

UK TRAVEL PLANNING PODCAST

Episode 224 · Full transcript

Visiting Chester? What to Know Before You Go

With Briony Wilson from Mountain Goat

IN THIS EPISODE

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- Getting around on foot, plus what to know about steps and access on the city walls and the Rows
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- Briony's perfect day: the walls anti-clockwise, the Eastgate Clock, Chester Market, the amphitheatre, the Roman Gardens, the River Dee and Watergate Street
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Transcript

Tracy
00:00

There is a city where you can walk a Roman wall, shop in a medieval gallery, and be in Wales 20 minutes later. In this episode, Briony Wilson shares what to see in Chester, how much time to give it, and how to use it as a base for North Wales, Liverpool, and Manchester. Hi everybody and welcome to this week's edition of the UK Travel Planning Podcast. Now, a quick note before we start: if a UK trip is on the cards and you're still working out the shape of it, our free UK trip planning roadmap takes you through the whole process step by step. The link is in the show notes. Now, when I was recording the autumn episode a little while ago with Briony Wilson from Mountain Goat, she mentioned that she'd spent 10 years living in Chester, and I thought straight away that she would be the perfect person to come back and tell us all about it. Now, Chester is a walled Roman city compact enough to see on foot, a direct train from London Euston, and it puts North Wales, Liverpool, Manchester, and Wrexham all within easy reach. It is somewhere Doug and I have loved every time we visited.

Briony has walked those city walls more times than she can count. So here's everything worth knowing before you go. So it seems like just 5 minutes ago since I spoke— last spoke to Briony Wilson from Mountain Goat all about the Lake District And here we are a few weeks later to talk about Chester. And came about basically because when I was talking to Briony about beautiful places to visit around the Lake District and other places actually you might go leave from, we, we could start talking about Chester. And Briony, you lived in Chester for a while, didn't you?

Briony
01:43

I did. I spent 10 years in Chester. So after the Lake District, it's probably my next favourite place in the UK.

Tracy
01:49

So who else but to invite on to talk about Chester but Briony? So welcome again to the podcast. Lovely to chat with you.

Briony
01:56

Thank you for having me.

Tracy
01:57

So this is again another one in our kind of Before You Go series, because we're trying to do a whole series of the different places to visit in the UK and the things that you need to know before you go. Because if you're planning a trip and you don't know the basics, then you don't know where to start. So the first thing we're going to talk about, Briony, and exactly the same as we did when we talked about the Lake District a few weeks ago, is actually just to say to people, to tell people geographically, where is Chester and where is it near?

Briony
02:22

Yeah, so Chester again is in the northwest of England. It's in a county called Cheshire. It sits on the River Dee and it's really, really close to the Welsh border. So it's sort of very close to Liverpool and Manchester. So you can get direct trains from London. A lot of people consider Chester to be a commuter city for London because it's just 2 hours

away, but it's also less than 40 minutes across to Liverpool and less than an hour across to Manchester, all by train. And roughly similar travels by car. So with it being on the doorstep to North Wales, it's a brilliant place for sort of a base for a trip for a couple of days with access to so many places.

Direct trains go sometimes every 20 minutes from London Euston straight through to Chester. The journey takes about 2 hours. Liverpool is just 18 miles away and Manchester is about 42 miles away. So as I said, about 30 minutes. by road or rail, and both of those cities have international airports, which make it a very easy place to get to.

Tracy
03:26

And lovely northern cities. As a northern girl, I like to be promoting the north of England, so it's always lovely to talk about somewhere northern. Now, also, I guess some people on the podcast, you may be listening and thinking, I've not heard of Chester. So what do you want people to know about Chester before they arrive, or even to consider actually adding it into their itinerary?

Briony
03:47

So as you say, a lot of people haven't heard about it, but I think once you're in the know, it's one of those places that you just keep going back to. So Chester is actually a walled Roman city, and so much of that history is actually still part of your everyday life as you walk around the city. So you can walk around the Roman walls, you can see a big chunk of one of the Roman amphitheatres, you can explore the Rows, which very few other cities have, you can move through the streets and you can see these things that have been there for centuries and how they're used in different day-to-day life now, which I think is living history. Love it. So the city has so much culture, and if you're visiting in the summer, I would highly recommend visiting the theatre that they hold in the park. You've got wonderful places like Storyhouse, which has an inbuilt theatre, a cinema, a theatre, a library. Very impressive. There's the new-built Chester Market, which has got all this wonderful food and retail offering.

And there's just so many opportunities as a city to work with independent establishments, whether they're hotels, places to eat, local retail places. It really is a big city with sort of a small mindset. Like, there's so much independent culture, which is just amazing that I've seen in no other city like it. With it being so compact, which can surprise people, you can get so so much done in one day and you can do it by foot. You can get from the Roman Walls to the cathedral, over to the River Dee, to the racecourse, all within minutes of each other. But there's so many more other attractions. So Chester is more than one city. There is so much on your doorstep just outside the city.

If you're here for a little while, there's real bucket list items that I would recommend doing. Visit Jodrell Bank. It's a UNESCO World Heritage Site that many don't know about. It's a working Observatory with the Lovell Telescope. We've got Tatton Park, we've got Dunham Massey. These are amazing heritage houses that especially in the Christmas season are somewhere that is just a must-visit in my opinion. Then you've got amazing things like Chester Zoo, Chester Racecourse, Cheshire Oaks. These are full-day activities if you want to make it into one.

So I think there's lots of things that you'll have heard about Chester but never quite connected the dots, and I think that's something that Hopefully I can help with today.

Tracy
06:09

Oh yeah, definitely. I think that's true, there's lots of kind of personalities and sides to Chester. I think that it's, it's a very multi-dimensional city, that's for sure. Um, and it's, it's somewhere that Doug and I absolutely love to visit. It's very easy to get there by train. Um, so if you're planning a train itinerary around the UK, it's a really easy one to fit in. Um, and do you want to talk a little bit about the, the train, how to get there by train, Briony?

Briony
06:35

Yeah, so the most straightforward way from London is the train and there's direct services from London Euston and the quickest journeys are just over 2 hours. It can take a little bit longer if you, if those timings don't work for you. There's a city just outside of Chester about an hour away called Crewe, 20 minutes by train but an hour by car, so that explains Cheshire as a county for you. But that means that it gives you a lot more options if you're willing to not have a direct train and maybe only add 5-10 minutes to your itinerary, you can make this manipulate the times to work much better for you by diverting through Crewe. International visitors, Liverpool and Manchester both have international airports. These are great useful gateways. They've both got really good rail connections towards Chester but also by bus. So you've got a number of opportunities.

It really is a convenient city and an easy one to get to. Plus once you're in Chester, if you do come by train, you're only 10 minutes from the city centre, and it's a very safe walk. So once you're out and about, I feel like even by foot, it's a very comfortable city to be in and be around.

Tracy
07:46

And as you say, it's actually quite an easy city to just, you know, to walk around. I mean, there are Ubers and taxis available. I think the last time we came into the train station, it might have been pouring down with rain or something, but I know we got a— we ended up getting a taxi just to our hotel. We stayed actually at the Hotel Indigo, which was lovely. It was one of our favourite stays, actually. The staff— actually, big shout out to the Hotel Indigo staff in Chester, because I think you are some of the most fabulous and some of the most favourite staff that we've, we've actually worked with when we've been in the UK. So they were absolutely fantastic. Um, and as I said, that's not that far from the train station.

Um, so talk about kind of, for anybody kind of planning to walk around Chester, is it difficult to get around? As like, is it cobblestone? Because obviously a lot of the UK cities have got cobblestones or not so great to walk around or get around. So how's Chester?

Briony
08:39

So the main thing I'd say about Chester is it's quite a compact city. As I said earlier, it's a walled city, so a portion of the city is really within that small area, a little bit sort of like Marrakech in that sort of city, just to compare it to another sort of international area. So I would say the best way to explore it is by foot. If you have a car with you

because you've been coming, you've made it part of that journey, absolutely fine. There's loads of car parking. It's not the cheapest, but there is lots of car parking and there is park and ride service. So you can drive out of the city, park up for cheaper for a couple of days, and then get back into the city. And you really don't need your car for exploring things within the city.

But if you're wanting to make it into a wider area of a journey using Cheshire and some of the other local areas, then having a car is never a bad thing. But I do think you'll experience it best on foot because it's such an old city, you can expect uneven surfaces. There are steps throughout, there is quite a lot of level changes, and a lot of these sort of street textures vary quite a lot from different roads to different areas. So it can be somewhere if you've sort of got uneven footing or you've got sight problems where it can be a little bit of a challenge, and for that I would recommend coming with some other guests that can definitely help you navigate. The Rows are elevated and traditionally they're reached by steps, although there are accessible routes on all of the sections. And again, with the city walls, there is a number of step cuts and steep sections, so most of it is accessible but not the entire thing by wheelchair. So it's worth just keeping that in mind that you won't be able to do a complete circuit, but you will be able to get— definitely get the vibe and experience most of it for yourself. There are local buses if you want to go further out, and there are other ways to experience as well, the city.

Like, you can use a river cruise going up and down on the River Dee, and it's a great way to just see the city from a different perspective.

Tracy
10:33

Perfect. Now, you mentioned the Rows a few times, and I can guarantee that some of our listeners are thinking, is that R-O-S-E? Actually, no, that's R-O-W-S. So they are the Rows. And would you like to explain a little bit about what the Rows are, Briony?

Briony
10:47

Yeah, so the core area of Chester, you've kind of got a central area called the Cross, which doesn't look really like anything. It isn't a cross shape, um, it kind of looks like a little nubbin randomly, um, and that forms a cross between what you have as what would be Northgate Street, Eastgate Street, what should be Westgate Street was actually Watergate Street, and then ironically rather than Southgate, in typical Chester style, we have Lower Bridge Street because it heads towards a bridge, which I believe— Right. Was probably built before the cross, but I can't guarantee that. Lots of Chester was built in a way to navigate, to try and confuse the Welsh, because we didn't get on at the time. So you'll see highlights on Eastgate Street like the Eastgate Clock, which is beautiful, which sits just outside of the Chester Grosvenor, which is one of the 5-star hotels, which is often on the bucket list for a lot of people to see. But that cross sort of really creates the fork and the sort of navigational point of the centre of the city to navigate your way between And whilst it's not exactly halfway, it sits within the walls, so it's sort of that centre point. So the cross forms the centre part of the Rows, and from there you'll be able to look up, and they're typically 2 or 3-storey buildings. They're typically sort of white painted, and they've got this beautiful white pattern, and you can head up there a number of storeys deep.

And from the bottom, you've typically got restaurants and sort of street level where you can walk along, you can go up onto the next Row and that's typically retail, or these days you've got a lot of people that have like beauticians and different appointments, and they're often small independent businesses that are set along the Rows. So they form all of the sections across Northgate, Eastgate Street, Watergate Street, and Bridge Street, which is a lovely area.

Tracy
12:41

And they're a little bit old, aren't they? They're actually medieval.

Briony
12:44

Yes, they are a real sort of heritage item, but Chester is one of those interesting cities that has really grown and changed over the years. So whilst we use these for retail and shopping now, back in the medieval days, a lot of people would have lived in them. But you've also got that sort of experience that we are a Roman city that then has sort of the medieval different areas. So you can really experience the city from a number of different sort of time zones, if that makes sense.

Tracy
13:12

Oh no, no, absolutely, that's exactly right. That kind of, let's just say, that kind of multi-dimensional kind of time travel, you do have it because there's just so much to— there really is so much to the city. Now, we kind of, we talked a little bit about, um, obviously where I stayed when I went with Doug last time to Chester, um, but what part of Chester would you kind of recommend as a good base for people?

Briony
13:31

Um, so I think it really depends on the type of visit that you're having in Chester, um, because some of the accommodation is sort of brilliant within and without. So whether you want to stay centrally within the walls or if you want to go a little bit further out. So if you're coming without a car and you want to be right in the middle of everything, staying within the walls is a great option. You can walk out of your hotel, you're straight amongst the Rows by the cathedral, the shops, the restaurant, the bars. You're really within everything. So for a short city break, that's amazing. But if you are driving, you want a little bit more space, you want a more relaxing stay, there's some fantastic hotels just outside of the centre and you'll often find more parking, larger grounds. Some of these are in the these heritage buildings, so you get that little bit more of a bougie stay.

And a lot of these have sort of spas, pools, leisure clubs, just have a wider range of facilities that you can enjoy because there's a little bit more space out of the city. And there's a really good mix of accommodation across the city with independent hotels, properties, guest houses, but then also some really good well-known chains. So you've got plenty of choice and it all sort of varies around your budget. There's some beautiful Airbnbs and a real variety depending on what you're comfortable in and what works best for you. I can guarantee you'll find it in the walls and outside in Chester. There's plenty of accommodation. What I'd definitely say is worth checking is practical details before you book, just because some of Chester's properties are a little bit older. Whilst it gives them lots of character, it does mean there's a lot of stairs and lots of sort of different levels and it can limit access somewhat.

So a lot of them don't have sort of step-free entryway unless you've discussed with the hotel prior, and that a lot of them have ramps, but they might be portable ramps that somebody might need to assist your entrance with.

Tracy
15:19

Perfect. And I was going to ask you about if you only had one day in Chester, what you'd do. But before that, I mean, I feel that you need to have more than one day in Chester. So what would you recommend? Because again, it's a great— it's a good base to go to explore some of the areas close by as well. So what do you reckon, a couple of nights, would you say, Briony? 2, 3 nights in Chester?

Briony
15:42

So I think you can tick off the Chester bucket list in one day. The real highlights for me is walking a section of the walls, going to see the amphitheatre, exploring the Rows, seeing the cathedral, and then heading down to the River Dee. And you can fit all of those into a day without feeling like you're constantly rushing from one side of the city to another. However, definitely extend your stay if you're wanting to do any of the big ticket attractions. Chester Zoo, that's a day in itself. If the races are on, that's a day in itself. Even if you're not there for the races, but if the races are on, that will impact your day. This will make the day a lot busier.

The city is mental when it's a race day. It's a really lovely vibe. It's great. Everyone's dressed up. You can sit in a— you can sit and have a coffee. You can check out people's outfits. Great day for people watching and seeing what people do. The restaurants and the entire city is just a little bit of a buzz.

But because of that, it will make it harder for you to get to and from attractions. The streets are crazy. They close down some of the streets, so if you're driving, it does make it a little bit more challenging. But also, it will just be harder to navigate places like the Walls. There will be bigger crowds and things. So whether you're coming for the races or not, if it's races on, if I'm honest, take an extra day and go see some horses. It's one of the most famous still working racetracks. It's beautiful scenery.

I think it's one of my favourite things to do in the city, so I definitely recommend it. I think Chester works really well as a sort of 3 to 5 day break. It's got brilliant restaurants and brilliant bar scene, so even if you want to go off and do different things in the day, to come back to that every evening, I think is the perfect opportunity. You can spend a day exploring Chester itself, another day at the zoo, another day at the races, and then you can use it as a good starting point for seeing the wider region. If you have the Cheshire countryside on your doorstep and where it's quite different to the Yorkshire Dales, where it's quite different to the Lake District. It's a very rural farming community once you get out of the cities. And I think that's a really interesting thing to see. If maybe I'm just a country girl at heart, but it's something I always loved about Cheshire.

North Wales is just on your doorstep. When I lived in the area, I used to go into Wales every day for my petrol because it was closer than going across the other side of the city and crossing the water. So one of those things that it is literally so close and you have so many opportunities that for that, I would say Chester is a great place as a base for you to explore all of these other, these other areas.

Tracy 18:24

So talk a little bit about North Wales because, as you say, it's on the doorstep of North Wales. So if I was planning to, I could use Chester as a base and do some trips in North Wales. Where would you recommend I go? I know that I might go do some tours in North Wales. So what sort of places do you head to?

Briony 18:40

So North Wales is way bigger than anybody ever thinks about. And the size of— so where Chester sits on a map, this is quite hard without having a map for reference, but where Chester and Liverpool sort of sit on a map, they sit about a third down. into where North Wales is. So you can go all the way from Chester, it's about an hour up to Bangor, which is one of the highest points. North Wales continues all the way down then past Anglesey, which from Chester is about 2 and a half hours across and down. But that sits about in line, from what I can remember, as about Birmingham. So when we say North Wales is a long area, it's not very wide, but it is very tall. So North Wales covers a lot of ground, and then you get into South Wales, which is where you'd be heading towards Cardiff and things.

I think from Chester, Cardiff is about 6 hours, but obviously North Wales takes over a lot of that space of, like, travel time in between. So on the mountain goat tour, which I think gives you a great experience, it takes you into Eryri, which is the name of the national park. which is where Snowdon sits in the area of Snowdonia. But we take you across to— you get to see Llandudno, you get the whole sort of archway of the tour. We go to Conwy just for a short stop. You can see the castle, you can go through the market town. We go to Caernarfon, we have a proper stop there. You get to go through the castle.

We take you up through some of the passes so you can see the different areas of sort Snowdonia. I think it's a lovely tour. You get to really experience a lot, and coming from the cities like Liverpool, Chester, Manchester, it's a proper chance to get out of the city and see green and see these amazing sceneries. Yeah, I would recommend it to everybody.

Tracy 20:40

Well, absolutely. Not only do you get to kind of explore Chester and everything that Chester offers, as you say, medieval Rows, you've got the Roman amphitheatre, Roman walls, which is all— if you get the name Chester in anything, you kind of know that the Romans have been involved. So Manchester, Chester itself, um, and so you've got all of that as well. And as you say, you've got lots of potential day trips out if you want. I've never been to the zoo, actually.

Briony 21:03

It's literally one of the best zoos in the country, so I would highly recommend.

Tracy 21:08

I have heard that, actually. Um, yeah, and then, and then the ability to go— if you're in, you know, you're visiting the UK and you're going to primarily spend the time in England and maybe go up to Edinburgh because that's really popular, and they think, oh, actually, I want to experience Wales, I want to say I've been to Wales, then that's a great opportunity to base yourself in Chester and take a day trip out to Wales, get a taste, and you'll probably want to go and explore a little bit further next time. It's a bit like the

Lake District, isn't it? You go and see these places and you go, oh, next time I want to see a little bit more.

Briony
21:36

I mean, for football fans as well, it's a great base because from Chester you're only 20 minutes from Wrexham. Yes. If that's on your bucket list. But also, if it's a match day, you've got great opportunities for, whether you've got 2 football teams in Liverpool, obviously Liverpool and Everton, and when it comes to Manchester, you've got Manchester City and Manchester United. So again, for a game day with access to the trains and such, if you didn't want to be in those cities, which can be a lot on a game day, you're only an hour away from the big cities, 20 minutes from Wrexham. So football fans, you've got an option.

Tracy
22:09

Perfect. Of course, Wrexham's so popular now. We've always been asked about Wrexham, so I should have actually remembered about that. And actually, my husband will say though that there's only one football team up there and that's Liverpool. Liverpool. Diehard Liverpool fan. I know, I mean, nothing I can do about that. He's been a fan forever.

I'm a Newcastle fan, so what can I say? Now, if anybody's planning to visit Chester and it's gonna be the first visit, and again, it's that kind of, what would be the, the number one tip that you'd share with anybody who thinks, actually, you know what, Chester sounds great, sounds like something I want to add into my itinerary? So what would you recommend?

Briony
22:44

So I'd start, have a start with a really good day and go for a really good breakfast. So personal favourites of mine is Kookaburra Bakehouse. They aren't open on a Monday or Tuesday, so then I'd definitely go somewhere like the Flower Cup. This gives you a really good option to, from where those ones are based, to head up to Northgate, top of Northgate Street, and start on the steps there, which gets you onto the Chester city walls. I'd then walk anti-clockwise. I know I'm being precise, but there's a reason for it. This gives you brilliant views From that section, you're walking towards the racecourse. You then continue round, you get to see Chester Castle, you get to see the River Dee, and because you're so early in the day, this gives a really good option to get your bearings from this subsection of the walls.

You can start to understand how compact the city is, but for later on the day when you want to come back and explore things further, it gives you a good idea of where stuff is and understanding that that cross is in the central and which sections you've come from. At different points, you can always look over the bridges and you can find the cross So we're always good sort of help there. Continuing anti-clockwise, I'd then say continue around the walls, stop for photographs along the way. This is going to take you probably an hour to do the whole circuit just because you're stopping. There will be a lot of people on the walls. People use this as their route to work. I know a girl that used to go to one of the private schools in Chester and they used to do their PE lessons running around the walls because it's just shy of 2 miles, so you'll see all sorts on the walls. About halfway from where your starting point was, you'll get to the Eastgate Clock.

This is quite famous. I would say this is one of like the signature photos that everybody wants, and you can get on and off the walls here. It is by steps, but I would strongly recommend taking photos at the top on the clock also going down onto the main street by the Chester Grosvenor, and you can get images there as well. Depends on what timing works best for you and how busy it is. With it being one of the most recognisable landmarks, it's something that you're going to want to take away with you. You then continue back round. This will get you to where you started, and you effectively completed the circuit. But I think that's a really good position to be in, probably for early morning, where you're going to be.

From there, you can see the Town Hall, which isn't always open but is a very stunning building. and then just to the right, you'll see Chester Cathedral. Now, they do tours all over Chester Cathedral. You can go in, you can pay your respects. Again, a stunning building. There is tons that goes on at the cathedral. They've always got loads of events and things on now. They're really making use of it.

And if you're around anywhere near Christmas, then this area outside the Town Hall near the cathedral is where Chester City Christmas markets takes place. So the area is busy, don't be fooled. And on a Thursday evening, it's crazy because there is parades every Thursday. So there is a real hub of activity in this area. This is where I'd stay for lunch. Just beyond, behind this town hall is where they've built the New Chester Market. And this area, I'm a massive fan of, I have to admit. There's something for everyone.

There's probably 20 different food vendors in there, lots of street food. They do it on a buzzer system so everyone can eat together. There's loads of little retail shops in there, you've got butchers, fishmongers, all sorts. This is a real sort of hub of activity for Chester and I think that's where you should spend your lunch. I've been back many a time, I've been there for lunch and dinner several times in a day, I've got to admit, because some of those foods are just amazing. Once you've had your lunch, I would then head out during the afternoon and get stuck into some Chester history. So from this area, you'll see Chester Information Centre. So if you're wanting to start a guided tour for the day, that's where there's some wonderful people.

You can get led around by a Roman, by a gladiator. Like, if history is your bag and you want to know more about it, that's definitely an opportunity. They also do ghost tours, food tours. As a city, they're really proud of their heritage and there's people willing to shout about it all day long. So you can really get immersed into these sort of opportunities. If you aren't quite as much of a history buff and you don't want to be shouted at by a gladiator and told to march around the city, then I can recommend doing it yourself. Now, people see the Romans and go, oh, they built the walls. This is like, that's the main feature.

That's one of the features. We also have half of an amphitheatre. So the other half, unfortunately, was covered up by some crazy history which I really don't understand. So you can see half of it, you can sit inside of it, there's some beautiful tiled sort of mosaics in there. I would highly recommend getting a visit into there. And if you follow down past the amphitheatre and go down towards the right, you can see the Roman Gardens. Now this is something that a lot of people miss and I think it's such a shame. I think it's an amazing piece of little history.

It's a long thin garden that you steps down and you can go down and you can see the old underfloor heating system that the Romans used to use. Heading down, there is some beautiful, again, mosaic features on the ground, a real good little bit of history, but one you can take in your own time, you can work out for yourself. And as you get guided through down to the garden, this takes you right down to the River Dee. There's some fabulous Cheshire Farm ice cream and snuggeries down there, so you can sit by the river, you can get an ice cream. If you wanted to, you can go out on the Chester Boat. and get to see up and down the river, or you can spin yourselves back around as if you're heading back up towards the town and past the amphitheatre and there's the lovely groves. So you can have a little bit of an afternoon in the Grosvenor Park, which if you're visiting in summer, I would highly recommend. They do the theatre in the park and I've never seen shows like it.

They're always entertaining, they always contain music. And they're just a real good vibe around the city and a great way to spend an afternoon if you've got it. Then for the evening, I'd head back up to that central hub that I mentioned earlier. That is the Cross that leads you in between the 4 main streets, and from there you are going to find some incredible independent restaurants, loads of options for food. I've never seen a city like it that's got something for everyone. Incredible Italian, French, Thai, a little bit of everything. I have too many favourites, so I'm not going to rattle them off. But I would highly recommend once you've finished at the Cross, get yourself onto Watergate Street.

I know that as Bar Street and I've got people that come to visit, that's where I go. You have got some of the best cocktail bars in the city and there's places dotted around, but Watergate Street holds most of them in such a good area and you can just bar hop if that's how you want to spend your evening. There's wine bars, cocktail bars, something for every, for every palate.

Tracy
29:55

Oh, it sounds lovely, it really does. Now I'm gonna, I'm gonna end on a quickfire, so I'm gonna, I am gonna get some of the names of some of those restaurants and places out of you now. Yeah, so what would be the one place people picture, do you think, when they think of Chester?

Briony
30:09

I think the clock. I think the clock is what's in people's mouths. It is said to be the 2nd most photographed clock in the UK.

Tracy
30:17

After Big Ben, I'm guessing?

Briony
30:18

After Big Ben.

Tracy
30:20

What about the one place to stay?

Briony 30:22

My place to stay, so there's so many amazing independents, and whilst I love a chain, you know what you're gonna get, I love to stay with an independent personally. So my place to stay would be Odd Fellows. So the team that have just recently taken this over have incorporated more theming than ever before, and this is Alice in Wonderland themed. So they have loads of interactive events, And they've got a Harry Potter event — well, sorry, a wizarding-themed event. They've got Alice in Wonderland-themed tea parties. They've got some wonderful food, a lovely secret garden out the back. That would be on my hit list to stay at.

Tracy 30:59

Oh, that sounds really, really good. I like the idea of that. Um, now, one thing to eat or drink, or I'm going to ask obviously one place to eat or drink. So what would be— and I know I'm really putting you on the spot, but if you—

Briony 31:12

I was going to say kind of Cop out and go Chester Market. There's so many different options. And in there, I would recommend the pasta store. They do a truffle risotto, which is my favourite thing.

Tracy 31:24

Oh, perfect. Now, what about one view worth the effort?

Briony 31:28

I'd say head down to the Groves, have an ice cream, and look at the city. Like, look at the water and just see it. Take a breath out just because you've seen— the city's so immersive, you can't put it in a picture, you can't put it in a postcard. I think head down to the water, Take the time out and enjoy it for the break that it is.

Tracy 31:49

Perfect. One thing to bring home?

Briony 31:53

Cheshire cheese. It's what we're known for. There's so many different companies that do it. A lot of them are waxed, so they're great for transport, but they do loads of weird and wonderful flavours.

Tracy 32:03

Perfect. I love cheese, so I'm easy on that one for sure. One thing to book before you go?

Briony 32:08

I'd say one of the various different tours. So whether you come out with Mountain Goat and we take you off to North Wales and do something exciting or whether you explore a little bit more of the city. I mean, ghost tours, food tours, history tours, there's so much on offer. As a city, you don't necessarily need to book things. Places like Chester Zoo have got so much availability. It will be busy, but you don't need to book in advance necessarily unless you want to go at Christmas and do one of their sort of events. But one of the tours I would say is worth getting in your diary before you go. Or if you're going to come for the races, just being cautious of those dates, it's worth getting your tickets early.

Tracy
32:48

Perfect. Now, if you're planning to visit, I guess check that if you're not wanting to go for the races, make sure that you check that the races aren't on because it sounds like it would be a— it sounds really busy. Well, thanks so much, Briony, for coming on this week and sharing all about Chester. It was great to have a chat with you, and, and hopefully, um, some of our listeners will, um, start considering putting Chester into their itineraries because it's a, it's a fabulous city. Absolutely worth visiting. As I say, another northern city. I mean, I love— always talk about York, Chester, Durham, Newcastle, Liverpool, Manchester. We've got some fantastic, fantastic cities to go and visit, and obviously, and also surrounded by some of the most beautiful countryside as well.

So yeah, thanks again, Briony.

Briony
33:27

Thanks for having me.

Tracy
33:29

That brings us to the end of another episode. Briony's full day in Chester is written up in the show notes at uktravelplanning.com. From the walls and the amphitheatre to the market and the Rows, along with a note on where the accessible routes are. Now, if a Mountain Goat tour out to Wales sounds like your sort of day, our code UKTRAV10— that's UKTRAV10— gives you 10% off. And the booking link to Mountain Goat is on that same page in the show notes. And the booking link is in the show notes too, as well as our free UK trip planning roadmap if you're still in the early stages of planning. Now, if this episode has raised a question about your own itinerary, do leave me a voice message through SpeakPipe and I will do my best to answer it on a future episode. Until next week though, as always, happy UK travel planning.

Links from this episode

Show notes

Briony's full day in Chester, the accessible routes and every place mentioned: uktravelplanning.com/episode-224

Mountain Goat day tours

Use code **UKTRAV10** for 10% off a Mountain Goat tour, including the North Wales day trip Briony describes. The booking link is in the show notes.

Free UK Trip Planning Roadmap

Still working out the shape of your trip? Our free roadmap takes you through the planning step by step. The link is in the show notes.

More Before You Go episodes

Edinburgh, York (219) and the Lake District (221). Every episode is in our Podcast Episode Guide.

Got a question about your own itinerary? Leave Tracy a voice message through SpeakPipe on uktravelplanning.com and she'll do her best to answer it on a future episode.

This transcript was made from the episode audio and lightly tidied for reading. Check opening times and prices before you travel.