

OUR PLACE *News*

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

SEPTEMBER 2024

Inside this issue...

Slow seasons:

How I spent 16 months
journeying from the top
to the bottom of England
in a canal boat

Gastro reboots:

10 of the best renovated
English foodie inns

Reap your rewards!

Tips and tricks to preserve your harvest

Wellbeing that works:

Happiness is a journey, not a destination

PLUS...

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

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

CONTENTS

What's On	3
Health & Lifestyle Feature	
Happiness is a journey, not a destination	4-5
Health & Lifestyle News	6-7
Leisure & Travel Feature	
Slow seasons on a canal boat	8-11
Food & Drink Feature	
10 of the best renovated English foodie inns	12-13
Home & Garden Feature	
Tips and tricks to preserve your harvest	14-15
Our Charity of the Month	16

Data Privacy

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



NEVER leave your dog in a hot car!

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

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 eye 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 thirst, thick saliva, heavy panting, lethargy, lack of appetite, dark tongue, rapid heartbeat, fever, vomiting, bloody diarrhoea, and lack of coordination. If a dog shows any of these symptoms, get him or her out of the heat, preferably into an air-conditioned vehicle, and then to a veterinarian immediately. If you are unable to transport the dog yourself, take him or her into an air-conditioned building if possible and call animal control: Tell them it is an emergency.

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 sense of purpose.

4. Keep your dog in the shade Don't have air conditioning? No problem! Find a spot in the shade and set up a kiddie pool. Lay down a wet towel for your dog to lie on. Or simply set up a fan in front of a pan of ice.



Wellbeing that works: Happiness is a journey, not a destination

Maintaining happiness is a goal many strive for, and while it can seem elusive, there are practical steps you can take to cultivate a happier, more fulfilling life.

Here's a comprehensive guide to maintaining happiness:

Practice Gratitude

Daily Journaling: Write down three things you're grateful for every day. This practice shifts your focus to the positive aspects of your life.

Express Thanks: Regularly thank people in your life, whether it's a simple note, a text, or a face-to-face thank you.

Foster Relationships

Quality Time: Spend meaningful time with friends and family. Build and nurture relationships through shared activities and deep conversations.

Support System: Surround yourself with positive, supportive people. This network can provide comfort and encouragement during tough times.



Engage in Physical Activity

Regular Exercise: Aim for at least 30 minutes of moderate exercise most days. Activities like walking, yoga, or team sports can boost your mood.

Outdoor Activities: Spend time in nature. Activities like hiking or gardening can provide a refreshing change of scenery and a mental reset.

Pursue Goals and Passions

Set Goals: Identify and work towards personal and professional goals. This sense of purpose and achievement can significantly contribute to your happiness.

Hobbies: Engage in activities you love, whether it's playing an instrument, painting, or reading. These pursuits can provide joy and fulfillment.



Mindfulness and Meditation

Daily Practice: Incorporate mindfulness or meditation into your daily routine. Even a few minutes each day can reduce stress and increase feelings of well-being.

Mindful Moments: Practice being present in everyday activities, such as eating or walking, to enhance your connection to the moment.

Manage Stress Effectively

Relaxation Techniques: Practice techniques such as deep breathing, progressive muscle relaxation, or listening to calming music.

Time Management: Prioritise tasks and break larger projects into manageable steps to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

Positive Thinking

Cognitive Restructuring: Challenge negative thoughts and replace them with positive ones. Focus on solutions rather than problems.

Affirmations: Use positive affirmations to build self-confidence and a positive outlook.

Maintain a Healthy Lifestyle

Balanced Diet: Eat a nutritious diet rich in fruits, vegetables, and whole grains. Avoid excessive sugar and processed foods.

Sleep Well: Ensure you get 7-9 hours of sleep each night. Good sleep is essential for emotional regulation and overall well-being.



Help Others

Volunteer: Offer your time and skills to help others. Volunteering can provide a sense of purpose and increase feelings of happiness.

Acts of Kindness: Perform small acts of kindness daily, such as holding the door for someone or paying a compliment.

Seek Professional Help if Needed

Therapy: If you're struggling with persistent feelings of sadness or anxiety, consider seeking help from a mental health professional.

Support Groups: Join support groups where you can share your experiences and gain insights from others facing similar challenges.

Happiness is a journey, not a destination. By incorporating these practices into your daily life, you can build a foundation for lasting happiness.

Remember, it's okay to have bad days; what's important is having strategies to navigate through them and maintain your overall well-being.

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

A new start after 60: I was hoping for a quiet retirement - but instead I became a firefighter

Craig Miller thought he would get away from the wildfires when he moved from California to upstate New York. Instead, at the age of 65, he found himself training to put them out.



The Guardian reports that when Craig Miller moved from California to the Catskill mountains in upstate New York in 2019, the freelance journalist wanted to get away from traffic jams and wildfires and enjoy a quieter pace of life.

Yet, one year into his stay, at the age of 65, he became his town's newest volunteer firefighter.

"It was something I realised I had to do as rural fire departments are desperate for people to help out," he says. "Answering the pager for callouts at all hours of the day isn't an ideal retirement, but four years in, it has become one of the most rewarding parts of my life."

It was Miller's eye for a story that first alerted him to the issue facing volunteer fire departments. Driving around town and noticing recruitment signs, he decided to dig further for the PBS website Next Avenue.

"Speaking to fire chiefs, I realised they are in crisis since more than 60% of all firefighters in the US are volunteers, and rural areas can't get young people to join," he says. "The chief was trying to recruit me as soon as I hit town and said that it didn't matter about my age as there is a job for everyone."

Miller was unsure about the level of commitment and training required, while his partner, Heidi, wasn't keen on the danger it might involve. Yet, as the Covid lockdowns were enforced, Miller realised that volunteering would be a good way to become a part of the community.

He signed up to train as an external firefighter, which meant he only tackled blazes from outside the burning structures rather than potentially running inside buildings to rescue people. He was soon ready to respond to emergencies, and given a uniform, helmet and pager.

"The exterior firefighting training owned my life for three months, with night classes and Saturday sessions covering everything from operating a pump panel to throwing ladders," he says. "We started every session with a 'donning drill', racing to put 40lb (18kg) of equipment on in under a minute. We sometimes had to do it four or five times and I was staggering by the end. It immediately improved my fitness."

Passing his certification and becoming a full member of his crew, Miller witnessed the extent of the problem facing rural fire departments. "The average age of our crew is 54 and only three of us are under 45," he says. "We have some in their 70s and I've seen other crews where people are in their 80s. Every person counts."

While younger volunteers might be needed to rush into burning buildings, older members are typically external firefighters. Averaging 60 callouts a year, many of them due to faulty smoke detectors or part of mutual aid requests from neighbouring departments, Miller has experienced his fair share of hair-raising moments.

"I've been on car fires and wildfires, which are stubborn and difficult. Cars can also give off some gnarly fumes when they are melting," he says. "The worst feeling is when you get paged, show up and you're the only one at the station. That happened once when I was early into my training and it was terrifying thinking I would have to lead the callout."

Luckily, when I arrived on the scene there were other emergency medical staff there to help."Despite the urgent need for volunteers, Miller has learned to set boundaries and not respond to calls when he might be putting himself at risk. "You need to know when to say no. No one will call you up on it, since the pressure to show up is all self-imposed," he says. "If it's 90F (32C) outside and I'm running in all my gear, I'm putting myself in too much danger at my age. So it's better to stay at home."

Now 69, Miller has noticed a huge positive effect on his physical fitness thanks to his fire crew's weekly drills. "Manoeuvring a fire hose that's fully pressurised is like handling a 200ft python that doesn't want to be moved," he says. "It's a workout being on the nozzle and it's definitely kept me feeling young."

The greatest impact has come from helping people during some of the worst moments of their lives. "It's massively rewarding to put yourself out there for strangers and they are so grateful for us, too," he says. "Someone accidentally started a forest fire with his chainsaw and after we put it out he sent us a very nice donation. It showed how much people appreciate us." Despite initially thinking he would stop volunteering at 70, as that milestone approaches, Miller is now committed to carrying on. "I feel like I'm still learning and that's really exciting to me," he says. "One of the essential things in life is to feel you have a purpose, and this is mine. I'll keep going as long as I'm able. It gets in your blood."

(Article source: *The Guardian*)

Why walking is good for us

The benefits of walking for our physical wellbeing are well documented but a 30 minute daily walk can help reduce stress and anxiety too.



How will I benefit physically from walking regularly?

Walking at a brisk pace - making your heart beat faster, but where you are still able to converse normally - can be of fantastic all round value for your health. It can make your heart stronger and may help lower your risk of heart disease, guard against conditions such as type 2 diabetes and it can burn calories which can help maintain a healthy weight.

Regular brisk walking will also help strengthen your core and the muscles in your legs and bottom. If your core muscles are strong then your posture will improve which in turn can help to avoid lumbar pain. Experts believe that adults should exercise aerobically (jogging or brisk walking for instance) for at least 150 minutes a week. This could be broken up into half hour chunks of exercise for five days a week or even shorter bursts of more regular exercise.

Does regular walking help with mental health?

Researchers have found that depression and low mood can be improved by walking. Improvement in mental health has been seen by regularly walking half an hour each time more than twice a week over a ten week period. "Regular exercise can help prevent physical illness, can help combat depression and can help improve your sense of self-worth", says AXA PPP Healthcare's psychological expert, Dr Mark Winwood. "Walking is a great way to set you on the road to being physically and mentally fitter." Chemicals like dopamine and serotonin are released when you're physically active and these give your mood a boost. If you are stressed, then exercise can help the brain make more positive connections, enabling us to better cope with our worries".

Is jogging better for us?

Jogging is more vigorous than brisk walking and puts more strain on your muscles, although it is good aerobic exercise. It is up to you and your ability level whether you decide to walk or jog but if you are fairly inactive and choose to start by jogging, then pay attention to your lower body and joints as these may suffer to begin with. As with any exercise, build up gradually and don't overdo it at the beginning.

It is important to enjoy any exercise you undertake as the aim is to stick at it, so if you prefer to go for a brisk walk rather than a jog then that will definitely be better for you.

What type of terrain should I walk on?

Hills are more challenging and so will be better for your cardiovascular fitness and will also make your calf muscles stronger. If you choose to walk on uneven ground then this will work your ankle muscles.

How should I start?

It is always better to start slowly when you try something new, especially if you are fairly inactive to start with. Remember that not only will you be working muscles you have not worked for a while, but you will also be making your heart and lungs work harder too. Start by walking on a flat route for perhaps 20 minutes, then another time include a hill, then gradually increase your distance and then perhaps increase the time you're out and so on.

If at any time you struggle to walk and talk then you're probably working too hard - your breathing should be heavier with brisk walking but you should still be able to hold a conversation. As with any exercise, it is important to stretch out afterwards so your muscles don't ache the next day. Concentrate on stretching your hamstrings, calves and thighs.

Does it matter if I miss a day's exercise?

It is not the end of the world if you miss a day as the aim is to achieve 150 minutes of moderate activity a week. If you're not able to exercise one day then you can add a few extra minutes onto your subsequent days throughout the week. It is best, however, to build walking into your daily routine and so making it a habit you're less likely to break.

I can't manage 30 minutes a day - can I do less and still benefit?

It is recommended that we should all take moderate exercise for 150 minutes a week but if this is not easy for you to manage at first then 20 minutes a day, though not as beneficial as 30, is certainly better than doing nothing at all! So don't worry, try and gradually increase the time that you can walk. But if this is not possible then you may find that you are already doing other things in your day that count towards your 150 - like gardening, housework, or chasing after children!

I wear trainers but my feet are still sore when I walk

It is possible that your trainers are worn out or not particularly supportive in the first place. It is best to invest in a good pair of trainers that provide you with a cushioned insole. Not enough cushioning may result in direct pressure on your heel or the balls of your feet. You could also suffer minor strains from the extra pressure placed on the soft tissue on the underside of the foot, especially the arches if there is lack of support there too. If you invest in a new pair of shoes, then do break them in before you embark on your walking regime as this can also result in painful feet.

If you do have sore feet after a good walk then a useful remedy is to gently stretch them, but don't forget to stretch your calf muscles too as these can also be a cause of pain and stiffness in the feet. Another way of relieving foot pain is to roll a small ball, like a tennis or golf ball, under your foot.

(Article source: *Silver Surfers*)



Slow seasons: How I spent 16 months journeying from the top to the bottom of England in a canal boat

From within sight of the Lake District to Surrey, an epic - and slow - journey along the length of England's waterways.

My home is a floating island on more than 2,000 miles of interconnected inland waterways in England and Wales.

In my 17-metre narrowboat home, I have travelled from the most northerly of the joined waterways - within sight of the Lake District - to the most southerly, about 30 miles from the Channel.

It took me 16 months to complete but I was never in a hurry, travelling as slowly as the seasons change.

Along the way, between Tewitfield in Lancashire and Godalming in Surrey, I enjoyed some meandering diversions, based on talk I had heard along the towpath, to waterways that seemed too good to miss: the River Weaver, the Ashby canal, the upper Thames.

This meant that by the time I reached Godalming, the distance had swollen from the most direct 387 miles to 517 miles, with 220 locks.

On the waterways, a journey progresses as if you've passed through a portal to a former century and now move at a very different speed from that at which the rest of life is lived, on a route edged with wildflowers even within sight and sound of roads and railway tracks.

In Wigan, the canal has sunk, and so has the surrounding land. Hollows - called flashes - have filled with water and are now full of birds and yachts.

Reed-edged pools of light glitter either side of the canal, which has been raised up on an embankment.

The canal has become deeper as its sides have been raised higher.

My boat is like a model on a catwalk, cruising through the lakes below.

The subsidence is due to millions of tonnes of coal having been extracted at Ince Moss colliery. Mining began in 1863 and continued until the late 1960s.

Up to a million tonnes of coal a year was dug up in that time. No wonder the earth sank.



During the Great Depression, George Orwell visited this stretch of canal to research his book *The Road to Wigan Pier*.

I borrowed a copy from Wigan's smart new library. "I remember a winter afternoon in the dreadful environs of Wigan.

All round was the lunar landscape of slag-heaps and... the factory chimneys sending out plumes of smoke.

The canal path was a mixture of cinders and frozen mud, crisscrossed by the imprints of innumerable clogs, and all round... stretched the "flashes" - pools of stagnant water that has seeped into the hollows caused by the subsidence of ancient pits.

It was horribly cold. The flashes were covered with ice the colour of raw umber, the bargemen were muffled to the eyes in sacks, the lock gates wore beards of ice.

It seemed a world from which vegetation had been banished; nothing existed except smoke, shale, ice, mud, ashes and foul water."

Less than 100 years later, this area is famed for water fowl rather than foul water.

Birch and willow edge the lakes. The towpath is no longer mud and cinders but smooth concrete.

Instead of factory workers clapping in clogs, there are cyclists, dog walkers and birdwatchers with binoculars and cameras.

I detoured on to the River Weaver in Cheshire, descending 15 metres from the Trent & Mersey canal in the world's oldest working boat lift.



Beyond the chemical works - there because of abundant salt deposits - the Weaver is a serene and languorous river or, more accurately, "navigation".

Its levels are controlled and its route has been altered. I cruised past steep wooded banks dotted with ramsons, bluebells and towering oaks.

As I was heading upriver, through Dutton Locks, Mac the lock-keeper saw me through the enormous lock chamber that once took ships 60 metres long.

Eighteen narrowboats can fit in the lock at once, said Mac.

We rose smoothly, half a million gallons of water filling the lock chamber evenly thanks to the "Stoney's patented cylindrical equilibrium sluices" installed in the 19th century during a programme of improvements and enlargements when the locks on the Weaver became the biggest in the country.

Mac operated the sluices with the push of a button.

Continued on pages 10-11...



More buttons opened the large gates and we cruised on past reeds where great crested grebes and moorhens hide, past sailing swans and schoolboys rowing blindly towards us from a rowing club by Acton Bridge.

Thanks to the ingenuity of 250-year-old engineering, our inland waterways traverse up and down hills.

After ascending the Anderton boat lift, I cruised up “Heartbreak Hill”, so named for its many locks (31), and burrowed under a spur of the Pennines through Harecastle tunnel, into the potteries of Staffordshire, stopping to tour the new Wedgwood factory.

One evening I moored near the River Trent, under beech trees with sunlight playing through the leaves and a million river flies dancing above the dark canal.

Days and miles stretched and yawned as county borders were crossed.

The geology changed from millstone grit to sandstone to limestone, as did the vernacular architecture.

Landscapes changed from moorland to farmland, from urban to rural.

On a train or in a car, it would all be a blur.

By boat the scenery unfurled at 3mph and sometimes I stayed for days in one place.

Near Braunston, fields adjacent to the Oxford canal appeared like the wind-blown sea.

These stationary waves of sheep-grazed pasture predate the canal by centuries.

They are the remains of medieval ridge-and-furrow farming.

Braunston is a busy canal junction, the site of the 1923 “battle of the canals” when about 50 striking boatmen and their families blockaded the waterway with their boats in protest at wage cuts foisted on them by a cargo company feeling the pinch from railway competition and a surge of wartime vehicles returning to the roads.



Heavies were employed to evict the boating families from their boats.

Blood was shed.

In the end the boaters won, but the demise of cargo carrying proved inexorable.

I pattered through acres of ripening wheat with barely anyone in sight.

The summit of the South Oxford canal is one of the twistiest sections in the country.

You travel 11 miles to go five.

The 18th-century engineer James Brindley’s approach to canal cutting was to minimise the amount of digging and lock making by following the contours of the land, twisting and turning.

Later, the need for speed, such as it was, at 3mph, encouraged the surveyors to plan more direct routes, with cuttings and more locks.

HS2 encroaches on this otherwise quiet and lonely stretch of farmland through which the canal wiggles.

For miles around, heavy trucks and dinosaur-like machines heap former agricultural soil into embankments.



A new bridge for the 225mph trains is being constructed across the canal.

The contrast between speed and slowness will be exaggerated by the otherwise timeless setting.

In Banbury I watched an otter hunting for crayfish in the canal.

Close to the pretty village of Lower Heyford, a few miles south, the canal soundtrack was of toads chirping and the explosive call of cetti’s warblers from the hedgerow.

Kingfishers and herons were almost daily sightings.

I swam in the Cherwell adjacent to the canal.



Then it was on to the Thames at Oxford, where rowers sculled and men wearing straw boaters brayed from their punts.

Riverside gardens had boathouses big enough to house a family of four.

At Weybridge I joined the Wey navigation, the start of the last 20 miles of my journey the length of England’s waterways.

“You’ll love Godalming: it’s beautiful!” said one narrowboat dweller above Catteshall Lock, the 16th and last lock on the Wey navigation.

“Moor just up there and you’ll hear owls and see deer,” she added, pointing ahead to an overgrown bank next to a coppery meadow.

I turned the boat around at the limit of navigation: the remains of Godalming wharf.

This place was once busy with boats and men unloading barrels of gunpowder destined for Portsmouth and the Napoleonic wars - wars that kept the inland waterways busy with trade as merchants feared sending goods by sea.

Here I was, finally at the southernmost limit of the joined waterways. For now, that is.

Maybe one day the Wey & Arun canal, abandoned in 1871, will be restored all the way to the south coast.

Today it is just a short dead-end arm, a left turn off the Wey navigation after Guildford.

As with the Lancaster canal in the north, a band of dedicated volunteers is campaigning to reopen “London’s lost route to the sea”.

Perhaps one day the joined navigable inland waterways of England will stretch from Kendal in Cumbria to Littlehampton in Sussex and narrowboats will be able to cruise from the Lakeland Hills all the way to the Channel.

But for now, I had arrived at my long, slow journey’s end.

(Article source: *The Guardian*)



Gastro reboots: 10 of the best renovated English foodie inns

From a 16th-century former pub on the Isle of Wight to a boutique hotel in the Lake District, these refurbished inns and coaching houses offer a mouthwatering stay in all seasons.

The Owl, Hawnby, North Yorkshire

Seven months after it reopened under the new ownership of renowned Yorkshire chef Sam Varley, the Owl made it into both the Michelin Guide and the Good Food Guide last month. Depending on the time of year, meals can be taken on the sunny terrace, in the elegant dining room or in front of the fire in the stone-flagged bar.

Expect creative dishes with a focus on local produce - spatchcock tandoori quail, "hog and hop" sausages, pork T-bone with roasted peach. The nine bedrooms have a cocoon-like feel with deep green walls and marshmallow-soft beds.

Doubles from £135 B&B; theowlhawnby.co.uk

The Village Pub, Barnsley, the Cotswolds

A cosier pub with a glitzy sibling nearby (the Pig-in-the-Cotswolds, opening in September), the Village Pub reopened in June. In keeping with the Pig's focus on all things foodie, the menu encompasses traditional bar snacks - pork pies, cockles and vinegar - alongside classic main dishes, such as smoked gammon and parsley sauce and rabbit, leek and bacon pie.

The six rooms, tucked into the eaves, come with Egyptian cotton sheets and monsoon showers.

Doubles from £215 B&B; thepighotel.com

The White Horse, Dorking, Surrey

Established in the 13th century, the White Horse, one of Britain's oldest coaching inns, reopened in May after a £4m renovation by Raymond Blanc's Heartwood Inns group. Set on Dorking's charming high street, the food in the buzzy restaurant is predictably excellent; simple dishes done well, from dressed Devon crab to slow-cooked pork and apricot roulade. Rooms are boutique-hotel slick with Roberts radios, fluffy robes and Bramley bathroom treats, plus doggy welcome packs for four-legged guests. **Doubles from £149 B&B; whitehorsedorking.com**

The Great Bustard, Wiltshire

Part of the Great Durnford Estate, this charming country pub reopened in June after a complete restoration, with 10 bedrooms named after birds that have been successfully reintroduced into the UK, such as the Great Bustard. Menus focus on a farm-to-table ethos with meats, game and vegetables from the estate and an excellent British cheese selection. Rooms are furnished with a mix of antique and contemporary pieces, while the Osprey Treatment room offers skincare treatments for face and body. Pop into the adjoining farm shop for foodie treats and organic spa products to take home.

Doubles from £200 B&B; thegreatbustard.uk

The Packhorse, Newmarket, Suffolk

A stone's throw from the racecourse, the Packhorse reopened after a two-month renovation period this summer, adding eight new rooms in an adjoining converted barn. The modern British menu - with excellent GF and vegan options - encompasses everything from 45-day dry-aged steaks to salads and a lip-smacking pineapple and rum tarte tatin. Bedrooms channel a rustic-glam vibe, with underfloor heating, rain showers and butter-soft linens, with dogs welcome in the new barn rooms.

Doubles from £128 B&B; thepackhorseinn.com

The Black Horse, Climping, West Sussex

After a five-year closure, the 17th-century Black Horse reopened its doors last Easter after a major renovation that restored many of the original features, adding a pewter bar, deep, comfy sofas and a double-sided wood-burning stove. The dishes are standard pub fare - fish pie, homemade scotch eggs, sticky toffee pudding - accompanied by a good selection of Sussex wines, craft beers and ales. Rooms are elegantly furnished with muted wallpapers and sumptuously comfortable beds; two have rooftop balconies overlooking the surrounding fields. **Doubles from £119 B&B; hshotels.co.uk/theblackhorseclimping/rooms**

The Buddle Smugglers Inn, Isle of Wight

One of the island's best-loved and oldest inns reopened in spring after a four-month makeover, with work continuing on the four new bedrooms, available from 1 September. Behind the 16th-century stone frontage, the renovation works kept many of the original features, including the open fireplaces and exposed beams in the traditional bar.

Menus make the most of IoW crab and prawns, with salads, sandwiches and seafood boards alongside pasta, risotto and steaks. Bedrooms are crisp in neutral shades with lovely sea views, and dogs are welcome if notified in advance. **Doubles from £100 B&B; buddleinn.co.uk**



The Stag & Huntsman, Hambleden, Buckinghamshire

Surrounded by the bucolic landscapes of the Hambleden Valley, the Stag reopened in January with new management and a Michelin-starred chef, Dom Robinson, at the helm. Lunches of welsh rarebit on sourdough or suppers of rigatoni with 'nduja and fennel are taken in the firelit bar and dining area, with classic roasts served on Sundays. Nine rustically styled rooms boast Harrison Spinks beds; two two-bedroom cottages are ideal for families. **Doubles from £130 B&B, stagandhuntsman.com**

The White Horses, Rottingdean, East Sussex

A former 18th-century coaching inn, rebuilt in the 1930s as a small hotel, the White Horses reopened in July, set right on Rottingdean's pebbly seafront. The chic rooms have an elegant, art deco feel with crisp, cream décor and pops of colour - burnt orange, dusky blue - in the fabrics and drapes. Menus change seasonally, with a strong accent on locally caught fish, including sharing seafood platters and whole crab rarebit with excellent GF options and sinfully good puds - best taken on the sea-view terrace, right on the beach. **Doubles from £100 B&B; thewhitehorseshotel-rottingdean.co.uk**

The Brackenrigg, Lake District (pictured top left)

Opened in April, the Brackenrigg is set on the tranquil banks of Ullswater, a stone's throw from its sister property, the family-friendly boutique hotel Another Place, The Lake. Guests can use the hotel's restaurants, swimming pools and Kids' Zone or paddle, stroke and glide across the lake with a range of kayaks, paddleboards and wet suits available to hire from the hotel. Or simply soak up the cosy pub ambience in the firelit bar, perfect for a post-walk pint. Dinners are hearty and locally sourced - Cartmel Valley venison burgers, sautéed fish of the day with samphire and sticky toffee pudding to die for. Of the seven chic bedrooms, six look over the lake, and dogs are welcome throughout. **Doubles from £180 B&B; another.place**

(Article source: *The Guardian*)



Reap your rewards! Tips and tricks to preserve your harvest

Blanching, freezing and liquidising will help you cope with gluts. Anyone who grows fruit and vegetables should now be reaping the rewards of their hard labour, as many crops are ready for harvesting.

The problem is, how do you store them all - especially if you're just about to go on holiday?

Many families cannot manage all the runner beans and courgettes they have grown this season, let alone the summer fruit which has to be picked when ripe.

Of course, there's the option of giving the surplus to friends, family and neighbours - or even leaving a box outside your front gate inviting people to help themselves.

But so often, people end up either chucking away their surplus or throwing it on the compost heap.

Yet there are crops harvested throughout the summer which you can enjoy eating in the months ahead, provided you store them properly.

And if you run out of space in your freezer, remember that potatoes, carrots, beetroots, parsnips, leeks and sprouts can be left in the ground or on the plant until required in the winter.

Blanching

Many vegetables, such as courgettes, green beans and sweetcorn, will deteriorate and lose their colour and flavour if you just chuck them in the freezer after picking.

Blanching - boiling for a very short period - is the answer if you want your veg to retain their flavour, texture and colour.

Put them into boiling water for up to three minutes (sweetcorn requires up to six minutes) before cooling them quickly by plunging them into a bowl of iced water. Once you've done that and they've been cooled and patted dry, they're ready for freezing.

Liquidising

Keep other surpluses of vegetables by liquidising them, freezing them in bags or food containers and using them as a base for soup.

Summer fruits

Raspberry lovers should freeze raspberries in a single layer on trays. Once frozen, the fruits should be transferred to freezer bags or airtight containers, which makes them easier to separate when required.

Redcurrants also make useful fruits in the winter, pepping up puddings and pies, and should be frozen in the same way as raspberries.

If you pick blackcurrants when they have ripened fully, they also freeze well and you can save time by freezing whole bunches.

Anyone who has ever tried to freeze strawberries will know that they usually end up a soggy mess during the defrosting process. So if you want the summer taste of strawberries, puree them before freezing and they can be added to ice cream in winter or used as a coulis with a delicious chocolate dessert.

Beans and peas

Many varieties will freeze well, including dwarf French beans, garden peas, broad beans and mangetout. They should be blanched and frozen in small quantities - enough for your family's needs.



Cauliflower

Cauliflower and calabrese can also be blanched and frozen - the best way is to remove the largest stalks and separate them into florets, freezing on metal trays before transferring to a bag.

Spinach

To freeze spinach, cook it first, removing the stalks and then simmer until soft. It can then be squeezed to eliminate the excess water, rolled into balls and frozen.

Herbs

Anyone with a glut of ripe herbs should also take action now, because they are wonderful later on in the year.



You can freeze coriander, basil, mint, parsley and thyme in an ice cube tray. Blanch sprigs of herbs by dipping them in boiling water for a few seconds until the colour intensifies and then chop them roughly and transfer them into individual compartments of the ice cube tray.

They should then be covered with water and frozen - then you can transfer them to bags. Alternatively, pack the herbs into butter and freeze that in cubes, or add them to flavour olive oil or wine vinegar.

Tomatoes

Tomatoes don't freeze well as a whole fruit, but the answer is to skin them. Do this by pouring over boiling water, leaving for a few minutes and then the skin should come off easily.

After that you can puree and freeze them, ready to add to bolognese and other tomato-based pasta sauces or casseroles.

Courgettes

Slice the courgettes into thick wheels and boil them for about a minute before plunging them into a bowl of iced water. Pat them dry with kitchen paper then place them on a tray and put them in the freezer. Once frozen, they can be transferred into a freezer bag and frozen for up to a year.

(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 **HALVED** 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 **HALVED** 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

