

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Hosts

Alex Payne, Jess Field, and Pam Lorg

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Alex: The three of us have been to London many times on points. It's one of those destinations that's so easy to visit on points and with so much to do, one that you can visit again and again and still not see it all. Listen in as we share how you can use points and miles to visit London.

Welcome to *Points Talk*®. We are three moms who've discovered how to leverage credit card welcome offers to get hundreds of thousands of dollars of travel expenses for nearly free. We've used credit card points and miles to take vacations to places like Hawaii, Paris, Greece, Maldives, Japan, and so much more. And the best part? We each still have 800 plus credit scores. Imagine being able to take the vacation of your dreams for nearly free. It's totally possible, and we're here to show you how.

Alex: Hey, I'm Alex.

Pam: And I'm Pam, Alex's mom.

Jess: And I'm Jess. Let's talk points. We previously recorded an episode about London, one of our most early episodes of the show. That episode is very out of date, so we figured now was a great time for a London refresher. All of us love London. In fact, I'm visiting London three times this year alone. You know I love a London trip. All right, there we go. It is a great place to visit, a great place to position if you want to continue visiting other parts of Europe, and so easy to do on points and miles. So Pam is going to kick us off with some of the best ways to get to London on points.

Pam: So, honestly, for 21 years, since my daughter, Lindsey, married a guy from London or from England, London has been my second home. I go there probably two or three times every year. I feel like I know it so well. The interesting thing is she is now moving to the United States. They are moving, their whole family. And so I'm kind of sad because I'm not sure, you know, how often I'll be going there now. It's kind of a sad thing because I too, I really, really love London. So many things to do. It's just so great to go somewhere and everybody you can understand what people are saying. I find the tube very easy to get around. You know, so many reasons, you know.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

And the other thing that is so great about it is that there are, it's so easy to get to because there's so many flights from the United States. I don't care almost anywhere you live. If you live near a halfway, you know, major city, there is some sort of flight. It's not direct, it's going to have a connection. And there are a lot of direct flights from the US to London also. Delta, American, Virgin, British Airways, United, JetBlue, Alaska, all of them fly direct, you know, from some city or other.

Now, I think the one thing that's kind of takes people back a little bit about planning trips to London or flights in particular is that the fees flying out of London are always high. I mean really high, especially if you're flying premium class. I am used to paying around \$700 for a business class seat flying out of London. I try to book a flight that is a lot less. I love to fly on United. It's like \$5.60.

Alex: Well, that's just going there.

Pam: Just going in.

Jess: Coming home, even on United, you're going to pay those higher amounts.

Pam: Yes. Yes, yes. So there is a UK Air Passenger Duty that you have to pay when you leave the UK, and that is what makes it a lot higher. So people will, you know, even for economy, you're going to be paying 200, 300, sometimes \$400, you know, for economy or premium economy. So it's just know that going in. Some airlines also charge fuel surcharges like British Airways. So even going into London where there's a lot of times I can fly into London and not pay much. If I'm flying on British Airways, I just have to, you know, because that's all I can find or that just works better. I just have to kind of cough it up. It's kind of rough.

So, like I said, all of us have been to London. All of us have been to London with the last within the last month. And so we're going to talk a little bit about how each of us has done it.

Now, my last two flights out of London, I like I said before, if I could, if I had unlimited United miles, I would fly direct from Denver to Heathrow. I would pay my \$5.60 on a business class flight. It would usually cost me about 80,000 miles

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

because I have their credit card. Perfect. But I don't have unlimited United miles. So I have to sometimes position to another airport to get a business class flight.

One of my favorite ones for quite a while has been Virgin Atlantic, Boston into Heathrow. I love that. I have been able to get that for I just had one for 48,000, um, points. And at the last minute, I changed it. This was coming back from London. I changed it and it was about \$700 in taxes and fees. And I changed it because I just found something that got me all the way back into, um, into Denver. It wasn't direct, but it just worked better. So I paid a little, I paid more in points, but a little less in surcharges.

Then AA, I just flew AA, um, there. I went from, um, Denver with a layover in LAX onto to Heathrow. Um, that was on, um, an AA flight, which was great. I like, you know, I like those flights. They're they're they're good. And usually might be sometimes more in points. Um, you're going to pay one or the other. You're either going to pay like 57.5k in points on one of those flights. It could be then flying booked on AA, but flying on a BA flight, but then you're going to be paying about close to \$1,000, or you can pay 100 and 12,000 or 70,000 and just get by with that with that cheaper \$5.60 in and about, I think we paid coming back, we paid \$400 coming back on business class this last time.

And so that's kind of what we do. I just wrote a post all about, would you rather pay more for points or more in taxes and fees? Because on my last trips, this was my quandary, and I had paid, I had found flights that were less in points and more in taxes and fees. And then I didn't like them. And I decided I need to find something better. And that is the magic of points of miles is that you can look at the last minute and see if there's something better that you like. My flight going there, my flight coming back to London, which was this last month, both times, I switched that very last week.

And so it just depends what matters to you most. I mean, for me, because I am the only person really that's using all my miles, I'm fine with paying a little bit more in taxes and fees. If I had a family, I wouldn't be. So that's how I usually have done it.

Alex: All right. So I have coming home, I have flown Delta booked via Virgin Atlantic. I have also done KLM to Amsterdam and then once I arrive in

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Amsterdam because Salt Lake City doesn't have very many direct flights to Europe. I think we've got Amsterdam, London and Paris. And the London flight is on Delta. And if I can't find it on Virgin Atlantic, sometimes it's really expensive to book on directly with Delta. And so the last time I went, I flew into Amsterdam, I flew premium economy for 40,000 miles. It was a great flight. It was actually at the time I booked, the regular economy was also 40,000 miles. I'm like, well who's of course I'm going to do premium for the same price. So that was a really great flight. And then we stayed one night in Amsterdam, but you could just hop on another plane and go like get a cheap flight and then fly right to London.

But we stayed one night, explored Amsterdam for 24 hours, and then took the Eurostar to London. That was just \$76. You can get it sometimes even cheaper than that. And Amsterdam Central Station is in a great location in Central Amsterdam. And then we went right to Pancras, London, um, super easy to do. The train stopped in like Rotterdam, Netherlands, Belgium and France. But they were just quick stops, like we didn't get off the train. So that was a really great option.

And yeah, that's I've also flown American. I did that one time too. I went from Salt Lake City to Chicago to London Heathrow and that was really nice. The thing I like about American is if you can find the AA operated flights, you don't usually have to position as long as American flies from your airport to the hub, they will connect your whole itinerary. So that is really nice with AA. And like my mom said, I just for mine, I only paid \$5.60. And then, yeah.

Oh, I did want to share another one. So Tracy, our copy editor was actually in London the same time as I did or I was. And so we were texting a little bit about how she was flying there. She actually took the same flight home that I did, but was one day after me. It would have been fun if we were on the same flight. But anyway, so she's in Seattle and Alaska has a flight to London direct on Alaska Airlines from Seattle. If you book it through Alaska, it's it's going to cost you more, but she has found if you book it through AA, you can get it for 57.5 and just \$5.60 in taxes and fees. And she has been finding pretty good availability that just keeps popping up.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

So I was like, Tracy, are you okay if I share this on the podcast? Because like this is your like this, you know, this is your way to get to Europe now, to get to London on a great price in business class. She's like, no, I'd be honored if people, if people started flying this route, like, anyways, Tracy's the best. So shout out to Tracy for sharing that tip with us for those of you on the West Coast. Super great way to get to London. I think she usually seats two, but she has seat availability for four as well.

Pam: You know, Alex, I forgot that I have done that several times where I've booked an I've actually booked an AA flight through, um, Atmos. In fact, coming back, I forgot that's how we did it. I was thinking we flew American Airlines. We did fly American Airlines, but I booked it Atmos. It was for 70k each, so it was a little bit more, but it got me all the way, um, from London, stop in Miami all the way to Denver and uh, taxes and fees on that were more expensive.

Alex: Yeah, because you were leaving London.

Pam: Yeah, so it was \$400, but still a great deal.

Jess: Yeah.

Jess: All right. Well, I have quite a bit of experience flying to London this year. I'll share, I'll share a few different ways I've done it. So I'm in Houston, as you know, and the only two nonstop options I have from Houston are United and British Airways. If I were flying economy, United would 100% be my choice because like they said with those US-based airlines, you're just going to pay \$5.60. There's usually really good availability on United economy to London. And so that would be my choice.

Unfortunately, I have gone to I've experienced business class and now it's hard for me to, um, to give that up. And so I've for my recent trips, I've been looking for business class. And like Pam was saying, if United Polaris availability was there, that would be my number one choice, 80,000 and \$5.60. Unfortunately, it's not and I'm not paying upwards of 200,000 or more United miles to fly business class.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

And so then I go to British Airways, because I am someone like if I can fly nonstop, that is 100% my priority. I would rather pay more points and fly nonstop than have to position. Because to me, it's just like every time you position, there's a cost involved in that. Even if it's not points or cash. It's time and it's energy.

Alex: But there but there also is points in cash too. You have points and cash and energy and you have the risk of with every flight you add, you have the risk of things going wrong. Delayed flights, missed flights, canceled flights. A direct flight from your home is like, okay, something happens, I just go home. I'm not stranded.

Jess: Yeah. And like I, a lot of you know, like I have flight anxiety. I don't love flying. And so like every flight I add is another takeoff and a landing where I am like anxious about the experience. And so if I can just have one nonstop flight, that is my number one priority. So, um, British Airways, the downside is the amount of points and miles required and the fees. The upside is their availability for all classes, economy, premium, and business is very predictable, especially if you book far in advance, right?

And so, um, I looked this up because I was like, this is so funny. So from Houston to London, I'm going to see which one y'all would choose out of these three options. I could book it directly via British Airways. It's going to cost me 99,000 Avios and \$394. That's a non-starter for me. I'm not paying 99,000 miles to fly to London. Okay. I could book it via American Airlines, which I have done recently, and it's just 57,500 miles, but it's \$733 in taxes. So again, that's one of those things where you have to decide like, do I want to pay more miles or do I want to pay more taxes?

Japan Airlines is a pretty great sweet spot when it comes to this. You can book the exact same flights on British Airways for 60,000 miles and \$390 in taxes. And so that to me would be, if I had JAL miles at the time that I booked my flight, that would have been my number one choice. The only downside is it's a little bit harder to earn JAL miles because if you have Built points, those transfer one to one to JAL, but Capital One now only transfers four to three to JAL. So if you're transferring from Capital One, it's not as easy of a decision.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Alex: Is it is availability... do you know what if it's pretty good through JAL?

Jess: It's pretty, yeah, like it's pretty good for, um, for JAL also. So, especially if, I mean, it gets tricky if you're looking for more than like two to three people. But if you're just looking for two or three, then it's it's pretty good.

Alex: I think it really depends on what points you have and what your stockpile is looking like. I, I mean, obviously, if I had tons of JAL, that one makes the most sense, but I do think that there's some benefit of booking through AA if you're unsure of your travel plans or you think there's a chance you might cancel, because it's so much easier to have miles sitting with AA than JAL.

Jess: That's true. That's true.

Alex: So that and also depends too, like if I'm flying, if it's just me, I'm much more okay with paying \$733 for a business class and not having to position. Cuz you know, like.

Jess: That was my thinking is I'm like, to me that's kind of like an economy fare and then I just paid for an upgrade. You know, because like on United, I'm going to pay 40,000 miles to fly economy.

Alex: Yeah.

Jess: And so 57,500 for business plus the \$733 plus the ability to cancel and just get my AA miles back like you said, those are like some of those harder to quantify benefits.

Pam: Yeah. For me, I'm going to do the same thing. I'm going to go with the AA and part of it is if I don't have to take a positioning flight, I don't mind paying that \$733 because to be honest, I'm probably paying 300 to \$400 for that positioning flight since I never use points on miles for my positioning flights because I want to have all the miles for my business class seats. So, and it just makes sense. I, you know, to me, it's like I'm paying \$733 to sit in business class. I would do that every day that I could do that, you know. So I'm I'm okay with that. But there's just one or two of us.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Alex: Yeah, it goes back to Jess to your, if anyone doesn't know, Jess has a rule or just a thing she goes by and that I have adopted as well, is if she's flying and she's booked in economy and she there's the option to upgrade to business class on a, you know, over the seas flight. If it's, what is it, Jess? \$100 per hour in the air, you're willing to spend.

Jess: Right, yeah, I'm and this is not, y'all, I did not get this from anyone. This is just in my head, okay? So if you don't want to follow this rule, no one is going to hold you to it. Okay.

Alex: But it kind of like gives you or it gives helped me have like, even though it's just an arbitrary scale you invented, it did give me like something to go off of like, okay, is it worth it to me to sit in this seat for \$100 an hour? You know?

Jess: Yeah, like I am willing my rule is I am willing to pay up to \$100 an hour for my personal comfort to sit in business class on a long haul flight. So this is not like people will message me and they're like, I'm flying from Houston to Orlando and it's \$300 to upgrade to first class. Should I do it? And I'm like, no, I don't use the rule when it's like a domestic first class flight just to give me like a little bit more width. You know, I'm talking like lay-flat seat because I need to be able to sleep on the flight or I want to be like comfortable on my return home in a lie flat seat. So, that is just my general rule that I go by, um, and it has worked well.

Alex: Well, and that's what I think though. I feel like I don't know how long is your flight from London to or from Houston to London?

Jess: From Houston to London, it's almost 10 hours long.

Alex: So if you think of it that way, if you're like, okay, I'm paying 57.5, which is a low amount of points. And you're just being like, okay, \$733, that's your rate right there of and that's almost the price of an economy ticket. That's actually cheaper than what I've paid on my Delta economy tickets home from London. So you know, like I don't think I think sometimes people hear these numbers for these British Airways taxes and fees and they're automatically like, oh my gosh, that's insane. I'm not doing that. But then you have to think, okay, but what am I doing instead? What are the other costs that I'm not considering of a positioning flight, of, you know, not having a easy cancellation policy, all of those things we have

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

to factor into and the lower miles that you get to pay when you book BA through AA. And the availability. Like the availability is really good.

Jess: Yeah. No, that's the other thing is like if you're looking for either premium economy or business, BA is going to have way more availability and predictable availability than United has unfortunately. So...

Alex: Yeah, just hopefully you don't get the weird plane Jess got that one time.

Jess: Yeah, that was not good, but you know, they did like a plane swap. They did a plane swap last minute and there's it's just one of those things where like it's a risk that you take and you know, I was able to lie flat in the sky, so for that I am thankful.

Alex: Yeah. Okay, moving on to hotels. So we're each going to share a couple hotels that are good options that you can book in points in London that either we've stayed at or friends of ours have stayed at and have recommended. So first of all, on my last trip, I stayed at the Hyatt Regency the Churchill. All three of us have actually stayed here. I know, Mom, you've stayed there multiple times.

Pam: And they love me. Every time I stay there, I get a suite upgrade just for asking for a win. I don't have to use a certificate or anything. It's been amazing. That's like...

Alex: They know the way to your heart.

Pam: It does. This place has a special place in my heart because of this.

Alex: Yeah, that's awesome. So it's a category seven. So you're looking at 25,000 to 55,000 Hyatt points a night. I paid 35,000 points a night and I when I was preparing for the episode, I just kind of looked around and I saw a lot of dates at that price. So I think that you can, that's a pretty common price to pay there. This hotel, the service was great. It's walkable to many places that you'll want to visit, like 20 minutes to a 20-minute walk to Buckingham Palace and lots of different other places that you would probably want to go check out. Really easy to walk to shopping and restaurants.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Overall, just a really, really great location. They have a Regency club. So if you have a club access award, that's a great option to use that there. They also have a restaurant where you can enjoy your breakfast if you have globalist status, you can, you know, go to the Regency club and have the option to go to the restaurant for breakfast. They offer connecting rooms, which is nice. Not every hotel in Europe, you're going to find offers connecting rooms. And when I just went, I went with some friends and so we had two rooms and I actually reached out to the hotel ahead of time and just said, hey, we're going on this girls' trip. If at all possible, we would love to have connecting rooms. And they were really great and they email me back like, okay, great, yeah, we can confirm we have you set up in connecting rooms.

And that's not a thing that you can like Hyatt never guarantees connecting rooms. But it was so it was really nice that the individual hotel did. So I always recommend you want to reach out to the hotel and not the Hyatt general line for these sort of requests because you're much more likely to get a actual like real response where they know what they're talking about than just the Hyatt general line.

Pam: Alex, did you go did you go into the Regency Club at all?

Alex: Yeah, we did. We kind of some mornings we had a slow start and I think breakfast ended at 10:30 and so we would wake up, take it slow and get ready and then we were like, oh, like it's 10:00. We don't want to go all the way down for the breakfast there. We'll just pop into the Regency Club or we'd go in there at the end of the day and go get like some drinks, like some Coke and things like that. So it was nice. Our floor was on the same floor and our room was really close to it. So it was really convenient for us to just like pop in and grab some water.

Pam: Well, I think in the evenings, they have some really good appetizers. I remember one time my sister and I just ate our dinner there. You know, they would actually come by and ask us which ones that were made to order that we wanted. So, yeah, I'm pretty impressive. I think, I think the breakfast is good. I think the uh the Regency club in the evenings is really good. So that makes it special too.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Alex: Yeah, so it was a great hotel and I would totally stay there again.

Jess: All right, I have a couple, well, I've stayed at several London hotels, but a couple I'm going to talk about. The first one is one that I stayed at a couple years ago and I'm staying there again on my upcoming trip and that is the Kimpton Fitzroy. So Pam loves her Kimptons, we know that. So it's an IHG property. A couple of years ago, I stayed there on IHG points for two nights with a friend and the only, like it's it's great location, it's very like funky, kind of what you would expect from a Kimpton, but the only downside for me was that the rooms were really small and that's just, you know, part of that is just it's London. Like your hotel room is going to be small.

But this time when I'm going, so I'm going with another friend and we are staying for four nights this time. And so I was a little bit more strategic now that the edit and the select hotels credit and points boost is a thing, which it was not, you know, two and a half years ago when I was there the first time.

So we're staying four nights. We each have a Sapphire reserve card. And so we got together, we were like, let's go get Mexican food and plan this trip together. I literally brought my laptop to the restaurant. So we're like eating our chips and queso, drinking our margaritas and redeeming our edit and select hotel credits online. So what we did is I booked two nights using my \$250 that edit credit plus my \$250 select hotels credit that you can use at IHG properties. and then I covered the rest in Chase points via points boost. So I did that for the first two nights. She did the same thing for the second two nights and then I emailed the Kimpton and was like, hey, can you link our reservations so that we can stay in the same room? And they replied and said, yes. So I'm hoping that all goes well as far as that goes, but we were, you know, between the two of us and the four \$250 credits, we saved \$1,000 off of our four night stay.

The other thing that I really like about the edit option and points boost is you can book higher than the standard room. So like when I booked, when I redeemed it with points, I had to book just like the base one queen bedroom. And so it was fine. Like I said, it was just really small. So this time I was like, can we like splurge on like a little bit of a bigger room? And so we were able to do that with our credits and points boost. And so now we have a room that's going to have

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

two beds in it. And so I think it's just going to overall be a more enjoyable experience. So yeah, I like that option with the edit and points boost of not being stuck with just the standard base room in situations like this.

Alex: Yeah, that's a super smart way to use those credits. So if you can, especially when you can pull it with a friend. I love that.

Jess: Yeah. And then the other one, the one that I stayed at most recently is the Andaz London Liverpool. I've stayed here twice. I do think the Kimpton is not a great option for families. So like the Kimpton is great if you're traveling with a spouse or a partner or one friend, you know, like if you want a room for two, it's not great for families. I don't feel like I think the Andaz is a really solid option for families. It's going to be fewer points than the Regency Churchill would be. It's the location is not as convenient as the Churchill, but it is literally next door to Liverpool's tube station, which is a major tube station in London. So you're really well connected on the tube from there.

And I didn't do it this most recent time, but the first time I stayed there, we used the Hyatt family plan rate. I'm not guaranteeing that they're still accepting this. It varies by property, it varies by dates, but with that, you basically pay for one room on points or cash and then you can get 50% off the cash rate of the second room. So we booked one room on points. I got 50% off the cash rate of the second room and they were able to give me connecting rooms. So I do think that is a good option for families.

Alex: Yeah, that's awesome. Um, here's another good option for families. This is a one that Tracy, when she was just there, she stayed at. And I said, hey, Tracy, we're doing this episode. Do you mind giving me some information to share about this hotel? And Tracy's all about helping and sharing everybody. So she's like, yes, here's what you need to tell them. So she stayed at The Standard. It was her and her son and it's a category six. So 20 to 40,000 points a night. It's right by King's Cross and St. Pancras station. So great location as far as getting around. So and that's what Tracy said. She's like, the location was great. It was so easy to take King's Cross to wherever they needed to go.

The decor was a little quirky, kind of like a mod '60s vibe. She did feel like the toilet was a little strange because it's like in a separate closet outside the

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

bathroom, which was fine, but there was no sink and she thought it was just kind of funny there wasn't a sink in there. So then you like go to the bathroom and then you got to go back into the main area to go wash your hands and like odd light switches, but her son really liked it.

So the thing that's unique about this hotel is most hotels, you're going to they're going to fit two people. And so this one was really nice because you can put four in a room. I will say the rooms are going to be tight, but if you have two adults and two kids that are 10 and under, you can book for four in the two double room. Now it's two doubles. So I wouldn't personally want to do this, but if you are looking to, if you feel like we're only sleeping here or my kids are little, like I have a you know, a couple toddlers, that could be a case where that could work really well for you if you're...

Jess: And not a husband who is like six five or however tall Mitch is.

Alex: Yeah, if you're smaller people, this might be a great option, especially if you're like, we really value keeping everybody in the same room. Like our kids are little, we all just want to be together. This could be a really good hotel where you're spending less because you only need one room and you don't have to worry about are they going to guarantee connecting rooms. You just know your whole family's together. So I think this could be a really good option for smaller families with young kids because you do have to be 10 and under to be able to have two kids in the room with you.

Pam: Okay. So for me, I've stayed at most of these places. Jess is going to talk about my favorite place at the end. In fact, I was just in London this last time. They were having a horrible heat wave. And the thing about London, homes don't usually have air conditioning because they don't have very many heat waves. We were so hot. We had to go into London and stay at a hotel and I was so grateful to have points of miles and be able to stay one last time. Well, maybe it won't be one last time. Hopefully I'll get that.

Alex: Come on, we know Park Hyatt London is going to be on your list for years to come.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Pam: It is. I love, love, love it. And so we stayed there. But there was another time when I was staying in London with my daughter and there was another heat wave. I just couldn't do it. I did it for about three days. I was like, I'm done. I have to have air conditioning at night. And so I hotel hoped for the next three nights and these are the places that I stayed at. Um, I stayed at the Great Scotland Yard, which you know what? Honestly, I've never stated it since this place and I truly loved it. It is in the most convenient place. It's very close to the theater district. It is decorated so cute. You can find it at for 25k a night at the low end. You can even find at the lowest Hyatt um, and you can find it for 20k. It's a great hotel. Again, not huge rooms, but again, it is London. You're talking about London, New York City.

Alex: This is one that's super popular with our audience. Like if it's your first time to go to London and you're like, I don't know if I'm coming back. Like, I would say this is probably the best place to stay as far as location wise to just be able to walk where you want to go.

Pam: Yeah. Then I stayed at the Marriott St. Pancras because, um, I really, I'd seen pictures of it. It just looked amazing. It's this huge historic building and, um, so I was really excited. That was where I went one of the nights and I'll tell you what, the common areas were amazing. I felt like I was back in the 1920s in a speakeasy. I mean, it was so cool. So, so cool. And then I got up to my room and I go, what? This just doesn't fit. The room was just okay. So, I probably wouldn't do it again unless I was guaranteed a suite upgrade. Um, I tried to get one then, wasn't able to. I found it recently for 63k a night on the low end and lots for 80k a night. That's a lot to me to pay. I'd have to use like an 85k certificate to stay there, free night's certificate. I'm not going to do it if the room is just okay. But it's worth walking into the hotel because it is amazing.

Jess: Well, the other thing with that is there are so many options in London. You know, so like I'm more likely to save an 85k certificate for somewhere that doesn't have a ton of options. You know, like London, if you want somewhere that has options with every single hotel chain in every single category, then London is your place.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Pam: Exactly. And then on that heatwave hotel hopping jaunt that I took, the last one I went to was the Hotel Indigo Kensington. I hadn't stayed at a Hotel Indigo before, very boutique. Um, I think they're historically a little smaller rooms than you get for the Kimpton, but very much boutique like that. It is my vibe. I love, love, love the vibe. It was in, um, Kensington, Chelsea area, close enough to walk to a lot of things or get on the tube. And I found it for 39k many nights. So that could be a free night certificate from IHG, but I've also seen it as much as 70k. I wouldn't stay there for 70k. But it was very, very cute. I loved it. I would stay there again, definitely if I could find the lower rate. And then talk about my favorite, Jess, my favorite.

Jess: Yeah, so I have stayed at the Park Hyatt London twice now. I love it. The only thing that is the only downside to this hotel is the location. It is not a great location for a first-time visitor. And so if you're someone who wants to be walking distance to all the main sites, this is not the choice for you.

Pam: But the tube is nearby.

Jess: The tube is nearby.

Pam: We took we took the tube everywhere and I've changed my feelings about that location now just because it was so easy to just hop on the tube and get into central.

Jess: You know what else is close by that Ted and I took? The Uber boat. Did you take that?

Pam: No.

Jess: You can take the Uber boat and then you can pass by, you know, the London Eye and Big Ben from the water.

Pam: Nice.

Jess: But you're still just paying, you know, you're still just paying like however much it would cost to take the tube. You're not paying for like a formal excursion or anything.

Alex: Yeah, that's cool.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Jess: So when Ted and I stayed there most recently, that was our favorite way to get around because it felt like a kind of, you know, like an experience as you're riding the public transportation. So I don't personally mind the location because I've been to London so many times. Like I don't need to be walking distance to Big Ben. I have walked by Big Ben a dozen times, you know?

Alex: Yeah.

Jess: If you're like that, if you're like, I want an amazing room to come back to, I want an indoor pool. I want just bougie and luxury and you're celebrating a birthday or an anniversary. I think this is a great option. They did just bump it up to a category eight. I don't think it deserves to be a category eight because of the location. I think it should be a seven. But, you know, if you're if you're looking to splurge, your Hyatt points, then I do think this is a really great option. The rooms are really big by London standards. Like I said, it has that indoor pool if you want to just, you know, take a break or if the weather in London is bad that day and you want to just chill at the hotel. So, I love it. Would totally return there next time I'm in London.

Pam: I booked it the night before we were going to stay because it was just too hot at my daughter's house. And so I did book it at the last minute for 35k. I had a sweet upgrade award I then used. My daughter, Kelly, who lives in Colorado Springs, and granddaughter Riley came. And Riley's face when she walked into this place, she hadn't didn't even believe that a hotel could be that nice.

Alex: That is awesome.

Pam: It was so worth it. The breakfast is really good. Uh, we did have to we did have to pay. They did have us pay extra for the third person, which lots of times you don't at Hyatts. And I did have to pay for a rollaway to come in. So that, you know, but still, it was every bit of it was worth it for her face.

Jess: I mean, you were able to you were able to fit three people into the standard suite and so that's a good option. You know, if someone's traveling with three people, it may make more sense to pay for a rollaway versus booking an entirely new room.

Pam: Oh, completely because I think it was \$105 or something.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Alex: Yeah.

Jess: Yeah. All right. We are going to wrap up with things to do in London, and we have a very long list that I'm going to.

Alex: I know. I wrote the list. You don't have to say everything or go into detail, but just like. And also like it's also not an exhaustive list. It's a very long list, but London has a trillion things to do, which is why all of us keep going back and finding more things to do because it's such a big city with so much. So, yeah, not exhaustive list, but a long list. Sorry, Jess.

Jess: So one of the great things about London is so many of their museums are free. And so it's, you know, it's a little, like we said, it's a little bit more expensive to fly there on points if you're factoring in the taxes and fees and maybe the food's a little bit more expensive than you're used to. But all these points...

Alex: Their conversion rate isn't the best for us, but it's all good.

Jess: But, you know, when all of these museums and parks are free, it can kind of take the sting out of some of that. So like the National Gallery, the British Museum, the Portrait Gallery, the Tate Modern, there are many others. Those are all free. And so this is a great option. Another thing I love about London is I feel like it is a great destination no matter who you're traveling with. It's great for families with young kids, it's great for families with teens, it's great for adults only, it's great for a girls' getaway. Like no matter your configuration, you will find something to do. There's Trafalgar Square, there's Covent Garden, which Covent Garden around the holidays is beautiful with all of the decorations. Ted and I did that a couple of years ago. There's Bureau market. You have to get your chocolate covered strawberries. There is shows on the West End. Alex and I are taking trips to London this year purely to see Leslie Odom Jr. in Hamilton.

Alex: And the shows on West End are cheaper than what you're going to pay on Broadway. So that's the other thing too is it's like a lot of things are more expensive, but the shows are not one of them. Like we paid the same for what we paid in New York, but we had way better seats on the West End when we went. We were like in the sixth row and it was pretty cool.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Jess: Yeah. Tower of London, I think if I could choose one thing for people, for like a family to do in London, I think Tower of London would be my choice. I love it. I've been there so many times. Uh, Alex actually just went there recently and she booked it via Viator. So that's always something you want to keep in mind is like if you are booking these museums or excursions to try and like go through a portal and get even more points from your purchase that you were going to make anyways.

The Transport Museum is also really cool and really fun, especially if you have kids that are into buses and trains and tubes and all that thing. The Transport Museum is great. Afternoon tea is a must do in London. So Alex's sister, Lindsey recommends a place called Scratch. I have been to several different places. I really like Fortnam and Mason for just like a classic afternoon tea experience. Again, if you go at the holidays, you will be blown away by the decorations, even the exterior.

Alex: You have to just even if you don't do the tea, you've got to go to the store. It's just such a cool store.

Jess: Other things we have done, we've done changing of the guard. So there's changing of the guard at Buckingham Palace. That tends to get much more crowded than changing of the guard at Windsor Castle. So when our kids were younger, we actually took the train out to Windsor and watched changing of the guard there. We were front row. Like we got the best view of changing of the guard. So if you want a little bit of a less crowded experience than Buckingham Palace, definitely check out Windsor Castle.

On our most recent trip to London, it was Ted and I and it was a birthday gift for him. He is a huge Arsenal supporter. If you're a Premier League person, I surprised him with, you know, flights in business class on points, stay at the Park Hyatt London on points and tickets to an Arsenal game for his birthday. So we went and saw an Arsenal game. It was epic. You can also do a tour, like we've done a tour of Emirates Stadium or whatever your football team of choice is, you can do a tour of their stadium.

We also did a Ted Lasso tour while we took the train to Richmond and did a Ted Lasso tour. That was really fun. I can link that one in the show notes, Alex,

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

because I really liked the tour guide that we had. We also did a day trip to Oxford. That was, I know Pam, you've done that because you have a granddaughter who goes to Oxford. And so that's just a really fun way to kind of like, it's not that far from London, but you kind of feel like you're in it's so far from like the hustle and bustle of London.

Pam: It's so Harry Potterish. It is like it is so amazing. You feel like you are there at Hogwarts.

Jess: Yeah. So we did like a little audio tour and then we went and saw the different Harry Potter sites. And speaking of Harry Potter, on my upcoming trip, the friend I'm going with is a huge Potterhead and I recently read Harry Potter for the first time last year. So we are going to the Warner Brothers Harry Potter studio tour. That's another big thing to do in London. Alex, I know you have taken your family there and I think y'all had a really good time.

Alex: Yeah, it was really fun. And that's one that you'll want to book your tickets ahead of time. Like you don't you don't want to do it the day of. You might not get tickets.

Pam: So you skipped two of my two things that I really love.

Jess: Okay.

Pam: I love, love, love the Imperial War Museum.

Jess: Okay.

Pam: It is I, you know, I've been there two or three times. I love museums, but I love history. So it's just amazing. They have a very good Holocaust exhibit there. And I also really love the Churchill War rooms. I think that was very interesting too. So, yeah, I mean, London is just so full of history that it's just it is amazing. You could you're never bored in London.

Jess: It is kind of awkward seeing Hamilton in London though. I feel like. I've seen it there once and I'm seeing it there again. Because everyone in the audience is cheering for the Americans and I'm like, but you're British. You lost the war.

Pam: Oh, how funny. I never thought of that. That is funny.

Ep #195: London on Points: Flights, Hotels, and Things to Do

Jess: Anyways, you, if you're interested in.

Alex: It's it's very different than seeing it in New York because in New York they're like in the greatest city in the world and you're like, yeah, we're in New York. Like they say they're talking about New York when they're saying that and we're in New York. So then when they say it to London, you're like, but we're not in New York. We're in London. It is kind of funny. I agree with you, Jess.

Jess: I will say if you're interested in like learning more about, you know, like seeing actual videos or photos from us doing these different experiences, you want to check out our Instagram highlights. I think we have at least a couple of London highlights. And so go check those out.

Alex: And a ton of posts.

Jess: A ton of blog posts. If you go to our blog and search "London"...

Pam: Reader success stories all over.

Alex: Like London should be a piece of cake for you all after you watch our stories, you read our blog posts and hopefully from this podcast too, it'll all just be like, okay, I can go to London. We know what to do when we go there. We know where to stay, we know how to do our flights. Hopefully, fingers crossed.

Jess: Exactly.

Pam: London is such a great place to go to because you understand the language for sure. It's going to be a little bit pricier because the dollar and the pound rate uh rates aren't the best, but there's so much to do, so much fun to have. So we really hope that this episode inspires you or helps you plan your next points-paid trip to London. If you enjoyed this episode, please share it with your friends and family.

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