. Now, a good question for you. The next question we often get asked is: what is the best way to get around London day to day?

Doug: Well, I personally don't think you can do better than the London Underground. It's a wonderful network of underground trains with great coverage. It's really reasonably priced because there's a daily cap and it's all done on a zonal basis, Zones 1 and 2 in the centre, and you work your way out. That's run by TfL, which covers the London buses as well, which are an excellent way to get around.

Tracy: It's really good and it's not that expensive at the moment. I did just check, and for Zones 1 and 2 the daily cap is currently £8.90. Once you reach that limit, you won't pay any more that day. What we're asked about often is Oyster versus contactless. More people these days are going towards contactless, to be honest. Do your research and decide what works best for you. We always say that. We will never say you must do one or the other.

Tracy: We have heard other people say don't do this or don't do that. It's not how we operate. Make your judgement based on what will work for you.

Doug: How you feel safest.

Tracy: I've got an Oyster card and sometimes I use contactless. I do both, depending.

Doug: I'm purely an Oyster card person, but I always have been. So, preferences.

Tracy: A lot of people do enjoy the buses. The buses can be slower, but when you're sitting on a bus, you see more. The Tube is a great way to get from A to B very quickly.

Doug: That's right.

Tracy: Though don't underestimate the amount of walking you might have to do in the Tube, and also just how busy it can get during rush hour.

Doug: There's an excellent app called TfL Go. TfL is Transport for London, who operate the Underground trains. They have a great journey planner, and it gives you the live status of all the different lines. Definitely worth using.

Tracy: And I have an article about the different zones in London, so if you're confused when we use the term zones, just think of concentric circles working their way from the centre of London out. Most of the attractions people go to will be in Zones 1 and 2.

Doug: That's it. That daily cap increases as you go out.

Tracy: It does get more expensive. Okay, so question four, and I know you've just done a video about this on YouTube.

Doug: I have.

Tracy: If you want to see Doug on YouTube answering this question visually, check out his video. I will link to that in the show notes as well. So, Doug, what is the best way from Heathrow into London?

Doug: Well, you've got three train options from Heathrow itself. You've got the Elizabeth line, which runs from Heathrow towards London Paddington and then straight through the middle of London and out the other side. Very good. Then you've got the Piccadilly line, that's the Underground line that goes all the way across from Heathrow towards north London and takes about 50 minutes to an hour from Heathrow to King's Cross St Pancras. And then you've got the Heathrow Express, which is just 15 minutes from Heathrow to London Paddington, and the Elizabeth line is about 20 minutes.

Tracy: Perfect.

Doug: Those are your three main options. I've tried them all many, many times, and you can't go wrong. Have a look at our article, and from a train perspective I've got it all covered in that one YouTube video.

Tracy: And if you want a private transfer, we will link to that option as well.

Doug: There are some bus options too.

Tracy: There are. So there are different ways to get into London from Heathrow.

Doug: We know there are multiple terminals, so just be aware of which terminal you're coming into.

Tracy: Do check out Doug's video all about this.

Doug: Even though I say so myself, it's not too bad.

Tracy: No, it's a good video, Doug. Right, question five. I'm probably going to have to answer this one. Do I need a UK ETA, which stands for Electronic Travel Authorisation? Yes, most people are going to need an ETA to enter the UK unless you are a UK citizen. That can cause issues as well, and I will talk about that in a second. The first thing I want to say is make sure you go through the official government website.

Doug: Yes.

Tracy: It's £20, it lasts for two years, or until your passport expires in the meantime. Apply, I would say, at least three days before. Some people are saying it's coming through very quickly, but I've spoken to people who've said it has taken longer. So make sure you do it well in advance of flying, minimum three days beforehand. I'm going to link to the official government website because we have heard that there

have been scams where fake websites have been set up and people have paid £200 for an ETA. That is not how much it costs. So do go and check.

Tracy: We also have an article on our UK Travel Planning website all about the ETA and ETIAS, because ETIAS is what's happening in Europe, just to explain that to you. But I would always say use the official websites. Now, one thing I will mention, and this has tripped quite a few people up in Australia, is that you could be a UK citizen and not necessarily know it. You need to check whether a parent was born in the UK and then moved out to Australia or the US or Canada, because they are UK citizens, and you may be a UK citizen by birth as well. So it's worth checking. And if you're a dual citizen, for example Doug and I are both dual citizens of Australia and the UK.

Tracy: Previously I'd quite often travelled in using my Australian passport. You cannot do that any more. You have to have a UK passport. My passport expired in November and I had to get a new one very quickly, because this was brought in in February. So double check. But with information like this, you should always, always, always check on the official government website. Don't listen to what somebody might say on Facebook.

Doug: Check yourself.

Tracy: Check, check, check. Right. Question six: what should I budget?

Doug: That's a difficult one.

Tracy: This is a really difficult question for London, because I would say whatever you think you're going to budget, probably budget more.

Doug: Okay, sure.

Tracy: Because it is an expensive city. Accommodation is going to be your main expense, whether you're staying in a hotel, an Airbnb or a VRBO. So start with that. Then think about the sort of activities you want to do during the day. Look at entry for the Tower of London, Buckingham Palace if you want to go, entry to Westminster Abbey. If those are your basic entries, you can look at something like the London Pass, which bundles a lot of those activities in. That can be pretty good if you're going to do quite a few things as a first-time visitor and fit them in over two or three days.

Tracy: That can work out cost-effective. I always say add it all up yourself to work out whether it's worth it for you. So you've got all these attractions, then you've got food on top, and food can be pricey.

Doug: That's right.

Tracy: We do have some good food hacks that we'd recommend, and one is meal deals.

Doug: Oh yes, I'm quite partial to a meal deal.

Tracy: Meal deals are what all the supermarkets offer in the UK: a sandwich, a piece of fruit, a packet of crisps, a chocolate bar and a drink for a set price. They can be anything from £3.50 up. The most expensive one I've had is from Marks and Spencer, for their very special prawn sandwich, which is delicious. If you're travelling with a family or you want to budget, look at the meal deal option.

Doug: Also for evening meals, or if you're self-catering, they quite often have a starter, main course and a dessert for a set price.

Tracy: Or for a family of four they do a pizza and garlic bread and so on.

Doug: Or three main courses.

Tracy: Salads, yes. Everybody always loves them. We get people saying, I wish we had that in Australia, I wish we had that in the States, because it really is a fantastic option, and I do miss it. You will also find the variety of food choices mind-boggling, particularly in Marks and Spencer, which is my favourite. It's an incredible amount of food.

Doug: Also, in supermarkets, don't forget the buy one get one free offers. If you've got a family of two, three, four or five, and you can halve the number of things you've got to buy, it can make quite a saving over a few weeks.

Tracy: There are a lot of free things to do in London too, which I'm going to talk about later, because that's another question that comes up. But I think once you start with your accommodation and look at what price you're willing to pay, then start looking at the activities you want to do, your food and your transport costs. If you're travelling in Zones 1 and 2, you're not going to be going over £8.90 a day, because that's the cap.

Doug: That's right.

Tracy: And if you're using contactless, there's no cost for an Oyster card, but make sure your card has no foreign transaction fees.

Doug: That's right.

Tracy: Because that can add up. It's so difficult to say, but as a bare minimum, I'd say probably about £180 to £220 or so per person per day. If you're looking at staying in a dorm or a youth hostel, it may be cheaper, but that's not the sort of travel that we do, so it's difficult for us to advise on that. Though I was quite excited to find out there are new pod hotels opening in London.

Doug: Yes, that's right.

Tracy: Which I haven't tried, but I may try next time, because I was asked about them and thought, you know what, I could give one of those a go.

Doug: We should give it a go. If anybody's already done one, let us know.

Tracy: Yes, get in touch. My only problem is that I get slightly claustrophobic, and I have wondered whether I'll get a bit panicky if I close that door. So I might have to try it. But it's quite an exciting development.

Doug: Do what you usually do, send me off to try it first.

Tracy: Who else nominates Doug to go and try one of those hotels out? I've not tried them anywhere in the world. But it is an exciting development for London, because accommodation really is the big, big expense when you're staying in London. Also, don't discount souvenirs, because I can guarantee you're going to buy stuff.

Doug: Tracy's talking from personal experience here.

Tracy: I do like to buy stuff, but if you go there, you are going to buy souvenirs, so add that into your budget as well. London is not a cheap city.

Doug: The cost of souvenirs can mount as well, I'll point out.

Tracy: Absolutely. So working out a budget for London is work out what you think and then add a bit more. Maybe add another 25 per cent.

Doug: What happens when you're setting a budget is some days you might spend a little bit less, another day a little bit more, but on average...

Tracy: It's working out that average. Okay, question number seven, and we were talking about this before we recorded, so this is an interesting one: favourite day trip from London right now. We could spend a whole day talking about this. We've actually spent two episodes talking about it, episodes 96 and 97, where we go through our favourite day trips, because there are so many. In fact, we could probably do another whole episode about it.

Doug: And the problem is, ask me again tomorrow or next week, I'll probably give you a different answer.

Tracy: Well, I know you'll be happy with any train.

Doug: That is undoubtedly true, yes.

Tracy: So I'm going to split this: your favourite day trip from London by train, or your favourite day tour from London. Favourite day trip by train: can I start with this one?

Doug: Go on then.

Tracy: I recently went to Jane Austen's house in Chawton, in Hampshire.

Doug: Oh, yes.

Tracy: I loved it. I'm still raving about it. It was one of the best days. I had a wonderful three months in the UK, but it was one of the absolute best days. It was just fabulous.

Doug: You've raved about that ever since.

Tracy: Absolutely. And it was so easy to get to. In fact, I'm going to write a whole article about how to get to Chawton and what to expect when you go to Jane Austen's house. You get a train to Alton, and there's a taxi company right outside the train station. They knew exactly where I was going when I went in, we just phoned and they picked us up. It was a really easy day trip by train, so that's my absolute favourite. What about you, by train?

Doug: It's really difficult. I've always enjoyed the Great Western Main Line from London Paddington towards Bristol and Bath. I've always enjoyed going in that direction, but that's more to do with the trains that used to run on that line years ago, some of the first of those high-speed trains. So I've always had a bit of a weak spot for that line.

Tracy: But what about an actual place?

Doug: Oh, to Bath. Sorry, it's just trains with me. Bath, because it's so straightforward from London Paddington, which is one of my favourite London stations anyway. It's so straightforward and it's just a world apart. London to Bath, you think you're in a different country. It's just so different.

Tracy: Bath is really lovely. It's the only UNESCO World Heritage City in the UK.

Doug: You were a bit jealous last time I went, because everybody was in costume.

Tracy: Because he went on a Jane Austen day. I really want to do that. That is on my list for next year, because I think that would be fabulous. There are lots and lots of possible day trips by train, so do check out those two podcasts. And we have a whole article on it.

Doug: We have a whole article on that.

Tracy: Now, for a day tour, I've been very lucky. In fact, you haven't done any of these with me, I don't think.

Doug: I don't think so, because I just do trains.

Tracy: I went on three tours with The English Bus. I did one last year and two in April this year, and I loved all three. Last year I went to Stonehenge and Bath, and then a secret place on the way back. I'm not sharing where that secret place was; I've got an article on it, you can check that out. This year I did two. I did Kent: villages, Dover Castle, the White Cliffs of Dover and then up to Canterbury, which is a lovely day trip. The other one was Stratford first, then the Cotswolds villages, and then Oxford. If you want to find out all about those day trips, which were wonderful, you can listen to Chris, who owns The English Bus, and Lucy, who was our driver guide on both of those day trips, in episode 199 of the podcast. I will say, we had one listener who listened to that episode and booked all three tours.

Doug: All of them.

Tracy: All three tours, and absolutely loved them. It was fantastic. Big shout out to Chris, who did that.

Doug: You're a legend, Chris.

Tracy: It's the power of the podcast: listening to Lucy's passion for doing those tours, and Chris, who created the company. Fabulous. There are so many options for different places to go outside London. My main tip is just make sure you do one of them, whether that's by train or on a tour with The English Bus.

Doug: And consider where you're staying in London if you're catching a tour from out of the city, and if you're catching the train, the time it takes to get to the train station.

Tracy: Absolutely.

Doug: Just a tip there for all of you.

Tracy: That's useful, because the next question is the best area to stay in London. If you are taking day trips out, think about where you'll pick up the train or go to the meeting point, because when you come back in, you don't want to spend 45 minutes getting back to your accommodation. Think about what your interests are as well. On the London Travel Planning website I have a whole article about the different areas, who they suit, and three examples of accommodation at different budgets in each. If you ask me my favourite place to stay in London, I always enjoy staying around Covent Garden.

Tracy: There's always a lot going on in that Covent Garden and Holborn area. Lots of places to eat, the theatre district. It's a really lovely, busy area all the time. I really enjoy it.

Doug: But it's about the best fit. You might want to stay there, but the cost of accommodation there may be beyond your budget, so you have to rein that back in. It's about the best fit for you.

Tracy: I stayed in Holborn at the Z Hotel, which was a really good budget option. Yes, central London is slightly more expensive, but when I looked at the budget for the Z Hotel, that was a good budget option and it worked really well. It's about looking at what area appeals to your interests and your itinerary, and what you expect from your accommodation. In a lot of the consults we've done this year, people are staying in the South Kensington area, which is close to the museums, and that's a really good area. I've stayed near Waterloo Station, near the London Eye, which is excellent. We've stayed beside the Tower of London, because we were going to the Opening Ceremony of the Tower, and that was a really good option.

Tracy: To be honest, my main tip on where to stay is stay near a Tube station.

Doug: 100 per cent agree with that.

Tracy: Because the last thing you want to do, and I've said this in I don't know how many podcasts, is get to the end of a full day out and know you've got a 30 or 40 minute walk back to your accommodation. You will be absolutely exhausted. Uber starts looking very attractive at that point.

Doug: We are talking from experience here. We've both had long days out and got back and thought, oh boy, we're tired.

Tracy: It just makes for a better trip.

Doug: It does.

Tracy: Question eight, which we get asked a lot and relates to the budget question earlier: what are the free things to do in London?

Doug: There's so much. I think London is spoiled compared with some countries and locations around the world in just how many free attractions there are.

Tracy: Give some examples.

Doug: The Imperial War Museum is free, the Science Museum, the Natural History Museum, the British Museum, the V&A.

Tracy: Yes.

Doug: If I don't mention the V&A, I guarantee you will.

Tracy: The only thing I will say is those museums are free, but if they have special exhibitions on, you do have to pay for those.

Doug: That's right. And things like the Bayeux Tapestry, those tickets are in huge demand.

Tracy: Huge demand. Parks are free.

Doug: Parks are always free.

Tracy: What else is free? Shopping.

Doug: I'm not even going to think about shopping.

Tracy: Art galleries. The National Gallery is free. The National Portrait Gallery is free. So a lot of the museums, parks and galleries are free. And just wandering around and looking at the outside of places like the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey, soaking in the history, walking along the Thames and enjoying the atmosphere. I think that's a fabulous way to do it.

Doug: It is. And you know me, I'll probably grab a picnic and sit and watch the world go by in a park somewhere.

Tracy: One of the questions we considered adding, but we'd got to our top ten, was our favourite activities in London. For me, I love the Tower of London and seeing the Crown Jewels, and having a tour of Westminster Abbey. The V&A, absolutely. I'm hoping to put together a top ten of the things I enjoy at the V&A for YouTube. We did start recording quite a bit, but some of the things I really like are shut at the minute, like the fashion gallery.

Doug: Oh, that's right.

Tracy: So I have to go next year and take more video and pictures. One place we did talk about was Greenwich. I would love to have Visit Greenwich come onto the podcast, so if you represent Visit

Greenwich, get in touch, because we love Greenwich and we'd love to promote you. That's your favourite place to go for a picnic.

Doug: I do like having a picnic there, sitting on the banks with the nice trees and the view on a nice day. I really enjoy that.

Tracy: When we say picnic, we've never gone there with a wicker basket and a hamper. For Doug, what would you say?

Doug: I'd just chuck my jumper down and have a meal deal.

Tracy: A meal deal, and he's happy with that.

Doug: Which constitutes a picnic to me.

Tracy: There are a lot of really beautiful parks in London to sit and enjoy a picnic. Which neatly brings us to the last question. We get asked all the time about the best Sunday roast, but I'm going to change that and talk about our favourite places to eat.

Doug: You hog the limelight here.

Tracy: The problem I have when I get asked about Sunday roast is that there are so many options and things change. What I will say is that earlier this year I spoke to Becky from Devour Tours, in episode 186, about places to eat in London. She lives in London, so I asked her where the best place for a Sunday roast is, and she mentioned Roast at Borough Market. So I thought, I'm going to go there. I went with my friend Melissa, who was over in London for a week in May. Borough Market was a bit overwhelming because it was a very busy Sunday, but my goodness, that Sunday roast was delicious.

Tracy: Not only was it delicious, the restaurant was beautiful. It was all decorated with flowers.

Doug: Lovely. Did you have to book in advance?

Tracy: Yes, I booked in advance. It was quite pricey, I will say that. It was not cheap, but it was absolutely delicious. So if you want something special, I'd say Roast at Borough Market. Generally, talking about places we always go to, I think we're creatures of habit.

Doug: We are.

Tracy: We always go to Pick and Cheese. I went twice, once in May and once in June. I love cheese. You came with me the second time?

Doug: I did.

Tracy: Another place I spend a lot of time, and I'll go on my own and just have a cup of tea, is the Cafe in the Crypt at St Martin-in-the-Fields, Trafalgar Square. Fabulous place. It's not expensive, the food is always excellent, it's always busy, and a lot of locals eat there as well. Where else do we eat? We were talking about this.

Doug: I went to the Marylebone...

Tracy: Mercato Mayfair. You can walk down from Marylebone to it, but it counts as Mayfair.

Doug: I've been in there and had a cup of tea and cake.

Tracy: I went there as well. That's the Instagram place at the moment. I've got some pictures of it.

Doug: I didn't get any photos last time because there was scaffolding up outside.

Tracy: It wasn't when I was there. I went specifically because it's become very popular. Lots of different food stalls and you can choose what you want.

Doug: There's also a nice chippy a few doors down.

Tracy: We also like to eat in the museum cafes.

Doug: We've done that many times.

Tracy: The V&A cafe, which is a favourite, the Tower of London cafe. All the museums have really good cafes. And because you're going to spend a decent amount of time in the museum, it's good to be able to pop in and get a sandwich.

Doug: It gives you a rest, because they're quite tiring places.

Tracy: If you're listening and you've got a favourite place you've eaten in London, get in touch via SpeakPipe, because I want to know. We've had loads of recommendations from people in the Facebook group, and we've added those to our London map. The London map has 917 places of interest, places to eat and area guides on it, and we're adding to it all the time. You can buy that and I'll link to it in the show notes. It's a very popular product.

Tracy: I think that's hopefully answered all ten questions. If you've got a question we didn't cover today, we've just launched London Trip Quick Answers.

Doug: Straightforward.

Tracy: It's difficult to say; I have practised it. London Trip Quick Answers is a 30-minute live Zoom where you can speak to Doug and me. You bring your specific questions for your trip. This is not a generic answer, this is Doug and me chatting to you. It's not AI, it's us.

Tracy: We ask you to send your questions before the 30-minute chat, and we will go through anything. So if it's a last-minute thing and you want some reassurance, book a 30-minute session with us.

Doug: Yep.

Tracy: You get a recording and a summary, a Google Doc PDF with links in it and all the information. I'll link to it in the show notes. We know what it's like, because when we travel, sometimes it's a week or two before you go and there are all these doubts: is that going to work, is that happening? I wish I could talk to somebody about it. So we're now available for that. Now, I should do the announcement about the new series I've been teasing over the last few months.

Doug: Go on.

Tracy: This is the month we start our new bonus episode on the last Thursday of the month, all about what's on in London the following month. The first one will be out on the 27th of August, about what's on in London in September, and how to prepare if you're visiting London this September. We'll talk about the weather, because we'll have the up-to-date forecast for the month, any booking deadlines worth knowing about, and the tours we recommend for September.

Doug: Yeah.

Tracy: There will be lots of practical information. On our website we have a monthly guide, London in September, and a guide to events in London in September, but we'll be talking through those with you. And we'll mention things coming up in a few months' time that people often miss. So if you're visiting at Christmas, you also need to know this. There'll be a five-minute "you need to know this" segment. We're

hoping it will be a lovely bonus episode that all of you planning a trip to London will enjoy. Whether you're in London this September or looking at September 2027, it will be worth listening to.

Doug: Yep.

Tracy: Everything we've talked about in today's episode, the episode numbers, the freebie, the London map and anything else we've mentioned, you'll find in the show notes at uktravelplanning.com/episode214. I guess that just leaves us to say, until next episode, Doug, our usual sign-off.

Doug: Yep. Happy UK travel planning.

Tracy: Thank you for tuning in to this week's episode of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. As always, show notes can be found at uktravelplanning.com. If you've enjoyed the show, why not leave us feedback via text or a review on your favourite podcast app? We love to hear from you, and you never know, you may receive a shout out in a future episode. But as always, that just leaves me to say, until next week, happy UK travel planning.

Doug: Bye.

Transcript of The UK Travel Planning Podcast, episode 214. Show notes: uktravelplanning.com/episode214. Lightly edited for readability.