OURPLACENews

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

MARCH 2022

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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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St Patrick's Day in London Thursday 17th March 2022 London

Join in the lively Irish celebrations with St Patrick's Day events and activities in London.

Every 17 March, Ireland celebrates one of its patron saints, St Patrick, with a national holiday and a traditional feast. Although it is not a public holiday in England, London marks St Patrick's Day with fun and spectacular events every year, usually on the weekend closest to 17 March.

This year's theme is #LondonIsOpen and the main celebrations take place on Sunday 17 March 2022.

St Patrick's Day Parade in London

Be amazed by flamboyant pageantry, elaborate floats, marching bands from across the UK, sports clubs and Irish dancing schools in the annual London St Patrick's Day Parade. The procession sets off at midday from Piccadilly and makes its way along a 1.5-mile (2.4km) route, passing some of London's most iconic landmarks, including The Ritz, Piccadilly Circus, Trafalgar Square and onto Whitehall.

St Patrick's Day Festival in Trafalgar Square

Join the St Patrick's Day Festival, which takes place in Trafalgar Square between 12pm and 6pm.

Watch St Patrick's Day performances by well-known Irish acts, rising stars and special guests. Then, browse craft stalls, and tuck into traditional and modern Irish food from the market. There is also usually a family zone on Pall Mall East, hosting an array of free child-friendly entertainment, workshops and activities.

You can also celebrate St Paddy's Day with parties and Guinness in London's Irish pubs and bars, many of which are decorated in green for the occasion.

Do you have an Event near you? Let us know by visiting: www.ourplace.co

The Grand National 2019

Saturday April 9th, 2022 at 13.450pm

Aintree Racecourse, near Liverpool.

The greatest steeplechase in the world.

No other race arouses so much interest worldwide. At least 600 million people are said to watch on TV. And in England, people who never bet on anything have "a flutter" on the Grand National. Plan ahead and you could be one of almost 200,000 who attend the three-day race meet. Friday is Ladies Day, a great social event with smart attire and big hats.

The Grand National itself is run on Saturday and, after the buildup, the four and a half mile race, over 30 fences, is finished in minutes. Seventy thousand are there on the day and the atmosphere is electric.



Van Gogh Self-Portraits 3rd February to 8th May 2022

Courtauld Gallery, Somerset House, London

Self-Portraits takes as its springboard Van Gogh's iconic Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear, one of the most celebrated works in The Courtauld's collection, and will bring together around half of the self-portraits Van Gogh created during his short years as a painter.

This will be the first time that the full span of Van Gogh's selfportraiture has been explored in an exhibition. Several works in the exhibition were last together in Van Gogh's studio and have never been reunited, until now.

An outstanding selection of 16 self-portraits will be brought together to trace the evolution of Van Gogh's self representation, from his early Self-Portrait with a Dark Felt Hat, created in 1886 during his formative period in Paris, to Self-Portrait with a Palette, painted at the asylum in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence in September 1889, one of his last self-portraits before his death in 1890. The myth of Van Gogh today is linked as much to his extraordinary life as it is to his stunning paintings. This exhibition will allow both aspects to be explored.



Dementia sufferers like me deserve to enjoy life - that's why I went skydiving aged 63

Jumping from an aeroplane above an astonished crowd helped Wendy Mitchell prove that people with dementia, like her, do not need to be stuck indoors.

I'm sitting in front of my GP with a piece of paper on which I need her signature. "I need your permission for something," I say. She looks back, puzzled. I push the paper across the desk to her, and as she opens it, I see her forehead crease with confusion.

"You're going to do a skydive?" she says finally.

When Young Dementia UK, a charity I'm involved with, said they wanted to raise funds by organising skydives, they probably expected relatives or carers to take part. But I was fit and well, and who says people with dementia can't jump out of planes?

I wonder whether my GP will approve the medical waiver. Luckily for me, she read my first book - about life after being told that I had early-onset Alzheimer's in 2014, when I was 58 - which changed her view about dementia. And so, with a smile curling at her lips, she signs.

I remember the last time I went to the airfield, for a flight in a glider. The pilot asked my daughters if I was up to it. I tried not to take offence, knowing such an attitude of disbelief was why I needed to write What I Wish People Knew About Dementia.

Whenever I have spoken to people about this latest madcap plan, there has always been disbelief in their eyes. I remind them that I will be strapped to someone else - with no fear I will forget to open my parachute. "I can just relax and enjoy myself," I say. I'm not sure they're convinced.

I wonder why there is so much risk aversion. My quality of life is as important as the next person's, and I want mine to be filled with experience and adventure. Why wouldn't I?



Health & Lifestyle Feature

Both my daughters always provide constant encouragement, despite their initial shock at whatever it is I want to do next. They have let go of worry in the same way I have. They just allow me to enjoy life, and for that I'm forever grateful.

At the airfield I'm introduced to my fellow skydivers. No one mentions dementia, not even as we sit with a cuppa watching all the other parachutes descend from the clouds.

Our training is, of course, utterly hilarious for me. There are long lists of "musts" and "must nots". I capture one: you must lift your feet when landing.

I make jokes to put the others at ease - particularly the woman who was "surprised" by her family that morning with a skydive for her 50th birthday.

The two guys who will be filming us make polite conversation. I mention then that I have dementia. They take it in, but don't bat an eyelid. These are people of the same mindset as me, craving adventure. They won't consider me a liability.

My jumpsuit is placed in front of me. I stare down, not knowing which arm or leg to put where. A giant of a man, all dressed in pink, strides towards me.

"Let me help you get into this contraption," he says calmly. "We're going to make this a day to remember." I don't like to say anything to him. I have no fear, just complete confidence that Mr Pink Man will see me safely back down to earth.

When I prepare to walk over to the plane, onlookers gather around my daughter Gemma, their eyes darting to and from me, as if saying: "Should she be doing this?" I give her one last hug and tell her: "I'm so excited!" The jumpsuit I'm wearing is so cumbersome that I waddle towards the plane. Two men hoist me in. I'm surprised to see the inside has no seats, just the floor to sit on

When we start our ascent, the plane's engines roar. I watch the stunning views over the coastline as Mr Pink Man gives me a running commentary of what we can see - Scarborough, Robin Hood's Bay, my beloved Humber Bridge. The ascent to 10,000ft takes around 20 minutes and a beep signals it's time to leap. Mr Pink Man fastens us tight together and we shuffle towards the open door.

"Head back, head back," he repeats in my ear as the rush of cold air hits me, stealing my breath away. And then we jump.

I am floating, the earth below me, Mr Pink Man strapped to my back like a turtle shell. We are higher than the birds. We are free-falling down to earth at 130mph and I am smiling wider than I have ever smiled before. If this is not freedom, then I don't know what is. Up here, there is no dementia. Up here, that disease does not inhabit my brain. I am flying, free from all that binds me to the Earth.

The jolt of the pink parachute takes me by surprise, and as it opens above us, so too does the peace, the silence, a sense of stillness as we float gently down. The clouds are our company, the ground a finished jigsaw.

A voice in my ear says: "Do you fancy doing some acrobats and twirls?" I hear myself replying: 'Yes!"

We whoosh through the air, spinning this way and that. I close my eyes at first, a sensation that my eyeballs might just vacate their sockets, but once I've adjusted, I peer out again and squeal with delight as the world whizzes by.

We right ourselves again. Up here it feels as if we're descending so slowly, yet as the ground comes closer - and I spot Gemma waving, a tiny dot - I see we are actually travelling at an alarming rate.

"Legs up," Mr Pink Man shouts as we come closer every second to the viewing area. I'm confused because I thought the landing spot was behind the woods. I feel the smile still plastered to my face, as if the wind has left it there, but there is no energy left in me from the thrill.



I hear people shouting. "Legs up, Wendy!" Mr Pink Man must realise this and he lands us both like ducks on water, and I collapse in a heap at his feet. "Did we miss the landing spot because of me?" I ask.

"No," he says. "We had to show everyone you could do it."

He hugs me and undoes all the clips and fasteners. Two other men help me stagger back to the hangar to the sound of claps and cheers, and there I take off my jumpsuit. I wrap Gemma in a huge hug and then a man from the crowd interrupts us. He takes a £20 note out of his wallet because he knows I'm doing this for charity. "Amazing, well done," he says, handing it to me.

Had he been one of the doubters as I took to the air? Who knows? In that moment I hardly care. If I listened to what everyone else says, I would never have jumped out of an aeroplane. I would never have done half the things that others say are not possible for people living with dementia. For now, back on terra firma, I'm still buzzing - and plotting my next adventure. Why on earth should they ever stop?

(Article source: Inews)

4



Wild swimmers and

UK rivers and seas

surfers call for year-round

water quality testing of

Currently testing only takes place during

summer but an explosion in popularity

means this is 'no longer adequate'.

Health & Environment News

But analysis from campaign group Surfers Against Sewage suggests

Earlier this week i revealed that popular swimming spots can be awash with dangerous levels of harmful bacteria, suggesting the presence of raw sewage. Pollution spikes are often during the wet

needed. CEO Hugo Tagholm said: "The bathing season is somewhat of an anachronism in this day and age, particularly given the boom in wild swimming, cold water swimming, and the wetsuit technology that allows people to use our coastline and our rivers year round in complete comfort." He said the system needs "reviewing and modernising".

A mentalist who specialises in card tricks, Farrell performs "parlour

Applause breaks from this "sense of wonder... Someone has seen

money on a stink bomb or two, or a device to vanish a ha'penny.

"I didn't know that there's thousands of books on magic." Instead, he got into acting. "I think you can see a theme here," he says, sounding every inch the English teacher. "A need for an audience."

He reprised the magic in his 30s after he and his wife, Sheila,

He bought a magic book, practised tricks, even found a magic club in Manchester. He and Sheila had two boys, who were mostly unimpressed by the tricks as children. Farrell never worked his magic at school, except as an activity during enrichment week, when pupils had a chance to learn something different to their normal

In some ways, maybe teaching was another parlour show, though. comedy into the classroom."

Health & Environment News

Pollution Risk Forecasts, which are issued by water companies to alert bathers to short term pollution such as sewage discharges, are also only issued during the official bathing season.

that sewage discharges into rivers and coastal waters are more likely to happen during the winter months, when wet weather means outdated sewer networks are overwhelmed.

winter months, local groups have discovered.

Surfers Against Sewage says real time monitoring all year round is

Some swimmers are taking matters into their own hands. Laura Owen Sanderson is the founder and director of We Swim Wild, a not for profit organization for wild swimmers that campaigns against

Next month the group will launch a 12-month project in partnership with Bangor University to monitor water quality at swimming sites around the UK. A team of 30 volunteers will take samples once a month to assess pollution from microplastics, nitrates, phosphates,

"Post-covid people swim all the time all year round, so they should be testing all year round," Ms Sanderson told i. "We wanted to equip people on the ground who go to these places to do it themselves,"

(Story source: Inews)

Inews reports that the current system of testing water quality at bathing sites during the summer months is outdated and should be replaced with year-round monitoring, wild swimmers, surfers, and environmental campaigners have told i.

Thanks to the explosion in popularity of cold-water swimming people now swim in UK rivers and coastal waters all year round.

A 2020 survey by Outdoor Swimmer suggests the number of wild swimmers in the UK has trebled since 2019, with 65 per cent of respondents swimming outside in winter two to three times a week.

Swimmers said the current testing regime, which only monitors water quality during the summer months, has not kept pace to changes in how people are using the water. "The system hasn't caught up with the surge in interest in wild swimming. People do now swim all year round," said Pauline Barker, outdoor swimmer and founder of Devon & Cornwall Wild Swimming. "It's something that needs to be reviewed in the light of things post-pandemic."

Alice Goodridge, founder of Swim Wild, said winter swimming is becoming "more and more normal". She said: "There isn't so much of a bathing season anymore in terms of when people are actually accessing the water."

Instead, it would be "useful" to know what water quality was like at popular bathing spots during the winter months, Ms Goodridge added.

Under the current system regulators across the UK - the Environment Agency, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) and Natural Resources Wales – test bathing sites regularly between May and September.

A new start after 60: 'After 35 years of teaching, I became Magic Frank - and I've never been happier'

Frank Farrell had loved magic since he was a child. But it was only after retiring that he began to perform professionally. Now he is living exactly the life he wants to live.

The Guardian reports that when Frank Farrell's retirement day came in 2018 - after 35 years of teaching - everyone thought he "would be straight down the pub to celebrate". Instead, he stayed sober and prepared his materials: the next day he began his new career as a magician.



He was 60, and he didn't yet feel like a magician, but that weekend Mr Farrell the English teacher gave way to Magic Frank. Under this stage name, he performed 10 shows at a Harry Potter convention in Manchester.

Farrell had been dabbling in magic since his 30s, but the scale of these gigs - he was paid nearly £2,000 - struck him as "a mark of respect" and validation. "I started to consider myself a magician, not someone who does a bit of magic on the side."

shows" at weddings, birthdays or Women's Institute gatherings. The audience's gaze is so intense, he feels his hands burn.

something that logic tells them cannot happen, but which they've just seen happen," he says. "Usually people start laughing. It makes me laugh as well. It feels good."

As a child, Farrell loved magic. The son of Irish immigrants - his father worked in building foundations, his mother as a home help he grew up in Romford, Essex. Occasionally he trekked to the joke shop on Tottenham Court Road in London to splurge his pocket

"But it fizzled out because there was nothing to nurture it," he says.

returned from a trip to India. Sheila had impressed some children with an illusion in which she seemed to pass a thread through her neck. Farrell thought: "When I get home I'll learn some. It's a useful thing if there's children around."

Farrell's style was "a bit offbeat... I played music. I tried to bring

He put on voices, loved wordplay, and for minor misdemeanours asked students to apologise to his pot plants. At his final summer fair, some of the students wore masks with his face on.

Teaching, like magic, is transformative - albeit "a much slower process of transformation", he says. "With magic you get immediate feedback if it works well. In teaching, that moment might never

Even if you have had that effect, you might not know." At first it was a shock to live life without a timetable. But Farrell now rehearses for an hour a day, has up to nine bookings in a month, and spends the rest of the time pitching, handling enquiries and deepening his art.

He has finally shaken off any sense of being an impostor. "I can genuinely call myself a magician, because people are paying me to

Clearly, he says, needing validation is a bit of a theme, but he is unsure why and doesn't like to "navel gaze". Maybe it "came from having a very ordinary background", but adds: "Don't we all want to feel special?"

The ability to transform and to create wonder are important to Farrell, and I ask what, in himself, has caused him the greatest

"I find the process of becoming older quite amazing," he answers. "I have discovered that I am far more self-confident, more relaxed ... I am living exactly the type of life I want to live." When people ask about his retirement he likes to reply: "I've always been happy but never been happier."

(Story source: The Guardian)





Extraordinary Escapes with Sandi Toksvig: New Channel 4 series visits remarkable holiday homes

A new book, accompanying the TV series, details the magnificent properties featured alongside many more that will inspire a dream UK getaway.

The Chalet, Herefordshire

Set 500ft above the River Wye on the steep slope rising to Symonds Yat Rock, this red timber Nordic chalet is a scene-stealer. It featured in an Ideal Homes Exhibition after being shipped to England from Norway as a flat-pack house in 1912, and was a location for the Netflix series Sex Education.

A top-to-toe consultation with Farrow & Ball informed the latest revamp, creating a colour-saturated interior with a wonderful Smoke Green conservatory and pinky-brown attic. From the wraparound deck with hand-built pizza oven and wood-fired Swedish bath, steps lead down through the garden to a summer house with a secret cinema, then to the river.



Sleeps 10, from £2,995 for four nights, thechaletsymondsyat.co.uk



Leisure & Travel Feature

Pilothouse PH5, Argyll (pictured left)

Far out in design and location, this compact aluminium hideout's elliptical form is inspired by a submarine control tower, making it a unique base for exploring the remote Sound of Mull.

Every detail has been thoughtfully executed to create a space that feels ergonomically designed. An upside-down arrangement of rooms gives the main living space views to the colourful town of Tobermory and a wraparound balcony has a 360-degree outlook on sunsets, storms and wild seas. On the same site is AirShip 002, following the design characteristics of airships, plus the Captain's Cabin, another elliptical building on the flat roof of an old chapel.

Sleeps two, from £160 a night, outoftheblue.uk.com, airbnb.co.uk

Ty Hedfan, Pembrokeshire

Like a Welsh answer to Frank Lloyd Wright's Fallingwater in Pennsylvania, Ty Hedfan, meaning "hovering house", is perched above the River Ysgir near the Brecon Beacons.

A spectacular, box-like wing clad in slate cantilevers over the river, among mature oak and ash trees, and houses a living space overlooking the black water passing beneath.



The interior is a soothing haven of slate and timber, with tasteful wooden furniture and thick Welsh blankets. Most of the surrounding landscape has been left wild, with a stream forming pools as it tumbles towards the river and beds of vibrant lupins, foxgloves and bamboo.

Sleeps six, from £1,100 a week, ty-hedfan.co.uk

The Houseboat, Dorset

Not a houseboat but a RIBA award-winning building constructed to look like two upturned boat hulls, this imaginative beach house overlooking Poole Harbour packs an aesthetic punch inside and out

A veritable Escher painting of staircases and stepped bridges connects split-levels with lounges and seating areas, creating a large internal void into which natural light pours from the glazed, sea-facing side. A restrained nautical theme is limited to the occasional vintage toy boat and striped cushion (no naff driftwood affirmations here) and there is something glamorously 70s about the lounges, with jewel-toned sofas. Owner-architect Roger Zogolovitch calls this his "analogue retreat", where free time can be given to enjoying the quiet luminosity of the coast.



Sleeps 10, from £1,208 for three nights, thehouseboatpoole.co.uk

The Mill House, Devon

There are amazing sea views from every window and water borders the property on two sides at this historic cottage on the north coast of Devon. Whether storms roll in, thrashing the sea walls with powerful waves, or sun bathes it in heavenly warmth, it provides a ringside seat for the drama and beauty of nature.

Starting life as a flour mill powered by a water wheel in the 1560s, it later became a smuggler's hideout, a bakery, general store, sweet shop and a tea room. Now the airy interiors feature "an eclectic mix of old and older" with flagstone floors, lanterns and antiques and a little drawbridge.



Sleeps eight, from £770 a night, themillhousedevon.co.uk

Continued on pages 10-11...



Wishbone, Worcestershire

Looking at first like a tumbledown barn, this bewitching 16th-century cottage within the remains of an ancient fruit farm in the Malvern Hills retains many original features, to create a cosy and timeless interior.

Owners Mervyn and Niki have been slowly and sympathetically restoring it since the 1990s, preserving original wattle-and-daub panels, exposed beams and a fabulous brick floor. Hiding within thick stone walls tangled with tendrils of foliage is a nest of snuggly blankets, plump sofas, upcycled furniture and a woodburner, the perfect place to retreat to after a day's walking.



Sleeps two, from £995 for four nights, uniquehomestays.com

Found Tower, Suffolk

In the early 19th century, after the French Revolutionary Wars, the British were terrified of potential invasion by Napoleonic forces, so as a deterrent built 100 towering luxury holiday homes all along the southern and eastern coasts, to scare the French off with unnerving good taste and an eye for interior design.

Well, not quite; these imposing circular towers were built as defensive forts and topped with cannons, but now one of them, on the Deben Peninsula in Suffolk, has indeed been repurposed as a stunning holiday home. The exterior appears as intimidating and impenetrable as ever, with a fleet of steel stairs leading to a doorway halfway up, but inside the tower is a peaceful interior of exposed brick.

Everything from the log store to the shelves is bespoke to fit the tower's curve, there's a bedroom in the old gunpowder storeroom and where soldiers once watched for the enemy on the rooftop, there's now a stylish open-plan living area opening onto the roof terrace.

Among the cannon-holders guests can bask under starlight by the fire pit and soak up the glory of the Suffolk coast.

Sleeps six from £1,995 for a short break, uniquehomestays.com



Leisure & Travel Feature

Little Inka, Cornwall (pictured left)

Hot tub - check; en suite - check. Alpacas? Yes! Few holiday boltholes can offer a herd of cuddly South American animals among their facilities, but at this charming cottage/cabin on a country farm on Bodmin Moor they're part of the appeal, along with the unbelievable stargazing.

A shepherd's hut containing the bedroom and a free-standing copper bath is connected to the living space, painted black to echo the area's famously dark night skies, which have made it an officially recognised Dark Sky Landscape.

The sunken courtyard has a Japanese ofuro hot tub for watching pipistrelle bats at dusk, until the inky heavens stage a glittering celestial show.

Sleeps two, from £850 for three nights or £1,150 a week, uniquehomestays.com

The Woodsman's Treehouse, Dorset

Climbing a spiral staircase to soak and steam in the rooftop sauna and hot tub, relaxing in the outdoor "tree shower" and zipping down a slide are some of the playful elements at this secluded adults-only treehouse. Set in a private corner of a woodland in West Dorset and built around a 200-year-old oak tree, it is a treehouse of dreams, where guests quickly adapt to the immutable rhythms of the forest.



Inside, a circular living space has a rotating wood-burner, kitchen, king-size bed and a roll-top copper bath, while the lower deck has a hammock to slumber in, a barbecue and wood-fired pizza oven.

This combination of pampering with a side portion of childish zaniness is typical of the building's creators, carpenter Guy Mallinson and his partner in design, architect Keith Brownlie. It's not just fripperies and fun, though - it was sustainably constructed to protect the trees and ecosystems around it, helping to win a RIBA South West Award that even the squirrels and bluetits would applaud.

Sleeps two from £990 for two nights, mallinson.co.uk

The Greenhouse, Devon

From different perspectives, this shape-shifting property appears as both a triangular wedge slotted against the sloping gradient of the land, or as a timber tower set within the trees.

Inside is an open-plan living area of irregular spaces, where unexpected heights and angles suggest, says Devon-based architect David Sheppard, an internal forest canopy. Stripped wood, fine plaster and ply veneer create a smooth finish, while full-height glass seems to bring the outdoors in. It's been brought in literally as well, with stairs constructed from storm-felled trees and a dining table made from a split beech.

A round fireplace with a funnel-shaped chimney is a focal point, and a cushioned window-seat runs around the room, perfect for a languid afternoon's reading. From this relaxing space, a sliding glass door opens onto a terrace between the trees, with a fire pit and a Big Green Egg barbecue. All good intentions to go running and walking in the Blackdown Hills may be abandoned here, though you must stroll down to the two small lakes below, one of which is for swimming.

Sleeps 11 from £5,000 per week, avenueproperty.com

Hunsett Mill, Norfolk

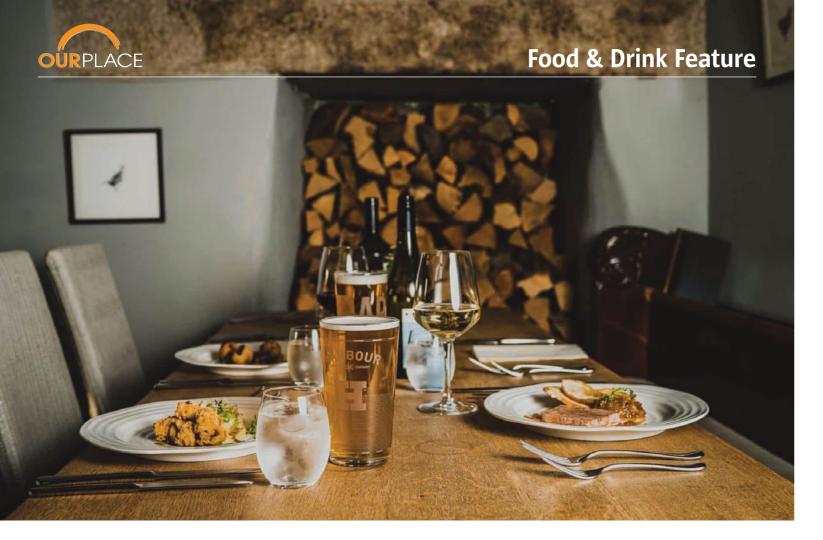
In a sleepy part of the Norfolk Broads, beautiful old Hunsett Mill is romantically situated on the banks of the River Ant, where otters, kingfishers, sailing dinghies and wherries pass by. Built to drain marsh for arable land, it is a much-admired landmark, an iconic Norfolk Broads scene that has featured on many a vintage postcard.

At first glance little seems to have changed over the centuries on the waterfront, where the arms of the windmill slowly rotate beside a simple red-brick 19th-century cottage. Set back a little way, though, is a daring extension in blackened cedar, designed to appear as a shadow. The radical reworking, by up-and-coming architectural practice Acme, features three linked gabled pavilions and a light airy interior of pale wood.

Guests keen on fishing can catch their own supper in the river, a barn owl makes a fly-by most evenings and bitterns and marsh harriers inhabit the surrounding marsh. Unpolluted skies make for amazing stargazing here, and the big-sky beaches of the Norfolk coast are three miles away.

Sleeps nine from £1,390 for three nights, hunsettmill.co.uk

(Article source: Various)



The inn crowd: 9 of the UK's best renovated foodie pubs with rooms

With spruced-up interiors and innovative menus, these revamped country inns tick all the boxes for cosiness and culinary class.

St Tudy Inn, Cornwall (pictured above)

The 17th-century St Tudy Inn, in the village of the same name west of Bodmin moor, is under new management and has reopened with a new look, a new menu and a new head chef. The inviting bar has an open fire, stools made from beer kegs and bookshelves converted from old crates; it serves pints of home-brewed St Tudy ale and a lighter bar menu. In the restaurant, dishes include goats' cheese bonbons with squash and sage, Cornish sole with shrimps, and sticky toffee pudding with clotted cream. The derelict barn next door has been converted into four elegant rooms, with two more rooms above the pub opening soon.

Doubles from £111 room-only, sttudyinn.com

Chartists 1770 at the Trewythen, Llanidloes, Powys

The former Trewythen Arms in Llanidloes, a market town in mid-Wales, was renovated last year. Chartists 1770 at the Trewythen - named after the Chartist riots of 1839 and the year of the building's construction - is now a modern Welsh restaurant with seven bedrooms over three floors. There are also four heated dining pods in the walled garden. Welsh produce includes sea bass with cockles and samphire (£16) and lamb with creamed cabbage and smoked bacon (£17). There is a separate plant-based menu with dishes including a starter of risotto with British grains and wild mushrooms (£8) and a courgette, chickpea and hazelnut loaf as a main (£14).

Doubles from £110 B&B, trewythenhotel.wales



Food & Drink Feature

Wild Thyme & Honey and The Crown, Ampney Crucis, Cotswolds

A 16th-century pub a couple of miles east of Cirencester has been transformed into a boutique inn, pub and dining room. Wild Thyme & Honey has 24 bedrooms and suites - some with freestanding baths, all with decanters of sloe gin - and a VIP apartment with a deck, sauna and hot tub. Across the courtyard is the Crown pub, which serves everything from a pint of Cotswold lager and "proper" pork scratchings to jazzed-up classics: posh prawn cocktail and cheese souffle; steaks, sole and celeriac cooked on a charcoal grill; venison cottage pie and ox-cheek bourguignon. There is a cocktail menu and lots of wines by the glass.

Doubles from £150 B&B, wildthymeandhoney.co.uk/crownampneybrook.co.uk

Bell & Crown, Zeals, Wiltshire

The Bell & Crown was the first pub bought by Chickpea, which now has a handful of pubs and pizza places in the south-west. It is also the cosiest, with wood panelling and open fires, plus a heated, covered outdoor dining area. The hearty menu, which changes often, features produce from small, family-run suppliers. Liver and bacon is always popular; other pub favourites include fish and chips, steak and ale pie, sticky toffee pudding, and rhubarb and custard. Good-value, well-chosen wine is from Gardner and Beadle in nearby Tisbury, with most bottles under £30. This spring - around mid-March - six simple, stylish rooms will open upstairs.

From £90 B&B, bellandcrown.com

The Crusoe, Lower Largo, Fife

Graham and Rachel Bucknall, a couple who own the Bridge Inn at Ratho and the Ship Inn at Elie, have taken over a third pub, the Crusoe in Lower Largo. Like the others, the Crusoe is a pub with a view - it is right on the edge of the beach. In winter, drinkers can have a pint of local ale by the fire, and in summer they can sit out on the pier with a pint of Crusoe lager. All meat and fish on the menu is Scottish, with lots of shellfish (Orkney scallops, Shetland mussels) and game (pheasant schnitzel, Balmoral venison). The first seven of 14 planned rooms opened on 11 February; all have sea views.

Doubles from £110 B&B, thecrusoe.com

Hare and Hounds, Bowland Bridge, Lake District

This 17th-century coaching inn was once the heart of Bowland Bridge, but it went into decline and eventually closed. Now it has been reinvented as a modern country pub, and reopened in September. All the original features have been retained - beams, exposed stone, fireplace - with a smart new paint scheme inspired by the Cumbrian countryside, pops of pattern and cosy nooks such as the snug.

The dinner menu features classic pub grub (steak and ale pie $\pounds 17.95$) and more unexpected dishes (Lakeland lamb tagine $\pounds 18.95$), while the retro lunchtime menu includes chicken or scampi in a basket. Upstairs are five calming rooms with rolltop haths

From £145 B&B, hareandhoundslakes.com

Bull's Head Inn, Craswall, Herefordshire

The Bull's Head, a traditional drovers' inn at the foot of the Black Hill close to the border with Wales, had been closed for six years when the owners of Lower House Farm took it over. It reopened in November 2021 after a restoration that retained its whitewashed walls, flagstone floors and open fire. It now serves well-kept ales, natural and organic wines, all-day bar snacks, and lunch and dinner from Thursday to Sunday. Food, much of which is grown on the farm, might include hogget chop with anchovy and caper butter (£22), or roast crown prince squash with sheep's curd and pickled mushrooms (£16). Four rooms are due to open in spring, followed by cabins in the grounds in summer.

Doubles from £80 B&B, cabins £120, wildbynaturellp.com

Bottle & Glass Inn, Binfield Heath, Oxfordshire

This thatched inn near Henley-on-Thames reopened in 2017 and has had several new additions over the past year. Three rooms have opened above the restaurant, one with a roll-top bath, and there are plans to add five shepherd's huts in the spring. The Dutch barn was converted into an open-fire cooking space last summer, and serves all-day pizza and burger menus. The barn also had a pastry counter, and a farm shop was added in December. The main restaurant specialises in game from the surrounding Phillimore Estate, such as partridge wellington (£24), and 32-day aged steaks (from £18) from nearby Paddock Farm.

Doubles from £140 B&B, bottleandglassinn.com

The Bear Inn, Hodnet, Shropshire

The Bear Inn, a 16th-century coaching inn near Market Drayton, reopened in August after a £2m makeover. It is an atmospheric place: interconnected rooms with panelled walls, beams and fires - and even a resident ghost. There are 12 folk-inspired bedrooms by the interior designer Octavia Dickinson, seven above the pub and five in the coach house. On the menu are fruit and vegetables grown in Hodnet Hall's walled garden, meat from the owners' own cattle and ales from Shropshire brewers. Dishes change regularly but might include artichoke ravioli, butternut pithivier or ox cheek with bone marrow mash.

Doubles from £110, thebearinnhodnet.com

(Article source: The Guardian)

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Rich pickings: Choose a wealthy area and carry a measuring tape. Lessons in furnishing your house for free

After outfitting his home with free finds from the kerb and beyond, Marty Smiley shares his hard rubbish tips and regrets.

When our landlord booted us out of our share house last year, a group field trip to Ikea was out of the question. Like many Australians, designing a living space based only on taste and style was a luxury we could not afford.

Instead, we had to take to the streets: scavenging, upcycling, trading and buying through online flea markets. While we did make some secondhand purchases, much of what we got we got for free

The fact that furniture can be found by anyone with a hire van and a dream is a godsend for renters. Here's what we've learned to look out for.

It's (usually) not stealing if it's on the kerb

Timing is everything: if your city's wealthiest suburbs have hard rubbish collection days, write them down. If not, time your scavenging hunts to popular decluttering periods.

Wealthy homeowners discard stuff like it's going out of fashion. When summer months fade, perfectly workable barbecues are discarded as the negative gearing brigade upgrade to turquoise Heston Blumenthal gas burners. Well-manicured lawns are strewn with deck chairs, picnic accessories, inflatables and beach umbrellas. On the back end of winter, firewood, fire pits, and gas heaters emerge like spring daisies. We've taken them all.



Home & Garden Feature

It's not just the mansion-dwellers though. Most of the lamps in our house come from the lawns of student accommodation towers. The transience of student life means there's a high turnover rate of household items. Slow cookers, rice cookers, blenders and crockery are plentiful. In outer suburbs, come collection time, nature strips become Harvey Normans. It's where I found a second computer monitor to upgrade my working-from-home life.

Now many LGAs have switched from council pickup days to ondemand pickups, which makes it harder to find a lot of things in one swoop. But a Sunday evening drive-by in a ritzy area is a good strategy. That's the time someone else's weekend spring clean - with a pickup scheduled Monday morning - can become your visit to the homemaker's centre. Before you commit to picking through hard rubbish, it's worth noting that some local councils have laws against taking things from kerbside pickup piles and might hand out fines for doing so.

Let the internet search for you

Sometimes the best strategy is to work through online groups who do the scouting for you. Street Bounty and area-specific hard rubbish groups on Facebook are great resources. People take photos of the hard rubbish they've seen in their neighbourhoods and if you join a group in your local area you'll find everything from sex toys to spoon holders.

Often, professional hard rubbish trawlers, who collect items they can refurbish or sell in pieces, will post photos of potential hauls after they've pillaged them. This allows the rest of us to see what's kerbside without leaving our house. The only thing is, you'll have to be quick if there's something you want. Users list the suburb, street and accompany it with a photo, so jump in your car or van and go before someone else gets it.

Rough Trade, Buy/Swap/Sell and Pay It Forward groups can also help you declutter or get the item you want. They operate like an online flea market where you can trade stuff you have in exchange for the items you see posted in the group.

I advertised a plasma TV on Rough Trade and wrote in the caption "happy to trade for beer or art". I didn't get a slab of beer but I did score a framed painting that looks great in our hallway. Other times people will write "NTN" meaning no trade necessary, or PIF, pay it forward - meaning it's free with a good deed. Whoever comments first has the best chance of getting the item. NYT - "name your trade" prompts you to comment with an item you'd be willing to exchange.

If you're not the first to comment, you can write "NIL", which is next in line. If the first commenter/user doesn't close the deal, the seller will go to you next to consider your offer.

Ask what else they've got

Often people are giving things away online as part of a bigger decluttering project, so if you've come to collect one thing, always ask your donor if they've got anything else they're trying to offload.

Make it sound like you're doing them a favour: "Let me take that off your hands." They'll either give it to you for free or super cheap. Better it goes to you than in the tip.

Know what you're bringing home

There's a reason people kick some things to the kerb, which is important to remember when you're checking out a standing fan that has no power cord. A major trap people fall into is bringing home items that are broken, or missing pieces.

I'm guilty of this. Take this canoe I got. Or is it a kayak? Whatever it is, it's a hobby I'll never get to embark on because after a few months of it sitting outside, taking up space in the backyard, I discovered it had a hole in it. Denial is the reason it's still in there. It wasn't easy to transport.

Even if you're taking something for free, it's worth doing the same due diligence you would if you were buying it. Carry a measuring tape so you can work out the length, width and depth of bulky items you plan to adopt.

My housemate has a huge chest of drawers sitting outside his room because it was too big. He carried it all the way up the stairs before he noticed it didn't fit his parameters. It's now been sitting in the hallway for four months because he's been trying to rehome it and hasn't found a willing buyer.

Make sure you can actually transport it

I once drove 45 minutes to a lady's house only to arrive and realise my bargain cabinet was too big for my car. I managed to get it in, but the weight of it blew a gasket in my engine. Not such a bargain after all. The moral of the story: don't bite off more than you can chew. Check the weight.

The item may be free but if it's too big for a train or bike and it can't fit in your car, is it worth the hire van fees? Car hire services like GoGet and CarNextDoor make things a bit easier for you, but if you time it wrong, they can charge you extra for going over. Transport and distance are the factors to consider before you say yes to a new bed frame on the other side of the state.

Ask permission, not forgiveness

The origin of the phrase "one man's trash is another's treasure" is actually "one man's meat, is another's poison" which is relevant to our house, because not everything your roommate, parent or partner brings home is going to be widely accepted by the household. My housemate Nat brings home cardboard cutouts and places them around the house to scare us. They serve no purpose other than his own amusement. Nat's finds are our fears.

Maybe consider sending a group message to the people you live with before you cop a rug they despise. As long as decluttering stays in style, it will be easy to find a different one (that everyone agrees on) online or on-lawn.

(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

