

# **Finding Your Ideal Accommodation: Tips, Tricks, and Travel Tales with Tracy, Melissa, and Shelly**

## **The Global Travel Planning Podcast discusses how to choose accommodation for your travels**

Tracy: How do you find the perfect place to stay when you travel? In this episode, Melissa, Shelley and I share how we search, book and choose accommodation along with must have amenities, money saving tips, and our best and worst stays. Hi and welcome to the Global Travel Planning Podcast. I'm your host, Tracy Collins, who with my expert guests will take you on a weekly journey to destinations around the globe, providing travel inspiration, experience, itinerary ideas, practical tips and more to help you plan your next travel adventure. Hello and welcome to episode 43 of the Global Travel Planning Podcast. So this week myself, Melissa and Shelly are going to be talking about how we choose accommodation for our travels. But before we do that, we're just going to, have a quick chat about what we've been up to over the last month in terms of travels, if we've done anything exciting and what plans we have over the next month. Because I, know at the end of March that episode we're probably going to have some exciting travels to share with you. So, that's the first thing I'm going to start off with. but before that, before I invite Shelley and Melissa to chat, I'm just going to give a big shout out to Laura Sternum Diltz, who came onto Speak Pipe to share her travel plans for this year, which was great. So thanks, Laura for coming on and sharing that. And, remember, if you leave a message on Speak Pipe, you get a chance to have a shout out, on the podcast, which is really cool.

## **Shelley from Solo Her Way just returned from Sri Lanka**

Right, let's start with you, Shelly. What have you been up to this last month and just share again your website. That'd be good for everybody to know.

Kerry Heaney: Hi, I'm Shelley with Solo Her Way. And, I just returned from Sri Lanka. So I just spent about two and a half weeks, in Sri Lanka and it was, it was really, really nice. I enjoyed it. I traveled all around the country. I went from Colombo all the way to the hill country and, all the way back down by the beaches. So it was really nice. the culture, the food, the people were amazing. I learned a lot about, the different foods, about, gems about, you know, the different arts and crafts that they do. so it was, yeah, it was really, really nice.

Tracy: I think, you'll have to come on and chat about Sri Lanka, Shelly, because Doug and I are planning to get there hopefully in April if all things work out. So it'll be really good to have a chat with you so we can get some tips off you for that. So remember, that's Shelly from soloherway.com now we have, which is. Here's the yank from our obviously Brit Aussie Yank, episode at the end of every month.

## **Melissa: I haven't done a lot of travel in last month**

So let's talk to the Aussie contingent. So, Melissa, how are you?

Kerry Heaney: Yes, hi, Tracy.

Melissa Kailey: Ah, I'm really good. but look, I haven't done a lot of travel or probably any travel in the last month. But, when I'm not traveling around the world, I love getting out and exploring Brisbane. So I've been to a couple of new shows that are playing in Brisbane. You can read all about it on the [brisbanetravelguide.com](http://brisbanetravelguide.com) but something really exciting that I've been planning at the moment, which also involves Shelly, given Shelly's in Queensland at the moment, I'm going to take Shelley up to Bundaberg, in a couple of weeks, which is the southern end of the Great Barrier Reef, and super exciting. Shelly and I are going to sleep on the reef. So we're going to stay on a pontoon for the night and sleep under the stars for a night. We're also going to go to Lady Elliot island, which you can only get to by plane. it's just been named the best snorkeling place in the world. and we also hope to see some really cute little turtles being hatched, because it's that time of the season in Bundaberg. So next time we're on, me and Shelley are hopefully going to tell you all about that.

Tracy: I have to say, when you told me about your plants, I was really, really jealous. I was like, oh, that sounds so amazing. So I can't wait to hear all about it. though Doug and I fly to Morocco on Tuesday, so I shouldn't feel too sorry for my.

Melissa Kailey: That's pretty cool.

Tracy: So over the next month, we are flat. Well, we're in Morocco for 10 days. We're doing an intrepid tour, which, Melissa and I did two intrepid tours last year of India, which we actually still need to talk about on the podcast, which were amazing. so we decided that because we just haven't had a lot of time to book an intrepid tour of Morocco. So that's what we're doing. We're there for, 10 days, eight days of which are the tour, and then we fly to Madrid on the 28th of February, and then we have sometime in Madrid, Seville, and possibly, into Portugal by the time we speak next. So that. That's

m. That's our plans anyway.

Kerry Heaney: That's amazing.

Tracy: I'M pretty excited.

Melissa Kailey: Awesome.

Tracy: yeah, so anyway, we'll, we can, we can, we'll catch up on that next month.

## **This episode focuses on how we choose accommodation for our travels**

But this episode we thought we'd talk about how we choose accommodation for our travels. Now it's, I, I find it important if

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you get the wrong accommodation, it can have a huge impact on your trip. for sure. But I thought what I'd start off with, with asking because we're, we're, we're all in our kind of well, late 40s or, or late 50s. I'm not going to say who, might be me, but. So as we get older, I think our preferences potentially have changed. Now I know for me it certainly has and I certainly look for a little bit more of the luxury option. We do tend to mix and match. So we'll do the luxury, with, with some more budget accommodation and in the UK we'll do. We spend a lot of time in BnBs. We really like B&Bs because they're local and you get to meet people and it's just, they're also cheaper and you get a breakfast

which is a really good budget option. So what about you, Melissa? Have you have, have your accommodation option choices changed as you've got older?

Melissa Kailey: I actually don't find they really have to be honest. you know, I'm a bit of a budget adventure type of traveler. Ah. So, you know, I guess the only thing I'd say when I was in my 20s, I was happy to stay in a dorm room, which I definitely would never stay in a dorm room. Now. not, not at, not at all. But I'm still okay with the budget kind of thing. It doesn't bother me. There are other factors to me that are way more important when it comes to accommodation as a, compared to price. So yeah, I, no, maybe I'm, you know, I'm the one who's in the late 40s. So maybe when I'm in 10 years, when I'm on my late, maybe they might have changed a little bit. But no, I don't find it's changed too much for me at this stage. No.

Tracy: Okay. What about you, Shelley?

Kerry Heaney: Definitely, definitely. They have changed. When I first started, especially full time traveling, I was like, oh, I can do this, I could sacrifice, you know, whatever it was now. No, no. Ah. As time has gone by, my preferences have evolved and I'm, I'm with you. I'm more of the luxury mid range. it doesn't have to for me. It doesn't have to be fancy, it doesn't. Just has to be clean. It has to have nice towels, nice linens. it, you know, wi fi, you know, basics that some people take for granted, but when you're on the road, those basics are really important, so.

Tracy: Oh, yeah, absolutely. I agree.

Kerry Heaney: Definitely. Yeah.

Tracy: Okay. So we all have kind of different preferences than when it comes to accommodation. I think, I mean, we, honestly, we are flexible. And just thinking about the accommodation over the next month, I'm obviously looking at places that are Airbnb type, so we can do washing. Because getting your washing done on the road can be a bit difficult in hotels, especially in more expensive hotels, where they seem to charge a lot of money per item to wash things. so that's something. So.

### **Shelley says the first thing she does when planning a trip is research**

So what about when it comes to, you know, you're planning a trip, what is the first thing that you do when you're looking for a place to stay? Shelley?

Kerry Heaney: The first thing I do is I will. I believe in the hotel points. and so I will join. Even if I stay one time, I will join. So what I usually do, I'm planning another upcoming trip. What I'll do is I'll go on the hotel apps. I'll look and see, if there's, you know, any deals they'll send you, you know, percentages off, see how many points I have. I'll. I'll look that way. The other thing I do, which may be a little unconventional, maybe you ladies do the same, is I use my vpn. So I will switch my VPN to that, country, that city, and then I will look for their prices, the local prices, because oftentimes for myself, if you're looking at a US site, and most sites have different categories, you're looking at US site, believe it or not, they have US prices for travel. So if you switch it to another site, that's maybe Spain or Italy or wherever you may choose, you might see a substantial difference in the price and also the accommodations offered, because a lot of those accommodations are not on these big sites. So those are like my two key.

## **First thing I do before looking at accommodation is research the area**

Tracy: Okay. What about you, Melissa? When it comes to finding accommodation?

Melissa Kailey: the very first thing I do before even actually looking accommodation is I research the area and try and work out where the best area is to stay. In my view, there's no point actually looking at accommodation

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Melissa Kailey: until you have worked out the area you want to stay. And so to do that, I normally look at a lot of different travel blogs and try and work out where everyone recommends to stay in terms of the area, I might map out, some of the attractions I want to see and try and work out. Is there a central area I want to stay, you know, using Google Maps and try and work out where the restaurants are or, you know, whatever. It kind of depends on the trip. But yeah. So before I even start looking at accommodation, I do my research on what area of the city I want to stay in.

Tracy: Yeah, that's a good point. I have to say. We tend to look at how we're getting to this place. So if we're going by train, then I'll look at what the areas like around the train station if we're driving. And particularly in the UK where you've got some cities where getting parking is incredibly difficult. So you have to be thinking, if I've got a higher car, am I going to actually be able to park anywhere near the accommodation or am I going to be miles away and how would I feel about that? So it's checking that sort of thing. so that's something I do, I must admit for this just looking at hotels in Madrid the other day I just kind of put in Madrid and just saw what came up in our price range. See, you know, just checked where it was close to public transport and I've kind of gone off that.

I've booked anything yet, but that's kind of my initial research. What about reviews? Do you check reviews? Do you trust them?

Kerry Heaney: yes, I, I want to make one notation about the other thing about booking. I don't know if either one of you have heard of hood maps or, or it's kind of like when you look at Google and you search the area and along with Melissa, I agree, like one of my things is it has to be walkable for me in the major areas. Well, hood maps, they will show you it's made by locals. So it's a combination of almost like an urban kind of dictionary type thing and Google combined. But they'll tell you the areas, whether it's students or whether it's, you know, maybe retirees, maybe it's business, and it kind of goes. But it's flowing all the time and it's changing. So that's another resource.

### **Do you believe in hotel reviews? Melissa says she doesn't**

Okay, now I'll answer the other question in case he wants to fix it. okay, I'm, I'm 50, 50 on the reviews. I've, I, I really don't trust a lot of the reviews. I would say a lot of sites, you know, if you have credible websites like ours, that are, People don't pay for our reviews. And we're ethical about reviews. You would be surprised how many reviews are bought, and how many reviews are changed. So I look at it, I look for keywords in the review, and if any of those show a red flag, then I just move on.

Tracy: That's a good idea. I must admit. I. I use booking.com a lot for checking, out accommodation. And I always look, when I've put in my criteria, it's always an 8 review of 8 or above. I don't look at anything less than that. That's kind of our criteria. And then I do check just to see if things like if it's going to be noisy, because you can. We were reading a review the other day and it was something about, they said something.



Luckily they had earplugs. And Doug was like, why does it say they've got earplugs? And then I read a bit further and it's on this very noisy street in Madrid. There you go. So it was kind of that clue. So Doug was like, oh, no, because he's a very light sleeper, so that wouldn't work for him. But, what about you, Melissa? What about reviews? Do you believe them?

Melissa Kailey: Okay, I'm gonna say yes and no. and a little bit different from what you guys have said. Oh, gosh, there's some whinges in the world. I read some and, you know, wait a minute.

Kerry Heaney: Can you translate that for the American?

Melissa Kailey: Okay. Some people will just complain about anything and everything.

Kerry Heaney: Okay, I was reading something the other.

Melissa Kailey: Day and someone was complaining about that the hotel, they. The hotel bar they stayed at wouldn't allow them to byo. And they gave them a one review, a one star review. And I was like, oh, my God. Okay, well, like, it's not allowed. Whatever. so look, what do I do is I do read reviews, but I do read a lot of them and I choose to kind of balance it out. So I won't just read one or two. And they go, oh, this place is awful. I'll read, you know, quite a few and go kind of see, overall, what are people saying? Because you just can't. I just think some people are super radical. But the other thing you need to think about is reviews as well, is to make sure you're looking, you know, like you're sorting it by, like, recent, because sometimes the way they show reviews might be different. And, so make sure you sort it by recent because hotels change hands all the

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Melissa Kailey: time. So, you know, you might be reading some bad reviews and it's changed hand and now the hotel has run much better, or vice versa. It used to be run really well and now it's not. So, yeah, I'm just going to say, make sure you're looking at recent reviews and just read a few and give it a balanced approach and try to read through those one stars because someone's having a good old complain.

Tracy: Absolutely. And I totally agree with you on that.

## **What things do you have to have in your accommodation when booking a hotel**

Now, what about when you come to book a hotel? When you what. What things do you have to have in your accommodation? So not hotel. Airbnb. Ah, bnb. What is it that you're looking for now? I know, and I'm waiting for Charlotte to say air conditioning, because. I know, because I just know that is kind of top of the list when, I speak with that most of the North Americans. For my UK Travel Planet London Travel Planet sites. It's always. Aircon is a huge. Now, really, we don't need it very often in the UK. But come on then, Shelley, what do you have to have in a hotel? I'm going to throw in their WI fi. That absolutely is a total must for me. It's got to have free WI fi and good WI fi.

Kerry Heaney: Yes. Stable WI fi. Stable WI fi. yes, Aircon. Stable WI fi. It has to be safe. So it goes back to the area. It goes back to whether you're in a hotel. Airbnb. So if you know the locking system, like, I know that sounds petty, but the locking system on the door, I mean, is it a key card? Is it a swipe to get in and out of the building? Do you

have a doorman? You know, I mean, that for me is a big deal.

Tracy: I think that's important, Shelly, because, I mean, as a solo, solo female traveler, you've got to think about those things.

Kerry Heaney: Yes. And. And also, you know, if it's a hotel, I like staying up on an upper floor. But besides that, I mean, my basics are, like you said, air conditioning, WI Fi. I have to have some place to make coffee. So if it's a tea kettle, it has something just to get the first cup of coffee in in the morning. That's it. maybe a little refrigerator. But then again, I like clean, nice linens, towels and hot water. And I'm good.

Tracy: Okay. Yeah, well, I'm with you on the kettle. We have to have a kettle. and we have to have a private bathroom. Kettle. Private bathroom, yes. yeah, those are kind of key Considerations. It's got to have good WI fi because I can't do my job if I haven't got decent WI fi. What about you, Melissa?

Melissa Kailey: It kind of depends for me on the kind of trip that I'm doing. Like, you know, there are some trips that you're kind of doing a sightseeing city trip and you might only be there for one or two nights. So my requirements m might be a bit less. I might be willing to compromise a little bit more if I'm not there for long. But if I'm going to be there for like a week or like, you know, like a beachy type of holiday where I'm relaxing, then I want a little bit more. I might want space and I want. I might want, you know, like, you're talking about. I mean, the WI fi is not huge for me as a traveler. as a blogger. Then, yes, I want the WI fi. and yes, you know, if it's hot, I want air con. If it's cold, I want heating. It's just kind of a tricky one because it kind of depends on what sort of trip you're doing as to what the requirements are. But actually, sorry, I just want to make a note as, as, you know, a family travel blogger, one thing that is super, super

important and maybe guys don't know about this is particularly in Asia. Asia thinks that four to 20 kids can sleep in one bed. So you will see a hotel room and it'll go sleep 10. And you look in it, you look into it a bit further, and it just has one bed. So I'm going to say, as a family travel blogger, it's really important that everyone has a bed or, you know, it's a double bed for two people. That's so important. And it's really, really hard. Hotels, for some reason, just don't make that stuff easy. So I'm just going to say as a family travel blogger that everyone actually has a place to sleep and we're not all expected to sleep together.

Kerry Heaney: That's a good, that's a good point. Because I've been in the situation as a solo female traveler where they will put me in, like, a twin bed and they'll shove me, like, in basically a closet because I'm one person.

Melissa Kailey: Yeah.

Kerry Heaney: And no windows. It's literally like a closet. So, yeah, you really have to, in certain countries, really look into that. And also the other thing, Tracy, I think you said it previously, laundry. A place to do your laundry or a place that can do your Laundry, because especially for me, I stay longer. my average is like a month in one

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Kerry Heaney: place. And that's essential.

Tracy: Yeah, definitely. And that's easier in some places than others. You know, in Asia, it's not a problem to get your laundry done, and it doesn't cost a lot of money. But traveling around Europe, which. Which we're doing it, it's really a huge consideration.

And we had that when we were traveling around before, Christmas, when we did about six different countries and Christmas markets and extra. We were all over the place. Luckily, we stayed with a friend at Doug's in Stockholm, so we could do some washing then. But it was, you know, you look at the cost of the. The actual hotel charges to wash stuff, and you're like, no. So we do take a washing line and we take those, ah, washing sheets with us as well. So we do as much as we can, in the hotels. but, yeah, that's it.

### **When booking a hotel, do you go for breakfast or do you leave it**

What about. I'm gonna ask about breakfast, because that's another one I know when I look at booking, it's like, so do we take it with a breakfast or do we not now quite often? So Doug loves to have his breakfast. So we kind of look at the cost and decide if it's worth it or if it's just, you know, if there's a. If we look again on Google Maps. So we've got a hotel. There's. Look, there's a supermarket five minutes away. We'll go and stock up, which is why we generally will try and always get a fridge, because of that. But, you know what? You. Do you go for breakfast or do you not. Do you book it or do you leave it?

Kerry Heaney: I don't. I don't. Because I hate to say this, but sometimes I value my sleep a lot more than I do an egg. So I find myself looking at the clock and I'm like, oh, I got like 20 seconds to get down to breakfast. Never mind. I figure if. If I really. I do your trick, Tracy, I, I'll go to the store, I'll get a couple things to have to snack on, and then I'll go out and have breakfast. Or if I'm staying in an Airbnb, I'll cook something later. But it's for me. It's not worth the price. And if you really, really want it, you could always purchase it.

Tracy: That's true. What about you, Melissa?

Melissa Kailey: Yeah, I'm, probably like what you said, Tracy. Like, I'll weigh the price up, and if I think, oh, wow, that's really cheap. I will do it. But otherwise, generally, no. And mainly the main reason for me is because when I'm in a city, I want to enjoy the city. I don't want to be stuck in my hotel. So, you know, like, if you're in Europe, for example, I want to go somewhere where there's a really cool square and sit on a, you know, a nice table and have some breakfast while I'm watching the world go by. So, yeah, I will do it if I think it's a good price. But otherwise it's not really a big deal for me.

Tracy: actually, that's. That's brought back a memory when you said that, Melissa, because I remember Doug and I staying at hotel in Sarlacc and the Doi Doyle in France, maybe about 10 years ago. And we didn't have breakfast at the hotel, but we found this amazing cafe on this wonderful street that did Le Petit dejeuner complete. And that's what we had every morning. We went and we had our, little bit of breakfast and we watched the world go by. As long as we've got a couple of tea first thing in the morning, we're happy to then wait a little bit. But Doug's got to have his breakfast. That's something. He's like, no, we've got to have breakfast. But as long as we find somewhere or have something in the room. The one thing, it's some places I do love breakfast. So we stay at this. We always stay at the same hotel in Bangkok, and they do the best breakfast in the world. And I could not stay at that hotel. It's, the chatrium at Riverside and in Bangkok. So shout out to them if I could not stay at that hotel without having the breakfast. Because, honestly, it is just magnificent. Absolutely magnificent.

**Now, let's talk about location. What about you, Melissa, when it comes to accommodation**

Now, let's talk about location. Decided. Now, I kind of mentioned before about, for us it's around train stations looking at that. I am very keen when I talk to people about where they stay in London. I say stay in the center because you don't want to be spending your precious time traveling in and out of a, ah, city, for example, to go and see the site. However, I want to ask you this one, Shelley, because obviously you spend a month in a place, so I just. The thought of spending, I don't know how much, how many thousands it would cost to spend a month in the center of London in a hotel. So what would you do in those sort of circumstances? What would you look at for location? If you want to stay somewhere that was, you know, like a major tourist destination.

Kerry Heaney: well, what my strategy is is usually I'll book a hotel for like two or three days, so then I get to see the area. And then either previously, which normally previously, I will have already done some research for Airbnbs or B and Bs. And then once I'm there and I have those two or three days, I do stay in the city center because I do a lot of walking, but I will go ahead and I will look physically at that area. So once I'm there, it gives me a couple days leeway to check it out. I have been known to text an Airbnb or a BNB owner and ask if I could actually see it. And sometimes they say yes, sometimes it's occupied. but

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Kerry Heaney: that's, that's usually what I do. I tend to stay in the center. There's more things to do. The other thing that I do for location is make sure that there's many day trips I can take from that location. So I'm planning an upcoming trip after Melissa and my trip coming up in March, that I want to take several day trips, but I don't want to lug my luggage like every other night.

Tracy: So can you spill the beans about where you're going? Because you said, mentioned about this trip now. I need to know, Shelley, and still.

Kerry Heaney: Unseen, still in the place. but anyways, but I'm trying, I'm trying to see how far I can go out from that city center on day trips or maybe even one overnight that will be cost effective. so that's, that plays into me for long, long range.

Tracy: Yeah, I know that's, that's a good tip. And I know we, we're looking at Madrid for three nights, so we'll stay in a kind of hotel in the center. But because we're going to be in Seville for longer, I'm, I'm looking at the apartment like that' to be in the center. It's going to be a little bit cheaper. Obviously, a lot of European cities as well now that don't allow Airbnbs because it's impacted so heavily on, the cost of housing for, you know, residents of those cities. So, yeah, I can understand, you know, why, why it's more difficult in terms of being able to, to get that accommodation that's not a hotel these days and those in those kind of center of those cities. What about you, Melissa, when it comes to accommodation, what do you, what do you look for location wise?

Melissa Kailey: I mean, Location for me is the number one thing I look at. And again, it depends on what sort of trip I'm doing. Like, so, like, what you kind of touched on, if it's a city, a sightseeing sort of trip, I need to be close to the attractions or, the main train station or bus stop or whatever. But I mean, you know, I also do family trips where I might be doing, like a beach trip in Asia somewhere. So I want to be, you know, I might want to be on the beach or I might want to be really, close to where the main swimming area is or where the restaurants are. So it just depends on, the sort of trip. But I think too many people get lost in the actual accommodation and don't think about the location. Location needs to come before accommodation.



Tracy: Yeah, yeah, I guess so. And I think, yeah, you're right. I mean, you have to think, like, if you're arriving into, like we arrived into Germany, into Berlin, center of Berlin, so we didn't stay around the Bahnhof this time because it's really expensive. But I made sure that I found accommodation that was on a direct line that we could get to. So I think that's important. The last thing you want to do is arrive and think, how am I going to get to my accommodation that might be 20, 25 minutes away? Because then, or even further then, you're going to negotiate public transportation, transport, which brings all sorts of other issues. And if you're driving yourself as well, you've got to think about, you know, can you navigate safely around that city is the parking. Although those sort, of considerations come in.

Kerry Heaney: Now, just to add one thing to that, it sets off the cost also.

Melissa Kailey: Yes, yes, yes.

Kerry Heaney: so you may think you're saving money by staying a little bit further out, but by the time you pay for transportation, your time and the aggravation, sometimes it's not worth it.

Melissa Kailey: Absolutely. I. I was going to say that too. Like, if you're looking for somewhere cheap and you actually choose the cheapest place, it might actually not be the cheapest place because then you. Every day you're going to have to get a cab or because there's no public transport or whatever, or there's nowhere nowhere near buy to get food or whatever. So you've got to.

Tracy: Yeah, so, yeah, that's something. I share that a lot in terms of, talking about London again, because we deal with a lot of kind of accommodation requests around

London and often, you know, people say, well, we've got a tight Budget, so we don't want to stay in the centre, so we're going to be further out and then they'll tell us the accommodation. And it's miles away from a bus stop, it's miles away from a tube stop, it's maybe a train sometimes that they've got to get out. So by the time they've added the cost. Exactly what you said. The cost of getting in and out rush hour in London on the tube is not fun. If you're going to get cabs, it's going to cost you. And also time. and also if you've had a busy day out sightseeing, the last thing, I certainly do not want to have a 20, 30, 40 minute walk to my accommodation. I, I just want to be, come off the public transport or whatever and then just get into my accommodation. So that's a huge kind of thought process. And if you've got luggage when you've got, when you arrive in a place as well, dragging luggage through, you don't want to do that. So. Yeah, I, I agree. It's. You've got to kind of consider what the style of your trip was in terms of are you going to be, you know, are you traveling with family or are you going to be, you know, is it a beach holiday and it's just you or you have you got loads of luggage, is it going to be a month long trip? And then really sort of think what will, what will

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Tracy: work in terms of accommodation and the area that you need stay in? I think that's true.

## **Now do we book direct or do we use third party platforms**

Now do we book direct or do we use third party platforms? This is a great question. Now I have to say I've been using booking.com for years, so we do use that and that is my go to because I always book with free cancellation. Always. so that, that's who I use

and kind of, I'm upfront about that. Sometimes it may be more expensive but that's, that is how I've rolled for a long time in terms of go on booking.com and I look at it. So what about you, Shelley?

Kerry Heaney: I use again I use the hotel apps. I will also use different apps like hotel.com hotel, tonight. Different, different apps. I will use the booking.com and different Airbnb obviously. But what I'll do is I'll research everything and then I cross check it. So I'll research it on let's say the Bonvoy app and then I will go on the direct website and then I'll go on booking.com and then I'll see which one. And then depending on if there's a huge price difference, that's the platform I'll book on. Or if I want to make sure I get my points, then I will either book directly or, book from the app.

Tracy: I think the thing that always puts me off about, booking some like Airbnb is you've got to pay it up front. I quite like the ability to pay it when I check in. That's always a big plus for me, I have to say.

Kerry Heaney: Yeah, the Airbnb, the only thing with Airbnb I've found is that it's good if you do it through the app. a lot I've run into. Some owners will want to take you off the app and talk and sometimes it's okay. But, basically, if you stay on the app, Airbnb does have a resolution team. So like you were saying, Tracy, if you pay for something up front and you get there and it's a disaster or two days in, it falls apart. Then if you have a valid, you know, concern or complaint, they are very. I have to say, I've had really good experiences with them intervening and refunding me my money back.

Tracy: That's good to know. What about you, Melissa, in terms of when you come to book accommodation, what do you use?

Melissa Kailey: I'm pretty much like you, Tracy. I tend to look, use booking.com all the time. and I only book, ah, accommodation. Ah, that can be cancelled even if it's extra. I'm going to book accommodation. That's cancelable. the funny thing is, it's really odd is that, it's actually nine times out of ten more expensive to book direct. I know. You know, I'm in a lot of Facebook travel groups and people always go, oh, book direct. Book to correct. Book direct. But it's often more expensive. Not cancelable, if that's a word. and. Yeah, and just not flexible. which is really, really strange. so, yeah, mostly booking.com, i will also book from Qantas because I like to. I like Qantas points. And Qantas often have some really cool, deals where you'll get like crazy amounts of points. But if I don't get the crazy amounts of points, I'll just go through booking dot com.

Tracy: Yeah, that's right. I think, ah, they.

## **Shelley says free cancellation is important because you never know**

What about you, Shelley, when it comes to free cancellation, is that something that's important for you as well?

Kerry Heaney: I was gonna say, I always do free Cancellation, that's one thing. If you join a lot of these hotel programs, one of the perks is you get free cancellation. So, I always do that because you never know. You don't know.

Tracy: No, absolutely. I remember we headed to Paris a few years ago. We actually went, one time I did not book with free cancellation. Why did things happen the one time, the one time you've not done something? And I felt, and I was actually really ill, but we went, I got medication and I was all right. But to be honest, if we had had free

cancellation, I probably wouldn't have gone. But so I always make sure that I do it now and I always did before that. As I say, it was a kind of one off I think.

## **Let's talk about our favorite hotels or worse places we've stayed at**

But now let's, let's talk about our favorite hotels or worse. We're going to talk about favorite, I think first and then want to talk about any horror stories or, or places without naming them, that we've stayed at because I think that'll be good. So, what about you, Melissa? Your favorite place that you've ever stayed at?

Melissa Kailey: Yeah, I mean I, I did a bit of research before the podcast to try and think about this. And what I came up with is, about a year or two ago I went to Khao Sock in Thailand, which is in their jungle. And and they have a big, they have a big lake. And we stayed in like some over water villas. So you're on the lake, you're in overwater and you can just jump off your villa straight in swimming and stuff. But you're surrounded by jungle and so during the day and night you can hear monkeys and hear elephants. Couldn't. I didn't see any elephants but did hear, see, sorry monkeys, but definitely heard the elephants. And yeah, it was really cool, amazing

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Melissa Kailey: experience. And then you know, they've got kayak that you can kayak around and yeah, you're basically in the middle of nowhere and it was super cool.

Tracy: That sounds amazing. What about you, Shelley? Got a favorite.

Kerry Heaney: You know, I like Melissa. I was trying to think before the podcast and this sounds horrible but like I've been so many nice, you know, really. So it's, it's hard to pinpoint but I could wrap up the best and the worst all together.

Tracy: Okay, go for it, go for it.

Kerry Heaney: Answer. I'll answer them both at the same time.

## **Melissa had bed bugs on her first trip to Italy**

So, my first trip to Italy, I, I'll make this very short first trip to Italy I went to, I flew into Bari. So I Was told Bari was going to be these little nonnas rolling pasta in the street. All this stuff, all this fantasy, whatever. Okay, no, anyways, so I, I went. I had booked an Airbnb, did my due diligence. I should have had the red flag when the taxi driver dropped me off very quickly and left very quickly. So I went in. It was not what it was supposed to be. fast forward two hours and a lot of communication, not in English. And, basically I got kicked out of the lobby by an 85 year old Nona. It was. She was like maybe four feet tall, screaming at me in Italian. It was like, I was like, what is happening? So I'm out on the street, sitting on my pink suitcase in the middle of Italy. And so fast forward, I'm like, okay, oh my God. I found a way to get to a taxi because there was no taxi, no rideshare. Found a way to the taxi, looked up a hotel on one of the apps. Person didn't speak English, showed them. Okay, okay, I take. You took me now this is later at night. I can't see. A lot of stuff took me and did not take me to where I was supposed to be. But it wasn't a scary thing. He just didn't know. He pulls over. And I ended up, in. I didn't know at the time until the morning. I ended up in the most beautiful town in Italy, Polignano. As you know, Tracy.

Tracy: Yes, yes.

Kerry Heaney: And I was met by a very gracious host very late at night and I was brought to a bnb. And not an Airbnb, but a bnb. And it was the old stone with a chandelier and all that. I mean, it was, it was small, but it was gorgeous. And when I woke up the next morning, not knowing where I was, I opened up the drapes and there was the blue turquoise water, whitewashed buildings. I mean, it was amazing. So from getting kicked out by an 85 year old Nona, all the way to fast forward this fabulous, you know, trip, I mean, you know, and I was only supposed to stay a couple days. I ended up staying two and a half weeks.

Melissa Kailey: So.

Tracy: Wow.

Kerry Heaney: so it. Yeah, so you never know how things are gonna go. So that was kind of like one I could think of. Best and worst altogether.

Tracy: Yeah, no, that's it. That's quite, that's quite a story. Quite an experience as well, Shelly. So you're lucky that you ended up in somewhere. That was, that was so amazing. Have you had any horror stories, Melissa?

Melissa Kailey: Oh, you know, I'm pretty. I'm pretty easy going and nothing really bothers me that much. But probably, one of my recent horror stories was when I was in the UK and I stayed at a very nice hotel, but I ended up with bed bugs and I had bites all over my face and my arms and hands, and it was awful. yeah. And like, you know, I, you know, I've traveled a lot and this was only recent. Well, I say recently, it was

probably about two or three years ago. And, yeah, it was, it was awful. But it just. It was a very, very nice hotel. So it just kind of proved to me that, ah, you know, you kind of think of bedbugs as somewhere where you stay that's a disgusting, you know, dorm place. But this was not that. and so much so that, you know, I took photos and videos of the bedbugs and you could obviously see them on me. And, the hotel gave me my money back. So, they certainly took it serious, which was good to hear.

Tracy: But, yeah, I think it's been a huge problem, in, Europe over the last couple of years, actually. I have. I'm going to say this, I'm going to touch wood here because with all the travels I've done, I've never come across bed bugs yet. But you just know, like you say you don't.

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Tracy: It could be a beautiful hotel and it just is one of those things. So, yes, hopefully it will never happen. Have you ever had experienced bedbugs, Shelley, or not?

Kerry Heaney: One time. One time. And believe it or not, it was.

Melissa Kailey: In the U.S. wow.

Tracy: Yeah. Yeah. So there you go. You just don't know.

## **Doug and I booked a place in the Daintree in Queensland**

Yeah, well, my horror story was in our Queensland. I have to share this with you. So



Doug and I had booked this, amazing, amazing place in the Daintree. And, it had fabulous reviews and it was basically like you had to go through. Through the Daintree forest. And we had our own, like, little hut kind of thing, but really beautifully, like a gorgeous, like, it. Just beautiful little hut. And there was like five or six of these kind of huts around this, this hotel. But the day we arrived, the people who owned it had. Well, they'd left the day before and basically the, new owners, they weren't arriving for another week, so they basically hired a couple of people to come in and do the cooking and look after it. Well, they couldn't cook, they couldn't organize, they couldn't have run a bath. To be honest. It was awful. It was the work. We were there I think for two or three nights and it was just honestly. And then when we checked out they tried to charge us for the coke that Doug had been drinking which we had brought, brought with us. It was just.

Melissa Kailey: Oh my gosh.

Tracy: It was. Honestly it was the worst experience and it was, it wasn't cheap either. You know the Daintree is expensive so we have not been back to that particular place so hopefully it's it'll have sorted itself out. I think we, we got lots of apologies from the new owners because it was kind of between owners but honestly it was just not, it was not the best day that we've ever had and we've had some, we've been to some wonderful places in, in Queensland for sure but that one definitely didn't didn't impress us, that's for sure.

**So have you got any last minute tips or thoughts about booking accommodation**

So have you got any last minute tips or thoughts, anything that you want to share about, you know, that we can share with our listeners about booking accommodation? I think my, my tip is always to, to you know, do the research and, and spend some time thinking about where you're going to stay, wherever your budget really and, and kind of check out as m, you know, as Melissa said the area and Shelley said also check out things like you know, the loyalty programs because those are a really good idea if you need to save a bit of money. Is there anything else that you think we should cover?

Girls?

Kerry Heaney: I, I think the key for me is not just me but a tip would be be flexible on your times if possible. If you could book like a shoulder season or the other thing too is when you're looking at some of these booking like booking.com or any of these apps, you can look at their price calendar and you can see if the hotel is full, if the hotel. Maybe there's a holiday that you don't know about because many times I arrive in a country and I don't know there's a holiday but just be flexible because often the shoulder season the weather's still pretty good and if you are flexible you'll be able to get a much better price.

Tracy: Well, I'm hoping that's the case in Spain and Portugal. Next month I will report, I will report back.

### **Next month's topic will be packing. What our big packing tips are**

Well, so I think next month's topic, which I've just made up now, I'm just gonna say so I think next month's topic, I think let's talk about packing because that's a huge thing for me right now because we have potentially a three month trip back to Australia and, and

I'm only taking a small little pull along bag so I have to figure out exactly what I'm going to take with me for the next few months. I may be sending a suitcase back to Australia though. But yeah, so that's good. So let's talk about packing. What our big packing tips are. Our packing, best packing wins and hacks and our kind of maybe our packing nightmares as well. Let's talk about those next month. But yeah, so again, just want to share with our listeners where we can find you. So whereabouts are you, Shelly, in terms of your website, social media?

Kerry Heaney: it's solo her way and it's [soloherway.com](http://soloherway.com) and I do have travel guides for Sri Lanka. I have other information of different areas. So yeah, check me out.

Tracy: Perfect.

Melissa Kailey: And Melissa, my family travel website's Thrifty Family Travels. I've also got Queensland travel guide and Brisbane travel guide and I have the practical travel guide on social media.

Tracy: Wonderful. I tell you what, between the three of us we've got, we've got loads of loads of resources, Websites, the podcast, social media. Honestly give us all a follow and make sure that you join our Facebook group. So we've got the global travel planning Facebook group but Melissa's also started a new Facebook group which we're all in and moderating. So do you want to share that Facebook group as well, Melissa?

Melissa Kailey: Yes, I think. Is it over 50s women's travel? I can't remember exactly the title. Is that it?

Kerry Heaney: Yes.

Tracy: Yeah. So yeah.

Kerry Heaney: Yes.

Tracy: So it's. Do you want to say that again?

Melissa Kailey: So it's over 50

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Melissa Kailey: women's travel.

Tracy: Yeah. On Facebook. So I will put links in the show notes to you guys website, to social media and to the Facebook groups. So do pop over and join and as I said at the beginning, leave us a message on social speak pipe. We'll give you a shout out. We loved. We love to hear what you're up to, where you're traveling and yes, any questions about anything we talked about be absolutely fantastic. So you guys have a fantastic trip to Bundaberg and Lady Elliot Island. I cannot wait to hear all about it. Shelley, we need to get on and talk about Sri Lanka at some point as well because I'm very excited to hopefully get there in April.

**This is the final episode of the global Travel planning podcast**

So until next week, that's goodbye from me.

Kerry Heaney: Goodbye from me, Melissa, and Shelly.

Tracy: And happy Global travel planning. Thank you for joining us on this episode of the global Travel planning podcast. For more details and links to everything we discussed today. Check out the show notes @globaltravelplanning.com Remember, if you enjoyed the show, please consider leaving us a review on your favorite podcast app because your feedback helps us reach more travel enthusiasts just like you. Anyway, that leaves me to say, as always, happy global travel planning.

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