OURPLACENews

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

NOVEMBER 2021

Inside this issue...

'Truffle Hound'

Truffles are the most expensive food in the world - here's how to find them and where they are in the UK

Golden slumbers

10 glorious woodland retreats for an autumn break

Meditation, vodka and vinegar:

Can the morning routines of the rich and famous make me a better person?

The pandemic lit a fire inside me'

How three high-fliers retrained as garden designers

PLUS...

What's on • Health & Beauty • Money & Work • Leisure & Travel Food & Drink • Arts, Crafts & Hobbies • Home & Garden

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

CONTENTS

What's On	3
Health & Lifestyle	
Meditation, vodka and vinegar	4-7
Health, Work & Environment News	8-9
Leisure & Travel Feature	
10 glorious woodland retreats for autumn	10-13
Leisure & Travel News	. 14-15
Food & Drink Feature	
'Truffle Hound': How to find truffles in the UK	. 16-19
Home & Garden Feature	
Three high-fliers retrained as garden designers.	. 20-21
Our Charity of the Month	22
The state of the s	

Data Privacy

data only with your consent or if we are permitted to do so by other lawful means. We work hard to ensure your data is safe and secure at all times. We collect your name and address so that we can ensure your free subscription to our newsletters and entry to our prize draws is uninterrupted and for the purpose of direct marketing based on a legitimate interest. We cannot process your service without this. We Collect your phone number and email address so that we can email you with any queries that may arise on your details and to send you marketing via email with your consent. This data is voluntary, but without it we will be unable to advise you of any changes with your service. This data is voluntary. We need to share your personal data with third parties such as our direct Despatch suppliers and business partners. We may also share your name and address with retailers and charities whose products and services you may be interested in. We will store your personal data for as long as it is required for fulfilment of your service, our statutory requirements or for direct marketing purposes. For full details please visit www.ourplace.co. Please inform us of any changes to the personal data we are holding on your behalf. At any time, you have the right to withdraw your consent for marketing, you can also request that we no longer use your personal data as detailed above for legitimate interests including direct marketing. Please email your request to support@ourplace.co, or phone 01989 564468 or write to us at the address below.







Coronavirus (COVID-19): what you need to do Stay at home

- Only go outside for food, health reasons or work (where this absolutely cannot be done from home)
- Stay 2 metres (6ft) away from other people
- Wash your hands as soon as you get home

Anyone can spread the virus

Full guidance on staying at home and away from others

The single most important action we can all take, in fighting coronavirus, is to stay at home in order to protect the NHS and save lives.

Details

When we reduce our day-to-day contact with other people, we will reduce the spread of the infection. That is why the government is now (23rd March 2020) introducing three new measures.

- Requiring people to stay at home, except for very limited purposes
- 2. Closing non-essential shops and community spaces
- 3. Stopping all gatherings of more than two people in public

Every citizen must comply with these new measures. The relevant authorities, including the police, will be given the powers to enforce them - including through fines and dispersing gatherings.

These measures are effective immediately. The Government will look again at these measures in three weeks, and relax them if the evidence shows this is possible.

Symptoms and what to do

Do not leave your home if you have coronavirus symptoms

Do not leave your home if you have either:

- a high temperature this means you feel hot to touch on your chest or back (you do not need to measure your temperature)
- a new, continuous cough this means coughing a lot for more than an hour, or 3 or more coughing episodes in 24 hours (if you usually have a cough, it may be worse than usual)

To protect others, do not go to places like a GP surgery, pharmacy or hospital. Stay at home.

Use the 111 online coronavirus service to find out what to do.

Advice for people at high risk

Who's at high risk from coronavirus

Coronavirus can make anyone seriously ill, but there are some people who are at a higher risk.

For example, you may be at high risk from coronavirus if you:

- have had an organ transplant
- · are having certain types of cancer treatment
- have blood or bone marrow cancer, such as leukaemia
- have a severe lung condition, such as cystic fibrosis or severe
- have a condition that makes you much more likely to get infections
- are taking medicine that weakens your immune system
- · are pregnant and have a serious heart condition

Who's at high risk from coronavirus

If you're at high risk of getting seriously ill from coronavirus, there are extra things you should do to avoid catching it.
These include:

- not leaving your home you should not go out to do shopping, pick up medicine or exercise
- stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people in your home as much as possible

Ask friends, family or neighbours to pick up shopping and medicines for you. They should leave them outside your door.

Self-isolation helps stop coronavirus spreading

Do not leave your home if you have symptoms of coronavirus (COVID-19) or live with someone who does. This is called self-isolation.

If you are self-isolating, you must:

- not leave your home for any reason, other than to exercise once a day - but stay at least 2 metres (3 steps) away from other people
- not go out to buy food or collect medicine order them by phone or online, or ask someone else to drop them off at your home
- not have visitors, such as friends and family, in your home

You can use your garden, if you have one.

STAY AT HOME!

Published by Clearlight Media, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB. Telephone: 01989 564468 Web: www.ourplace.co



Health & Lifestyle Feature

The entrepreneur and trainer Adrienne Herbert has created a successful podcast (and now a book) around her concept of a "power hour" in the morning. "First, it's because solitude is so hard to find at any other time. It's also about starting the day as you mean to go on," she says. "That is going to set you up for the day, for better or worse. Without that, you just kind of roll the dice." It is also a way of putting yourself first, she says: "It's quite empowering. I'm completely in control of my time before I'm on call for anyone else."

My own routine is a 7.15am alarm, followed by bleary horizontal doomscrolling until my elderly dog's complaints become overwhelming, then a slow trudge to pick up his poo, followed by a pint of tea at my desk. I am not empowered, effective or optimised. "What if you could change anything about your life just by changing the way you start your day?" asks Elrod's film. Time to find out.

Wake at dawn

The idea

There is a simple, earnest romance to rising with the dawn, like a Thomas Hardy character before the harvest fails and tragedy looms. The writer and Observer Food Monthly editor Allan Jenkins is a horrifyingly early riser, sometimes up at 3am or 4am. In his book Morning: A Manifesto, he writes about the dawn light like a lover, observing its shifts and moods, the colours it wears. "I'm a light-driven person," he says. "Being somewhere on your own with light coming up - it's slightly magical."



It is good for you, too: research has demonstrated that exposure to early morning light increases alertness, improves sleep and decreases stress levels. I want all those things, obviously, so I leave my curtains open and switch off the alarm.

The verdict

I don't know where the people who suggest this live - the Outer Hebrides, maybe, or the 18th century - but where I live, leaving the curtains open means a massive assault of artificial light, from street lamps to neighbours' security lights going on and off every time a cat walks past. Light is good for you, but so is dark. I can't sleep with the curtains open without wearing an eye mask, but I can't witness the dawn if my eyes are covered. You see the problem.

The idea

Fitting exercise into my day is, hmm, I will say "tricky", but "vanishingly unlikely" also works. Getting it done first thing is the best way to maximise your chances. Herbert is an eloquent advocate for early-morning movement: she started her power hour in 2017, with only 14 weeks to train for a marathon. "The almost meditative beat of my feet striking the ground brings a feeling of invincibility," she says. "My worries don't seem so big any more. I can think clearly. I have more energy and anything

The verdict

Get physical

Imagine a cinematic montage of me falling out of bed, fighting with a sports bra and dozing off as I lace my trainers. My Monday run is bearable. Obviously, I hate getting up, but, after a barrage of online advice, I set my kit out the night before, giving myself one less excuse. The misty dawn is beautiful, as is my smug glow.

seems possible." It doesn't hurt that Herbert is a glowing,

inspirational picture of health and vitality. Count me in.

On Tuesday and Wednesday, I do early online classes, one called Your Mum's VHS, the other Boyband Barre. The former involves high-energy bouncing à la Jane Fonda (although the 90s music suggests the mum in question is me, which stings). The latter, meanwhile, is a brutally painful way to start the day - even the instructor appears to be suffering - and no amount of Take That can drown out the screaming from my glutes. On Thursday, I try the app Zombies, Run!, a post-apocalyptic audio tale that provides running prompts. I enjoy running in darkness through a desolate wasteland populated by the undead, desperately searching for food and fuel: it is perfect preparation for Christmas 2021

problem, according to Herbert; the most important part of power hour preparation is getting enough sleep. "No one wants to get up in the morning early if they're tired. If you want it to feel good and not to be a punishment, get to bed early and get the sleep you need." But this is where life intrudes: I am a poor sleeper, my sons' adolescent body clocks mean they talk to me only after 10pm and the dog needs his walk before I can exercise. By the weekend, I am rebranding the 10-minute dog walk as "exercise".

If mornings are painful, afternoons are worse: I experience slumps so intense they feel like out-of-body experiences. It feels as if I am wading through syrup. I ask Herbert for advice. "I definitely get a slump; for me, it's concentration and focus. The way I combat that - and people don't want to hear this - is movement. Get up from your desk, get moving, walk around outside, stretch, get a bit of oxygen." She is right: I don't want to hear this. I try Jenkins, hoping for sympathy. "Life isn't perfect, so why shouldn't you be tired sometimes?" he says. "That's what tea is for, that's what sugar is for."

Speaking of sugar, I eat constantly and indiscriminately this week, with the panicky greed of a rat trapped in a Greggs wheelie bin. Very much #fitnessgoals.



Meditation, vodka and vinegar: Can the morning routines of the rich and famous make me a better person?

I am not empowered or optimised by my current morning routine.

I am a bleary-eyed doom-scroller. So I spent a month ditching my phone, exercising, journalling and embracing the dawn, to find out what really works.

Are morning people better than night owls? I was delighted to discover that they are not. The "morning morality effect" - the notion that our capacity to resist lying and cheating dwindles through the day - applies only to larks, research shows; nighthawks behave better in the evenings.

Morning people do, however, have a reputation for getting stuff done. Early rising is associated with energy, optimisation and efficiency; it is a foundational principle of all manner of self-help and self-actualisation programmes.

"If you look at many of the most productive people in the world, they'll have one thing in common: they were early risers," says one wide-eyed zealot in the trailer for the motivational guru Hal Elrod's film about his "miracle morning", as Oprah Winfrey, Mahatma Gandhi and Albert Einstein flash past. Elrod's Savers routine - silence, affirmations, visualisation, exercise, reading, scribing - is a classic of the genre, but he is only one of many urging us to seize the day super-early.

4

Continued on pages 6-7...



Meditation

The idea

The benefits of meditation don't need restating: its impact on a wide range of conditions, including depression, anxiety and fibromyalgia, is well documented. Many spiritual traditions that incorporate meditation consider it an early-morning practice, too: "Creating a sacred connection to your higher self when the world and your mind are at their quietest," as the alternative medicine enthusiast Deepak Chopra puts it. I have hated every previous attempt at meditating - my mind churns like a cement mixer -but perhaps dawn will work its magic.

The verdict

I try the Calm app twice but, as usual, my brain trots straight to my greatest failings, festering grievances and the expired soup in the fridge. I have the rest of the day for that stuff; I don't need an extra hour of it in the morning. Instead, inspired by Jenkins' beautiful and persuasive writing about early mornings in nature - the blackbirds and foxes that inhabit his street and his allotment, the light-streaked sky at "the quiet moments when the day inhales and the night fails" - I try sitting outside, quietly.

I watch the wind move the leaves and the sparrows bustle in the bushes as the dark recedes over 15 minutes. I don't think it is meditation - my eyes are open, I am not focusing on my breath - but it does have that stilling quality I find so elusive.

The Creativity

The idea

The Artist's Way, a 1992 book by the creativity whiz Julia Cameron, introduced the concept of "morning pages": freeform first-thing writing to get the juices flowing (yuck). Its more recent equivalent, journalling, is a staple of self-help and personal development morning routines.



The bestselling author Jojo Moyes dabbles in early writing shifts: "When my children were young, I started at 6am (or, if I could face it, 5am). It was the only time of the day that my brain wasn't fogged with domestic detritus," she says. "The first half hour was always a struggle, but there is a weird filterless quality to what comes out straight after dreams. It's a good time for the imagination."



Health & Lifestyle Feature

Early-morning writing works for Jenkins, too: "The stuff I do early just comes, because there's nothing else around. You can kind of hear it; the tone is there." The writer Oliver Burkeman tested Cameron's idea and found it "powerful ... at calming anxieties, producing insights and resolving dilemmas". I need that.

The verdict

Cameron's instructions are rigid, yet terrifyingly vague: three full longhand sides of "US letter paper" on anything; a complete stream of consciousness. I fall out of bed at 6am, shuffle to the spare room, open a notebook and start to write. I hate how it feels - and, as for the output... well. Morning pages are supposed to be private, but let me share some snippets: "Wow this is terrible I hate this"; "Jeopardy, no USP chicken estuary"; "This was terrible". Powerful stuff.

On the third day, I abandon the bootcamp because I have work to do on a tight deadline. I start at 5.30am. Moyes and Jenkins are right: the emptiness, the absence of noise, creates a space where I am not constantly distracted. I finish efficiently, without scrolling through Twitter once.

Celebrities

The idea

We are fixated on dissecting the minutiae of celebrity routines, keen to draw any lessons we can from their habits. How did they become so successful, glossy and charismatic? Is it anything to do with their breakfast? This means I have plenty to choose from as I try to capture a bit of morning-routine stardust.

The verdict

I start with Winfrey, the queen of self-actualisation. In one of the many conflicting versions of her routine I read, she wakes at 6.02am, without an alarm clock. I have no expectation this will work, but I swear that when I check my phone on waking in the morning, it is precisely 6.02. She follows up with dog walking, coffee and meditation in her 3,000-tree garden or "breakfast chair".

I manage dog and coffee, then I sit in the shed for 10 minutes (it is raining) and check out the Winfrey-endorsed The Bowl of Saki (daily snippets of Sufi mysticism) on my phone, taking in absolutely nothing. Winfrey does assisted stretches ("two, sometimes three, people... come to my house to help me"), so I ask my husband for help. He pulls my arms, briefly and perfunctorily. Winfrey also runs "a giant loop around my home". I do this, too. It takes 35 seconds.

After Winfrey, things degenerate. I can't manage Jennifer Aniston's 4.30am start, or her regime of "keeping your body confused" by exercise, including the ominous-sounding "spinyoga". My body is sufficiently confused by getting up at 6am, so I ride my bike round the block (this is so fun I do it twice) then sleepwalk through a 10-minute yoga video.

Aniston's breakfast smoothie is an unholy sludge with cacao (I use cocoa), protein powder, spinach and other horrors: it sits on my desk for hours before I can stomach it. I do adopt, and genuinely appreciate, her "no phone for the first hour" discipline, however.

Victoria Beckham drinks two tablespoons of apple cider vinegar first thing, then does two separate workouts. No wonder she often looks thunderous. I do a 6am run, then drink the vinegar, an experience so unpleasant I decide it counts as my second workout. Beckham is another smoothie devotee - what is it with celebs' reluctance to chew? - but my blender can't countenance broccoli, so I eat a few florets instead.

Orlando Bloom's nonsensical and much-derided regime also defeats me. "I chant for 20 minutes every day," he says, but I settle for muttering: "I hate this," a few times. Bloom's first breakfast of "green powders that I mix with brain octane oil" becomes a cod liver oil capsule and a cystitis sachet (I don't have cystitis, but it is the only vaguely therapeutic powder in the house). He does "eye-gazing" with his infant daughter, but I daren't look my 17-year-old in the eye before midday, so I just glance at him as he eats breakfast, stony-faced.



I had hoped to close the month with Princess Margaret's fabled morning routine, as revealed in Craig Brown's Ma'am, Darling: breakfast in bed, two hours of reading the papers and smoking, bath, hair and makeup, then vodka. Sadly, none of that is possible when you have to hold down a job.

After a month of self-actualised, optimised mornings, I am bone-tired and biscuit-dependent; the dog's body clock has fatally readjusted to require walking at 6am. Even so, I find myself reluctant to give up. I have started setting the alarm earlier and, when I wake before it, something compels me to get up and go outside. It is certainly not because I am more effective, but the peace, the birdsong and the light feel like an initiates' secret, a gift to myself. "If you can make it work, there's goodness in it," says Jenkins. Perhaps I can.

(Article source: The Guardian)

6` **7**`



Health, Work & Environment News

Over-50s want climate crisis addressed 'even if it leads to high prices'

Research finds almost two-thirds of older people want UK government to move faster on green initiatives.



The Guardian reports that the majority of over-50s believe the UK government should be doing more to address the climate crisis, even if it leads to higher prices, a study has found.

A survey of more than 500 people aged 50 and over found that almost two-thirds want ministers to move faster on climate initiatives, regardless of whether it meant products and services would be more expensive over time, or more difficult to access.

Stuart Lewis, the founder of Rest Less, which conducted the study, said: "Our research shows that midlifers feel a huge sense of responsibility for the health of the planet and their role in reducing climate change."

Rest Less, a website that supports and provides advice to older people, also found that only a minority of older people said they were unconcerned about the climate crisis, challenging assumptions about a generational divide on environmental issues.

More than two in three people polled said they had bought fewer clothes to cut down on waste in recent years, while half reduced their vehicle use and consumed less meat and dairy. One in five said they only bought seasonal food, while half said they had reduced home energy use.

"The vast majority of midlifers we surveyed are already making changes to their own habits, from recycling more to consuming less, changing their travel habits, with some even giving up their car altogether." Lewis said.

However, the findings come as other research showed older homeowners were unlikely to receive significant financial benefits from greening their properties. The government is aiming to upgrade as many homes as possible to an average energy efficiency rating of C by 2035. But the average cost of improvements - which could mean insulating water tanks and lofts, or installing solar panels and heat pumps - can be much higher for older people because they tend to own older and less energy efficient homes. A study by Nationwide building society found the cost of improvements was about £8,100 on average, but rose to £25,800 for homes with a F or G energy efficiency rating.

The average annual savings of greening a home are estimated at about £1,780 a year, meaning owners of older properties would only reap financial benefits after 14 years. "This suggests a need for further incentives to help decarbonise homes," said Andrew Harvey, Nationwide's senior economist.

Meanwhile, better energy performance certificates (EPCs) are having a limited impact on house prices. While the worst performing homes were valued 3.5% less than the average home, the greenest only attracted a premium of about 1.7%, Nationwide said.

The financial implications could "disincentivise" older property owners from taking action, Harvey said. "However, the value that people attach to energy efficiency is likely to change over time, especially if the government takes measures to incentivise greater energy efficiency in future to help ensure the UK meets its climate change obligations."

(Story source: The Guardian)

How working from home during Covid pandemic has given a much-needed boost to local economies

The pandemic has provided people with a glimpse of what life outside of a rigid office-based work culture looks and feels like.

Inews reports that in its 2019 manifesto the Conservative Party said it would be "levelling up every part of the UK," recognising the increasingly unbalanced distribution of wealth and quality of life across the nation and the growing public dissatisfaction about it.

An Institute of Fiscal Studies report last year found the UK is one of the most geographically unequal countries in the developed world.

Compared with 26 other developed nations, it ranks near the top of the league table on most measures of regional economic inequality. There are also substantial differences in earnings, wealth, health, educational attainment and social mobility across the country.

Making financial fairness a priority is a smart aim in theory, but I am not quite sure the Government has a clear idea about how the levelling-up agenda fits with repairing the British economy post-pandemic. Earlier this month, Tory party chairman Oliver Dowden told party conference delegates "to get off their Pelotons and back to their desks".





His comments were swiftly followed by Boris Johnson appearing to suggest that everyone should get back into the office to avoid being the subject of office "gossip".

I understand why this message is being hammered home - city centres with their coffee shops and restaurants lying desperately quiet, high street retailers whose footfall has plummeted, public transport networks still expected to run a good service but with a fraction of the ticket sales to fund it - the traditional British economy is designed around people commuting to urban centres to work in offices

The pandemic has given people a glimpse of what life outside of a rigid office-based work culture looks and feels like. It means there is now an important debate to be had about whether we want to go back to that economic model.

Pulling people back into the office will serve to restore spending to those areas that have seen their streets empty as those who could worked from home. But to do this at scale will mean those same people stop spending in their local communities.

Having stayed with a friend in Gloucestershire over the weekend, it's abundantly clear that small towns and villages have had life breathed back into them since the pandemic hit.

Riverside cafes, local boutiques and eateries could never have survived while more than half the community's population was clambering onto a packed train to spend 90 minutes standing with their face in a stranger's armpit each morning and not returning until late in the evening.

This is the thing about levelling up. To bring local economies up will have a corresponding cost somewhere else. The City of London's loss is the Midlands' gain.

Property wealth is a crude measure, but Rightmove's September house price index indicates that for the first time since the 2008 financial crisis, house prices across the all regions of UK have risen by an average of £6,000. Still lagging behind in this rapid growth, however, is London, where prices in the last year have risen just 2.6 per cent, compared to over 11 per cent in Wales in the same period.

For some, going back to the office will be right, for others, the option to support their local community has become more appealing.

(Story source: Inews)

Better walking and cycling infrastructure crucial to keeping over 50s healthy

A new report emphasises that well-designed neighbourhoods that enable people to walk and cycle are vital to helping people in their 50s and 60s stay active.

Centre for Ageing Better reports that 38% of people aged 55-64 and 43% of those aged 65-74 don't get the recommended amount of exercise each week. We're calling for government to increase funding in this area to get people moving.

According to a new report, 'Best foot forward', too many people in their 50s and 60s will remain physically inactive unless we re-design our neighbourhoods to encourage walking and cycling. The report, which looked at the barriers people in this age group face to walking and cycling, says that action is needed from national and local government, service providers and health systems to get people moving.

Data from Sport England shows that 35% of people aged 45 to 54; 38% of those aged 55 to 64 and 43% of those aged 65 to 74 do not do the amount of physical activity recommended by government. People in their 50s spend less than two hours a week walking or cycling, and people in their 60s spend just over an hour and a half walking or cycling.

According to the report, avoiding the stresses and annoyances of driving - like traffic and parking - is a key motivation for walking or cycling; however, fear of traffic and a lack of confidence act as barriers to cycling.

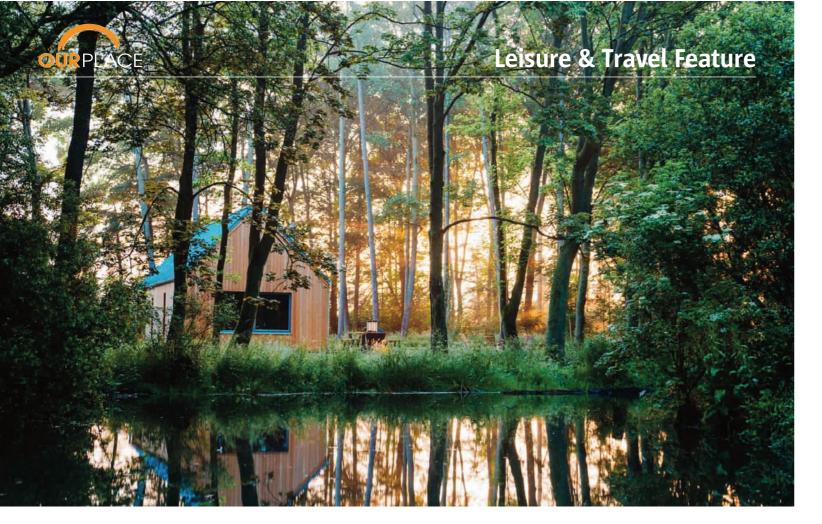
These issues can be remedied with good-quality cycle paths that are separated from traffic. Well-maintained dedicated footpaths are crucial too, as is proximity to shops and services so that they can be easily reached on foot or by bike.

The report also found that health conditions and the perception that they're not fit enough are major barriers to people in their 50s and 60s getting active in this way, but wanting to improve fitness can also be a motivation.

The Centre for Ageing Better says that encouraging people in their 50s and 60s to travel by walking or cycling more is absolutely vital to helping this group stay active and improving people's health.

They say that to support this, national government should increase the funding available through the Active Travel Fund for local areas to install safe, supportive infrastructure for walking and cycling like well-maintained paths, adequate lighting, separation from traffic, and places to lock up bikes in town centres. Ensuring this kind of infrastructure is in place would, they say, remove many people's fear of traffic and boost confidence in walking and cycling.

(Story source: Centre for Ageing Better)



Golden slumbers: 10 glorious woodland retreats for an autumn break

With our forests about to burst into colour, we pick cosy woodland cottages and eco-cabins for making the most of a British autumn.

Cream of cottages, New Forest

There's no better time to visit the New Forest than autumn, when the trees blaze auburn and saffron and the ground is scattered with fungi, leaf litter and acorns. These are the months when the forest's ponies are replaced by domestic pigs, who are let out to roam the forest to feast on the acorns (which are poisonous to other animals) in a centuries-old tradition known as pannage. Kingfisher Cottage is new to rent, and offers complete privacy down a mile-long lane, with an easy walking trail through the forest to Burley village. Bolderwood deer sanctuary is nearby, famous for the oak and beech trees that flame with colour in autumn, and the Blackwater Tall Trees Trail is a short drive away. The cottage sleeps four in two airy bedrooms, with crisp cream decor throughout and walking and cycling trails from the door.



From £711 a week, newforestcottages.co.uk

OURPLACE

Safari-style lodges, North Yorkshire (left)

Glamping is an understatement for these two spacious, well-equipped forest boltholes: one lodge and one safari tent, surrounded by woodland on the edge of the North York Moors at Thimbleby. Coulter - the tent - boasts reclaimed wood floors and walls, with a log burner in the kitchen-living room, while Lark is a spacious lodge with twin alfresco bathtubs.

A Place in the Pines is the passion project of owner Matt Brown, who is a fount of information on walks and places to visit. Dogs are welcome, too. A walk away through the woods is the Golden Lion pub, renowned for its food and Sunday roasts.

Lodges from £140, aplaceinthepines.co.uk

Bed in a botanic garden, Isle of Wight

For a taste of autumn abroad, Ventnor Botanical Garden has an almost Mediterranean climate and more than 30,000 subtropical plants and trees. The 22-acre space has several trails, such as Champion Trees: 10 trees that are the biggest of their kind in the UK.

Visitors can stay overnight for after-hours access to the garden, which also has a cafe, restaurant and wellbeing classes. Accommodation ranges from camping and tipis to three cabins and a cottage.

New for 2021 is the Smugglers Lodge, a restored Victorian building that is now a one-bedroom retreat with kingsize bed, rolltop bath, wood burner and terrace overlooking palm trees.



Lodge from £65 a night/£390 a week, botanic.co.uk

Hobbit house, Suffolk

Buried deep in tranquil woodland, West Stow Pods is a collection of wooden dens and lodges, each with a covered porch and outdoor seating, with half a dozen walks straight from the site.

The big draw is Pod Hollow, a subterranean, hobbit-like dwelling, built into the side of a grassy knoll and shaded by trees. Inside, round-walled spaces hold two bedrooms, a fitted kitchen and shower room.

Leisure & Travel Feature

The only issue is that its uniqueness means it's booked months in advance. Beyond the site, Thetford Forest is a stone's throw away - in autumn the Beech Trail at High Lodge is ablaze with colour, and kids will love the Gruffalo Spotters' Trail. Ask for the activity pack at the High Lodge info point, and download the app before setting off.



Glamping pods from £70 for two adults, children and dogs extra, weststowpods.co.uk

Gardens by the beach, Cornwall

The Hotel Meudon, just south of Falmouth, which reopened earlier this year with new owners and a new spring in its step, is something of an under-the-radar gem.



By autumn, the tourist crowds have gone and the Meudon's glorious gardens - nine acres of subtropical plants, exotic blooms and beautiful, mature trees - soften into warm golds and soft auburns, with the sea shimmering beyond the pines.

The main house dates from the 1800s and has a genteel but unstuffy feel, with one-to-one yoga and personal training sessions here or on the beach, and a daily cocktail hour featuring locally produced gins. Walkers are well served, too: the South West Coast Path runs straight past the hotel's Bream Cove.

Double rooms from £159 B&B, meudon.co.uk

Continued on pages 12-13...



Bothies in a pine forest, Cairngorms

Six bothies among the Scots pines on the 870-acre Blelack Estate near Aboyne are inspired by traditional Scottish shelters, but are solar powered and heated by a woodburner. Each sleeps four in a double bed and bunks, and has a range cooker, bathroom and deck for barbecues. Forest wildlife includes red squirrels, roe deer and otters, which live in the burn (stream) that runs through



From £369 for four nights, cairngormbothies.co.uk

Country hotel with arboretum,

Gliffaes, a 23-bedroom country house hotel near Crickhowell, stands in 33 acres of woodland, including a stretch of the River Usk, and has its own arboretum. There are about 100 kinds of tree, including ancient oaks, beeches and giant redwoods.



The mile-long Tree Walk takes in 40 of the best, and there are guided tours in autumn and spring. A three-night autumn break includes bed and breakfast, two three-course dinners, a picnic lunch and tickets to nearby Aberglasney Gardens.

From £633 for a three-night autumn break for two, gliffaeshotel.com



the trees. The owners have another 12 bothies planned.



Brecon Beacons



Tree tent, Herefordshire (top left)

EDITOR'S PICK

Brook House Woods comprises 70 acres of ash, oak, cherry and birch trees, surrounded by orchards, near Bromyard. Hidden in the woods are five cabins - three on stilts among the trees - and Goji, a berry-red spherical tree tent suspended three metres off the ground.



Goji is accessed up a stairway, and has two little sofas that fold out into single beds, a wood-burner, solar lights and insulated felt walls.



There is a separate compost toilet, a woodland shower and an alfresco kitchen, plus a barbecue and pizza oven shared with another cabin. Guests can take a wood-carving lesson, go cider tasting or catch a film at the tiny woodland cinema.

From £115 for two, canopyandstars.co.uk

(Article source: The Guardian)

Have you stayed at one of these places or know of any other great autumn retreats? If so, tell us all about it! Send us an email by visiting: www.ourplace.co

Fire pits and fairytales, East Sussex

Stay in a fire engine, a helicopter or an eccentric wooden treehouse straight out of Hans Christian Andersen at Blackberry Wood, a rustic oasis seven miles north of Brighton. There are plenty of traditional camping options, too: each of the 20 pitches is in its own leafy glade (with larger spaces for family groups), with fire pits positively encouraged, and cars parked separately to keep the site traffic free. One of the joys of staying here is being able to walk out into the Sussex countryside and up on to the South Downs, but the gardens at Wakehurst, Nymans and Sheffield Park are all within 20 minutes' drive. It's great pub country, too: an easy walk south-east is the lovely Half Moon at Plumpton, or head west, through the tranquil Stoneywish Nature Reserve, to the Bull at Ditchling.



Pitches from £30 a night for two people and car, blackberrywood.com

sleeps four, on a king-size bed and double futon, and has a kitchen, wet room, deck with views over the Severn estuary, and a private, wood-fired hot tub among the trees.

Now there are two new woodland cabins to rent in the area.

Coppice Cabin and Woodsman's Cabin are part of Resilient

Woodlands Initiative, a 20-acre wood near Lydney. Each cabin

eisure & Travel Feature

The retreat is a family business: brothers Lewis and Todd run autumn tree talks and walks, plus courses such as foraging, campfire cooking and woodworking.

From £125, resilientwoodlands.co.uk

Woodland cabins, Forest of Dean

colour, with its own 50-mile Leaf Peeping Drive.

The Forest of Dean is one of the UK's best places for autumn

12

Leisure & Travel News

Edinburgh social enterprise puts tourists in the hands of guides who have experienced homelessness

Vicky Spratt walks a Royal Mile in another person's brogues on an enlightening tour of the Scottish capital.



Inews reports that in 1998 Angus Stirling became homeless for the first time. It was a stint on the streets that lasted several years. In 2009, a relationship breakdown left him sleeping rough again.

The 65-year-old is from Aberdeen but now living in Edinburgh where he has spent years wandering the city and living on its streets, studying its old buildings.

Now, he is putting his knowledge to good use, working as a tour guide for Invisible Cities. It is a social enterprise which trains people affected by homelessness to become walking guides in their own city.

There are many walking tours in Edinburgh as it's the best way to see the city's nooks and crannies: ghost tours, black history tours and mystery, murder and legend tours. "This isn't going to be a Harry Potter tour of the city," Angus says firmly, making it clear that there will be no speculation about the location of Hogwarts.

The tour given by the former builder focuses on his passions: architecture and history. Edinburgh is a city built of sandstone and, like it was for Scottish novelist Robert Louis Stevenson, it is "a dream in masonry and living rock," to Angus.

"I am really interested in building materials and techniques," he tells me as we weave through the Old Town's closes. "Old stones are my passion." Angus waxes lyrical about his favourite buildings and laments what he calls the "dodgy" decisions of town planners.

"I like the old rugged stone walls," he huffs "but under the Victorians everything was made a bit more manicured because they wanted it to look less Scottish and more English."

He points to evidence of this along the Royal Mile where some of the older buildings (such as the preserved 17th-century tenement house Gladstone's Land) have a rougher stone facade than others which have been covered with smooth sandstone. "The Victorians did that because they wanted it to look grander and less Scottish," Angus quips.

We are in the medieval part of Edinburgh which has been designated a World Heritage Site. Its street pattern is often described as resembling the skeleton of a fish: the Royal Mile is the spine and the closes - steep, narrow, pedestrianised alleyways - span out from it.

At the end of the alleyways, you'll find more historic tenements which are hidden from view. Angus leads me to them excitedly, pointing to low-covered doorways and his favourite: gingery orange hued walls.

"People think of Edinburgh as all grand grey stone," he says, "but there was a tradition of using something known as Copperas render which is basically iron sulphate to create this ochre-coloured wash.

You don't see as much of it around these days as you should. It wasn't just used to inject colour but to add a layer of weather protection to rough stonework. "Nothing is worse than a badly built structure," Angus jokes. As we move through the city, he points out the buildings he considers to be badly built or restored and shares his love of Mary Queen of Scots.

He then explains that health problems brought his career as a builder to an end. After that, he worked as a gravedigger and a kitchen porter before eventually ending up on the streets.

Invisible Cities has been a lifeline for Angus. He found out about it from staff at the Big Issue a few years ago and, through working for them as a guide, has managed to move his life in a different direction.

As his tour comes to an end at St Giles Cathedral - one of Scotland's most important medieval parish church buildings - I ask Angus what's next for him. "I'm trying to move back to Aberdeen which is where my family are," he explains. He plans to continue working for Invisible Cities as a guide after the move. "I think Aberdeen is much plainer than Edinburgh. It might not be as grand but it's got incredible architecture too."

The founder of Invisible Cities, Zakia Moulaoui, meets me after my tour with Angus at the Kimpton Charlotte Square Hotel. Historically, Scotland has been the most forward-thinking part of the UK when it comes to tackling homelessness. It remains the first part of Britain to adopt a formal, Government-backed "housing first" strategy.

The premise is simple: you house homeless people immediately, regardless of their needs. It is a philosophy that influenced Zakia when she set up Invisible Cities. She works closely with other organisations that provide housing, food and other support services. More than that, she has partnered with local businesses, including the Kimpton.



Leisure & Travel News

"The Kimpton is a five-star hotel," she explains. "The staff kindly agreed to train our guides in customer service which means they get to gain new skills which help them get back into the world of work." It's the sort of 360 approach that makes so much sense you wonder why it isn't rolled out nationally.

Travel essentials

Getting there: Train service Lumo launches from London Kings Cross to Edinburgh today, lumo.co.uk.

Staying there: Kimpton Charlotte Square has doubles from £189, kimptoncharlottesquare.com

Touring there: Invisible Cities runs tours in Edinburgh, Manchester, Glasgow, York, Cardiff and Liverpool. From £12pp, invisible-cities.org.

(Story source: Inews)

Will the US accept AstraZeneca vaccine for travel? What we know about entry rules and when UK travel ban ends

The Biden administration has announced that the US travel ban will be lifted from November.

Inews reports that the Biden administration has announced that the United States will finally lift its ban on travellers from the UK and EU from November.

The Covid restrictions have been in place since March 2020, after being introduced by Donald Trump. President Biden decided to keep them when he assumed office in January.

Currently only US citizens, their immediate families, green card holders and those with national interest exemptions can travel to the US if they have been in the UK or EU in the previous 14 days. However, this will now change, with fully-vaccinated people from the UK and EU allowed to enter. Those who are not double jabbed will still be banned.

When will the travel ban be lifted?

The Biden administration has announced that the ban will be lifted from November. Boris Johnson appeared to confirm it will be from 1 November when he made a speech at a press conference in New York on Monday. The Prime Minister said he was "delighted" that the President was "reinstating transatlantic travel" from "the end of October". Mr Johnson a dded: "It's a fantastic boost for business and trade, and great that family and friends on both sides of the pond can be reunited once again."

When it happens it will come as a major boost for airlines such as British Airways and Virgin Atlantic, and Heathrow Airport.

The airport has gone from being Europe's busiest in 2019 to 10th, behind rivals in cities such as Amsterdam, Paris and Frankfurt.

What will the rules be?

White House Covid-19 coordinator Jeff Zients, who announced the end of the travel ban, said all foreign visitors will need to demonstrate proof of vaccination as well as proof of a negative test taken with the previous three days. Airlines will be required to collect contact information from international travellers so that they can be traced if required. People will not be required to quarantine upon arrival in the US.

The US is currently on the UK's amber list, however, the traffic light system will have been scrapped by the time the US lifts its ban. This means the US will land on the new "rest of world" green list. This allows fully-vaccinated people to visit without having to quarantine upon their return to the UK. Liz Truss, the new Foreign Secretary, welcomed the "excellent news" about the easing of US travel restrictions, saying it was "important for our economic recovery, families and trade".

Will AstraZeneca jabs be accepted?

The US' Food and Drug Administration (FDA) recognises Pfizer, Moderna and Janssen from Johnson & Johnson vaccines, but has not approved the AstraZeneca jab. However, it is expected that those who have received the AstraZeneca vaccine will be allowed to enter, as it has been approved by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UK's Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA).

Asked whether AstraZeneca would be accepted by the US, the Prime Minister's spokesperson said: "I have got no indications that it won't be. "I am confident that every vaccine we have used, any vaccine received in the UK and approved by the NHS, obviously signed off by the MHRA, WHO will be applicable."

When contacted by i, an AstraZeneca representative cited a footnote present in various documents issued by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) as proof that the US body recognises the jab. It reads: "This guidance applies to COVID-19 vaccines currently authorized for emergency use by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration: Pfizer-BioNTech, Moderna, and Johnson & Johnson (J&J)/Janssen COVID-19 vaccines. "This guidance can also be applied to COVID-19 vaccines that have been listed for emergency use by the World Health Organization (e.g. AstraZeneca/Oxford)."

In August, the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTCC) called on the US to officially recognise the AstraZeneca vaccine.

WTTC Senior Vice President Virginia Messina said: "Unless they give it the green light then the US will effectively remain closed to the vast majority of UK visitors and the many millions around the world who are double-jabbed with the AstraZeneca vaccine.

"This will leave airlines, cruise lines, tour operators, hotels and the entire Travel & Tourism infrastructure, which depends upon transatlantic travel, in significant trouble for the foreseeable future."

(Storv source: Inews)



'Truffle Hound': Truffles are the most expensive food in the world - here's how to find them and where they are in the UK

The tiniest spot of what looks like a buried egg peers out of the ground. When I lean down, scents of garlic and salami joyously greet my nostrils... It is the white truffle - the world's most prized food.

In the orange light of a Mediterranean sunrise, I find myself racing through a forest, trying not to wreck myself on a fallen log, while desperately pursuing a small white dog that has just charged ahead and begun to tunnel into the earth at the foot of an oak tree.

My companion, who I'll call Tomas, is one step ahead of me, beseeching the dog in rapid-fire Croatian. He reaches her first, nudging her out of the way and taking over.

From his pack, he produces a small spade and works it like a surgeon over the growing hole. He scrapes away a millimetre of dirt at a time, then leans down, sniffing. I kneel beside him, peering into the earth for a sign of our quarry.

Tomas calls the dog, Lela, and asks her to check again. She noses the ground once, twice, then scratches at a spot a few inches from his target. He changes his angle and goes deeper. "There it is." he says at last.



Food & Drink Feature

The tiniest spot of what looks like a buried egg peers out of the ground. When I lean down, scents of garlic and salami and amaro liqueur swirl out of the soil.

"Oh, yeah!" I say, jolted by the excitement of the treasure hunt, the relief after slogging through the pre-dawn darkness for two hours, and the sheer desire evoked by the irresistible smell emanating from the earth.

Tomas continues his surgery until the quarry emerges, looking like an off-white meteorite embedded in the earth. He pries the dirt around it, careful not to nick its skin, until he can slide his spade underneath and pop it out of the ground. Then he lifts it to his nose, closes his eyes, and inhales the sweet smell of success. It is the famed white truffle, Tuber magnatum, the world's most prized food.

Tomas pulls out his phone, snaps a photo, and begins texting dealers in the UK and Germany. Within minutes, he has sold it for \in 400. And we haven't even had breakfast yet.

I can't reveal more specifics - who I'm with, where we are - because those were the conditions of me being allowed to tag along. For the past three years, I've been hunting truffles in half a dozen countries for my book, Truffle Hound.

I've never encountered a food that floored me the way a truffle does, that has wrapped itself around the core of my consciousness like the thing in Alien and refused to let go, and I've found that many others are affected the same way. When it comes to smell, truffles are in a class by themselves.

I've also found that everything I thought I knew about them is wrong. The real world of truffles is far more interesting and diverse than the myths, a reality revealed by the details of this scene.

For instance, this is not Italy. Lela isn't a pig. And most important of all, the maddeningly complex aroma of this fresh truffle bears little resemblance to the musty odour passed off as truffle in the thousands of truffle chips, crisps, and oils on the market, most of which contain no real truffle at all.

From forest to table

Truffles are having a moment. In part, we can thank The Truffle Hunters, the recent documentary that is short on information but long on gorgeous, painterly scenes of old Italian truffle hunters and their dogs - as well as Pig, in which Nicolas Cage plays a burnt-out chef and truffle hunter seeking redemption (and his stolen truffle pig) in Portland, Oregon.

But both films are really indications of a greater awakening, as people discover that the forest-to-table movement has somehow overlooked the greatest forest ingredient of all.

Like mushrooms, truffles are the spore-filled fruiting bodies of fungi that live underground in partnership with tree roots.

The fungi mine minerals and water from the soil and feed them to trees in exchange for sugars, which the trees make through photosynthesis.

Unlike mushrooms, truffles never rise above the surface, so in order to spread their spores, they produce irresistible smells, convincing passing animals to dig them up, eat them, and disperse the spores.

Truffles grow wild in all the world's forests. There are thousands of different species, but only a handful are culinary gold (to humans, at least). Top are the black winter truffle and the white. French scientists worked out how to cultivate the black winter in the 1970s, and today 95 per cent of the supply is farmed, mostly in Spain.

But no one has ever managed to cultivate the white truffle, which must still be hunted in the wild.

Judging by my experiences, on a good day, you might find half a kilogram, but on many days, you will find nothing. Along with their intense smell, that is why white truffles are so expensive, about \in 3,000 (£2,500) per kg versus \in 1,200 for the black winter truffles.



So how can a bottle of truffle oil be sold for just a few pounds? Because it is cheap olive oil flavoured with a synthetic chemical that mimics one of the 50 flavour compounds in a real truffle. The same goes for most other packaged truffle products.

Continued on pages 18-19...



If you've been disappointed by the cloying attack of this smell, don't let it put you off real truffles, which are infinitely more delicate and complex.

They are expensive, but you don't need much. Just 10 grams are enough to transform your tagliatelle into a masterpiece and leave you with an experience that will be echoing through your memory banks for life.

The scent of success

The only way to find a truffle under the ground is to use an animal with a good nose. Truffling began in ancient times when farmers noticed their pigs rooting up "stinky potatoes" they found in the woods, so pigs were the obvious choice for our truffling partners, but it was always a fraught relationship. Pigs adore truffles, pigs are very large, and pigs are very insistent. Stories abound of ninefingered truffle hunters.

Although the image of the truffle pig endures, at least in films, virtually no one has used a truffle pig in more than a century. Today, everyone uses dogs: easier to train and easier to squeeze into your passenger seat. And most of them don't really care about eating the truffles. They work for treats, and love.

And how they work. Watching a top truffle dog in action is a joy. They race through the forest, noses low, zigzagging as they bracket the smell, forming a three-dimensional image of the scent trail in their mind.

Every time I'm convinced a dog is pursuing eau de squirrel instead of truffle, she will suddenly whirl around, charge 20 metres to a random spot, and begin digging.

At least, the good ones will. There are bad truffle dogs, for sure, and there is much debate about which breeds to use. Top of the pack is the poodle-like lagotto Romagnolo, an ancient Italian breed that specialises in truffles. They are smart, energetic and in short supply. For all those reasons, a good one can set you back $\leqslant 5,000$.

My impression, however, is that any dog off the street can be trained to truffle hunt, if you get them young and do it right.

"The trick is to make truffle hunting more fun than anything else," one expert in the US told me. "When they find a truffle, you lavish them with treats. I recommend rib-eye hot off the grill."



I've met brilliant truffle-hunting dachshunds, Jack Russells, chihuahuas, German shepherds and mutts of all stripes. Two of the world's top truffle dogs are black Labradors - one in Hungary, and one in England.



Food & Drink Feature

Where to find them

Perhaps the biggest revelation of my three years on the trail is that good truffles can be found almost everywhere. Although national pride and a desperate desire to hang onto their monopolies has kept France and Italy insisting they have a lock on great black and white truffles, the reality is that most black winter truffles come from Spain, many whites from Eastern Europe and many other amazing varieties can be found around the world.

That should be celebrated. Europe, Asia, Australia and North America all have their great truffles. Like wine grapes, each has its own appeal and regional character that depends on the local bedrock, soil, climate, and tree species.

The old myths and secrecy have suppressed much intelligent exploration of this territory, but that's changing, which is why there's never been a more exciting time to be a truffle hound. New species. New regions. New smells.



And better quality than ever before. In the old days, Tomas might have spent a week hunting, then sold his haul to a middleman, who would drive to Italy and sell to a dealer, who would distribute to chefs across Europe. By the time most of those "Italian" truffles reached dinner plates, they'd be a shadow of their former selves. Today, a truffle's journey from hunter to diner can take just a few days, its origin lovingly preserved.

This, I think, is the bright future of truffles. Expect to see restaurants and food shops offering a variety of fresh truffles from far-flung locales, each with its own unique flavour and story. As with wine, that uniqueness will be celebrated, not obscured. It will include the name of the species, the region, the hunter and, I hope, the name of the truffle dog who made it all possible.



British truffles

Yes, Britain has truffles. Southern England in particular. They are a different species, known as black autumn or burgundy truffles, and they are very good.

Both grow just beneath the ground surface near beech, hazel, oak and birch trees and are found in the rich soils of chalk downs. They have been found in Surrey, Wiltshire, Dorset, Hampshire, the Chilterns, Somerset, Herefordshire, Oxfordshire, Berkshire and the Isle of Wight as well as in Darlington.

Their flavour is often described as "nutty".

Be warned, though - according to wildfooduk.com they are "very hard to find without a female pig or trained dog".

Jacobson recommends englishtruffles.co.uk: "Good for both truffle hunts and for getting your dog trained!"

Truffle Hound: On the Trail of the World's Most Seductive Scent with Dreamers, Schemers and Some Extraordinary Dogs by Rowan Jacobsen is out now (£20, Bloomsbury)

(Article source: Inews)



'The pandemic lit a fire inside me': How three high-fliers retrained as garden designers

From the lawyer turned landscaper to the pilot who won a flower show prize, meet three career-switching gardeners.

A table and chairs covered in lichen; a grubby patio; an overgrown bed teeming with weeds ... those of us with outdoor space all have corners that need attention. And as many of us continue to work from home, spending more time in the garden and entertaining friends, there has been a growing demand for professionals to visit and beautify our gardens and terraces.

But, as reported earlier this summer, there's a waiting list: the average garden designer has experienced a 25% jump in inquiries over the past year, and, according to the latest figures, has seen their turnover increase by 203%. The Society of Garden Designers reports a 62% increase in its student members since the pandemic began.

So it's no surprise that more and more people are taking up garden design as a career, spurred on not only by demand, but by the impulse to re-evalute their working lives. Three garden designers new to the profession explain why they swapped spreadsheets for seeds.

Sonya Pinto, 39, former City lawyer (above)

I took a deep breath before I told my boss in May 2020 that I was leaving my stable law career to become a garden designer. But the pandemic had made me stop and think: is this really what I want to be doing in five or 10 years' time?

A career in law is exciting and varied, and I loved the pace of my job. But for a long time, I have known I wanted to do something more creative and spend more time outdoors. Also, I have two young children. When we went into lockdown and I stopped commuting, I assumed I'd get to spend more time with them, but it didn't pan out that way. I ended up using that extra time working.



Home & Garden Feature

I've always been interested in gardens, along with art and design, and am a keen amateur gardener. I'm lucky to have what feels like a large garden by London standards, and am in the process of creating a mini wildflower meadow towards the back of it, to encourage the local wildlife.

Once I realised I could enrol on a course professionally recognised by the Society of Garden Designers, I handed in my notice. With everything in disarray during the pandemic, making a big change suddenly seemed less monumental.

I started at Oxford College of Garden Design last September. We've studied garden history, planting design and construction plans; we've got to grips with software packages, planning applications and tender documents. I've even had a lecture on contract law, which I obviously felt pretty comfortable with. I've found my experience as a lawyer useful in other ways, too: I'm not daunted by large-scale projects and I understand the importance of good client relationships.

But after 15 years of a largely desk-based job, I am looking forward to swapping office clothes for a hard hat and boots. **sonyapinto.com**

Zoe Claymore, 30, former civil servant

At Ofsted, my workload was high and fast-paced. During the pandemic, I started working from home, and my garden - a small, sunny urban plot - was a solace. I was out there gardening every morning and lunchtime, which took me by surprise.

One day, I measured it, drew up a site plan and just started designing it. I didn't read a book or watch any videos; I just got stuck in and played with ideas. I dug out weeds, felled a blighted tree, planted veg, a cherry tree and hedges, built raised beds and watched my garden evolve through the seasons.

The pandemic made me realise that gardening, being outside and being creative were really important to me. When I nurtured a plant, I felt nurtured in return. It took me out of myself: I felt part of something bigger - and that was very healing. I think the pandemic woke people up to the importance of making the most of outside spaces.

I had already realised I didn't like working indoors all the time - getting headaches staring at a screen. But in lockdown that feeling grew stronger. I wanted to work for myself. I wanted to see the fruits of my labour. I left my job in March 2021 and offered my garden designing services to friends and family. I quickly got half a dozen jobs designing everything from small front gardens to parts of a country estate.

I also designed a community allotment bed at Hampton Court Palace for the Royal Horticultural Society. I planted marigolds, beetroots, alpine strawberries, salvia. For me, it symbolised what gardening during the pandemic has taught me: that life is vibrant and fleeting. When you connect with a garden, you realise that nothing lasts for ever. But also that there's always something to look forward to: the plant that dies down this summer will return next year.

I look back now and think how the pandemic lit a fire inside me. It made me realise you only live once. I've started a course at Inchbald School of Design and I know switching careers was the right decision. This was something I needed to do, for my soul. **zoeclaymore.com**

Felicity O'Rourke, 45, former airline pilot and stay-at-home mother

It was difficult to juggle my job as a pilot after I had my second child, in 2010. I realised I didn't enjoy it any more. The sense of liberation that flying gave me was gone after eight years. So I took a career break and became a stay-at-home mum.



In 2016, when my youngest was two and I was 40, I was diagnosed with breast cancer. I had to have major surgery and that's when I became fixated on modifying our garden - a small, south-facing plot with raised flower beds. At times of stress, you revert to comforting experiences you had when you were young. I come from a family of amazing gardeners and have wonderful memories of picking blackberries on my grandfather's allotment and eating peas out of the pod.

I had just started my garden design diploma at KLC School of Design in Chelsea Harbour when the first lockdown began; I graduated last December with distinction. This summer, I won a silver medal for a conceptual show garden in the Global Impact category at the Hampton Court flower show. My garden, called Extinction, featured a plane crash. As a former pilot, that's what I immediately associate with the word "impact".

The garden was designed to highlight the threat of climate change and our exploitation of the natural world. Through the wreck of the fuselage, people could see ancient primordial planting: tree ferns, ginkgo biloba and other ancient species. These plants have all survived past mass extinction events and will no doubt survive the next one. But we may not. The idea was to make people realise that. It was a real honour to win an award for my first show garden. Seeing how emotional people felt about it - how it communicated with them - was amazing.

I feel as though, because of Covid, we're at a turning point. We've proved we can make some drastic changes to our society as a result of an imminent threat. We could do that in response to the climate crisis too. **felicityorourkegardendesign.com**

(Article source: The Guardian)



Please help us rescue and care for vulnerable hedgehogs - Britain's

favourite mammal

A shocking study has revealed that hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside, with numbers <u>HALVED</u> in the last 20 years.

I am delighted to tell you that Britain's hedgehog has won favourite mammal in a UK poll.

The UK's only spiny mammal won with 35.9% of the 5,000 votes, more than double that of the Red Fox, who came in second place with 15.4%. The Red Squirrel came third with 11.4%, out of a shortlist of 10 charismatic UK mammals.

Unfortunately, hedgehogs are rapidly vanishing from our countryside as numbers have <u>HALVED</u> in the last 20 years, a shocking study has revealed.

Henry Johnson, hedgehog officer, People's Trust for Endangered Species (PTES) said:

"We Brits seem to love hedgehogs for a whole range of reasons, including their cute appearance, their role as slug controllers and the way they have colonised our gardens with such aplomb. This is why it is so sad to see them decline, with one in three lost since the millennium."

Threats to hedgehogs come mostly from us. In rural areas, our farmland increasingly lacks the diversity of habitats hedgehogs need and the invertebrates they feed on. In towns and cities green spaces are lost to development, paved over or increasingly fragmented. Hedgehogs are also very prone to road traffic accidents.

This is why we have launched this special Annual Appeal to protect Britain's favourite mammal.

At Hedgehog Rescue Rehabilitation and Care Centre we respond immediately to rescue injured hedgehogs. A vet is called in straight away and the hedgehogs are monitored and cared for. Once fit and well they are released back into the wild.

Hedgehog Rescue is now conducting its Annual Appeal. Only by continuing our huge effort and long-life commitment can we give these wonderful animals a safe, happy and contented life.





We care for many hedgehogs here at our rehabilitation centre. Hedgehogs just like these:

'Iulie'



'Julie' (pictured left) came in last Autumn, quite small, out in daylight and had ticks. She stayed a few weeks, put on enough weight, and made a full recovery. She was released back to her own territory by the finder.

Baby Hedgehogs

These 2 hedgehogs came in as very small babies and had stayed with us a few weeks, gaining weight and giving us a chance to sort out their health issues. They had several ticks and needed worming. When they were 100% ready, we released them close to where they were found.



These hedgehogs are some of the lucky ones. Others are less fortunate.

As a friend who knows what a wonder animals can be, I hope you will support our Annual Appeal. Your kind gift will help us rescue and care for many more vulnerable hedgehogs - Britain's favourite mammal.

To donate to Hedgehog Rescue, go to: https://www.justgiving.com/fundraising/hedgehogrescue or write to: Raisemore, Unit 1, Alton Road Industrial Estate, Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB

