OURPLACEMENS

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

JANUARY 2022

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10 of the UK's best cosy hotels to book in January and banish the winter blues

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Welcome

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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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



The RSPB's Big Garden Birdwatch is the world's biggest bird survey and regularly attracts nearly half a million participants.

The records from people counting birds in their gardens

The RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch 2022 will take place over the

provides a vital snapshot of the UK's birds each winter.

RSPB Big Garden Birdwatch

28th - 30th January 2022

Nationwide

time. You can use pen and paper or the RSPB's online counting

Don't count the total over the hour as you may get the same birds

Submit the results to The RSPB via their website.



19th - 23rd January 2022

Business Design Centre, London.

Take your first steps into the art world or enlarge your current art collection at the 34th edition of the London Art Fair in the **Business Design Centre.**



The annual fair brings together more than 100 galleries to showcase museum-quality contemporary artworks from the early 20th century to today's leading artists.

There's also two specially curated sections beyond the main fair focusing on new works, less established galleries, and contemporary photography.

Browse through sculptures, paintings, photographs, ceramics and more at the art fair, which caters for art lovers and collectors of all tastes and levels of experience.

Winter Wonderland 2022

January 2022

Hyde Park, London.

What are the top activities at Winter Wonderland?

Winter Wonderland activities include the chance to:

- · Skate to live music on the Winter Wonderland ice rink, the UK's largest outdoor rink.
- Marvel at the acrobatic wonders at a circus show.
- 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.
- Create your very own ice sculpture at the Ice Sculpting workshops
- Step into the Magical Ice Kingdom, a fantasy palace with forest glades, sorcerers and more.



To take part in the Big Garden Birdwatch simply spend an hour watching the birds in your garden or local park over the weekend. Count the highest number of bird species you see at the same

visiting more than once.

Ross-on-Wye HR9 5NB. Telephone: 01989 564468 Web: www.ourplace.co



Second act sensations! Meet the people who reached peak fitness - after turning 50

Rich started working out, Mags started running and Shashi started walking three times a day. It is possible to reach new goals as you get older and it is not only your physical health that benefits.

I do sometimes feel like a cliche," says Rich Jones. We're in the cafe at his gym and he is in workout gear. It's true, something about the language and the before and after pictures from his physical transformation - severely overweight to lean and chiselled - would appear familiar from thousands of adverts and magazine spreads, if it wasn't for one thing; Jones got into the best shape of his adult life after he passed 50. "On 9 August 2019, I walked in here. I was 54 and 127kg (20st)."

He worked out at least six days a week, for 90 minutes or more at a time. "I immersed myself in everything, I did gym, I did classes, Pilates, I even did barre," he says.

Within eight or 10 weeks, he was able to stop taking painkillers for a shoulder injury. He now cycles and runs on top of his gym sessions. "It's just a habit - I brush my teeth every day, I go for a run every day."

This new, dramatic fitness coupled with a weight loss programme (Jones lost 43kg (6st 11lb) in eight months) has been transformative in ways that don't show in pictures. "I enjoy the feeling of being able to walk upstairs and not getting out of breath, of being fit and strong," he says.

The effect on his self-image was equally dramatic: "It changed how I think about myself. I didn't realise how you feel about the world, how you interact with people, is so tied to your body image." Now on the dating scene after a separation, he is bursting with new-found confidence.



Health & Lifestyle Feature

What combination of factors leads anyone to go all out at the gym, become a marathon runner or walk miles a day after the age of 50?

Motivation is complex, and people differ, but the fact that mortality is nibbling at your heels, midlife restlessness has set in and with it the desire for reinvention, alongside a shift from active parenting or full-time work, may all contribute.

Sometimes, a low-level unease gradually crystallises into a sense of urgency. "I had this sense that if I didn't do something soon, it would be too late," says Jones. Timing, he thinks, is key.

Having retired early from his job as a chief information officer for a police force, the time was right. "I didn't need to work, so I was my project - I was my work, really."

Not every super-fit person over 50 has a clear "push". Mags Cook wasn't particularly looking to lose weight or get fit. "I was always quite a busy person - I didn't sit around too much," she says.

A retired teacher, Cook, 69, only started running properly at 59 when a friend encouraged her to try parkrun, the national weekly free fun run. "My husband died in 2006 and it was a good thing to know I'd be doing it every Saturday."

She enjoyed it, and her son-in-law suggested she join a running club. "I thought it was the most hilarious idea, because I was coming up to 60 and didn't think of myself as a runner. But it was the best thing I've done - it was amazing."



Cook runs three or four times a week, and says: "Please don't be too impressed, I don't go fast or anything." She is being modest - she has completed two marathons and a triathlon, for which she took swimming lessons to learn front crawl, and rode a bike for the first time since childhood.

"I thought: 'Might as well have a go,'" she says. The triathlon meant open-water swimming. "I cannot tell you how terrified I was ... but, actually, after the swim I was completely elated that I'd done something I didn't think could do."

While getting fit was not the end in itself for Cook, she can feel the difference now. "When I started running, I couldn't do more than 50 metres without collapsing, but you discover you don't have to run fast all the time - you can just keep going."

For Shashi Hussain, 53, staying sane rather than getting fit motivated her to start a walking regime in the first Covid-19 lockdown

"I'm quite sociable and being locked in my house, not being able to meet my friends and family, I found it really tough, so I decided to turn it into some sort of positive."

She began to walk daily, using the time to call friends and family to catch up. Gradually she went up from 5,000 steps to 10,000, "then 12,000, then 15,000; now I do anything between 20,000 and 30,000 steps a day".



It's a significant time commitment: Hussain is an NHS manager, and splits her daily step count into a walk before work, one at lunchtime and more steps after work.

She walks the streets and parks around her home in Essex, often combining exercise with errands, exploring new areas or taking photographs. "I've turned it into a bit of a learning exercise; I've learned so much about plants and flowers."

She has also lost weight, gone through two pairs of trainers and transformed her fitness. "My husband has always walked really fast. Before, I'd almost have to run to catch up with him, but he sees a difference in my breathing, my walking - I'm not out of breath."

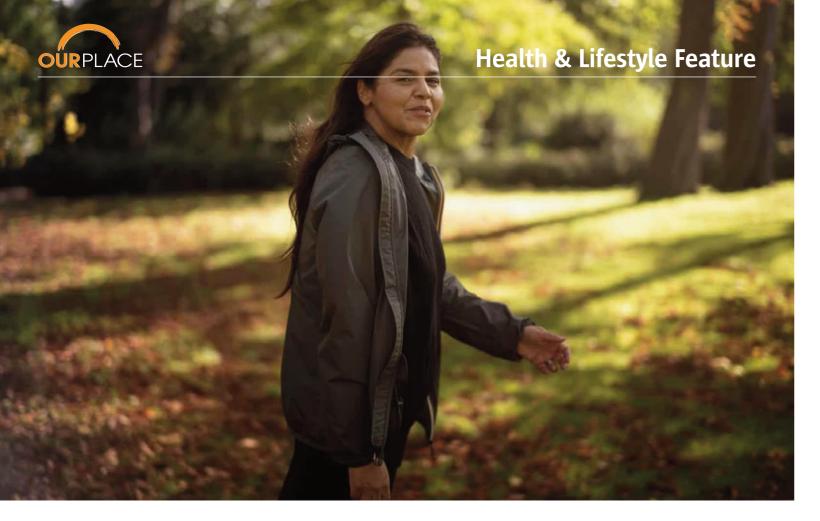
For both women, the mental benefits have been crucial during the pandemic. Cook's running club set members running tasks during lockdown: "They kept us going, it was brilliant. It really made lockdown so different." "For my mental wellbeing, it's been the best thing ever," says Hussain, who has surprised herself with her unwavering commitment.

It's almost a compulsion: if her step count is lower at weekends, she sometimes goes back out when her husband is asleep. "It has become part of my life." For Cook: "It has made me braver, I think."

While Cook, Jones and Hussain may be in the best shape of their lives, the same is not true of everyone in their age group: 42% of over-55s are inactive, compared with 29% of UK adults, according to Sport England research. Perhaps that is not surprising, when the fitness industry often appears to be tailored to the young.

Continued on pages 6-7...

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Chris Zaremba is very aware of that. Another convert to superfitness after 50, he is a personal trainer who specialises in the over-50s.

He coined the term "gymtimidation" to describe how many older people feel about fitness clubs. "A new gym opens in your town and, guess what, they are playing loud music, there are loads of mirrors and industrial grungy design - it's not welcoming for anybody over 40, which is really stupid."

Jones agrees: "You think they're judging you." He tried and disliked other gyms ("just a room with kit and pumping music") before finding a small, supportive one.

At 50, Zaremba himself was "allergic to exercise" and very overweight; his first experiences in the gym were typically off-putting.

"Everyone there was already several times fitter than I was," he says. But he conquered his misgivings in spectacular style: he has run marathons and a triathlon, and in 2014 won the world championships in both fitness and muscle modelling (similar to bodybuilding). His recent book, Fat to Fit at Fifty, describes his journey and provides training tips.

Getting fit after 50 is an optimistic act; a positive statement of intent for the second half of your life. "I hear time and time again: 'It's too late for me to start." says Zaremba.

"I say, no, it's not. I did not exercise at all when I was 50 and by the time I was 55, I was one of the healthiest 55-year-olds on the planet." Most of his clients have gentler aspirations. "It's about maintaining independent living for longer; being mobile, living a happy, independent life."

Is there a risk that extraordinary stories such as Zaremba's might discourage rather than inspire? "Headlines like: 'Anyone can run a marathon' are not fair because it's not actually true," says Dr Lucy Pollock, a consultant in geriatric medicine and author of The Book About Getting Older (For People Who Don't Want to Talk About It).

But getting fit after 50 need not mean becoming a ropey-calved cycling obsessive in Lycra or signing up for the Marathon des Sables.



"I think depictions of older people getting fitter fall into two camps," says Kate Dale of Sport England; its Active Ageing campaign funds projects that target inactivity in older people.

"It's either chairobics stuff or you've got marathon runners, like the Skipping Sikh. He's amazing, but you don't have to go to one of those extremes, you can find what's right for you."



Health & Lifestyle Feature

This is vital because, as Pollock's book highlights, research shows that activity can improve longevity and, crucially, quality of life for older people, including the group she describes as the "super old".

One of the best parts of her job, Pollock says, is seeing someone very fragile, with poor mobility, regain strength and the ability to move independently.

"It's amazing how quickly small amounts of exercise make a difference. There are lots of people who are never going to be able to do a squat again - that doesn't mean they can't do anything."

Brian Nathan can't do a full plié (pretty close to a squat, but much more elegant), but at 82, he goes down on one leg at a time at his Silver Swans class, a Royal Academy of Dance initiative for over-55 ballet beginners and returners.

Nathan started three years ago. "I thought: 'I've got to exercise', but I loathe exercise and hate ploughing up and down a swimming pool, so what is there in the dancing world?"

He finds it "impossibly difficult", but says: "What is marvellous about the teachers of Silver Swans is that they understand we are old and don't make us relentlessly go on and on."

An accomplished ballroom dancer in his youth ("I discovered girls love dancing so it was simple: become a decent dancer"), Nathan also played cricket and rugby.

But with six children and a successful tool-and-equipment hire business, "it petered out". Now, though, his weekly regime puts mine to shame.

"On Monday, I do old gits cricket and old gits tennis - it's brilliant. Tuesday, I have a rest, Wednesday, I do Move to the Musicals (another Royal Academy dance class), Thursdays I rest again and Fridays I do ballet." Nathan says he has improved.

"I'm motivated to try and get better because I love trying to be graceful to music - and totally failing; I still want to try every week.

We were walking this morning, and walking as a ballet dancer walks is hard. I can remember trying to do it three years ago and I couldn't; I thought good God, I'm better at it. I can see the point, you know."

There are as many ways to get moving, and what works will depend on individual circumstances and health, resources, time and inclination. "It's about forgiving yourself to some degree," says Pollock. "Accepting your limits and working within them."

For those who are ready to take on a challenge, Zaremba recommends trying to incorporate some resistance work as well as an activity that raises the heart rate (he is another parkrun fan).

It's important, he says, to try and fight sarcopenia, the process of losing skeletal muscle mass as we age (Pollock also recommends light weights, perhaps using a tin of beans).

Flexibility, mobility and coordination work can also be improved hugely in later life and have day-to-day benefits, in staying agile and preventing falls.

This can be quite modest: Zaremba recommends doorframe stretches as a good simple starter. However gentle your exercise regime, advises Pollock, give yourself credit as you improve.

"Notice that you're better at it this week than last week. Give yourself a pat on the back and notice how far you have come in a very short time."



As an additional bonus, the fitness efforts of people over 50 seem to have a powerful trickle-down effect on friends and family.

Cook has converted several friends to running and runs with her daughter; Hussain has inspired her friends. "A lot of people have started doing it with me, which is brilliant."

Even her mother, who is 76, now walks 10,000 to 15,000 steps a day. "She says I've really helped her because otherwise, she'd have nothing to do."

"I wouldn't call myself a role model in any way," says Jones, "But both my boys in their early 20s now take better care of themselves. I think there has been a kind of shared awakening."

(Article source: The Guardian)

Health & Environment News

Cornwall could become the UK's electric-car battery hub after world first mining breakthrough

It is the first time commercial-grade lithium carbonate has been produced from the mica in granite rock, British Lithium claim.



Inews reports that a mining company based in Cornwall claims to be the first in the world to have extracted battery-grade lithium carbonate from shards of mica crystals.

British Lithium said on Tuesday its pilot plant in Roche, North Cornwall, has successfully extracted lithium carbonate from the mica in the county's granite bedrock. It paves the way for Cornwall to become a hub for mining and refining lithium, the main ingredient for electric car batteries.

The Government plans to end the sale of petrol and diesel cars in the UK by 2030, with electric vehicles widely expected to make up the vast majority of new car sales from then. Producing lithium in the UK would help to build a domestic supply chain for electric vehicle batteries, supporters argue.

British Lithium chief executive Andrew Smith said he was "delighted" by the results from the pilot plant, particularly as it operates under "real world" conditions, using local water supplies and materials. The plant, which was funded by the UK Government, will shortly start producing 5kgs of lithium carbonate each day for customers to trial.

"We're delighted with the rapid progress we've made, but there's still a long road ahead in terms of refining and optimising the process," Mr Smith said.

Plans are underway at British Lithium to build a full-scale plant, with the aim of producing 21,000 tonnes of battery-grade lithium carbonate each year. That represents around one-third of the total lithium supply the UK is expected to need to meet future electric vehicle demand.

British Lithium is not the only company targeting Cornwall's lithium reserves. Last month Cornish Lithium, based just a few miles away in Falmouth, received investment worth up to £18m from TechMet Limited to fast track its lithium mining projects in the county. It also plans to build a processing plant near its mining sites to "build a value chain" for electric vehicle battery production in Cornwall, according to Cornish Lithium CEO Jeremy Wrathall.

Together the two firms could create around 860 jobs in the county, which is one of the most deprived regions of Northern Europe. If the mines and processing plants attract investment for a battery factory - known as a gigafactory - a further 3,000 jobs could be created.

(Story source: Inews)

Try Dry January

Dry January is an initiative that encourages people to abstain from drinking for 30 consecutive days: last year more than 2 million people signed up to take part and help kick start a healthier lifestyle.



Silver Surfers reports that a relatively small sacrifice can bring a big return - participants noticed weight loss, better sleep and money saved when they ditched booze for just a month.

Why try Dry January

In a society that uses alcohol to relax, celebrate and enjoy life, we often don't stop and think about how much we're drinking or what the side effects of living in a drinking culture can be.

Giving it up for 30 days helps rebalance the scales; we have the chance to give our body a break and take notice of the moments we reach for our favourite alcoholic beverage and examine whether it's always necessary to have a drink.

Gram for gram, alcohol has as many calories as pure fat; a diet that includes alcohol regularly can lead to weight gain over time. As a result of drinking, fat also accumulates in the liver - as little as two weeks of abstinence from alcohol can help return your liver to good health.



Health & Environment News

Give up alcohol for a month and you might also notice an improvement in your sleep. Though we sometimes associate alcohol with making it easier to nod off, in reality even a couple of drinks can interfere with your normal sleep patterns.

When we drink, we often fall immediately into a deep sleep, skipping the first stage of REM sleep. As the alcohol wears off, we slip back into a lighter REM sleep that is more easily disrupted, causing us to

This is why many people find after a night of heavy drinking they wake after just a few hours of sleep and still feel exhausted.

How to do it

Participating in Dry January is as simple as committing to 30 days without drink, and it's not too late to get started now.

You can sign up to participate formally on the Dry January website, run by charity Alcohol Concern. Cancer Research UK also runs its own programme to raise money for cancer, called the Dryathalon.

Here you can sign up solo or as part of a team to guit alcohol for a month and raise money for a good cause in the process.

(Story source: Silver Surfers)

How to save money on your energy bills - go green and fuel the fight against climate change

Our dependence on fossil fuels is costing us a fortune. The answer is to end their use by giving people an alternative - renewable energy.

Inews reports that Britain's energy bills have been a Government cash cow for decades. Stealth taxes that pay for social and environmental programmes add 25 per cent to our electricity bills. There's nothing wrong with the programmes, only how they're funded. And we pay VAT on energy too.

It adds up to about £9bn tax on our energy bills every year - at £300 per household, this makes energy considerably harder to afford. It creates energy poverty. And it's unique to energy.

An example is that as a nation we spend about £2bn a year supporting food production, but we don't add that cost to food bills. And while food poverty is a bigger issue affecting millions more people than energy poverty, there is no price cap for food and no VAT either.

In normal times, these energy taxes are wrong: in an energy crisis they look untenable.



This last weekend 20 MPs wrote to Boris Johnson demanding that the Government cut taxes on fuel bills and arguing that we need new exploration of the North Sea and the return of fracking.

But this shows a fundamental lack of understanding of the energy market. We don't set the price of fossil fuels, even when we make them ourselves.

The North Sea provides 40 per cent of our gas, but still we've been paying nearly 10 times more for it than we need to. Creating £20bn of windfall profits, which we should tax.

The problem is not just that we rely on global markets for fossil fuels, but that they set the price for those fossil fuels, even when they come from our North Sea.

What we need is to end the use of fossil fuels by giving people an alternative - green energy.

Ecotricity was the first energy company to offer our customers green electricity. We started with one windmill in Gloucestershire and have carried on building new wind and solar parks around Britain.

Whenever a home or business switches to us for their electricity, they stop using fossil fuel to power their home and start using green energy.

Other energy companies have followed our lead, and today around 33 per cent of the energy used in the UK comes from green sources.

But there's still a long way to go, and there are still fossil-fuel power stations across the country, coughing carbon dioxide into the air and increasing the effects of climate change.

We want to stop that by continuing to build wind and solar parks as we grow, as well as exploring different types of renewable energy.

The only way we can do that is to keep investing in it and the only forward is to become energy-independent and price-independent we can make all of the energy we need from the wind, sun and sea.

We have an abundance of these - and with the right regulation we can have price stability with green energy, as well as climate stability.

(Story source: Inews)



Winter warmers: 10 of the UK's best cosy hotels to book in January and banish the winter blues

The start of the new year might be cold and dark, but the UK has no shortage of cosy hotels that will be ready to welcome guests with a crackling fire and comfy bed, writes Lucy Gilmore.

Lord Crewe Arms, Northumberland

Dating back to the 12th century, the Lord Crewe Arms began life as a guesthouse for pilgrims visiting Blanchland Abbey. Now it's a honey-hued historic inn, in the village of Blanchland, huddled beneath the wild and windswept Pennine moors. After tramping across the high fells you can curl up in front of a roaring fire - there are even fires in the suites. The 21 rooms are divided into "cosy", "canny" and "champion," and are decked out with tartan blankets and roll-top tubs, while in the medieval vaulted pub, the Crypt you can sup a pint of real ale and tuck into "Bar Bait". Think a warming bowl of butternut squash, sage and apple soup or smoked chicken and ham hock terrine with dill pickled cucumber and toasted brioche.

The Bottle & Glass, Chilterns (pictured above)

This quintessential thatched country pub turned cosy restaurant with rooms on the edge of Henley on Thames has it all - exposed beams, a flickering fire and three heavenly new suites, one with a romantic roll-top tub. Across the courtyard the hanger-style Burger Barn, dishes up local Longhorn beef beside a blazing fire pit. The Chiltern Way meanders through neighbouring Crowsley Park, a 160-acre estate, once home to the Baskerville family (whose dogs inspired Conan Doyle's The Hound of the Baskervilles), or take a wintery walk along the bosky banks of the River Thames.

Doubles from £120 B&B, bottleandglassinn.com



Leisure & Travel Feature

The Crown and Castle, Suffolk

This cosy dog-friendly, 21-room village pub in the village of Orford, nudging up to Henry II's 12th-century castle, encourages you to walk off your dinner - or work up an appetite. You can download their seven course-by-course walks which range from a 45-minute stroll to a seven and a half hour "five-course" hike, a 16-mile trek alongside the River Ore, through the Sudborne Marshes and through Tunstall Forest - pick the route depending on how many courses you want to burn off.

Doubles from £140 B&B or £200 DBB, crownandcastle.co.uk

Hotel Meuden, Cornwall

Surrounded by nine acres of lush, green subtropical gardens, the recently revamped Hotel Meuden is open during the winter for the first time in 15 years. From its secluded beach, Bream Cove, you can tramp up to the South West Coast Path for a blustery hike along the cliffs - or brave a bracing dip in the sea. Then warm up in front of the log fire in the Drawing Room before cocktails in speakeasy-style Freddie's Bar (try a fiery spiced mojito or nutmeg-laced Brandy Alexander) before dinner - perhaps local Newlyn crab to start followed by pork chop, hog's pudding, chard and apple and Calvados.

Doubles from £119 B&B. meudon.co.uk

No.1 by GuestHouse, York

This newly opened (December 2021) Grade II listed Georgian townhouse, all Gothic high ceilinged grandeur and a dramatic candlelit entrance - is the latest addition to the Guest brothers' (Tristan, James and Tom) portfolio, their GuestHouse concept mixing up high-end hotel with warm guesthouse vibe. The 39 rooms feature original fireplaces and contemporary textiles, while the old drawing room and library have been transformed into two sumptuous suites with four posters and freestanding tubs. After mooching around the historic city, exploring the Roman walls and York Minster head down to the cellar, an air raid shelter during the Second World War and now a cocoon-like spa for a spot of pampering before curling up in front of a crackling log fire.

Doubles from £165 room only, guesthousehotels.co.uk

The Ship Inn, Fife

During the summer the cricket matches on the beach in front of the pub are a local highlight, but out of season it's all about crisp coastal walks and wild winter swimming. Just a pebble's throw away is Lady's Tower, built in 1760 for Lady Jane Anstruther who would change here for her daily dip. The inn, in the pretty seaside village of Elie, is on the Fife Coastal Path which meanders past ruined castles, secluded coves and picturesque fishing harbours. After wandering along the cliffs warm up in front of the fire in the bar before tucking into a warming bowl of Cullen Skink (a creamy smoked haddock, potato and leek soup) and bedding down in one of the six cosy coastal-themed rooms (Admiral, Captain or Sea Dog).

The Bradley Hare, Wiltshire

Modern artworks, antique furniture, contemporary textiles, freestanding tubs; each of the 12 rooms in this smart new village pub have been individually designed. The village of Maiden Bradley is cradled by the Duke of Somerset's estate and surrounded by rolling downs. Bradley means a large clearing in the woods ("brad" means broad and "ley" clearing) and after a romp around the estate or the nearby 18th-century Stourhead gardens the roaring fire waits in the traditional bar, sofas to sink into in the snug and a menu of hearty, locally sourced dishes.

Doubles from £130 B&B, thebradleyhare.co.uk

The Royston, Llanbrynmair

On the edge of Llanbrynmair in mid Wales, surrounded by 10 acres of rolling pastures and kitchen gardens, this 19th-century bolthole artfully mixes eclectic vintage pieces and modern design. Each of the Royston's seven striking rooms is scattered with original artworks and features sweeping views of the Cambrian Mountains - and no TVs. This is a place to switch off, scour the grounds with the binoculars and bird books, borrow wellies and a map for a yomp in the hills and then relax in front of the woodburner before a simple home-cooked supper.

Double from £275 B&B, theroystonwales.com

The Alice Hawthorn, North Yorkshire

You can now bed down in this gastro-pub, wedged between York and Harrogate in the village of Nun Monkton (which along with a duck pond and village green boasts the tallest maypole in England). The 12 Scandi-chic, timber-trimmed rooms were added in May, four in the Grade II listed inn and eight scattered between in three striking new structures in the grounds, built from home-grown Douglas Fir and designed to resemble traditional agricultural buildings. The inn, which provides a handy booklet of walking trails from the door, is named after a 19th-century racehorse which romped to victory three times in 1844 winning the Goodwood Cup, Doncaster Cup and Ascot Gold Vase.

Doubles from £120 B&B, thealicehawthorn.com

Pentonbridge Inn, Cumbria

In the heart of historic Reivers country, near the border with Scotland and close to the 150-mile long distance walking route the Reivers Way, this cute inn in the hamlet of Penton has an award-winning restaurant and nine cosy rooms kitted out with locally made tartan throws and hot water bottles. The 13-mile Bardon Mill to Wark section of the trail meanders through the beautiful Muckle Moss Nature Reserve and close to Hadrian's Wall. After working up a hearty appetite, sup a pint of local ale beside the wood-burner before dinner.

Doubles from £125 B&B, pentonbridgeinn.co.uk

(Article source: Inews)

Doubles from £179 B&B, lordcrewearmsblanchland.co.uk

Doubles from £100 B&B, shipinn.scot

World Cup 2022: Qatar hotels 'already fully booked' ahead of tournament tickets going on sale next month

The country hopes to attract more than 1.2 million visitors but most rooms have already been block-booked by tournament organisers.



Inews reports that Qatar is aiming to attract 1.2 million people to the World Cup next year but whether it can accommodate them remains to be seen as its hotels appear to be already fully booked.

Ahead of ticket sales beginning in January, extensive searches by The Associated Press of leading hotel chains and aggregation websites found only one property with availability for the entire tournament, which runs from 21 November to 18 December next

Most rooms have already been block-booked by World Cup organisers, in part to prevent price gouging, but mainly to ensure availability for teams, Fifa officials, sponsors and media.

"If a team is qualified, it's now that people are trying to find accommodation," Ronan Evain, executive director of the Football Supporters Europe group, told AP. "And at the moment there is nothing."

Qatar's Supreme Committee, which is in charge of World Cup planning, has provided the first details acknowledging the accommodation challenges after weeks of questions.

Only approximately 90,000 rooms will be made available to the public via a website.

That is equivalent to roughly number of fans from the United States who had tickets for the 2018 World Cup, which was spread across Russia and had hotels available on the open market.

But it is understood that surveys and data modelling by Qatari officials based on travel to previous World Cups show they now anticipate that 850,000 overseas visitors will require rooms.

World Cup organisers have also said that more than 1.2 million visitors will come. But the most recent data from the Qatar Tourism Authority said there were 33,208 rooms in hotels and hotel apartments.

What Qatar boasts as being its key selling point - the most compact World Cup ever with eight stadiums within a 30-mile radius of Doha - could prove the barrier to fans being able to make lengthy trips.

"It becomes a bit of a dystopian World Cup if the stadium could be anywhere in the world ... in the middle of the desert and then you just fly in and out," Mr Evain said. "That's certainly not the experience the majority of fans are looking for."

Despite the pressures on hotel stock in Qatar, there will be no system in place to equitably split the rooms between fans of participating nations or prevent them being bought up for the entire tournament en masse.

"There will be no ballot," the Supreme Committee told the AP. "Visitors will be able to book on the accommodation portal on a first come, first served basis."

Qatar will also not allow one-night stays. "As is standard practice in many events around the world minimum and maximum lengths of stay will be applied," the Supreme Committee said.

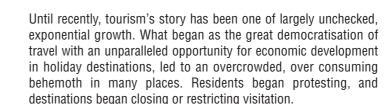
"This will be a minimum of two nights for the group stages - the same as in Russia. Long-stay bookings will be possible, and even more so for visitors keen to stay for the entire tournament."

(Story source: Inews)

Eight years to change the way we travel and see it as a privilege not a right

We must address the way we travel, but that doesn't mean not getting on a plane because a tourism vacuum can be equally detrimental.

Inews reports that scientists tell us that we have only eight years to cut humanity's carbon footprint in half. It's the greatest and most urgent challenge of our time, and there is no question that the way we travel and spend our leisure time will evolve more than it has already. This year, it will become more apparent than ever.



So even before Covid we knew that the system needed mending. Instead of asking "how do we get more tourists?" some destinations were starting to ask "how do we make the most of tourism while minimising its burdens?"

The past two years has accelerated the shift, even if the industry is slow to adapt meaningfully. Destinations are now actively working to determine how a tourism reset can benefit all residents before 2019 visitor levels return.

Boardrooms of major companies and government agencies are also demonstrating a shift in mind-set. At the COP26 summit in November the "Glasgow Declaration for Climate Action in Tourism" marked the first time the travel industry has come together with a unified voice on climate, with a commitment to halve emissions by 2030.

More than 450 organisations - including major players and places have committed to publishing annual progress against climate targets and working together to address the problem.

Cutting emissions in half by 2030 means we need to think more carefully about our trips. But it can't mean we should never step on

We've seen the economic devastation caused by grounding flights, with island and coastal communities particularly hard hit. We need to ensure that this carbon budget is well spent and that communities and ecosystems are genuinely benefitting from our visit.

With restrictions now commonplace, travel can no longer be seen as a "right" but a privilege. What we do with this privilege is a critical question. Will it be possible to travel less frequently, but spend more time and money in the destination?

Will we think twice about business trips and weekend breaks in exotic locations? Will we use the information available to us to select the lowest carbon flight options and the most eco-friendly hotels? In short, will we take a more balanced approach that doesn't put the very resources we love to visit in long-term peril?

If we can deliver on climate action ambitions, then in eight years' time, we'll still be seeing the world, and likely having more meaningful, more enjoyable experiences. But, we must contribute in a positive way towards the world's ability to maintain ecological balance, so that our children and grandchildren will have a world to experience in their own time.

(Story source: Inews)

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

Austria travel restrictions: What new entry requirements for UK travellers mean for skiing holidays

Entry requirements were tightened for arrivals from 'virus variant' areas on Christmas Day, including the UK.



Inews reports that on Christmas Day, Austria imposed new entry restrictions on arrivals from the UK, which it considers a virus variant area because of rapidly rising Omicron infections.

Entry without guarantine is permitted for those who can provide proof of a booster jab in addition to two previous Covid vaccinations, as well as a negative PCR test. This can be demonstrated using the NHS Covid Pass.

Those who are double jabbed - without a booster - and have certification of recovery from Covid within the last 180 days can also enter Austria. All others - both the unvaccinated and those who have not had a booster jab - are banned. Under 12s are exempt from the new measures.

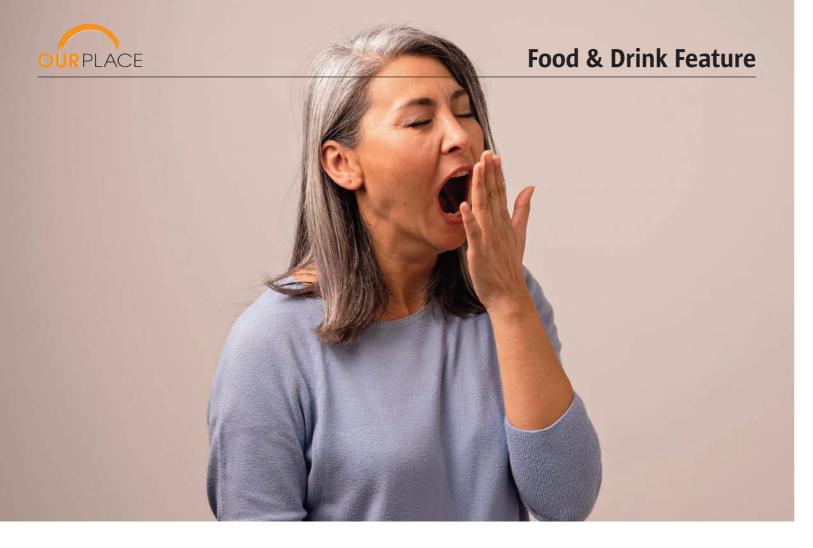
Teenagers born before 1 September 2006 (aged 15 and over) arriving from the UK need to be fully vaccinated and have received the third booster jab and also need a negative PCR test (48 hours) to enter Austria. The Foreign Office has warned that the new rules are being "rigorously enforced" in Austria. They include the requirement of a negative PCR test result, which is not more than 48 hours old.

It means that festive travel and ski holidays face more hurdles, and family trips with older teenagers, who have not received a booster jab, are no longer possible. Austria came out of lockdown on 12 December, but the unvaccinated must remain at home other than for work, study, healthcare or exercise.

The new measures also apply to arrivals from the Netherlands, Denmark and Norway. A limited number of exceptions apply to EU and Austrian residents, who must quarantine on arrival in Austria.

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(Story source: Inews)



Already low on energy? 9 healthy snacks to power you through January

When you're tired, it's tempting to reach for the nearest sugary snack to deliver a quick burst of energy. Particularly in January, when the days seem to drag on forever and there's all that leftover Christmas chocolate lying around.

But you just know you're going to regret your decision when, not long after, your blood sugar levels spike then come crashing down - and you're even more sleepy than before.

What we really need at this time of year are nutritious nibbles that fuel the body steadily, so you can munch between meals without risking a mid-morning or afternoon slump.

So what are the best foods for snacking sensibly? We asked experts for their energy-boosting ideas...

Nuts

GP Dr Sarah Brewer says nuts can be a good alternative to sugary or fatty biscuits or cakes: "The high protein and fibre content makes them a satisfying snack and they contain nutrients such as vitamin E, potassium and magnesium.

Nuts also provide protein, essential fatty acids, and important trace elements such as selenium." It's important to not go overboard though and stick to a portion size of around 40g.



Food & Drink Feature

Chickpeas

"Chickpeas are an excellent source of protein, fibre, antioxidant plant hormones (isoflavones) and iron to help prevent fatigue," says Dr Brewer, who suggests sprouting your own by soaking dry, uncooked chickpeas then making hummus, for a "different, more refreshing taste".

Cowell recommends dipping raw veggies in hummus: "Carrots and celery are great for your brain and eyes and will help concentration. Having a tasty hummus alongside will provide a protein boost to sustain your energy."

Popcorn

"This often-overlooked treat is amongst the healthiest snack choices," says qualified holistic nutritionist Alison Cowell - but she doesn't mean processed popcorn covered in "salted caramel, toffee, or any other artificial flavourings or fats".

Homemade popcorn, however, is "high in fibre and will provide you with a range of nutrients, including magnesium, zinc, iron and B vitamins. A cupful will satisfy your cravings and keep that afternoon slump at bay."



Buckwheat

If you're on a fitness kick, Cowell says buckwheat is "a personal favourite of mine, and also with the athletes I have as clients. This gluten-free ancient grain is incredibly versatile. It can be made into a porridge, pancakes, bread and even added raw (one tablespoon blitzed) to a smoothie."

Fruit

Fruit sugars have been somewhat demonised lately, but our experts say whole fruits are a wise choice when it comes to healthy snacks. "Although fruit contains natural sugars, most have a low to moderate glycaemic index and do not raise blood glucose levels excessively. Though don't over-indulge on dried fruits," says Dr Brewer.

Ripe bananas are "an ideal snack for those who are physically active, especially after exercise, as they are readily portable and easily digested", and can boost your brain because the nutrients they contain "provide building blocks for the production of these important neurotransmitters".

Meanwhile, Cowell says: "You can't go wrong with a juicy pear or grapefruit to boost your vitamin C and immune system. Both fruits are high in fibre, generally well tolerated and digested, can lower cholesterol and aid weight loss."

Protein balls

Low-carbohydrate, no-bake protein balls made with things like oats, healthy peanut butter and nut flours, can be made in advance for a quick bite, says Cowell: "Two or three (or whatever you can fit in the palm of your hand) will help lift your energy and stave off cravings."

Her favourite variety is raw mint chocolate balls made with ground almonds, cacao powder, honey, cacao nibs and peppermint essence. "Combine all the ingredients together and mix well. Roll into bite-size balls and roll them in chia seeds, coconut or cocoa powder," she says.

Avocado

Think avocado is too high in fat to be healthy? Wrong. Dr Brewer says: "Your brain especially needs a supply of unsaturated fats to stay healthy and alert. Not enough unsaturated fats in our diet can lead to poor mental and physical health."

Half an avocado seasoned and scooped out of the skin is the perfect portion size and provides "one of the highest protein contents of any fruit", as well as being "an excellent source of healthy monounsaturated fats and having a low glycemic index".

Sauerkraut

"Fermented food such as sauerkraut (fermented raw cabbage) offers an abundance of health benefits, not least the promotion of healthy gut bacteria," says Cowell. "You can easily make your own, but almost all supermarkets and health stores have this food on their shelves. I pop mine on a rice cracker, which I first spread with some hummus. I take the opportunity to sprinkle with paprika for an extra potassium boost."

A boiled egg

Whether soft or hard, the humble boiled egg is "quick to make, easy to eat, and can provide an instant energy boost," says Cowell. Boiled eggs are "high in vitamin A and powerful antioxidants, lutein and zeaxanthin, which also have anti-inflammatory properties, and provide a decent percentage of your vitamin D intake."

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

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Winter wonderlands: 10 stunning gardens to visit for a healthy walk and gardening inspiration

Blow away the cobwebs and walk off some of the excesses of the festive season. To keep fit in 2022 you can also gain inspiration for planting in the year ahead by visiting some of the UK's most beautiful gardens and parklands.

Whether you're interested in shrubs, trees or winter bulbs, a visit to one of these gorgeous spots in winter should provide you with plenty of food for thought.

Clumber Park, Nottinghamshire

Anyone wanting to relive Robin Hood should visit this fantastic parkland, heath and woods carved out of the ancient forests of Sherwood and covering more than 3,800 acres. Once the country estate of the Dukes of Newcastle, there are many glimpses of its grand past to explore. Walking routes around the magnificent lake are special in winter, especially on misty mornings when fog surrounds the Gothic chapel. (nationaltrust.org.uk)

Mottisfont, Hampshire

This house and gallery, set among riverside gardens, is at its most beautiful with a sprinkling of frost. The winter gardens are filled with richly coloured dogwood, silvery ornamental bramble and flowering shrubs.

Look out for hellebores and mahonia, sweet-smelling winter honeysuckle, witch hazel, viburnum and daphne. Then follow the river walk along the crystal-clear waters of the River Test and out to meadows beyond the gardens, from where you can take in beautiful views of the house. (nationaltrust.org.uk)

Audley End House and Gardens, Essex

Winter highlights to enjoy over the coming months in the glorious gardens of Audley End, which were among the largest and most opulent in Jacobean England, include a stunning show of snowdrops and aconites through the lime tree walk, and a cheerful display of daffodils around the parkland. Set in a landscape designed by Capability Brown - who swept away the remnants of a declining formal garden to create extensive views, a serpentine lake and more natural planting - other highlights include the fruit trees in the walled kitchen garden, the elegant garden buildings such as Robert Adam's bridge over the River Cam, and the restored parterre. (english-heritage.org.uk)

St Timothee, Maidenhead, Berkshire

This relatively newly created two-acre country garden, voted overall winner in the National Garden Scheme competition to find the nation's favourite garden, has been planted and maintained by Sarah Pajwani, owner and gardener. Her aim is to keep the garden looking good in every season, using tough, resilient plants that are relatively easy to source and manage. On January 13, visitors can join a talk and walk event with Pajwani, who will share ideas and information on the key plants that keep her garden looking good throughout winter. Pre-booking essential. (ngs.org.uk)



Timber Hill Gardens, Chobham, Surrey

Take the Witch Hazel walk in the woods and sniff out the winter honeysuckle amid the 16 acres of garden, park and woodland overlooking the North Downs, where you can also admire aconites, snowdrops and swathes of crocuses. Cyclamen are beginning to show in January, while in early February Camellia japonicas should be in bloom followed by magnolias and wild cherries. Pre-book for selected National Garden Scheme (NGS) open days in January and February. For further viewings go to timberhillgarden.com. (ngs.org.uk)

Gordon Castle Walled Garden, Moray

This impressive walled garden won the Historic Houses Garden of the Year award in 2021 and is worth a visit in winter to be able to see the bare bones and structure of the garden before it bursts into life in spring. Everything grown within the walls has a use, whether it be lavender for essential oils, fresh vegetables for the café kitchen or apples for cider. (gordoncastle.co.uk)

Westcroft, nr Salisbury, Wiltshire

There's plenty of winter flowering inspiration to be found in this two-thirds of an acre plot, in a characterful setting of brick and flint walls, rustic arches and terraces. Highlights include drifts of snowdrops, along with hellebores, pulmonarias, grasses and seed heads. Open to the public on selected dates in January, February and March. Pre-booking available. (ngs.org.uk)



Dinefwr, Carmarthenshire

Wildlife enthusiasts may spot fallow deer and badgers during a walk through this iconic estate, home to Wales' only parkland National Nature Reserve. There's a three-mile wildlife walk to explore, as well as a medieval castle and 17th century mansion. While taking in the Capability Brown landscape, you'll see ancient trees, some of which are thought to be more than 700 years old. (nationaltrust.org.uk)

Brodsworth Hall and Gardens, South Yorkshire

Winter is the ideal time to take a stroll around the formal garden of this county house, built in the 1860s for the Thellusson family. The garden has sharp lines and sweeping curves, while holly berries add shades of red, yellow and orange to the surrounding greenery. In the flower garden, the emergence of the spring bedding will add a splash of colour to your walk, while the evergreen ferns in the dell will also impress, as will the site's half a million snowdrops and 200,000 aconites, which cast a haze of white and yellow across the lawns and throughout the woodland floors. (english-heritage.org.uk)

Belsay Hall, Castle and Gardens, Northumberland (pictured top left)

A towering fir tree planted in the 1830s is just one of the surprises of the gardens at Belsay Hall, along with a Chusan palm, both of which can be found in the dramatic Quarry Garden. Snowdrops are another highlight as, in the early 18th century, Lady Anne Middleton began a tradition of the women of the house planting snowdrops in the grounds together. Now, each February, vast white carpets of the plants can be admired in the garden, fields and woodland surrounding the hall. (english-heritage.org.uk)

(Article source: Silver Surfers)



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

