OURPLACENews

The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

DECEMBER 2019

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11 easy eco swaps we can all make at home

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Winter warmer

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Letter from the Editor

Welcome to Our Place - The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life!

Every month, we bring you news and features on; Health & Beauty, Money & Work, Leisure & Travel, Food & Drink, Arts, Crafts & Hobbies, Home & Garden, plus... our Charity of the Month!

Our Place was founded with a mission to connect the mature online community to a world of news, features, offers and life changing products they may have missed out on. Bring them all into one place, Our Place.

What makes us special is that we are a vibrant team of all ages, from 21 to 65 who are all passionate about living life to the fullest irrespective of age. We have built strong relationships with some of the best UK age related businesses with the aim of brokering discounted rates for our Over-50s community.

Become a Friend of Our Place and receive our exclusive newsletters. They are a great way of keeping updated with the latest news and promotions. We aim to bring a smile to your face every time you open your inbox by selecting exclusive vouchers and discounts just for you.

We welcome you and hope you enjoy Our Place.

The Editor - Our Place

PS. Do you have an interesting story or article? If so, send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co

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ata Privacy

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Winter Wonderland in Hyde Park 21st November - January 2020 Hyde Park, London.

This free-to-enter family event features a host of festive fun and activities, including Winter Wonderland ice skating, circus shows, an observation wheel and a huge Christmas market.

Showcasing 125 years of motoring history, hundreds of vehicles go on display in the famous shopping street.

Winter Wonderland 2020 activities include the chance to:

- Skate to live music on the Winter Wonderland ice rink, the UK's largest outdoor rink.
- Discover mythical creatures made from ice and snow in the Magical Ice Kingdom's Secret Forest.
- Watch the Imperial Ice Stars' world-class skaters perform a thrilling Peter Pan on Ice.
- Marvel at the acrobatic wonders at Zippos Christmas Circus or Cirque Berserk.
- Soar into the sky on the iconic Giant Observation Wheel and see the twinkling London lights below.
- Ride a traditional carousel or brave the giant loops of nine different rollercoasters at the fairground.
- Go on an immersive cinematic adventure with The Snowman™ Experience, presented by Backvard Cinema.
- Create your very own ice sculpture at the Ice Sculpting workshops.

Christmas at Kew

Until 5th January 2020

Kew Gardens, Richmond-Upon-Thames.

Take an enchanting journey into a glittering wonderland with Christmas at Kew at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

The popular after-dark Christmas event returns with its mile-long trail through the famous botanic gardens, lit up with more than 1 million lights.

Get together with family and friends and follow the illuminated path around the gardens, enjoy live performances, and be treated to immersive installations and spectacular displays.



Chessington Winter's Tail 23rd November 2019 - 5th January 2020

Chessington World of Adventures, Leatherhead Road,

Chessington, Surrey KT9 2NE.

As the nights get colder, the elves here at the Resort we are busy preparing for the most magical Christmas yet.

This Christmas celebrate with the Gruffalo, visit Father Christmas in his magical grotto, plus enjoy some family favourite rides and meet our amazing animals at Chessington's Zoo and SEA LIFE centre.

Celebrate Christmas with the Gruffalo!

Join Mouse on The Gruffalo River Ride Adventure, a magical riverboat journey through the deep dark wood. That's not all...

- Team up with the Gruffalo's Child on a treasure trail around the Park and receive a special pop badge
- Decorate festive treats in the Gruffalo Kitchen
- · Enjoy a wintery tale with The Gruffalo's Child

Magical Experiences

With Father Christmas' festive grotto, The Elves' Kitchen, Christmas Pandemonium Live Show, plus our amazing animals, have a wild Christmas at Chessington!

A Festive Setting

The Resort gets a sprinkling of Christmas magic for Winter's Tail. Along with Father Christmas' grotto, families will be fully immersed in the festive atmosphere with our giant Christmas tree, cookie decorating and real reindeer!

With all the festive excitement don't forget to have a wild Christmas with our amazing animals at the Zoo, including our Tigers, Gorillas, Zebras and creatures beneath the waves including sharks and rays in our SEA LIFE centre.

For more information please visit: www.chessington.com

Best apps to promote a healthy mind

The benefits of therapy are powerful. Promoting time for reflection and self-care, taking the time to analyse our thoughts and behaviour positively impacts our ability to live better and feel stronger.



Over 50s.com reports that in today's world, life is fast-paced and busy, society scrutinises itself, constantly critiquing the way we all look, act and earn.

Finding the time to appreciate self and establish solace, away from the background noise is essential to good mental health. Not everyone has time in their schedule to visit a therapist, so apps are quickly becoming the number one way to practise techniques to promote happiness.

Harnessing the effectiveness of self-regulation using cognitive behaviour therapies, anxiety management, mood trackers, thought journals and meditation, the vast array of apps available online are widely comprehensive. Discreetly stored on your smartphone, apps can remind you to recentre and focus throughout the working day, encouraging positive habits to become second nature behaviour.

Here's our selection of the top apps to promote better well-being.

Worry watch

Taking the format of a journal, Worry Watch encourages users to become more self-aware of the anxieties and worries they experience on the daily. When a plaguing thought occurs, this is then entered into the app journal, along with the wider context in which the worry was first formed. There is then space after the anxiety has occurred to reflect on these patterns of behaviours and understand your triggers. A useful tool for taking responsibility for understanding yourself and developing empathy for oneself, this app is easy to use and doesn't take up too much time.

Headspace

Conceptualised by former Buddhist monk turned app developer Andy Puddicombe, Headspace is frequently regarded as the Gandhi of mindfulness software.

Featuring guided meditation, anger management and mindfulness tutorials, Headspace is used by mental health professionals and championed by psychologists alike. Engaging users is cyclical sessions, the beauty of Headspace lies in its relevance to everyone's experiences, from problem eating to stress and obsessive-compulsive disorders. Calmly delivering, life lessons Andy's voice is engaging and genuine. Award-winning and chart-topping Headspace offers premium therapy at a cut-price.

Happify

Extremely effective at helping users cope with life and react more positively to challenging situations, Happify is intelligently formatted. Setting activities designed to achieve specific goals, such as 'Conquer Negative thoughts' and 'Cope Better With Stress' user friendly games are devised to phase out unnecessary negativity, focussing on positive affirmations. This app feels very organic and authentic. For the more cynical users amongst us, this is the perfect solution to those dark cloud days.

(Story source: Over 50s.com)

5 self improvement life hacks

Modern life is busy and stressful. There is so much we need to get done in one day, the pressure to please everyone and perform can feel unrealistic and downright unachievable.

Over 50s.com reports that simplifying, planning and prioritising the tasks you have to complete in your life can increase productivity and limit time wasted.

If only it were that simple, right? Well, it can be.

Shortcuts or life hacks are genius ideas, designed to help you reduce stress and save time. Here are our top 5 life hacks to keep you smiling, help you save money and be smarter:

1. We all hate putting out the bins.

The juice at the bottom of the bin is one of life's worst and unavoidable daily evils. Protect yourself from the rotten stench dripping from your bin liner by layering newspaper at the bottom of your bin! Absorbing the slime and neutralising smells, this life hack is a no brainer for anyone and everyone.

2. Work your brain like a memory athlete.

Do you find yourself struggling to remember names, items on the grocery list and directions? If your short term memory isn't brilliant, educational psychologists suggest creating 'a memory palace'. By envisioning a 'memory palace', you are more likely to increase recall and improve your ability to imprint information in the short or long term. This technique works by visualising a specific, familiar place when storing information. You should try to see yourself walking down a street, such as your home town and attributing one article to a building, tree or point of interest. So church =orange juice, woods = milk, village hall = potatoes. Try this one today.



3. Whether you are training for your next marathon or simply struggling to cope in the humid summer heat, skin chafing can cause serious problems.

While many cosmetic companies out there claim to retail the perfect product to save you from sore skin, the best solution is often simply deodorant.

While Vaseline and talcum powder offer a short term fix, deodorant works for longer on the skin. Deodorant reduces the friction which causes sweat and irritates the skin surface, thereby creating an uncomfortable rash.

4. End your shower with a two-minute burst of cold water.

Subjecting the body to a cold, sharp shock after a nice warm relaxing shower to start your day has multiple benefits. A rush of cold water will trigger vasoconstriction, immediately metabolising and neutralising the lactic acid in your body which causes generalised soreness and stiffness. Reducing inflammation, waking you up, increasing your heart rate and burning fat, the benefits of a cold shower outweigh the momentary discomfort the water will provoke.

5. Wash fine, dull hair with Coca-Cola.

Big event coming up that you want to look your best at? The acidic qualities of Coca-Cola coat the hair and swell the follicles to create a beautiful shine. The liquids high fructose content will add texture, allowing styles to hold for longer with an effortless bounce.

Although this life hack isn't advisable in the long run because it causes the build-up of residues, in the short term it's a cheap and effective way to keep you looking salon fresh!

(Story source: Over 50s.com)

Legendary NI goalkeeper Pat Jennings backing safety message for over-50s

Former Northern Ireland Goalkeeper Pat Jennings has teamed up with Northern Ireland Fire & Rescue Service (NIFRS) to highlight the added risk from fire to people aged 50 and over.

ITV News reports that this striking statistic, released as part of North South Fire Safety Week 2019, has prompted NIFRS to reduce their 'People at Risk' from fire age to those aged 50 and over. Previously it covered anyone aged 60 and over.

Pat Jennings, 74, has come on board as a new Community Safety Ambassador to help raise awareness among that demographic about the importance of fire safety in the home.



He said: "I'm really pleased to be working with NIFRS to help kick off Fire Safety Week and raise awareness of fire safety in the home. Like over 30% of our wee country, I fall into that age demographic of 50 and over, who are most at risk from fire.

"I think it's really important that we are all aware of simple fire safety steps we can take to help keep our home safe from fire, and what help is available for people like me."

Organised in partnership with the National Directorate for Fire and Emergency Management in the Republic of Ireland, North South Fire Safety Week aims to promote fire safety, with the ultimate goal of zero accidental fire deaths and will be officially launched by the Lord Mayor of Belfast John Finucane at a special ceremony in Belfast Central Fire Station on Monday.

This year's theme is 'Safer Together' and the focus is on how NIFRS works with partner organisations to help keep people safe from fire, and also how the community can support each other and NIFRS to help STOP fire.

Alan Walmsley, Assistant Chief Fire & Rescue Officer, Director Service Delivery, explains: "We're delighted to be teaming up with Pat Jennings as our new Community Safety Ambassador to help save lives from fire. Twenty-seven of the 31 people (87%) who lost their lives in accidental fires in the last 4 years were aged 50 and over, prompting us to lower our 'People at Risk' age group.

"Many of this age group will remember the legendary Pat Jennings for his heroics in goals for Northern Ireland. He will be a great ambassador to allow us reach even more people at risk to help protect our community this Fire Safety Week and beyond.

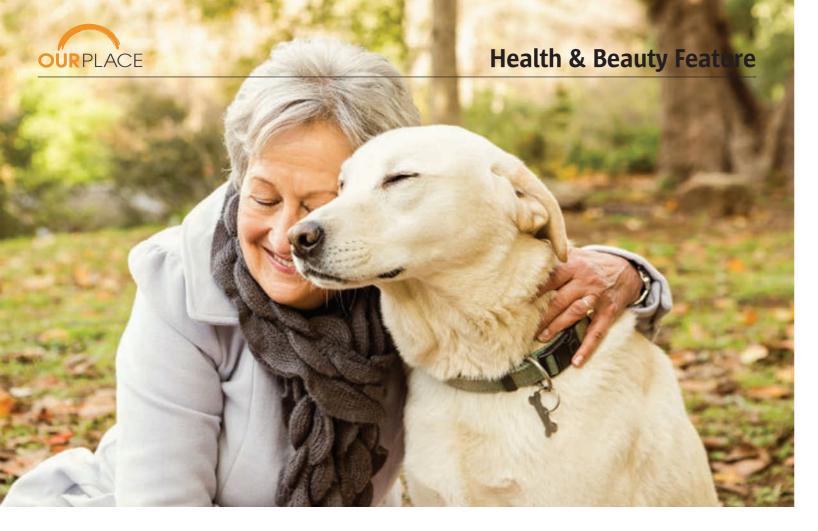
"This Fire Safety Week I would like to encourage you to check in with your older neighbours and family members, and with those who are more at risk from fire.

If you are concerned about their safety, arrange a free home fire safety check for them via our website. Together we can achieve our goal of zero accidental fire deaths. One life lost is one too many."

(Story source: ITV News)

Do you have an interesting story about Health & Beauty?
Tell us all about it by visiting: www.ourplace.co

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Living longer: Dog ownership associated with longer life

Dog ownership was associated with a 33% lower risk of early death for heart attack survivors living alone and 27% reduced risk of early death for stroke survivors living alone, compared to people who did not own a dog. Dog ownership was associated with a 24% reduced risk of all-cause mortality and a 31% lower risk of death by heart attack or stroke compared to non-owners.

Dog ownership may be associated with longer life and better cardiovascular outcomes, especially for heart attack and stroke survivors who live alone, according to a new study and a separate meta-analysis published in Circulation: Cardiovascular Quality and Outcomes, a journal of the American Heart Association.

"The findings in these two well-done studies and analyses build upon prior studies and the conclusions of the 2013 AHA Scientific Statement 'Pet Ownership and Cardiovascular Risk' that dog ownership is associated with reductions in factors that contribute to cardiac risk and to cardiovascular events," said Glenn N. Levine, M.D., chair of the writing group of the American Heart Association's scientific statement on pet ownership.

"Further, these two studies provide good, quality data indicating dog ownership is associated with reduced cardiac and all-cause mortality. While these non-randomized studies cannot 'prove' that adopting or owning a dog directly leads to reduced mortality, these robust findings are certainly at least suggestive of this."

Given previous research demonstrating how social isolation and lack of physical activity can negatively impact patients, researchers in both the study and meta-analysis sought to determine how dog ownership affected health outcomes. Prior studies have shown that dog ownership alleviates social isolation, improves physical activity and even lowers blood pressure - leading researchers to believe dog owners could potentially have better cardiovascular outcomes compared to non-owners.



Health & Beauty Feature

Dog ownership and survival after a major cardiovascular event

Researchers in this study compared the health outcomes of dog owners and non-owners after a heart attack or stroke using health data provided by the Swedish National Patient Register. Patients studied were Swedish residents ages 40-85 who experienced heart attack or ischemic stroke from 2001-2012.

Compared to people who did not own a dog, researchers found that for dog owners:

- The risk of death for heart attack patients living alone after hospitalization was 33% lower, and 15% lower for those living with a partner or child.
- The risk of death for stroke patients living alone after hospitalization was 27% lower and 12% lower for those living with a partner or child.

In the study, nearly 182,000 people were recorded to have had a heart attack, with almost 6% being dog owners, and nearly 155,000 people were recorded to have had an ischemic stroke, with almost 5% being dog owners. Dog ownership was confirmed by data from the Swedish Board of Agriculture (registration of dog ownership has been mandatory since 2001) and the Swedish Kennel Club (all pedigree dogs have been registered since 1889).

The lower risk of death associated with dog ownership could be explained by an increase in physical activity and the decreased depression and loneliness, both of which have been connected to dog ownership in previous studies.

"We know that social isolation is a strong risk factor for worse health outcomes and premature death. Previous studies have indicated that dog owners experience less social isolation and have more interaction with other people," said Tove Fall, D. V. M., professor at Uppsala University in Sweden. "Furthermore, keeping a dog is a good motivation for physical activity, which is an important factor in rehabilitation and mental health."

While this study draws from a large sample, potential misclassifications of dog ownership in couples living together, death of a dog and change of ownership could have affected the outcomes of the study.

"The results of this study suggest positive effects of dog ownership for patients who have experienced a heart attack or stroke.

However, more research is needed to confirm a causal relationship and giving recommendations about prescribing dogs for prevention. Moreover, from an animal welfare perspective, dogs should only be acquired by people who feel they have the capacity and knowledge to give the pet a good life."

Co-authors of the study are Mwenya Mubanga, M.D., M.P.H.; Liisa Byberg, Ph.D.; Agneta Egenvall, V.M.D., Ph.D.; Erik Ingelsson, MD, Ph.D. and Tove Fall, V.M.D., Ph.D. Agria Research Foundation and the Swedish Research Council for Environment, Agricultural Sciences and Spatial Planning (FORMAS), grant number 2013-1673 funded the study.

Dog Ownership and Survival: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis

Researchers reviewed patient data of over 3.8 million people taken from 10 separate studies for a composite meta-analysis study. Of the 10 studies reviewed, nine included comparison of all-cause mortality outcomes for dog owners and non-owners, and four compared cardiovascular outcomes for dog owners and non-owners.

Researchers found that compared to non-owners, dog owners experienced a:

- 24% reduced risk of all-cause mortality;
- 65% reduced risk of mortality after heart attack; and
- 31% reduced risk of mortality due to cardiovascular-related issues

"Having a dog was associated with increased physical exercise, lower blood pressure levels and better cholesterol profile in previous reports," said Caroline Kramer, M.D. Ph.D., Assistant Professor of Medicine at the University of Toronto and an Endocrinologist and Clinician scientist at Leadership Sinai Centre for Diabetes at Mount Sinai Hospital, part of Sinai Health System. "As such, the findings that people who owned dogs lived longer and their risk for cardiovascular death was also lower are somewhat expected."

Studies deemed eligible for analysis included those conducted among adults age 18 or older, original data from an original prospective study, evaluated dog ownership at the beginning of the study and reported all-cause or cardiovascular mortality of patients. Studies were excluded if they were retrospective, did not provide an absolute number of events that occurred and reported non-fatal cardiovascular events.

"Our findings suggest that having a dog is associated with longer life. Our analyses did not account for confounders such as better fitness or an overall healthier lifestyle that could be associated with dog ownership. The results, however, were very positive," said Dr. Kramer. "The next step on this topic would be an interventional study to evaluate cardiovascular outcomes after adopting a dog and the social and psychological benefits of dog ownership. As a dog owner myself, I can say that adopting Romeo (the author's miniature Schnauzer) has increased my steps and physical activity each day, and he has filled my daily routine with joy and unconditional love."

(Article source: American Heart Association)

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Money & Work News

Almost 1 million over-50s working nights in UK, study says

About 924,000 of record 3.2 million people who regularly work through night are over 50, TUC says.



The Guardian reports that the number of overnight workers over the age of 50 has risen to almost 1 million, a study suggests. Over-50s account for about 924,000 of a record 3.2 million people who regularly work through the night.

The figure has increased by 173,000 over the past five years as older people stay in work longer and more such jobs are created, like those in social care, according to the analysis by the Trades Union Congress (TUC).

The research indicated that 222,000 people over the age of 60 were working nights, and 69,000 aged over 65.

The TUC said the number of people regularly working night shifts was at its highest level since official records began in 2005, and the figure is 100,000 higher compared with five years ago. Over-50s account for all of the increase in overnight work since 2014, while fewer young people do late shifts, the union said.

The TUC general secretary, Frances O'Grady, said working unsociable hours can disrupt a person's family life and affect their health. She added: "Britain's loyal army of night workers has been boosted significantly by older workers.

"We all owe them a huge debt for keeping the country ticking over while we are asleep. The government is not doing enough to protect these workers. They need better notice of their shifts and proper compensation if work is cancelled."

Jobs most likely to involve night shifts include care work, nursing, road transport and security, the report said.

A study in 2018 found that working night shifts can disrupt the body's natural rhythms so much that the brain and digestive system end up completely out of kilter with one another.

Patrick Thomson, from the Centre for Ageing Better, said it was important to ensure that people were not being pushed into strenuous, insecure or isolated work at unsociable hours through a lack of alternative available work.

He added: "Many more of us are living and working for longer, so we need to make sure that jobs are designed to support our changing needs as we age, whether they are for flexible working, planning for retirement, caring for others or managing a health condition.

"With increasing numbers of over-50s in night jobs that can often be arduous, it's ever more important that employers can support health at work."

The government is proposing changes that would give flexible workers, including night workers, new rights and protections.

A government spokesperson said it was determined to make the UK the best place in the world to work and start a business and added that older workers "provide a huge benefit to our economy".

(Story source: The Guardian)

How to make a timeshare compensation claim

All you need to know about claiming timeshare compensation.



50 Plus reports that if you're unhappy with your timeshare contract you could have a case for a compensation claim.

Owning a timeshare can seem like a perfect opportunity to enjoy regular holidays with your family - and for many owners it is. However, for others the reality fails to live up to what was promised, and they find themselves saddled with unfair and expensive contracts that can be difficult to escape.

If this applies to you, you could be eligible for timeshare compensation - but don't plough ahead without some expert advice. We asked some timeshare lawyers to share their top tips on filing a successful compensation claim.



Make sure you're eligible

Claiming timeshare compensation can be a lengthy and costly process so, before you start the ball rolling, double check that you're actually eligible for compensation.

There are a number of scenarios which might give you cause for a compensation claim. Chief among these are unfair (and in some instances, illegal) contracts - for example, those which tie you in for at least 50 years, and 'floating week' contracts which can make it difficult to get full use out of your timeshare. Being a victim of pressure-selling tactics and false promises, or being asked to hand over money during the official cooling off period, can also give you a valid reason to pursue a claim.

However, if your experience doesn't fit neatly into any of these categories, don't be deterred. You may still have a basis for a claim, so it's worth seeking out some expert advice before you dismiss it altogether.

Get your paperwork in order

Once you've confirmed your eligibility, it's time to get your paperwork in order. In order to understand exactly what you've signed up for you need to go through your contract with a fine-tooth comb and get to grips with all the facts and figures. A careful reading of your contract will allow you gain a thorough overview of your situation, and will also tell you which country holds jurisdiction over your contract - essential information for any solicitor who takes on your case.

Be cautious

Unfortunately, the timeshare compensation industry is plagued by unscrupulous scammers who are only too happy to prey on unhappy timeshare owners, so it's important to keep your wits about you. Be very wary of any unsolicited cold calls that come out of the blue and be sure to exercise caution and do your research before revealing any personal information.

Seek professional advice

As with any legal proceedings, it's always best to seek professional legal advice, preferably from a solicitor with expertise in timeshare compensation claims. Most will be happy to provide a free initial consultation where they can assess the viability of your claim and outline the pros and cons of proceeding with legal action. If you decide to go ahead with a claim, a good solicitor will be on hand to guide you through the process and improve your chances of reaching a deal that works for you.

Claiming timeshare compensation can seem like a daunting prospect, but if you're truly unhappy with your situation, it's definitely worth considering. With some solid legal advice, there's no reason why you can't succeed in your claim and escape your timeshare contract.

(Story source: 50 Plus)

Do you have a Timeshare? Have you ever made a claim? Tell us all about it by visiting: www.ourplace.co

Grandparents prove their worth in half-term childcare



50 *Plus* reports that almost three quarters (71%) of grandparents will be called in for childcare duties over half term, with more than half (57%) taking their grandkids away, the majority of these (65%) on a staycation. But as many as a third (33%) of Grandparents do not buy travel insurance despite the protection it affords, according to research by AllClear Travel, a specialist medical travel insurance provider. The main reasons given for not purchasing travel insurance are, not believing it is needed for a UK trip and cost.

Chris Rolland, AllClear CEO, says this could be an oversight: "Travel insurance covers the cost of having to cancel travel and accommodation, and this can be extremely worthwhile even within the UK. "Specialist travel insurance comparison sites, such as AllClear Travel, will provide a range of cover and budget options geared towards older travellers and those with pre-existing medical conditions." The amount of time grandparents devote to childcare varies, with half of all those surveyed (50%) stating between one and three days, but over one in ten (12%) looking after grandchildren for five days or the entire week.

While a good proportion (55%) are sticking to a budget of less than £100, 21% are spending between £101 and £250, 7% between £251 and £1,000 and a small proportion (1%) admit to spending over £1,000 on half-term holiday fun. And grandparents are not just taking their grandchildren away once annually; nearly one in three of those who take their grandchildren on holiday, do so more than once a year. Most surprising is that only 3% will always be reimbursed by their children, with 83% of grandparents never seeing a penny, and a total of 14% sometimes receiving all or partial funds back. With the vast majority of those surveyed (92%) having more than one grandchild, and over a third (34%) with five or more grandchildren, Chris concludes the results reveal quite an undertaking from our nation's retirees: "Grandparents are providing an invaluable resource for parents - in fact it is estimated that grandparents providing childcare save working parents approximately £6.8 billion annually*. Undoubtedly, more often than not, this is fantastic for both children and grandparents, but it certainly means they are deserving of our gratitude!"

(Story source: 50 Plus)



Festive funding: 12 tricks to make some money this Christmas

The cost of Christmas presents, social events, food and drink to entertain family and friends between now and New Year all adds up. The key is to plan ahead so all the extra spending doesn't impact too much on your normal budget and cause you to go into debt.

The good news is that getting together a little extra cash can be easy when you put your mind to it. Follow our 12 tips to building up a Christmas fund...

1. Get on your soapbox

Some online surveys operate a reward scheme where you earn points for surveys completed that can be exchanged for shopping vouchers at the likes of Amazon and John Lewis.

Others pay up to £15 in cash for each one, which typically take around 30 minutes. Try surveycompare.net, uk.mysurvey.com, crowdology.co.uk, yougov.co.uk, and i-say.com.

Never pay to register and set up a new email address so your personal account doesn't get overloaded.

Many market research companies will also pay anything between £10 to £350 for you to take part in a focus group session. Some projects may involve product testing. Try paidfocusgroup.co.uk where registration is free.

2. Go undercover

Be a mystery Christmas shopper for a High Street brand. Some pay in cash, others let you keep all the shopping.

Sign up to an agency that matches candidates with jobs, such as JKS Mystery Shopping (jksmysteryshopping.co.uk) and Retail Maxim (retail-maxim.co.uk). You can be tasked with anything from a restaurant meal out to shopping for specific items.



Money & Work Feature

3. Switch for cash

Plenty of banks are offering cash rewards for switching your existing current account. The highest cash reward is currently from HSBC at £175. You have to pay in at least £1,750 a month to be eligible. M&S Bank is giving away a £100 gift card to new recruits. It also offers a further £80 gift card if you meet certain criteria such as paying in £1,250 a month, keeping direct debits active and registering for online banking.

4. Job Spotter

When you see a job ad in a shop window, upload a picture to the Job Spotter smartphone app from recruitment firm Indeed.co.uk. You will receive points worth between around 80p to £1.20 in Amazon vouchers for every picture you upload. The next few weeks should be rather lucrative while shops recruit extra staff for the Christmas period.

5. Become Santa

Have you grown a long white beard in retirement? Companies are hunting for people who are happy to dress as Santa every day during December. According to recruitment firm Indeed, there are 133 Santa jobs for every million job listings. The average Santa gets £10.51 an hour.



6. Sell old stuff

Use a specialist firm geared towards selling certain equipment you have upgraded or perhaps items for hobbies you may have given up. For example, golfbidder.co.uk will buy your golf clubs. Website camerajungle.co.uk does a similar job for those who want to sell photography equipment. Alternatively, sign up to ebay.co.uk or Amazon Marketplace, which allow you to sell second-hand items. You can also try the cash-for-clutter website musicmagpie.co.uk, which takes DVDs, CDs, electronics and games off your hands.

7. Be a babysitter

Lots of parents have social events during the run-up to Christmas and will be grateful for childcare. Typically, you could earn from £5 an hour, but with more experience and in certain locations such as London vou can earn around £12 an hour.

You can spread the word locally or on social media and online at yoopies.co.uk where you can register and advertise for free. Having a good set of references, experience, and being a parent or grandparent vourself will stand you in good favour. A Disclosure and Barring Service check (previously CRB) will also give you an added advantage. Applications costs £23 (£25 in Scotland).

8. Get competitive

For the investment of a few hours every day, you could end up bagging some brilliant prizes in time for Christmas. You can keep them, use them for presents or sell them online. Find free competitions on the prize finder.com, loquax.co.uk or by browsing MoneySavingExpert's forum board Competition Time.

9. Extra cashback

The deals on cashback websites become far more generous near Christmas. Until December 31, new customers signing up to Topcashback.co.uk get 100 per cent cashback up to £15 when they shop with a retailer listed under the toy category on the site. Brands include Early Learning Centre, Lego Shop, Hamleys and Amazon. New members can also get £15 off shopping at Fragrance Direct. There's no minimum spend - in fact, if you spend less than £15, you get your money back. Another offer pays £15 cash back to newbies on orders over £35 from Iceland.

10. Find bargains

As Christmas approaches, retailers will be boasting about their huge discounts. To ensure that you're getting the best final price, use a website such as Pricesearcher.com and you can compare prices across the retailers. For example, a Fitbit Versa special edition watch in lavender/gold costs just £171.49 at scan.co.uk compared to £273.99 at ebeez.co.uk. Likewise, a Jo Malone Pomegranate Noir scented candle costs £42 at Voisins.com compared to £62.49 on Amazon. A Mega Monopoly Game costs £22 on Amazon, but £30 at Argos.

11. Project work

Take on a one-off or short-term project via online temp agencies such as RedWigWam. Jobs are typically assisting with special promotions and product testing in supermarkets. This is perfect if you just want to pick up a couple of days work here and there to make some extra money but you cannot commit to a regular job. They also have evening and weekend jobs.

12. Proofreader

If you're quick to pick up grammatical errors and misspellings, then proofreading might be the job for you. There is plenty of appetite from writers to polish their work. It's flexible, pays around £15.71 an hour, and you can do it from home. You can search for freelance proofreading jobs online at recruitment firms including reed.co.uk and indeed.co.uk.

(Article source: This is Money)



Have yourself a quirky Christmas: 20 unusual Christmas travel ideas for every kind of traveller

This year, have a Christmas trip to remember. A couples escape, a family holiday or a cliche-free solo trip - here's a selection of our favourite quirky Christmas getaway ideas for a not-so-ordinary holiday season. Plus, if the legend is true, Santa will find you wherever you are.

This list will guide you through all the cool and unusual things you can do this Christmas. We encourage you to find the ones that resonate best with your traveler's soul:

Spend the night at a Bedouin desert camp

Sand, heat, camels: this image is the antithesis of every stereotypical Christmas card. So if you're looking to do something different, why not head straight to the nearest desert? It doesn't need to be a rough experience - you can stay in a luxury tent

Go skiing in a Santa costume

Cover yourself in a Santa costume and stir up a little festive confusion on the slopes of your favourite ski resort.





Leisure & Travel Feature

Build an igloo and have a festive dinner inside

If you have kids, make them build the igloo while you prepare the dinner. Bring candles, warm blankets and woollen socks for everyone.

Go on a Christmas road trip

We're not suggesting just any old road trip; for this challenge, you need to decorate the car. Head somewhere that's open on Christmas Day, like a nature park or the historical centre of a nearby city.

Soak in a warm mineral pool (especially if it's snowing outside)

There is nothing like immersing yourself in an open-air mineral pool in the winter. You'll feel like you're cheating nature as you watch snowflakes falling from above while you soak in warm mineral water, not caring about tiny details like weather forecasts or temperatures more suited to polar bears... Bring hot drinks with you.

Spend the day in the company of animals

Don't get me wrong, humans are okay... but I prefer animals because (other than parrots), I've yet to hear one assault my ears with "Tis the season to be jolly" for the 1,056,669th time in a row. In fact, I respect animals' ability to detach from the festive craze. Find some furry friends at a farm, a nature park or a zoo - whatever you have at hand will do.

Fly to the cheapest foreign country available

Check your favourite airlines' websites or a flight comparison website to see where you can escape at the last minute... and just do it. Life is short - you should make more silly decisions.

Go surfing

Surfing is a cliche if you are Australian, and an unconventional treat if you are not.

Rediscover yourself at a retreat

Why not head on a silence retreat, a meditation retreat or a nature getaway during the holidays? When the materialistic world becomes too overwhelming, it's time to run away from it all and sit in silence to rediscover your inner self.

Go skinny-dipping

This challenge is not for the faint of heart if you live close to one of the poles... but it's still worth it if you want a Christmas to remember.

Organise a snow picnic

Wrap yourself in warm clothes, pack some baked goodies and flasks full of tea and coffee (and rum, and whiskey...), and head out for a picnic in the crisp air. It's a good idea to pack extra blankets and spare gloves.

Embark on a refreshing bicycle ride

If the weather isn't too frightful, hop on your bike and enjoy a long, serene ride, making sure to occasionally glimpse through the windows of the houses you pass to see what other people do on Christmas Day. The best part about this is that the streets will be empty. Like, zombie-apocalypse empty. Have you checked out our bicycle-themed playlist to keep you company during your ride?

Return to your pagan roots

Christmas is rooted in Christianity, but Christianity is rooted further back in time. Add a pagan flavour to the holiday season by using your days off to visit an ancient monument. It could be a megalith, a stone circle, a tomb or whatever ancient landmark you have nearby.

Change the season

If you have spent your whole life celebrating snowy, white Christmases scented with the smell of chestnuts roasting on the open fire, then a little change will be more than refreshing. Head to another climatic zone and see what the change of scenery has to offer.

Just go somewhere colourful

Head to Guatemala, Colombia, Venice, Thailand or anywhere with colours more vivid than a photoshopped image.



Travel to a neighbouring city to eat at an exotic restaurant

As there is no Christmas in China, Bangladesh or Thailand, restaurants serving these national dishes will probably be open. Choose a nearby city and check which international restaurants there have the highest rating on Google, Facebook or TripAdvisor.

Book a remote cabin in the forest

The more remote, the better. Keep it warm and cosy, staying by the fireplace and preparing your own mulled wine. Take advantage of the fact that you are close to nature and practice the Japanese art of 'forest-bathing': shinrin-yoku.

Climb somewhere high for a gorgeous view

Depending on your preferences, this may be a skyscraper, a mountain peak or a just a tree.

Go boating or kayaking

Book a ticket on the nearest available cruise and sail the holiday season away. Or, if you'd rather travel under your own steam, swap the cruise ship for a kayak.

Eat your Christmas lunch on a plane, train, etc.

Most public transportation continues running even on Christmas Day. Even if you are not forced to be on a plane or train on Christmas Day, you can arrange a journey for yourself and make the most of the trip. Bring some cookies and special cinnamon latte with you if you're worried about missing the holiday spirit.

(Article source: 203 Challenges)

Over 50s 'more willing to immerse in local culture' than younger travellers

A study by TUI Tours found the older generation are more likely to go off the beaten track and socialise with the locals abroad.



The Mirror reports that the over 50s are more willing to immerse themselves in local culture than younger travellers, according to a poll of 2,000 adults carried out by TUI Tours.

The study found those entering their sixth decade are more likely to socialise with the locals, communicate in the native language and go off the beaten track.

Around seven in 10 are happy going for walks away from the resort - compared to just 54 per cent of those aged 30 and under.

And 41 per cent of the over 50s will happily make new friends when abroad, while only a third of younger adults said the same.

In contrast, younger holidaymakers are far more likely to travel for a suntan - 22 per cent compared to 15 per cent of older passengers. Those under 30 are also almost three times more likely to feel nervous about experiencing local cultures and customs when abroad than older travellers.

A spokeswoman for TUI Tours, which carried out the study to coincide with the launch of a new programme which offers local experiences in far-flung destinations like Borneo and Uzbeckistan, said: "This research shows a real thirst for travelling to more unknown and unusual countries.

"Those aged 50 and above definitely have an adventurous side, and more than that, a desire to understand and experience local cultures and customs.

"They are after all, the original free-spirited adventurers of the 60s and 70s and they want more from their travels than just a beach flop."

The study also found that driving and shopping are also activities older holidaymakers are happy to undertake while abroad.

However, Brits under 30 are a little braver when it comes to adopting local customs such as wearing appropriate clothing - 21 per cent versus 16 per cent of the over-50s.

It also emerged those nearing or in retirement like to travel three times a year to far-flung destinations.

And those in their fifties and sixties are also far more likely to opt for multi-destination holidays - breaks where they take in several locations and experience many sites - than the younger generation. When it comes to a destination wish list, Japan, New Zealand and the Arctic Circle are among the places the over 50s want to visit, in addition to countries closer to home such as Italy and Spain.

So far, one in 10 adults aged 50 and above have been to Canada, Australia and Egypt respectively.

A further one in 20 of those polled, via OnePoll, has visited India, while 26 per cent have experienced America.

Researchers also found the drive for adventurous travel comes from a desire to understand what happens in other countries (13 per cent).

Almost a fifth are hankering after more authentic experiences than the usual sun, sea and sand holidays while one in 20 want to have interesting stories to share with others.

And more than one in 10 have a number of countries they want to tick off their bucket list.

To demonstrate the effect of going off the beaten path, TUI sent five lucky competition winners on a TUI Tours South Africa adventure to keep a video diary.

Diarist, Kevin Hughes described the once-in-a-lifetime trip as "unbelievable" and said: "If it wasn't on your bucket list, it should be "

The group also got to grips with some local cooking lessons, and took a watery plunge on a voyage to spot hippos guarding their young from hungry predators.

Julia Bradbury, who accompanied the TUI Tours winners on their quest to experience the authentic side of South Africa, said: "As the video diaries of our competition winners, and the survey results, show, there is a real drive among the over 50s age group to experience local cultures and customs when they travel.

"With age comes a certain level of confidence and experience of course, which may lead to a willingness to go off the beaten track.

"Everybody likes to go home with happy memories and positive experiences from their holidays, but the over 50's also like to return home armed with more knowledge about where they've been,knowing they made a positive impact on the local communities as well."

(Story source: The Mirror)



Silver-haired snowboarders and gap-year grannies are turning their backs on traditional holidays in search of a thrill, according to travel experts.



The Daily Mail reports that holiday firms say they are besieged by adventurous grandparents who are increasingly choosing all-action holidays.

Now several companies have decided to branch into the over-50s market, offering specialist breaks to exotic locations.

Travel agent Gary Wardrope has launched a website dedicated to adventure holidays for the over-50s in response to 'amazing' demand from.

The site, get-lost.co.uk, features product from adventure travel specialist operators such as Explore and Exodus with activities ranging from camel-riding in Egypt to climbing Mount Kilimanjaro.

The new venture comes as the battle to capture the lucrative over-50s market hots up, with Shearings Holidays launching an expert agent partnership to coincide with the release of its new UK, Ireland and Europe brochures.

STA Travel is also recruiting staff for an as-yet-unnamed brand for over-50s. It is the first time the company has looked outside the youth market in its 30-year history.

Wardrope, owner of the Get Travelling Group told Travel Weekly: 'Often clients have been through a life-changing experience such as divorce, redundancy, bereavement, or perhaps the kids have left home, and realise that life is too short and they need help to fulfil their ambition. 'Despite the economic uncertainty, more people have the courage to take these adventure trips alone and get lost in local culture.'

Mr Wardrope's business is one of several that feel now is the time to act on advice often repeated at industry conferences to cash in on the 'lucrative grey market'.

Shearings is encouraging more agents to tap into this market with Shearings Expert Agents, a partnership programme offering members dedicated departures, research and joint marketing.

Chris Barker, head of marketing, said the over-50s market was becoming more diverse. 'If you are an over-50s specialist then you understand you can't lump them in together, so we have developed our own specialist programmes,' he said.

(Story source: Daily Mail)

Over 50s jetting off this winter

Recently over 50s have begun to set sail or jet off on holidays to beat the winter weather that is fast approaching.

Over 50s.com reports that They are avoiding the poor weather and heading off to locations across the globe in search of some winter sunshine.

A cruise, an all-inclusive holiday or just a weekend break are all good ideas if you yourself are looking to avoid the winter blues and get off into the glorious sunshine.

Hawaii, LA and Costa Rica are just a few of the options that you can choose from if you are looking to get away from the cold this winter. Get booking now though because this is becoming a very popular idea. It may be the best decision you make this year and in years to come

(Story source: Over 50s.com)

Over 50s travel preferences

It's well known that over 50s are a fan of travel. But did you know that they are extremely specific with where and when travel suits them best.

Over 50s.com reports that recently SAGA found that over 50s much preferred flying form regional airports than the larger airports such as Heathrow or Gatwick.

Cost didn't play a big part in the decision as the study found that most over 50s were willing to pay the difference in order to fly from a regional airport. You might be asking why would over 50s want to fly from smaller airports when their are larger more luxurious airports around.

It was found that over 50s like the smaller airports as there are fewer people and it is all together far more stress free experience. Do you share this opinion? Accounting for more than 58% of the UK's travel, I feel we should trust them on this one.

(Story source: Over 50s.com)





Food & Drink Feature

Winter warmer: How to make a Christmas favourite - mulled wine

Nothing says winter like a steaming mug of spiced booze, whether it's cider or the perfect mulled wine. We share our top tips on how to make a festive toddy.

You know Christmas is on its way when you have your mitts wrapped around a mug of mulled wine. But while the comforting warmth and slightly stained lips are two happy by-products of supping this glowing ruby tipple, there are pitfalls. Insufficient sugar, a grainy texture and too much spice can all dent festive cheer, so we've got some tips for creating the perfect mulled wine.

How do I make mulled wine?

Start with a classic recipe to use as your base. Ours recommends adding a dash of sloe gin to give you an extra warm glow. Alternatively, try our easy mulled wine recipe, which includes a dash of brandy. Be careful not to overheat the wine.



Easy mulled wine recipe (Serves 6)

- 750ml bottle of red wine
- 1 sliced clementine
- 1 cinnamon stick
- 1 star anise
- 3 dried figs
- 4 cloves
- 3 black peppercorns
- 50ml brandy
- 1. Pour the red wine into a large saucepan. Add the clementine, cinnamon stick, star anise, figs, cloves and peppercorns. Heat very gently until simmering, then turn off the heat.
- 2. Fish out the whole spices and peppercorns with a spoon, then stir in the brandy. Ladle into mugs or heatproof glasses to serve. You could drop in a slice of clementine to each.

What spices should I use?

The more traditional mulling spices are cinnamon, star anise, cloves and nutmeg, but you could try adding allspice, cardamom, bay leaves, vanilla pods or ginger, depending on the liquid you're mulling.



Use all of these spices sparingly, particularly star anise and cloves, as they become very strong in flavour when left to stew at length. A touch of citrus complements these warm spices a treat. Orange and lemon won't let you down, but tangerine, clementine and mandarin will add an extra festive kick.

Alternative spirits to try

Ramp up the cheer - it is Christmas after all! Choose a liqueur or spirit that's fairly low in alcohol to avoid completely incapacitating your guests. Cointreau, Grand Marnier or curaçao work with orange-based mulling blends, while a touch of sloe gin will bring out berry flavours in the wine.

A delicate drizzle of spiced rum, such as Sailor Jerry, ginger wine and cherry or apricot brandy can also work, but be careful not to go overboard. Avoid anything that might curdle, strongly contrasting spirits or anything cloying - while it's tempting to match the spices with something aniseedy, sambuca mulled wine would kill the party mood in an instant.

Use a sweetener

Lighten up the heavy booze and wintry spices with a sweetening agent. Add sugar at the beginning of the recipe so it gets a chance to dissolve. Stir regularly until it has disappeared. Most of our recipes use caster or granulated sugar due to their fine texture. You can always add a little extra sweetness later but, again, make sure you stir to dissolve.



If you're going freestyle, honey or a flavoured syrup can be added to taste as the mixture is taken off the heat, but make sure you give it a good stir.

More tips for DIY mulling

It's worth investing in some muslin so you can create your own spice bag. Fill it with any unground spice such as cinnamon sticks, whole nutmeg, cloves or ginger slices. This way you won't end up with floaters. Dot cloves into the skin of oranges and lemons to kill two birds with one stone - it will infuse the mix and it looks pretty, too.

Twists on traditional mulled wine

There are plenty of drinks that are fit for mulling beyond the ubiquitous red wine. Cider works well, but make sure you avoid the sweet, fizzy, bottled variety - try to get your hands on some flat farmhouse scrumpy, perry (pear cider) or dry French cider. Alter your spices accordingly: lift the mix with apple or pear juice, some fresh cranberries, vanilla and apple slices. While it's usually enjoyed crisp and chilled, white wine can also be mulled.



Team it with light flavours like elderflower cordial, rosemary, vanilla and thyme. And don't forget any non-drinkers; mulled apple juice with mild spices and orange should fit the bill nicely. Our mulled rosé also makes a festive alternative - be sure to add a generous glug of crème de cassis.

Continued on pages 18-19...





How to get ahead

Keep a pre-made bottle of spiced syrup in the cupboard to avoid a last-minute mulling crisis. Combine sugar and water with the spices of your choice and simmer for 20 minutes. Once cool, strain it through a fine sieve and pour into sterilised bottles.

Our recipe features instructions on how much of the syrup to add to wine, but if you're adding to your own taste, it's a good way of controlling sweetness and spice levels. It'll keep for up to three months, too.

How to serve mulled wine

Serve in style, going off-piste with your cups. While fragile glass is a no-no, sturdy dimpled half-pint glasses look good and have a useful handle. Garnish with whole cinnamon sticks and pared orange or lemon peel. You could also add a wedge of citrus studded with cloves - it's best to make one fresh rather than fishing a soggy slice out of the mulling pan.

The history of mulled wine

The most wonderful time of the year hasn't truly started until you've indulged in your first cup of mulled wine. It's a winter darling enjoyed by mankind since Antiquity. People continued knocking it back throughout the Middle Ages and it remained a Yuletide fixture in Victorian England. We still can't get enough of the stuff, especially once it's time to deck the halls.

Wine has been a major part of human culture since we first figured out how to make it. Unfortunately, weather can be fickle. Sometimes a bad harvest hits that lovingly tended vineyard and the grapes are underwhelming. Heating wine and infusing it with spices is a long time favourite strategy for masking flavours from spoiled wine or weak vintages. Thanks to the rise of trade along the Silk Road during the Roman Empire, new spices like ginger, cardamom, cinnamon and nutmeg flooded into Europe and improved food and drink across the Continent.

The practice of mulling survived the fall of the Empire and medieval Europeans took to it even more than the Romans did. Like their predecessors, Europeans found that steeping herbs, spices and a host of other ingredients in wine for medicinal purposes made a pretty potent health potion. Heating it was an effective way of fighting off winter chill, at least for a little while. So it's no surprise that mulled wine took off in a massive way in countries like Germany, Austria and the Scandinavian countries once the practice appeared to wane in the more southern countries. The German's glühwein is still a staple in Christmas markets and the ever-popular Nordic glögg is often taken to the next level with the addition of more spirituous stuff like akvavit, brandy or vodka.

At what point did mulled wine become equated with Christmas? We have one Charles Dickens to thank for that; the writer included a passage which mentioned Smoking Bishop, a popular mulled wine of the day, in his classic 'A Christmas Carol'.

Christmas cocktails & mocktails

Whether you want to experiment with mixology or need an easy festive drink, our favourite Christmassy cocktails and mocktails will provide much merriment.

Toast the season with a glass of something special. Deck the halls and fill them with the aroma of mulled wine, or how about a drop of Christmassy fizz, with our without booze. Either way, you'll offer the perfect welcome for guests arriving in from the cold.

Classic snowball

Serve up a classic snowball filled with creamy advocaat, sweet lemonade and plenty of ice. This retro party classic, garnished with a kitsch maraschino cherry is rich and boozy, just how we like our Christmas drinks.



Winter whisky sour

For fans of the dram, mix up our winter whisky sour. This classic bourbon cocktail uses fresh orange and lemon for a sweet and sharp citrussy edge. A sprinkling of gold edible glitter around the glass adds some festive cheer.

Amaretto fizz

Combine kitsch canned cherries, sweet syrup and almondflavoured amaretto to create a Christmas-cake-inspired amaretto sour. The sharp lemon cuts through the sweet, marzipan flavour of the amaretto, making a perfectly balanced drink. If you're hosting, try pairing your sours with salty nibbles like Spanish skewers.

Dark & stormy coffee cocktail

Dark & stormy coffee cocktail is one for caffeine fans who like a touch of warming ginger. This layered highball drink will look suitably impressive on your table and takes just minutes to make. Add a final squeeze of lime for a refreshing tropical twist.

Spice 75

Spice 75 screams "class" and is a quintessential taste of Christmas. This aromatic version of the French 75 uses allspice and a measure of rum. Garnish with an artistic twist of orange for an eye-catching pre-dinner drink. It's a strong combination, made to be sipped at leisure.



Grapefruit spritz

Take a break from super-rich eggnog and creamy cocktails and try a fresh grapefruit sprtiz. Serve up a taste of warmer months with a dash of Aperol and zesty grapefruit, topped up with prosecco. Put your bottle of fizz to good use with even more easy prosecco cocktail recipes.

Christmas cream liqueur

If you're a fan of creamy Christmas drinks, this glassful of deliciousness will be right up your street. Our easy Christmas cream liqueur, made with lashings of dulce de leche, makes a great homemade gift, (if you manage to restrain yourself from trying a snifter). The dulce de leche adds a deep toffee flavour we can't get enough of. Serve over ice for an after-dinner treat.

Clementine martinis

Whether shaken or stirred, martinis are divine. Elegant clementine martinis are easily doubled if you're catering for a big group. These picture-perfect cocktails are a great way to use up any fruit going to waste and we guarantee they'll go down a treat.



Cinnamon butter rum

No one could turn down a glass of our cinnamon butter rum, laced with festive spice. It takes just two simple steps to make the ultimate winter indulgence. If you're bored of mulled wine, this is the ideal Christmas alternative. This rich, syrupy delight will put a glow in your cheeks.

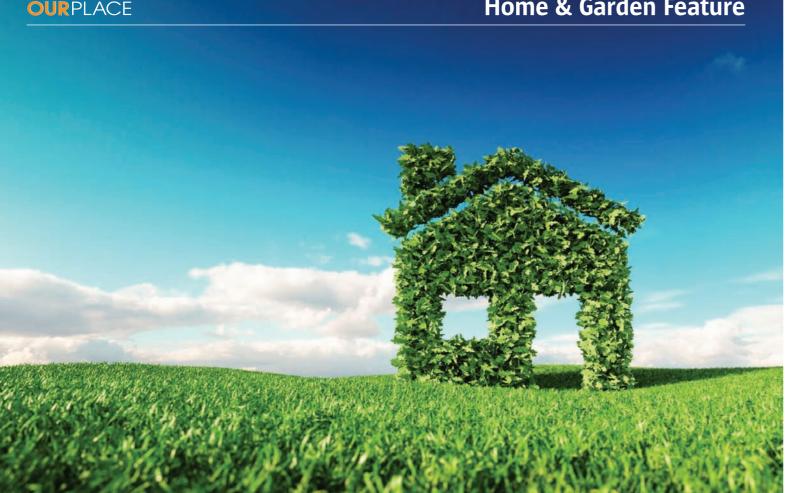
Cranberry margarita

This vivid red cranberry margarita with a decorative orange sugar rim is a wintry take on the classic tequila cocktail. When the holiday season rolls around, a batch of these striking tipples will add a pop of colour to the party.

(Article source: Various)



Home & Garden Feature



Go green: 11 easy eco swaps we can all make at home

Being greener has never been easier. We reveal how to help protect the planet by using less plastic and recycling more.

2019 has been a big year when it comes to plastic. So many more of us are now finally trying to use less, recycle more and just generally think about the planet. And it's high time. But there's always at least one extra change you can make. A recent YouGov poll revealed that almost half of us (49%) admit we 'could do more' when it comes to recycling, so now's the time to start.

"We believe that simple swaps, from plastic to paper and cardboard alternatives, could significantly reduce single-use plastic, says Alex Manisty, group head of strategy at DS Smith, a sustainable packaging company. "While there is no silver bullet, sustainable packaging has a huge role to play - and unlike plastic - paper and cardboard are materials that are recyclable not just in theory but in practice, achieving recycling rates of 85% today across Europe."

So, how can you do more? Try making these easy eco swaps at home...



Keep food fresh without using cling film

You can use off cuts of fabric, covered in beeswax and coconut oil instead of cling film, to keep food fresh in the fridge. Or if that's too much like hard work, you can buy your own beeswax wraps. Try Bee's Wrap Assorted Reusable Food Wraps - Pack of 3, £15.99 (was £19.99), Lakeland.

Only use recyclable wrapping paper

Most of us are aware you can't recycle all wrapping paper, but we often throw it in with the paper waste and hope for the best. Non-paper gift wrap, such as foil-based wrapping paper or bags, cannot be recycled. You can check if your wrap can be recycled by scrunching it; if it springs back when you scrunch it, it's not recyclable. Just buy lovely brown paper and decorate presents with ribbons or string, which can also be re-used. When you are recycling wrap, remember to remove any bits with labels or sellotape on them, too.

Put your recycling in the right bin

It sounds obvious, but so many people put items in the wrong recycling bins. This Christmas, more than 90% of us are set to shop online, which according to DS Smith, means that 25% more cardboard will make its way into residential collections. To make sure that all recyclable paper and cardboard is actually sent for recycling, residents need to make sure that it ends up in the correct recycling bin.

Bin the bubble wrap

Bubble wrap and plastic-lined envelopes are extremely difficult to recycle, so use paper versions instead. They'll protect any goodies you're popping in the post and can then be recycled.

Use a good old hankie

Tissues, paper towels and kitchen roll cannot be recycled once used - mainly for hygiene reasons. So why not go old school and swap these for a handkerchief or cloth, so you can wash them and re-use?

Treat yourself to a reusable coffee cup

If you frequent the likes of Starbucks or Costa for your morning caffeine fix, maybe it's time to get yourself a reusable coffee up. According to new YouGov research commissioned by DS Smith. the number of disposable cups used each year in the UK is estimated to have risen by 20% from 2.5 billion in 2016 to 3 billion. And despite a major push to use reusable coffee cups (like cheaper hot drinks), research shows that of the 46% of Brits who have a reusable coffee cup, only 12% use it all the time."

Don't forget to recycle your pizza boxes

Pizza boxes are 100% recyclable even when greasy, as long as there is no food left in them and they aren't heavily stained. The best way of ensuring your pizza box can be recycled is to remove any crusts, leftover food, and soak up any excess oil.

Think about the cards you buy

Greetings cards can be recycled, as long as they're not covered in glitter or other non-paper materials, so only buy ones you can actually recycle.

Shop with recyclability in mind

Look for the on-pack recycling information and avoid foods packaged in single-use plastics. Black plastic can't be recycled, and companies like Marks & Spencer are doing something about this. Their priority is to remove or reduce plastic packaging, and as part of this, they've removed 1,700 tonnes of black plastic from products such as fruit and veg, meat and fish and their Mini Bites tubs, while also launching new, widely recyclable terracotta CPET trays to replace black plastic.



Stop buying records and CDs

I know, I know, we love vinyl too, but do you really need any more stuff cluttering up your home? Sign up to a music streaming service like Spotify, where you can select and play pretty much any song you fancy listening to. And if you treat yourself to a new Google Nest Mini (£49, store.google.com, pop it on your Christmas list), not only will you be able to listen to your tunes on a quality speaker, but you don't even need to use the app you can just ask Google to play you anything you want to listen to. Oh, and the Nest Mini base is made of 35% recycled materials, while the cover is made from 100% recycled plastic bottles, so it's also a green product to invest in.

Use more eco-friendly ways to stay warm

If you feel the cold, it can be massively tempting to have the heating on more frequently, but if you want to use less energy, why not focus on just warming yourself up? Throw on an extra jumper, or cosy up in a super-efficient electric blanket - perfect for popping on the bed at nighttime, having on your lap if you work from home or snuggling up with on the sofa. Try the Velvety Electric Heated Throw, £49.99, Lakeland. Bliss!

(Article source: Silver Surfers)



Cat Hospice - Giving palliative care to sick cats

Cat Hospice is a small charity dedicated to cats living with FIV and is named after one of it's first residents, 'Strompus' - a pretty little long-haired feral cat, who sadly died on Christmas Eve in 2011.





Feline Immunodeficiency Virus (FIV) is similar to HIV / Aids in humans, in that it effects the immune system. With careful healthcare, these cats can live happy and healthy lives, so we feel that it should not automatically result in a death sentence. Most of our FIV cats are feral but some, like Tom, pictured above, are friendly pets who have just got into a bit of bother. Domestic cats with FIV can be rehomed in some circumstances. Tom (who came from Watford) went to live as a companion to another FIV positive cat in the North East. All our FIV cats are neutered, microchipped, wormed and vaccinated.

There are many cats in our care who live in our Cat Hospice who are very sick. Cats just like these...

'Tiger'



Tiger was abandoned on the street of a busy market town when his owners moved house. Frightened and hungry, he found his way to the home of a lady who fed him until we were able to take him in. Tiger was terribly matted and extremely thin, and he had to be fully shaved because of how matted his coat was.

After some time and a lot of love, we got him well and happy and a lovely coat. His health wasn't to last however, as some time later he developed lymph cancer, and needed a course of Chemotherapy. It was a difficult time for him, as the chemotherapy did take it out of him and make him sleep a lot. After two weeks of treatment, when he stopped taking them, his condition improved drastically, and he was in remission. This was 3 years ago now. Tiger's health will always be a problem, as he is a fragile boy, but he fought cancer and won. He has to remain at the rescue in a flat on site because of his sensitive nature and possible future vet costs. He loves relaxing on a comfy bed and still plays with toys even at his advanced age.

Cat Hospice needs help to care for all these other cats:

'Kiska'. This little FIV positive girl came from the same feral colony as Strompus.

'Wilton'. This rather handsome young chap came from a factory site in the North East, thanks to the Cat Orphanage. As he is FIV positive, we were happy to care for him at our Cat Hospice.

'Gillan'. Long haired tabby female Gillan is a feral cat living with FIV.

'Secret'. Secret is about 3 years old and is one of our domestic FIV boys.

'Whiskers'. Whiskers is a friendly boy who is living with FIV.

As you can see, all of these beautiful cats have their own unique character. They all need looking after so Cat Hospice can give them the best possible care through their final years of life.











Kiska

Wilton

Gillan

Secret

Whiskers

To donate to Cat Hospice, please write to: Raisemore, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB

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Just call McClure Solicitors on Freephone 0800 852 1999 and mention Farplace Animal Rescue.

