

Visiting the Lake District? What to Know Before You Go

Tracy Collins with Briony Wilson, Mountain Goat Tours

IN THIS EPISODE

Tracy is joined by Briony Wilson from Mountain Goat Tours in Windermere, who has lived in the Lakes for more than 20 years. They cover where the Lake District sits and how to reach it by train, why distances feel bigger than the map suggests, getting around with and without a car, how many nights to plan, which town to base yourself in, lake cruises, literary stops, gentle walks and accessible routes, and Briony's quickfire picks for what to eat, see and bring home.

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01

Welcome

TRACY Are you thinking about visiting the Lake District? There are a few things worth knowing before you go, and in this episode Briony Wilson from Mountain Goat Tours, who are based in Windermere, shares how much time the Lakes really need, how to get around with or without a car, and where to base yourself for the trip you want.

Hi everybody, and welcome to this week's edition of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Before we start, if you're in the early stages of planning a UK trip and not quite sure where to begin, our free UK Trip Planning Roadmap walks you through it step by step, and you can find the link in the show notes for this episode.

The Lake District is somewhere Doug and I get asked about all the time, and it is a part of the UK that rewards a bit of thinking before you arrive. It's not a town or a city you can point to on a map. It's a whole area made of towns, tiny villages and valleys that do not always connect the way you'd expect. So knowing how to get around and how much time to give it makes a real difference to the trip you have. That is exactly what this episode is for: the essential things worth knowing before you go.

Briony Wilson works for Mountain Goat, a touring company based in Windermere, and she's lived in the Lakes for more than 20 years. So let's get into the conversation with Briony. Hi Briony, and welcome back to the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Wonderful to have you back.

BRIONY Hi, nice to be here.

TRACY Give us a brief introduction about who you are, who you work for and what you do.

BRIONY I'm Briony Wilson. I work in the sales and marketing department of Mountain Goat, and we are a touring company based in the Lake District, but we have depots in Yorkshire and in the North West. So we run scheduled tours all across the North West of England, but we can take you wherever you want to go. We do a number of private hires, so we can do anything all over the country.

TRACY Fantastic. You will not believe, Briony, how many times I've been asked to do a podcast about the Lake District. And I'll start by saying it is the Lake District, not the Lakes District, because that's quite often what people say. So I thought, who better to come on and talk about the Lake District than somebody who lives there? And Briony, in a few weeks' time you're also going to be talking about Chester, which is another place you've lived, so that's going to be a great episode as well.

This series of the podcast is all about before you go: the things you need to know from somebody who lives there and knows the area. So we're going to start with the real basics, Briony. For anybody who doesn't know where the Lake District is and what it's near, would you give us some geography?

Where the Lake District is

BRIONY The Lake District is in the north west of England, and just to confuse you, all the locals call it the Lakes. We never call it the Lake District unless we're advertising it, so that's probably why everyone gets confused.

My base for the company is Windermere, and that sits roughly halfway between Manchester and the Scottish border. That makes us about 90 minutes by car or by train from Manchester. It's about three hours by train from London, ideally from Euston, and about five hours from London by car. If you're travelling further north, we're about two and a half to three hours from Edinburgh and Glasgow by both train and car.

The Lake District is an area rather than a town or a city. Our closest cities are Carlisle, Lancaster and Preston. But if you're looking for a city with a cultural, historic or shopping background, you're more likely to go a little further afield to Manchester, Liverpool, Chester, Glasgow or Edinburgh, the big cities of the north.

Because it's an area, we split it down differently. You have a lot of towns in the Lake District. The big ones include Ambleside, Keswick, Kendal, Windermere and Bowness, and they're your good bases for places to stay. But the Lake District is really made up of lots and lots of little villages. Some places aren't even a village, they're more an accumulation of a few houses, and places like that are Grasmere, Conistone and Hawkshead. So there's a real mix that makes up this area.

TRACY And it is an absolutely beautiful area of the world. It really is somewhere worth going to visit. Is there anything you wish people knew before they go to the Lake District? Some of the questions we get asked are about driving around, how easy it is to get around, can I get from one part of the Lake District to another. Those come up all the time. But is there anything you feel people don't know before they arrive that would be useful?

What catches first-time visitors out

BRIONY Probably the biggest thing is the scale of the Lake District. People look at a map and go, oh, it's really close together. And if you're coming from Australia or America, it is, but it can still take quite a bit of time to get from place to place. Especially between the valleys, one place doesn't necessarily connect to another. There are lots of farms and things in the way, so there are lots of roundabout ways of getting to places, especially on those narrow roads, and not everywhere is accessible by public transport.

That's part of its character. The lakes are a huge draw, and so are the fells and the smaller villages. But the character of the Lake District itself is what you're coming to see. You're not coming to see Windermere, you're not coming to see Ullswater. You're

coming for the experience.

A big thing when visiting the Lakes is to slow it down. Don't try to cram everything into one visit. The likelihood is it's going to be cold and it's going to be wet, whatever month you pick. We can't guarantee the weather over here, unfortunately, but that's part of its charm. Lean into it. Pack the cosy outfits, make it the weekend where you wear that fleece, that waterproof, the big boots. Pack sensibly, but know that it's part of the holiday. Experience it, enjoy it. The Lake District is what it is because of the rain. It's why it looks so green and so fresh. We've had a little rain this week and now it all looks green and lovely again.

"Slow it down. Don't try to cram everything into one visit. The Lake District is what it is because of the rain."

BRIONY

TRACY

The other thing to do is go when Doug and I go, because when we go there, it's always beautiful weather. We're just always very lucky. This year it was stunning, we had the most beautiful couple of days. But you never know what you're going to get. It's typical of anywhere in the UK, so you really need to be prepared.

Now, a lot of our listeners will start off in London and might be thinking, can I get there directly? How long would it take from London? Maybe go up to the Lake District for a bit of countryside and then on to Edinburgh. So is it possible by train, or would you recommend driving? And if somebody decides not to go the car option, can you get around the Lake District without a car?

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Getting there and getting around

BRIONY

Yes, definitely. What I'd always recommend is the train, from London Euston to Oxenholme. Oxenholme is our closest big station. It's technically just outside Kendal, which is one of the bigger towns in the Lake District, but Oxenholme Lake District is the station you're looking for. From Euston to Oxenholme is roughly three hours. It's on the main line, so the train from Euston stops at Oxenholme about halfway, then carries on all the way up to Glasgow or Edinburgh, depending on the train. From Oxenholme you've also got direct links to Manchester, Birmingham, Liverpool and Windermere.

You could also fly from Heathrow across to Manchester Airport and then hire a car. If you are coming to the Lake District by car, it's definitely feasible and you can get around by car, but you need to be very mindful of your timings.

If you're trying to get a little off the beaten track without a car, we have two main bus services, the 555 and the 599. They cover most of the central Lakes. But you've got to be cautious of the timings, and if you're not used to reading an English bus schedule, it's not the easiest thing to navigate. Some places are quite rural and you can't guarantee a bus is going to come through every hour. It might be once or twice a day.

There are other ways to travel around the Lakes. You can use one of the cruises, you can go on one of the ferries across the water, and there is a car ferry across Windermere. If you're driving, you can use that to get around the lake at least once. It's a lovely drive around, but it will take you some time. If there are a few things you want to do and you're staying on one side of the lake and not the other, use the car ferry. It's a great way to nip across and save quite a lot of time.

In some ways, not having a car is a real benefit. It takes away a lot of the stress in the Lake District. This is not an area that was built for cars. It's been adapted over time, but parking really can be a challenge. Outside some of the bigger tourist towns, expect limited parking. You might be parallel parking in small bays on the side of the road. You might not be used to the size of vehicles we have over here compared with home. So really consider whether you'd be comfortable driving here. Narrow lanes are a big one, and so is the steepness of some of the passes. There are passes that close at certain times of year because of weather, and we take that really seriously.

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Parking, narrow lanes and letting someone else drive

BRIONY One of the biggest things I will say as somebody who works in tourism is that it's really important to park responsibly when you're here. Not everywhere is a cleared-out parking bay, so be courteous to others. People live here. There are local residents, and emergency vehicles still need to get past. If you've parked badly and so has somebody else, and someone gets stuck further up one of the hills, the emergency vehicles need to reach them. These narrow roads should never be blocked, but it does happen. We see it a lot on our tours and it's something people really notice.

So if you want to take a car, you definitely can if you feel comfortable. If you don't, that's something we hear regularly on our tours, and it's one of the reasons Mountain Goat runs scheduled tours in 16-seater minibuses. We pick you up from your hotel if you book direct, and we can also collect you from certain meeting points across the Lakes. We show you things you wouldn't see on your own or get from a guidebook. A lot of our drivers have been with us for years and have so much knowledge about the area. They'll show you the Lakes as the locals see them: the hidden viewpoints other people don't know about, and the places you probably wouldn't be confident driving to yourself. There are benefits on both sides, but it really depends where your comfort level is.

TRACY For Doug and I, it's very straightforward. We don't take a car into the Lake District. We get the train to Oxenholme and on into Windermere, and we usually stay around that area. Then we either go out on the local buses or go out with you guys on a tour. When you go out on a tour, you get to learn about the area. Doug and I got to sit back, enjoy the scenery, ask questions, meet other people on the tour and ask about local places to eat. There are lots of tips you pick up.

A lot of people on the tour were a bit gobsmacked by some of the roads we were driving on, and manoeuvring past some cars was really difficult. As you say, some drivers had parked really irresponsibly and dangerously, because you cannot get parking easily in the Lake District. I would really underline that. It's not an easy place to find parking, and that stresses you out. I'm thinking about Hill Top, Beatrix Potter's house. Trying to park there is nigh on impossible. So let Mountain Goat take the strain and sit back and enjoy the Lake District. That's the best way to do it, in my opinion.

BRIONY If you're coming by car and staying in one of the bigger towns like Ambleside or Windermere, there are proper car parks with marked bays. Leave the car in one of those and then use the buses and other transport to get around. One of the things we do with the tours is offer full-day and half-day options. My biggest advice is still don't cram too much into a day, but because our guides know how to get from one place to another efficiently, if you're short on time and want a full day, it will be a full day, but you won't feel rushed. The same goes for the half days. If you were doing the same route on your own, I think you'd feel like you were getting in and out of a vehicle a lot. You're supposed to be here on holiday. Enjoy it.

TRACY Yes, absolutely, 100 per cent. So what are your top-selling tours in the Lake District? Which ones would you recommend for somebody visiting for the first time?

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Mountain Goat favourites for first-timers

BRIONY Definitely the Ten Lakes. I hate to call it this, but it's your bucket list. We are more than the lakes in the Lake District, but you tick ten of them off in a day, and you see those lakes in all their different forms. Each lake has a different persona, if that makes sense, so you really experience them in different ways. You also see things like Castlerigg Stone Circle, which is amazing. Just driving around this beautiful area, you almost gain your bearings because of the way the drivers take you.

The Ten Lakes is always my favourite. I like the Six Lakes in the same way. It's a half-day tour, but you still see most of the same things. And personally, I'm a bit of a literary geek, so I really enjoy the Beatrix Potter tour. I'd never been to Hill Top until I started working for Mountain Goat, but I was always a big fan of the books and always very

proud to be from the area she came from. I love the story behind it. And for a half-day tour it doesn't feel like a half day, because it leaves a little later, so you can have a great breakfast at your hotel in the morning and then a full afternoon.

TRACY That's a lovely segue into how many days you'd suggest for people planning an itinerary. What would you say is the minimum in the Lake District? If you have a day trip, you can do the Ten Lakes, which I'd highly recommend. Doug and I did it in June and absolutely loved it. We went to parts of the Lake District we hadn't been to before. But what would you say as a minimum?

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How many nights to plan

BRIONY Two nights is probably your minimum. That gives you enough time to see the main highlights, enjoy a lake cruise, visit a couple of villages and hopefully get up one of the fells as well. If you can stretch it to three or four nights, you'll get a much better feel for the area. It gives you time to explore without constantly checking your watch, and to experience how the northern Lakes, the central Lakes and the western Lakes all feel different.

The Lake District is sometimes treated as a day trip, especially from Manchester or Liverpool, as a bucket-list item. You can do that and have a really good day, but most people who do come back again. If you're coming from afar and spending time in the Lakes, give it the time it needs. I'd say three or four days. You can always extend it if you enjoy the area. But if you come for one day, the chances are you'll come back.

There are so many extra things you can do if you're here for a couple of days. Enjoy a casual evening by the water, see it when the crowds have gone, have a proper afternoon in a pub eating proper English food. And you have the flexibility that if the rain comes or it's a miserable day, you can move your plans around. You've always got to plan a little for weather in the Lakes, but if you've got a bit of room to manoeuvre, then if it's really wet you can spend the afternoon in the pub or do one of the indoor attractions, and go up the fell when it's easier.

"Two nights is your minimum. If you can stretch it to three or four, you'll get a much better feel for the area."

BRIONY

TRACY I know you're based in Windermere, so this might be a loaded question, and I did wonder whether to ask it. But what would you say to somebody deciding on a base in the Lake District? If you're taking the train in, which is generally what we do, Doug and I

like to stay near the train station. It's just easy, and you guys can pick up from there. But I can hear all the other towns in the Lake District going, well, that's not fair, what about us?

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Choosing a base

BRIONY It depends on the type of trip you want. For a first visit, and especially if you're travelling without a car, aim for Windermere or Bowness. They're really practical. They're close to the train, they've got great bus links, the lake cruises are nearby, and you've got so many options to hand.

Ambleside is a little further on and another brilliant option. It feels really central, it's got that town vibe with lots going on, and it's easy to get across to Grasmere and the Langdales. There are plenty of walks starting in that area, so it's a good base if that's what you're there for.

If you're more interested in the northern Lakes, aim for Keswick. It is further, probably 40 minutes to an hour from Windermere, so it is a distance. But if the northern Lakes are your focus, you've got Derwentwater, Borrowdale and access towards Buttermere. There's plenty of walking around you, and you still have the shops, the restaurants and the theatre. It's a proper town and a proper base.

It's worth noting that a lot of B&Bs, guest houses and hotels are in heritage buildings, so if accessibility is an issue for you, some areas can be more restrictive. Speak to your accommodation provider beforehand about accessible rooms. There are lots of hills, lots of steps and a lot of uneven ground in the area, so have that in the back of your mind. The Lakes is accessible, it's just a question of how accessible it is for your individual needs.

TRACY Perfect. Now I have to ask this for the people who want to get out on the water, and I must admit I love getting out on the water. I should ask you the difference between a lake and a mere, because we've got Windermere, and I've been told in the past when I say Lake Windermere that I'm effectively saying Lake Winder Lake, because mere means lake. Is that right?

BRIONY Yes. The difference between a lake and a mere lies mainly in usage. A lake is a large natural body of water surrounded by land, often deep and fed by rivers, while a mere is a type of shallow lake characterised by its broad, flat expanse.

TRACY Well, you've got plenty of both in the Lake District. So if I wanted to get out on the water, what ways can I do that?

Getting out on the water

BRIONY Windermere is probably your easiest place to get out on the water. It's the largest mere and it has regular cruises, and you can use the boats for sightseeing or as transport. You can get across to Bowness, Ambleside and Lakeside, and from Lakeside you can jump on one of the heritage trains to Haverthwaite, which is a lovely experience too. It's a really good option for a first-time visitor or anybody who wants a relaxed, easy way of seeing the scenery. The boats have a short commentary pointing out key places, so you know what you're looking at.

Ullswater feels a little wilder and more dramatic. The steamers are a lovely way to see the lake, and it's good for walkers because you can combine a boat journey with a walk along the Ullswater Way. Derwentwater is great if you're staying around Keswick, and the launches make it easy to hop on and hop off around the lake. You can combine a cruise with a walk and see the surrounding fells. You can also hire rowing boats there, and at Bowness you can hire kayaks and all sorts.

Buttermere is completely different. It's a much smaller, quieter lake, and it's more about being beside the water than on it. It's beautiful to walk around, with dramatic scenery, and some of the most beautiful photographs you'll take are at Buttermere.

Then you've got Coniston, which I have to say is one of my favourites. It has so much history, so at Coniston it's less about being on the water and more about knowing about it. This is where Donald Campbell attempted his water speed record.

Unfortunately he died in that attempt, but in the last year we've had K7, his boat, also known as Bluebird, back on the water. It's a really interesting piece of history, and there are various museums and connections to Bluebird where you can find out about it and how much work has gone into restoring this amazing machine.

TRACY I do love Coniston. It was very special the first time I went, because growing up and knowing the story and about finding Bluebird, it was a lovely place to visit.

Now I can hear my listeners going, Tracy, I've got my itinerary sorted, but I now really want to go to the Lake District and I'm only going to be able to do it for a day, so what should we do? I guess we're going back to the Ten Lakes. That's what I'd say you need to book, because it gives you that bucket list of the Lake District, doesn't it?

One day in the Lakes

BRIONY My main advice would be don't cram too much into a day. Our tour guides are brilliant at fitting things in efficiently and getting you to the bucket-list highlights: Castlerigg Stone Circle, Keswick, Borrowdale, up Honister Pass, and Buttermere, places that are

awkward to get to on your own. The Ten Lakes ticks those off so you can say you've been there.

If you were there for a couple of days and had done the Beatrix Potter tour, say, and wanted a day in the Lakes on your own, I'd start the day casually. Go on a lake cruise, especially if it's misty. People say you won't see as much, but personally I think there's nothing better than things emerging out of the mist. Have a quiet morning, get an ice cream, pop around the shops. Bowness is a lovely place to wander.

Then I'd head over to Blea Tarn. It's one of my favourites. You do need a car to get there, but it's probably one of the best viewpoints in the Lakes. And bringing it back to Beatrix Potter, we have this area because of her, so let's embrace it. You'll get incredible photos here, and whatever the weather, it looks beautiful. There's a nice flat walk so you can get around it easily. You can take a picnic up there or pop down into Little Langdale for a really good pub lunch. That's how I'd spend a day in the Lakes.

TRACY That sounds absolutely perfect. Are there parts of the Lake District you think people miss when they visit? Somewhere you'd say is a lovely place to include?

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The places people miss

BRIONY The western Lakes, the Langdales and some of the smaller valleys feel quite different. The roads are quieter and the scenery is more dramatic, and I think they often get missed. People focus on the lakes themselves and forget about the fells and the little villages. The Lake District is more about the character of the place than ticking things off, though I understand that everybody wants to come away with photos.

If you're interested in going further afield and doing something different, the Mountain Goat Mountain Passes tour is brilliant for this. These are not roads that I, even as a local, would want to drive. It takes you across to Muncaster Castle and you get to see the beauty of Wastwater. I'd never been to Muncaster Castle until I started working at Mountain Goat, and I've lived here for 20-odd years. You see some really different things and it's a relaxed day out. I'd highly recommend that one.

TRACY I'll put my name down for that one next summer, Briony. That sounds perfect. Now, you've mentioned the literary connections in the Lake District, which are fantastic. If somebody has that literary interest, how could they build it into their trip?

Literary Lake District

BRIONY We have an amazing background of literary figures in this area who used the scenery of the Lakes as inspiration for their stories. If you're interested in Wordsworth, head to Grasmere. You can go into Dove Cottage, which is an experience in itself. You step back into a house he actually lived in, restored to the style of when he lived there. They do a Christmas experience too, so you can see Christmas as they would have celebrated it if you're around at that time of year.

It's amazing for any children who are at school. This is taught on the UK school syllabus. I never realised this was in my area when I grew up and really took it for granted, until I went to university, talked about the school trips I'd been on, and people said, we didn't have any of that where I'm from. Suddenly you feel very appreciative of where you're from.

There's the whole Wordsworth Museum attached to Dove Cottage, so you can see lots of artefacts and readings. It's a real Aladdin's cave of literature. Then you can spend time in Grasmere, head over to Rydal, and see where his poetry was inspired. If you're a fan of his writing, you can take the books with you, look at the landscape and see things he wrote about. His life wasn't an easy one, and you can see places connected to what he went through with his family. There's the beautiful Dora's Field, and if you're with us in spring you can see the daffodils. If Wordsworth is your guy, definitely head to that side of things.

For Beatrix Potter fans like me, Hill Top is a must. It's a beautiful house, and the gardens are probably even more impressive than the house itself. It feels very personal, and you spot things and see where the books came from. Despite being a big fan, I learned things about her on the Mountain Goat tour that I never knew. You don't just see her house. You drive through the Lake District finding out about the different farms she owned and the areas that inspired her, and how she was a champion of the Lake District more than most. For that reason, I think the tour highlights it more than anything else could.

Then you've got Arthur Ransome. If you're heading to Coniston and you're interested in Donald Campbell and Bluebird, Coniston is also famous as the inspiration for Swallows and Amazons. So it's another beautiful area to explore with your literary mind at heart.

TRACY It absolutely is. I loved my visit to Hill Top. It's really magical to go up there and see where Beatrix Potter lived. I held up one of the books and you can see the gate, just as it is in the illustrations in the original book. It was fantastic, I absolutely loved it. If you're a Beatrix Potter fan, you really need to go.

"Hill Top is a must. The gardens are probably even more impressive than the house itself."

BRIONY

TRACY As well as the literary connections and the beauty of the Lake District, a lot of people go for the walking, and there are some quite serious hikes. But for those who want a gentler stroll, me for example, what would you recommend? Not everybody wants to go fell walking.

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Gentle walks and accessible routes

BRIONY Always top of my list, and I think you did this on your last trip, is Orrest Head. The easiest way to find it, as it's the question we get asked a million times every day we're open, is just over the road from the Windermere Tourist Information Centre, to the left of the Windermere Hotel, which is currently under refurbishment. You head up this beautiful hill on a simple path. Even for those who are navigationally challenged, you just follow the path all the way up, and you get some of the most impressive views of Windermere and the central fells. It's quite achievable. It's not a full fell walk, but you still feel you've been on a walk and achieved something. There's also an accessible route to the top with no steps or stiles. It can still be quite steep in sections, so it's not completely flat or effortless, but it is a brilliant walk.

For people with different accessibility needs, I'd also recommend Tarn Hows. It's one of the easiest recommendations. The main circuit is about two miles on a good firm path, suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs. There are a few little hills, but there are plenty of benches along the route and an accessible toilet in the car park.

Aira Force is absolutely beautiful. If you want to get right down to the waterfalls, it becomes a bit rougher, with stone steps and uneven ground, but it's not a long walk and the views are amazing. There's a car park, so it's easy to get to if you've got your own vehicle.

Buttermere is another favourite of mine, because you get the amazing scenery without having to climb high. There are gentle sections along the lakeshore, and you can walk as far as you like and turn back. There's no point you have to reach, no single photo spot you're waiting for. It's a comfortable day out.

Then you've got Catbells. This is a brilliant first mountain for somebody who wants to push things a little further. You still need to be reasonably fit and confident, as it is a proper fell walk. There are steep sections and short sections where you need to

scramble and use your hands. I'd recommend it to somebody wanting to go a step further who has a bit of a walking background. It's more than a gentle walk.

The Lake District is doing its best to be as accessible as it can. The National Park has a scheme called Miles Without Stiles, with routes graded by surface, gradient and so on, so you can find something that fits your needs rather than relying on somebody in the pub saying, oh, you can just pop up this hill, it's dead easy. I'd definitely recommend that. And even if going for a walk isn't for you, the lakes and the fells are still accessible. On a lake cruise you can still see all the fells. You just see them rather than walking up them.

TRACY That's brilliant. There are lots of ways to get around and see things in the Lake District, that's for sure. Now, I always finish with a quickfire round, but the last proper question I ask is this: what is the one tip you'd share with somebody planning a first visit that would make it go more smoothly?

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One tip for first-time visitors

BRIONY There's probably more than one tip here. Be flexible, but always have a basic outline plan. If you're bringing a car, know where the main car parks are for each day you're going out. If you want to visit certain attractions, Hill Top for example, they book up. Use the Windermere information centre or the ones in the other areas where you're staying. They'll be able to advise if there's an attraction on your bucket list you're worried about. Hill Top is the main one I'd say will definitely book up, but if there are others, try to book them in and work around them. Be flexible where you can. It'll make your experience much more enjoyable.

Definitely pack your boots and pack your waterproofs, because I guarantee you'll need them at some point. If not, head to Keswick. It's got more walking shops than I've ever seen in my life. I've got family members who buy a new waterproof every time we see them because they forgot one, so every year there's a new waterproof added to the collection.

And don't rely on phone signal, unfortunately. As much as we'd like to say we're part of the modern era, those hills are beautiful and they stand in the way of the signal. It's not always as easy as you'd think.

"Be flexible, but always have a basic outline plan. Pack your boots, pack your waterproofs, and don't rely on phone signal."

BRIONY

TRACY That's a good point. Now I'm going to do a quickfire to finish. You're not really supposed to think about any of these answers. Here we go. The one place people picture when they think of the Lake District?

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Quickfire round

BRIONY I think people picture Bowness Pier, but in their head they're going, we're going to Windermere. They connect Windermere and Bowness and get them mixed up.

TRACY We should put a couple of pictures in the show notes to show that. One place to stay, where would you recommend?

BRIONY I'm biased. I'm going to say Kendal. It's my hometown. It's just off Oxenholme, with really easy links to everywhere in the Lakes: car parks, buses, trains, everything. You're 20 minutes from Windermere and you'll probably get accommodation for half the price. Maybe not quite as pretty as Windermere, because we're known as the old grey town, but for the fact that everything's so accessible and on your doorstep, that'd be my choice.

TRACY One thing to eat or drink?

BRIONY Cartmel sticky toffee pudding. Everyone's got to give it a go. I'd say a good proper pub lunch, and luckily Cartmel is served at lots of pubs, so that gets you around it. Have a proper meal and save some room for sticky toffee pudding.

TRACY When I was talking through the questions with Doug, he said gingerbread. So I thought you might have said gingerbread. I'll throw that one in as well. One view worth the effort?

BRIONY Blea Tarn for me. It's just stunning.

TRACY I'll have some photos of that to put in the show notes, please, Briony. One thing to bring home?

BRIONY Again, bringing it back to my hometown, Kendal Mint Cake. This will power you through your fell walks. It is pure sugar. It was taken up Everest, it's famous. There's a chocolate-covered one, a white sugar one and a brown sugar one, and it will get you through the jet lag if you're travelling home internationally. There's nothing in it to go off, so it lasts forever and it's an easy one to pack.

TRACY That's true. And one thing to book before you go?

BRIONY Hill Top. If you're coming and that's something you want to do, book it. And so I don't get told off, book the Beatrix Potter tour with Mountain Goat and Hill Top's included.

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Until next week

TRACY Perfect. Thanks so much, Briony, for coming on and sharing all about the Lake District with us. If you're listening and you have any questions for Briony, get in touch via SpeakPipe and I'll pass them on and we'll get an answer back to you. It's always great to chat with you, and we're going to chat again in a few weeks for an episode all about Chester. So if you're thinking, I want to hear more from Briony, tune in to the Chester episode. It's always great to learn more about the Lake District, because it is a beautiful part of the UK.

BRIONY Great to be here. Thank you for having me.

TRACY That brings us to the end of another episode. If Briony has convinced you to let somebody else do the driving so you can sit back, relax and actually enjoy the Lake District while you're there, we have a code for Mountain Goat Tours. It is UKTRAV10. That's UKTRAV10, and it gives you 10 per cent off Mountain Goat Tours. You'll find it, along with the booking link, in the show notes at uktravelplanning.com/episode221, together with everything else Briony mentioned today: the towns she suggested as a base, the gentler walks, and the National Park's Miles Without Stiles routes if accessibility is something you're planning around.

And if you are in the early stages of putting a UK trip together, our free UK Trip Planning Roadmap takes you through the whole process step by step. The link for that is on the same page.

Until next week, as always, happy UK travel planning.

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