OURPLACE News

The monthly magazine dedicated to help everyone over 50 get the best out of life! JULY 2024

Inside this issue...

Brain gain: Top tips for keeping your mind sharp after 60

just get up and go!

The 11 coolest places to park your campervan in the UK

Pating at a slow pace

A new record at the world's bigg snail-eating festival

A nearby farmer too the whole herd': How a couple turned a cowshed into a dream home for artists

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



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

Published by Clea

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

CONTENTS

3
5
7
-9
1
3
4

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NEVER leave your dog in a hot car!

Every year, dogs suffer and die when their quardians make the mistake of leaving them in a parked car, even for "just a minute" while they run an errand.

HOT

DOGS

Parked cars are deathtraps for dogs: On a 78-degree day, the temperature inside a parked car can soar to between 100 and 120 degrees in just minutes, and on a 90-degree day, the interior temperature can reach as high as 160 degrees in less than 10 minutes.

Animals can sustain brain damage or even die from heatstroke in just 15 minutes. Beating the heat is extra tough for dogs because they can only cool themselves by panting and by sweating through their paw pads.

If you see a dog left alone in a hot car, take down the car's colour, model, make, and license plate number. Have the owner paged in the nearest buildings, or call local humane authorities or police. Have someone keep an eve on the dog.

Don't leave the scene until the situation has been resolved.

If the authorities are unresponsive or too slow and the dog's life appears to be in imminent danger, find a witness (or several) who will back up your assessment, take steps to remove the suffering animal from the car, and then wait for authorities to arrive.

Watch for heatstroke symptoms such as restlessness, excessive sense of purpose. thirst, thick saliva, heavy panting, lethargy, lack of appetite, dark tongue, rapid heartbeat, fever, vomiting, bloody diarrhoea, and 4. Keep your dog in the shade lack of coordination. If a dog shows any of these symptoms, get Don't have air conditioning? No problem! Find a spot in the him or her out of the heat, preferably into an air-conditioned shade and set up a kiddie pool. Lay down a wet towel for your vehicle, and then to a veterinarian immediately. If you are unable dog to lie on. Or simply set up a fan in front of a pan of ice. to transport the dog yourself, take him or her into an airconditioned building if possible and call animal control: Tell them it is an emergency.

What's On

Provide water to drink, and if possible spray the dog with a garden hose or immerse him or her in a tub of cool (but not iced) water for up to two minutes in order to lower the body temperature gradually. You can also place the dog in front of an electric fan. Applying cool, wet towels to the groin area, stomach, chest, and paws can also help. Be careful not to use ice or cold water, and don't overcool the animal.

When walking your dog, keep in mind that if it feels hot enough to fry an egg outside, it probably is. When the air temperature is 86 degrees, the asphalt can reach a sizzling 135 degrees - more than hot enough to cook an egg in five minutes. And it can do the same to our canine companions' sensitive foot pads.

On an 87-degree day, asphalt temperatures can reach 140 degrees, hot enough to cause burns, permanent damage and scarring after just one minute of contact. Rapid burns and blistering can occur at 150 degrees. Hot sidewalks, pavement and parking lots can not only burn paws, they also reflect heat onto dogs' bodies, increasing their risk of deadly heatstroke.

If you wouldn't put your dog in a frying pan, please don't make him or her walk on a hot pavement. Always test the pavement with your hand before setting out (too hot to touch is too hot for your dog), walk early in the morning or late at night when it's cooler, carry water and take frequent breaks in shady spots and never make dogs wear muzzles that restrict their breathing.

Summer tips for your dog

1. Exercise your dog early in the morning or late at night.

Since these are the cooler parts of the day, this will make the walk more comfortable for both you and your dog. I'm a believer in vigorous exercise for healthy dogs, but this is the time of year to back off on exercise intensity.

2. Use doggie boots.

You can find these at your local pet supply store. If you can't walk your dog during the early and later hours of the day, this is a good way of protecting him. Heat rises from the ground, especially on surfaces like cement and asphalt, and dogs absorb and release heat through their feet. Just like boots prevent the dog from absorbing the cold in the winter, they also isolate heat.

3. Keep your dog hydrated!

Different dogs have different needs when battling the heat. Keep in mind that darker coats absorb more heat than lighter coats. Also, overweight dogs are at higher risk for dehydration. Carry a bottle of water when going on a walk with your dog. Better yet have your dog carry it for you in a backpack or a vest! The water in the bottles will keep the dog cooler and also give the dog a

Health & Lifestyle Feature



Maintain a Social Network

Social interactions are vital for mental health.

Regularly connecting with friends, family, and community groups can help prevent feelings of loneliness and depression, which are linked to cognitive decline.

Tip: Make an effort to stay in touch with loved ones, join clubs or groups that interest you, or volunteer in your community.

Eat a Brain-Healthy Diet

A balanced diet rich in antioxidants, healthy fats, vitamins, and minerals can support brain health. Foods such as berries, nuts, leafy greens, fish, and whole grains have been shown to improve cognitive function.

Tip: Consider incorporating foods from the Mediterranean diet into your meals. This diet emphasises fruits, vegetables, fish, and healthy fats.



Get Adequate Sleep

Quality sleep is essential for brain health. It allows the brain to repair itself and consolidate memories. Poor sleep is linked to cognitive decline and an increased risk of Alzheimer's disease.

Tip: Aim for 7-9 hours of sleep per night. Establish a regular sleep routine, create a comfortable sleep environment, and avoid caffeine and electronics before bedtime.

Manage Stress

Chronic stress can negatively affect the brain, impairing memory and cognitive function. Techniques such as meditation, mindfulness, and deep-breathing exercises can help manage stress levels.

Tip: Practice relaxation techniques daily. Even a few minutes of meditation or deep breathing can make a difference.

Brain gain: Top tips for keeping your mind sharp after 60

POSITIVE MIND POSITIVE VIBES POSITIVE LIFE

As we age, maintaining mental sharpness becomes crucial for enjoying a high quality of life. Engaging in activities that challenge the brain, staying physically active, and fostering social connections are key strategies to keep the mind agile.

Here are some top tips to help those over 60 stay mentally sharp:

Stay Physically Active

ACF

Physical exercise is not only good for your body but also your brain. Regular physical activity increases blood flow to the brain and promotes the growth of new brain cells.

Activities such as walking, swimming, yoga, and dancing can improve cognitive function and delay the onset of dementia.

Tip: Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days of the week. Even simple activities like gardening or walking the dog can be beneficial.

Engage in Lifelong Learning

Continuing to learn new things keeps the brain engaged and builds cognitive reserves. Taking up new hobbies, learning a new language, playing a musical instrument, or attending adult education classes can all stimulate the brain.

Tip: Sign up for a class at your local community centre or online.

Stay Mentally Active

Keep your brain engaged with activities that require mental effort. Reading books, writing, and engaging in stimulating conversations can help maintain cognitive function.

Tip: Join a book club, start a journal, or engage in discussions on topics that interest you.

Health & Lifestyle Feature

Challenge Your Brain with Puzzles and Games

Puzzles, crosswords, Sudoku, and brain-training apps can keep your mind sharp by challenging your memory, problem-solving skills, and concentration.

Tip: Dedicate a few minutes each day to solving puzzles or playing brain games. There are many apps available that offer daily challenges.



Regular Health Check-ups

Regular visits to the doctor can help manage chronic conditions that might affect cognitive health, such as diabetes, high blood pressure, and high cholesterol. Early detection and management of these conditions are crucial.

Tip: Keep up with regular health screenings and follow your doctor's advice on managing any health issues.

Limit Alcohol and Avoid Smoking

Excessive alcohol consumption and smoking can have detrimental effects on the brain. Reducing alcohol intake and quitting smoking can improve overall health and cognitive function.

Tip: If you drink, do so in moderation. Seek support if you need help quitting smoking.

Staying mentally sharp after 60 involves a combination of physical activity, mental stimulation, social engagement, and healthy lifestyle choices.

By incorporating these tips into your daily routine, you can support your cognitive health and enjoy a fulfilling, active life well into your later years. Remember, it's never too late to start taking steps towards better brain health.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)



One night I'm a murderer, the next my husband's having an affair. Why do we have the dreams that we do?

We've stopped believing they're messages from the gods. So what are dreams - and what purpose do they serve? Here's what the science says.



The Guardian reports that when my husband brought me a cup of tea in bed the other morning. I could barely muster a "thank you". I was furious that he'd spent the night blatantly cavorting with another woman (a friend of ours, no less).

Never mind that it only happened in a dream. The emotions -betrayal, outrage, rejection - felt real. My next words - "I had a dream last night" - echoed what Oscar Wilde is said to have deemed the most frightening sentence in the English language.

My husband would probably agree. He rolled his eyes as I told him what he'd been up to. It's not my mind's first screening of this particular dream, though the exact cast and plot vary.

Do such dreams reveal anything? A generalised anxiety? A deepseated mistrust? A premonition? Or, as some researchers have posited, is dreaming meaningless "noise" - a byproduct of the frantic neuronal activity that occurs during the phase of sleep known as "rapid eye movement" or REM sleep?

Jane Haynes is a London-based psychotherapist. She originally trained as a Jungian psychoanalyst and still believes there is great value in working with dreams and the unconscious. "Dreams carry a message of some kind," says Haynes. "They communicate in a nocturnal language."

It's not, however, a language that lends itself to universal translation. Despite pop psychology claims to the contrary, dreams about teeth, or flying, or being naked in public do not each have their own onesize-fits-all meaning that can simply be decoded.

Health & Lifestyle News

"As a psychotherapist, I am guiding, not decoding," says Haynes. "It's always the context that's important when trying to make sense of a dream. Someone telling you what your dream means takes away your agency."

Haynes, along with neurologist and sleep physician Dr Oliver Bernath, is curating a Dream Symposium at the Royal Institution in London on 21 June. One of her motivations is to encourage people to take dreams more seriously. "They are an incredibly important part of our lives," she says. Consider that we spend roughly onethird of our lives asleep - and about 20% of the time we are asleep dreaming - and it's hard to argue.

Before we delve into the question of why exactly it is that we spend so much time in essentially a hallucinatory, delusional state, a word to those of you who claim not to dream at all. Sorry: you're wrong.

Sleep laboratory research has shown that when people who say that they don't dream are monitored and periodically woken up during the night, they have been dreaming. They just don't remember it in the morning.

The study of dreams - called oneirology - has a long history. In traditional Chinese culture, dreams were a portal into the future; in ancient Greece, it was believed that dreams were messages from the gods. "Sleep dormitories were held in the great arenas, where citizens could go to incubate their dreams, with 'dream guides' on hand to interpret them," says Haynes.

While we now know that dreams come from within, it's still not entirely clear what purpose they serve.

It's a question that Prof Mark Solms, a neuroscientist at the University of Cape Town and the keynote speaker at the Royal Institution's symposium, has been investigating for more than three decades. His research has shed light on an intriguing, and seemingly contradictory, function of dreaming.

It's natural to assume that the brain is in a resting state during sleep. Far from it. "Brain imaging studies show that during REM sleep, neuronal activity increases in many regions," Solms says. These include the visuospatial lobe and motor cortex, which govern movement and perception; the amygdala and cingulate cortex, which are the emotion-processing centres; and the hippocampus, which deals with autobiographic memory.

The other sleep phases characterised by greater brain activity are shortly after falling asleep (in what's known as the "sleep onset phase"), and when we are moving towards waking up (the "late morning effect"). "All three of these phases are associated with dreaming," says Solms.

You'd think one would get a better night's rest without having to flee marauding zombies or play a piano concerto naked at the Royal Albert Hall - but Solms's hunch was that dreaming actually protected sleep. To test his theory, he studied a group of people with damage to a particular part of the brain called the parieto-occipital cortex, which meant they did not - could not - dream. "They woke up repeatedly, especially just after they entered each phase of REM sleep," he says. "I have rarely witnessed such poor sleep."



The other half saw them in the evening and for the second time the In simple terms, this suggests that one of the functions of dreaming is to harness all the brain activity that occurs during REM sleep. following morning, after a night's sleep. Those who'd "slept on it" rather than allowing it to wake you up. reported a less emotional response to the images the second time around than those who had not, and their MRI scans showed less One region of the brain is less active during REM sleep: the activity in the emotional processing centre of the brain, suggesting prefrontal cortex. This is the rational decision-making centre of the that sleep - specifically, REM sleep - had toned down the distress brain; Solms calls it the "head office". It's as if when this rational associated with the experience.

part of the brain is off duty, other parts can run riot.

For Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, dreams represented our suppressed (and usually sexual) desires. But this has largely been dismissed. As Solms points out, "many of our dreams are anything but wishful thinking".

Indeed, research spanning 40 years and looking at more than 50,000 dream reports shows that negative emotions are more commonly experienced than positive ones during dream states. The most commonly reported emotion is anxiety; over 80% of people have dreamed of being chased.

Haynes says that this slant towards the dark side is reflected in the dreams that symposium attenders have been uploading to the event's website. "I don't know why so few joyful dreams have been reported. We mustn't just focus on dreams as unpleasant states of

mind." If that all sounds a bit literal, it's worth noting that research by Dr Robert Stickgold, professor of psychiatry at Harvard Medical School, But there may be method to the brain's madness. In a series of suggests that continuity isn't concerned so much with events as fascinating studies, beginning in the 1960s, the late Dr Rosalind with the associated emotional tone. He found that dreamers Cartwright (AKA the "Queen of Dreams") monitored the sleep and themselves were able to recognise the emergence of daytime dreams of people going through marital breakdowns. emotions, experiences or concerns in their dreams.

She woke them up during each phase of REM sleep to find out what Stickgold went on to look at the effect of dreams on memory they were dreaming about and discovered that those who dreamed consolidation, using a virtual maze study. First, subjects had to find about their situation were better able to cope with their real-life their way out of the maze from different random locations, passing stress than those who did not. She also found that the "emotional memorable landmarks along the way. Over the next five hours, half tone" (the term used to describe feelings associated with dream the group got a 90-minute nap while the others remained awake. "action" - anxiety, confusion or shame, for example) of these dreams When they were retested in the maze, sleep had had a positive effect lessened with each phase of REM-sleep dreaming, eliciting a more on memory but people who had dreamed specifically about the maze, or clearly related themes, improved their performance 10 neutral emotional response. times more than those who did not. Sleep was important, but it was When Cartwright reassessed her subjects a few months later, those dreaming that served as a problem-solving activity.

who had not experienced dreams about their spouse/marital to describe dreaming as "an internal psychotherapist".

breakdown were more likely to have become depressed, leading her It is said that the 19th-century Russian scientist Dmitri Mendeleev envisioned the periodic table in a dream. Samuel Taylor Coleridge's poem Kubla Khan: or A Vision in a Dream allegedly came to him in When I tell Haynes about my recent dream, and how I couldn't help a dream (and remained unfinished because he was disturbed while feeling annoyed with my husband in the morning, she tells me that trying to write it down on waking). While the evidence that dreaming it is common for waking mood to be affected by dreams -(as opposed to sleep, per se) can boost creativity is largely remarkably, even when we don't remember them. "Being able to anecdotal, Haynes says that our dreams are a unique resource attribute your mood to a dream experience is actually quite valuable, through which we can access our creativity. "And they are free," she because it gives you the power to defuse it," she says. adds.

The idea that dreaming can help us work through unpleasant I'm still not sure what to make of my infidelity dream - let alone the thoughts and events - the "emotional regulation" hypothesis - is now one in which I have killed someone and hidden the body, only for it widely accepted and backed up by further research. In one study, to be discovered decades later. But I am convinced that there is more subjects were exposed to a set of emotionally powerful images while to it than random electrical activity. having their brain activity measured inside a functional MRI scanner. One half of the subjects saw the images in the morning and again, "I have no trouble with the idea that dreams reveal something," says 12 hours later, in the evening. Solms. "What's surprising is that after 120 years of dream research - and all the technology at our fingertips - we still know so little."

Health & Lifestyle News

There are, however, other theories about the function of dreams.

Simulation theory - rooted in evolutionary biology - posits that dreams are a rehearsal for threats and negative situations, offering us "experience" to draw on should we face such situations in real life. (I'll be well rehearsed if my husband ever does run off with someone else, then.)

Rehashing, rather than rehearsing, is the basis for the continuity hypothesis, which frames dreams as a reflection of recent waking life concerns, thoughts and experiences (something Freud called "day residue"). For example, animal rights activists dream more about animals than the average person. And dog owners who sleep in close proximity to their dogs dream more about dogs than those whose canine companions sleep in a different part of the house.



Leisure & Travel Feature



Just get up and go! The 11 coolest places to park your campervan in the UK

Dreaming about a summer spent in a campervan? Check out these dreamy campsites where you can park and pitch up in the UK.

Whether you're imagining trekking legendary highways and gorgeous coastal routes or working your way between blissful nature reserves and bustling cities, we all have an ideal campervan getaway. However, each and every one of us hoping for a roving staycation needs one thing: some solid campervan parks.

Thankfully, the UK is as well suited as anywhere when it comes to cracking campervan holidays. Not only has it got vast nature reserves, picturesque seaside towns and lovely villages to unearth, it's also kitted out with countless excellent places to park up your camper. From invigorating wildlife-filled hideaways to places renowned for their community spirit, here are the best campervan parks and campervan-friendly campsites in the UK.

Ocean Pitch Campsite, Devon (pictured above)

The pitches at this campsite are so near the sea they're practically on the beach. This camper-friendly spot comes with roomy facilities, ace views of Croyde beach and on-site surf hire. It's also right on the coastal path if you prefer to keep your feet on solid ground.

Ace Hideaways, Inverness-shire

Near Inverness, just north of the Cairngorms National Park, Ace Hideaways more than lives up to its name. There are local walking trails, wildlife-spotting opportunities and the likes of whitewater rafting, tubing, kayaking, canyoning, cliff jumping and paintball, which can all be booked on site.



The Sunnyfield, Kent

There are just over two dozen pitches at The Sunnyfield campsite in the Kent Downs, where small campervans are permitted.

There are compost loos and horsebox showers if you don't have facilities in your camper. And an on-site outdoor pizza oven for alfresco evening feasts.

Catgill Farm, Yorkshire

Set on the edge of the Yorkshire Dales, this countryside campsite brims with brilliant facilities: hot showers, fire pits, electric hookup, hairdryers, a shop and even a coffee shop on site.

Catgill Farm's all surrounded by stunning scenery, with the ruins Need something of a digital detox? Go entirely off-grid at this of ancient Bolton Abbey Priory within walking distance. campervan-friendly Cornish campsite. There's a fishing lake, coastal hikes and beaches, all within easy reach, plus no wi-fi to distract you from your dreamy surroundings.

Muasdale Holiday Park, Argyll

Pull right up to the edge of the sand for a spot at Muasdale Holiday Park. Pitches have glorious and totally unobstructed sea views. You can even spy the Scottish islands of Jura and Islav in the distance.



Ashbourne Woods, Devon

Set in 86 acres of woodland on the edge of Dartmoor National Park in Devon, Ashbourne Woods is set up for wild camping, but campervans are very welcome to a spot. There's even electricity hook-up if you really can't live without home comforts.

Wardley Hill Campsite, Norfolk

On the edge of the Norfolk Broads, this rural campsite is all wildflowers, woodland and trickling streams. Small campervans are allowed at Wardley Hill, alongside tents and pre-pitched bell tents. Facilities are basic - compost loos and a single shower but it's a beautiful spot.

Digs in the Wig, Pembrokeshire

Parking spaces don't get much dreamier than those at Digs in the Wig campground. The tiny woodland site welcomes small campervans as well as tents. There are just five spots in total, each in its own peaceful clearing and with eco-toilets and a fire pit.



Cornish Tipi Holidays & Camping, Cornwall



Baystone Bank Farm, Cumbria

Park up at this site on a working farm in the Lake District, and you'll be surrounded by stunning landscapes and incredible hiking opportunities. You would be forgiven for staying put, though, thanks to Baystone Bank Farm's pretty stream, farmyard animals and horse-riding lessons.

Mousehole Camping, Cornwall



Campervans are welcome to park up at Mousehole Camping near Penzance in Cornwall. The site is basic but it's right by the coast, the pretty village of Mousehole and some stellar Cornish beaches.



Eating at a slow pace: A new record at the world's biggest snail-eating festival

Every spring, more than 200,000 visitors descend upon the Spanish city of Lleida for L'Aplec del Caragol - a cheerful celebration of the region's most beloved food: snails.

You smell it long before you see it. Columns of smoke rise from the barbecues at L'Aplec del Caragol, Catalonia's most important gastronomic festival and a yearly highlight for the inhabitants of Lleida, a city 130km west of Barcelona in north-west Spain.

As you get closer, you hear the music coming from the 119 penyas, the party tents each housing a bar, wood-fired barbecue and dinner tables, where groups of friends and family organised into so-called colles, or crews, feast on snails and dance until the early hours of the morning.

It's no wonder why the event draws more than 200,000 visitors and 15,000 participants for three days each spring (24-26 May 2024; 23-25 May 2025). People are curious to try the region's specialty - and discover what the world's biggest snail-eating festival is all about.



"The best part is to eat, drink and dance," says Antonieta Solé, a local who met her husband at Aplec 34 years ago.



All the penyas follow the same schedule with a collective lunch at 14:30 and dinner at 22:00. Some of the bigger penyas hire professional chefs, while others divide tasks among its members, explains Arantxa Contreras Blazquez, who has been the head of the penya Lavativa for 14 years. While the food is important, the best part is to be reunited with your friends. "Half of the people here I only see once a year for Aplec," she says.

The makeshift streets are a crowded affair and the joyfulness of the Lleidatans is contagious as they stand around large paellas (pans) filled to the brim with snails while cooking and drinking cold beer in the warm May weather. While walking across the festival grounds in the park Camps Elisis, I come across a man in an inflatable snail costume, an aioli-making contest and a children's snail race. The latter is quite anticlimactic given that the animals hardly move - most Catalans would probably agree that the snails are better as food than entertainment.

"The snail is something characteristic of Lleida, it's a food that's meant to be shared with friends and family. We've cooked and eaten snails all our lives," says Angels Ons Solé, a well-dressed woman in her 70s. She prepares a caracolada - a barbecue, but with snails - whenever her family comes to visit. Aplec itself could be described as a supersized caracolada on steroids.



Entrance to the festival is free and visitors who don't belong to any crew can enjoy traditional snail dishes in the spacious restaurant, including a la gormanda, snails cooked in a sauce of spicy paprika and herbs, and a la llauna, where the mollusc is cooked using a square paella placed directly onto an open fire. Snail aficionado Rosa Maria Gutierrez Naharro has come from a nearby town to celebrate her birthday at Aplec. "We've tried the snails a la gormanda and the snails with ribs, which were my favourite. If you order them, make sure to ask for extra bread to dip in the delicious sauce," she says.

There's an effort to conserve these traditional recipes, but they're also very open to interpretation, explains Ferran Perdrix, the president of FECOLL, the association organising Aplec. "The snail is like a blank canvas; it absorbs any flavours you add, and everyone has their version."

Francisco Vivas Fernandez has been working in the festival's restaurant for the past three years, and while most visitors are domestic tourists, he has also served people from France, Germany and Malta.

Food & Drink Feature



Apart from plenty of food, the festival also offers a crash course in Catalan culture, and visitors can enjoy everything from castellers - human towers several stories high - to the traditional dance Sardana. In recent years, there's also been an effort to improve the entertainment options available to those who don't belong to a penya, including concerts and open-air dance floors where DJs blast reggaeton until 06:00.

Most visitors come from nearby cities, but others travel from Madrid or other places connected by high-speed train, explains Perdrix. While Aplec has been named a festivity of national tourist interest, he hopes it will soon also become known internationally. For now, he will have to settle with breaking another record - this year, more snails than ever were consumed at the festival, 15 tons to be precise. During the weekend, Lleida lives and breathes snails, and the city's restaurants have to do two sittings to make sure everyone gets served, he says.

The festival keeps growing and four new penyas were added this year, making it the biggest edition in the festival's 43-year history. In front of a big pot of snails a la gormanda I find Aplec veteran Francesc Segura, who attended the very first festival back in 1980. "Back then, we were only seven colles who gathered by the river Segre to eat snails once a year," he says.

While Aplec has changed a lot since those early days, it preserves the unique spirit of this often-overlooked Catalan region, referred to by locals as the "Far West" due to its arid and flat landscape. In contrast to the more cosmopolitan and tourist-drawing Barcelona, Lleidatans know they don't have pretty beaches or Gaudí buildings to offer - but they do have plenty of snails, beer and a knack for showing others a good time.



'A nearby farmer took the whole herd': How a couple turned a cowshed into a dream home for artists

A former dairy business now hosts a thriving artistic community and a spectacular converted barn.

Suzanne Blank Redstone and her husband, Peter Redstone, have lived on the same Devon farm, nestled in a tree-fringed valley a mile from the sea, for 50 years. The couple's current home was once their cowshed, a simple, functional structure that they built in 1979 to shelter their herd of Jerseys over winter.

Today, it's an architectural statement, albeit a very liveable one. It was shortlisted for the Royal Institute of British Architects' house of the year in 2023 and bagged a prestigious Manser medal, too, while a photograph of the property was selected for this year's Royal Academy of Arts' Summer Exhibition, which runs in London until 18 August.





The Redstones worked on the project with David Kohn Architects, which converted this and several other buildings on the farm, including the former farmhouse, into new homes for similarly community-minded people - many of them creatives - along with their young families. As their four children grew up on the farm, they urged their parents to put their ice-cream dream into action. The couple took up the challenge in 1987, making and selling ice-cream in a small shop in Torquay, helped out by the children.

The lofty central space is artist Suzanne's studio. It has a wall of glass looking on to a leafy veranda, and new dividing walls in a suitably agricultural, locally made concrete block.

Wrapped around the studio are the kitchen-dining-living room, library, Peter's office, a guest suite and the couple's bedroom suite. There are two more bedrooms and a bathroom upstairs, but it was important that all the essentials were on one level. "To future-proof it, we made the ground floor wheelchair accessible," says Suzanne.

Similarly, the douglas fir kitchen cabinets have been fitted with large, circular oak handles, made on a local farm. They bring a graphic punch to the space and are easier for older hands to grip.

Natural light is a central theme in Suzanne's art, so she took a great interest in the positioning of the cowshed's windows and skylights, in particular the circular one that sits above her studio. She suggested powder-coating the deep surrounds of each roof light in different bright colours to give each room its own character.

As a nod to their home's agricultural past, as well as a money saver, the couple have used the aluminium shades of the lamps that once warmed the calves - again powder-coated. "We used all sorts of things from the farm: the studio's sliding door is made from the old cowshed doors; the meat safe is now a cabinet, and an old crate serves as a stand for the record player," says Suzanne. And much of their furniture was passed down from both sides of the family.

Suzanne - who grew up in New York - and Peter, who is British, met in the US in 1968. They married in 1970 before moving to London, with Suzanne working as an artist and accompanying Peter on his extended projects for management consultancy McKinsey.

It was while they were staying in a farm cottage in Whitley Bay, Tyneside, in 1973 that they wrote a manifesto for their future lives, and decided to buy their own farm. During the search for a suitable place, Suzanne became pregnant with the first of their children.

When they found this 20-hectare (50-acre) plot in Devon a few months later, they were hooked. "We'd looked all over the country but we already knew this area. The old farmhouse and buildings were in this beautiful red soil valley and it was relatively close to the cultural scene in Dartington," recalls Peter.

To prepare for farming, Peter took some training courses. "Tractor driving, milking, and the artificial insemination of cows," says Suzanne. They decided to focus on dairy. "I had a dream that some day we'd make ice-cream, so we decided on jersey cows because they're beautiful and their cream is so rich."

12

Rocombe Farm organic ice-cream quickly proved a runaway success. Eventually, the couple went into partnership with Yeo Valley and moved production to a factory nearby. After a few years, they agreed to an amicable takeover. In the early 2000s, as foot and mouth disease gripped the countryside, they decided it was time to give up the cows. "We found a farmer not far away to take the whole herd. It allowed me to get back to my art practice, as the children were growing up, too," says Suzanne.

When Suzanne began to get involved in local artists' open studios, the couple started using their now empty farm buildings to help set up, in 2003, the nine-day community-based Art Farm Project, for which about 50 artists displayed work in and around the property, drawing thousands to Rocombe.



Suzanne and Peter's children live and work all over the world, but return with their children for long stays on the farm. The pair thoroughly enjoy the community spirit that comes with the latest phase of their lives. Six young families, several with arts connections, now live in the homes the Redstones have created.

The couple had always wanted to live "as a community, with independence, but in close contact with others", says Peter. "We see these people a lot and it feels like a very healthy way to be."

Suzanne Blank Redstone is represented by the Close Gallery, Somerset

(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:

'Julie'



'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

