

OUR PLACE *News*

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

SEPTEMBER 2023

Inside this issue...

Chic glamping:

Top 10 beach and coastal campsites in France

No gym

fees, no fancy equipment:

It's the skint bouncer's guide to fitness!

Organic September:

What actually makes a food organic?

Darker spaces don't have to be dreary:

8 of the coolest plants for shady gardens

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	
The skint bouncer's guide to fitness!	4-7
Health & Lifestyle News	8-9
Leisure & Travel Feature	
Top 10 beach and coastal campsites in France ...	10-13
Food & Drink Feature	
What actually makes a food organic?	14-15
Home & Garden Feature	
8 of the coolest plants for shady gardens	16-17
Our Charity of the Month	18

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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.



No gym fees, no fancy equipment: It's the skint bouncer's guide to fitness!

Forget treadmills, rowing machines and air-conditioned exercise suites: you can get in shape with a staircase, a chair and fridge. Take it from a man who can't afford to throw money around.

Even a basic gym membership in Britain can easily cost you £30 a month or more.

This means it's likely to be one of the first things to get binned if you're on a low wage during this cost of living crisis.

In my job as a licensed bouncer and security guard, I earn £11.76 an hour.

Even if I work my contracted 48 hours a week plus all the overtime I can grab, and door work on the side, I've got as much chance of signing up to KX Life Chelsea's £615 per month membership, which includes a wellness assessment and access to the spa, as I do of getting handcuffed to a ghost.

But I also can't afford to be lazy: my job needs me to have a basic level of fitness.

Along with my shift mates, I'm a first aider and emergency responder as well as just a human roadblock.

I need to be able to sprint, restrain people, carry cones, stand upright for hours, and sometimes jump up to catch an escaped 18th birthday balloon.

Away from work, I also need to be confident my heart won't pop when I open my notifications and see the gas bill has shot up from £25 a month to £143.

Despite the cliched image of the muscle-bound doorman, I've never wanted to look hench.

Standing around flexing is more likely to invite trouble than keep it at bay. Also, off-duty, not many people want a life partner who spends all their downtime at the gym.

As a natural-born skinny bloke (or "Where's Wally with an asbo," as my girlfriend calls me), I've found I'm well suited to bodyweight exercises.

When I was a kid, I was transfixed by Clubber Lang's basement drills in Rocky III, and Sarah Connor doing chin-ups in her cell in Terminator 2. As an adult, I'm too knackered to go running at night when my shift ends.

In 20-odd years of working in frontline security, here are the exercises that have kept me in decent enough shape to protect people - and to tackle all the day-to-day lifting, swinging and pushing when I'm off the clock.

Push it

Forget flashbacks to PE: you can do a push-up. Start by pushing yourself away from a wall, then choose something lower, eventually building to horizontal on the floor. Then, for an added challenge, go back to the wall with one arm.



Building up to just a few one-arm push-ups has taken me decades, but arguably paid off when a bloke tried to drive through me while I was guarding an entry gate.

Obviously, I couldn't repel his hatchback, but the sight of my arms not bending on his bonnet may have convinced him to do a three-pointer.

Don't neglect your overhead pushing skills, either: they're useful if you need to get crates down from high shelves, or if you're the Leader of the House of Commons and have to carry a ceremonial sword without painkillers.

You can develop strength in this movement pattern by working up to a pike press: get into a plank position on your toes, then lift your hips back and up until you form a triangle.

Carefully bring your head down towards the floor by bending your elbows, and then straighten your arms to push back and reset.

For some added core work, swoop your chest up at the bottom of the descent to perform what's known as a Hindu push-up. Just beware that the next morning your arms might feel like you've had two BCG injections.

Pull it



Chin-ups (where your palms face toward you as you lift yourself up to an overhead bar) are slightly easier than pull-ups (palms away).

Start slowly by practising dead hangs, where you dangle from any overhead surface with your feet off the ground.

If you've got stairs, you can use your balustrade if you can reach it.

If you're in a flat, you can try "fridge-ups", raising your bent legs up behind you while you grip the top of a standard 70in combi unit and lift yourself up.

Continued on pages 6-7...



I once watched my fiftysomething boss put his vertical pull skills to good use when we were guarding a house occupied by a stoned squatter.

Using the edge of the downstairs bathroom roof, he was able to lift himself up, walk across it and politely ask the squatter through a window on the top floor whether they'd mind opening the door.

To anyone carrying a heavy backpack who wants to keep their spine and lat muscles in good condition: I recommend also developing rowing power, which you build by doing Aussie pull-ups.

Lie on your back under a knee- to waist-high bar; grab it, then lift yourself up and lower yourself down again while keeping your midsection straight.

Leg it

When we were learning about burns and acid attacks during first aid training, the instructor told us legs make up 36% of your body.

So anyone who focuses solely on their upper muscles will only ever be 64% healthy.

If you want to be able to hike, race up ladders, or in my case hurdle over traffic barriers when a fight breaks out in a car park, Bulgarian split squats are fantastic for training glutes, hamstrings and quads - and improving your mobility at the same time.

Push a chair back against a wall, stand a few paces in front of it, facing away, and put the toes of one foot on the seat.



Sink lower until the thigh of your front leg sinks to parallel with the ground, or just below.

Watch that your knee doesn't track over your toes, and jump lightly or hold a dumbbell to progress further.

To develop a hip-hinge movement - essential for doing the "bargain bend", when you try to reach the cheaper own-brand products that hide on the bottom shelf in supermarkets - you can try Romanian deadlifts, folding forward from the waist with your hands either in line with your knees, or outstretched holding a weight.

Focus on keeping your back straight rather than how much iron you can carry. No one cares about your numbers unless you're a professional powerlifter.

Core

Some of the bodybuilders I've worked with will add sets of crunches to the end of their barbell session.

My thinking is, if my midsection's valuable enough to qualify for a protective vest on the job, it probably needs a session to itself.

Russian twists can be done anywhere, and involve turning from side to side while sitting on the ground with your heels raised. Handy for quickly unloading a van.

Short circuit

What about running or cardio? Strength is essential, but your body's most important muscle - the one that beats through your chest on the run-up to payday - is life or death.



If you want to get your breathing up but have childcare duties or duff trainers, do a combination of the above exercises without resting in between sets.

That's what the 1950s fitness pioneer Jack LaLanne did. Aged 54, he famously beat a 21-year-old Arnold Schwarzenegger, who had challenged LaLanne to a push-up and chin-up competition after claiming the youngest-ever Mr Universe title.

Twenty minutes is enough for me to feel as if I've done cross-country without leaving my kitchen.

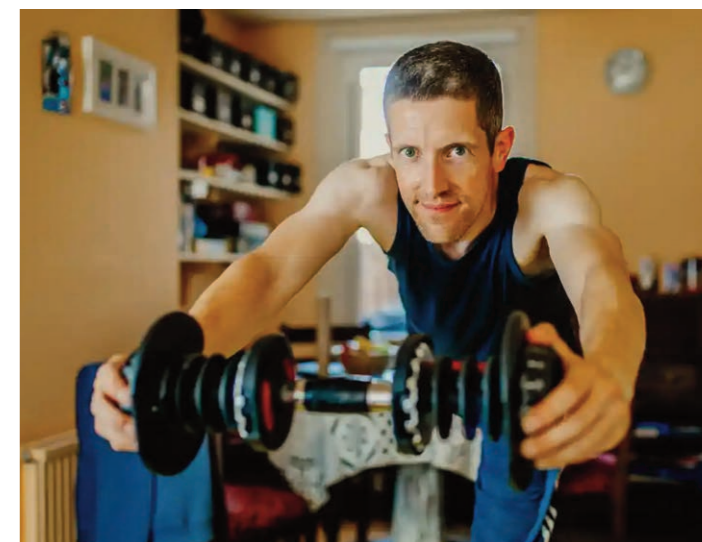
Rep recipe

Generally, it's accepted that sets of one to five reps (repetitions) of an exercise will build power, five to eight build strength, eight to 12 build muscle and more than 12 build endurance.

So which is best to focus on? Is pushing a car once a more useful life skill than stacking bricks for an hour?

Before you fall down the Google hole and get analysis paralysis, research suggests that you should "periodise" your workouts. Spend a few weeks focusing on strength, then change to endurance, then power... whatever order you like.

Just remember that doing five sets of five reps forever will eventually plateau.



Downtime (pictured top left)

Every few weeks, I'll get my head turned by the newest fitness fad. My mates start talking about battle ropes; I start wondering if I could make my own by connecting a load of bike locks.

That's when I'll take a "deload" week and focus on yoga. Controlling your breathing comes in useful - if someone's trying to spit on you, for example, or you're trying to hold your emotions together while explaining to your kid why you can't get a dog - and my favourite yogi is Cosmic Kids on YouTube.

The instructor combines poses with movie plots, telling my daughter and me that we're Charmander from Pokémon while ordering us into the downward dog position. It costs nothing, but the fun we have is invaluable.

I only hope Cristiano Ronaldo got the same buzz when he was paying £295 (plus £350 joining fee) to cool off in the cryostasis therapy chamber at CPASE. I might have a go at that myself this winter. I reckon all I'll need will be a stopwatch and my thermostat.

(Article source: The Guardian)

Taking adult education classes may lower risk of dementia

Researchers analysed data from 282,421 people enrolled in the UK Biobank study



Silver Surfers reports that taking an adult education class could help lower your risk of developing dementia, researchers have found.

Middle-aged and senior citizens in adult education have a 19% reduced chance of developing the condition within five years, a new study suggests.

The findings also suggest that people who took the classes kept up their fluid intelligence - the ability to reason quickly and to think abstractly - and non-verbal reasoning performance better than peers who did not.

First author Dr Hikaru Takeuchi, of Tohoku University in Sendai, Japan, said: "Here we show that people who take adult education classes have a lower risk of developing dementia five years later.

"Adult education is likewise associated with better preservation of non-verbal reasoning with increasing age."

Dr Takeuchi and his co-author Dr Ryuta Kawashima, also a professor at the Institute of Development, Ageing and Cancer at the university, analysed data from 282,421 people in the UK Biobank, which holds genetic, health, and medical information from approximately half a million British volunteers.

They had enrolled between 2006 and 2010, when they were between 40 and 69, and had been followed up for an average of seven years at the time of the new study.

Based on their DNA, people were given an individual predictive risk score for dementia, and self-reported if they took any adult education classes, without specifying the frequency, subject, or academic level.

The study looked at data from the enrolment visit and third assessment visit, between 2014 and 2018.

Those enrolled in the study were given psychological and cognitive tests, for example for fluid intelligence, visuospatial memory and reaction time.

According to the study published in *Frontiers in Aging Neuroscience*, 1.1% of people in the sample developed dementia over the course of the study.

It also found that people who were taking part in adult education, at enrolment had 19% lower risk of developing dementia than participants who did not.

The results were similar when people with a history of diabetes, high cholesterol, cardiovascular diseases, cancer or mental illness were excluded.

The researchers suggest this means the observed lower risk was not exclusively due to people with developing dementia being prevented from following adult education by symptoms of these known conditions.

Dr Kawashima said: "One possibility is that engaging in intellectual activities has positive results on the nervous system, which in turn may prevent dementia.

"But ours is an observational longitudinal study, so if a direct causal relationship exists between adult education and a lower risk of dementia, it could be in either direction."

(Story source: Silver Surfers)

Prostate screening 'could save lives' - the symptoms and risk factors you need to know

Do enough men know what the signs of the disease are?

Silver Surfers reports that there are more than 47,000 men diagnosed with prostate cancer every year in England but new research says using MRI scans can reduce deaths caused by the disease.

Current tests usually detect the level of the protein prostate-specific antigen (PSA) in the blood, but scientists say this has meant overdiagnosis and overtreatment of low-risk cancer.

The Reimagine study, by University College London, University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and King's College London, invited 303 men aged between 50 and 75 to have a screening MRI and a PSA test.



Of those men, 48 (16%) had an MRI that indicated prostate cancer despite having a median PSA density - 32 of those had lower PSA levels than the current screening benchmark, meaning they would ordinarily not have been referred for investigation.

After NHS assessment 29 were diagnosed with cancer that required treatment, and three were diagnosed with low-risk cancer with no need for treatment.

Prof Caroline Moore, consultant surgeon at UCLH, chief investigator of the study and NIHR research professor, called the findings "sobering".

She said: "Our results give an early indication that MRI could offer a more reliable method of detecting potentially serious cancers early, with the added benefit that less than 1% of participants were 'over-diagnosed' with low-risk disease."

What is prostate cancer?

Prostate cancer is the UK's most common male cancer. It affects the prostate - a walnut-sized gland that sits beneath the bladder and surrounds the urethra in people born with male sex organs. Its main purpose is to help produce semen (the fluid that carries sperm).

Prostate cancer can develop when cells in the prostate start to grow in an uncontrolled way.

While some prostate cancers grow quickly and spread, others grow too slowly to cause any problems and therefore will never need any treatment.

What are the risk factors

"Prostate cancer is a disease we tend to see in older age groups (over-50s), but there are exceptions, as with any form of cancer," said Dr Sanjay Mehta, GP at The London General Practice.

According to Prostate Cancer UK black men are at a higher risk - one in four black men will get prostate cancer in their lifetime (compared to one in eight for other men).

The risk increases after the age of 45. Family history is important too; your father or brother has had prostate cancer or your mother or sister has had breast cancer, your risk is higher.

What are the symptoms?

Often there aren't any signs in the early stages, so be aware of your own risk factors and chat to your doctor if concerned.

Prostate Cancer UK have an online risk checker you can use too.

Mehta said to watch out for urinary symptoms and changes to how you urinate.

"So frequency, where you need to go more often.

Hesitancy, where you're standing over the toilet bowl and a period of time will pass before you're able to pass urine, and 'dribbling', where you've finished but find you're still passing when you walk away.

"These are common in older men anyway.

But if it's new for you, and you find you're having to go more often at night, and you're having hesitancy or urgency, see your doctor."

Other things to get checked include erectile dysfunction, blood in your urine, and any new and unexplained lower back pain.

"Then there are general systemic symptoms, like lethargy, lack of appetite," added Mehta.

"Again, these things often happen anyway, but if it's a change for you and it's been happening for a couple of weeks, see your doctor."

How is prostate cancer diagnosed and treated?

First, your doctor will chat through your symptoms and history with you.

"The next step would involve an examination, including a rectal examination of the prostate," said Mehta, before referral for further investigations.

"I appreciate this can put some men off seeing their doctor but it is a very helpful way of assessing things".

After diagnosis, treatment depends on the stage of the cancer and what's suitable for each individual, but it may include surgery or radiotherapy.

Caught early, prostate cancer is generally very treatable. And even with advanced prostate cancer, treatments have come a long way.

(Story source: Silver Surfers)

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Chic glamping: Top 10 beach and coastal campsites in France

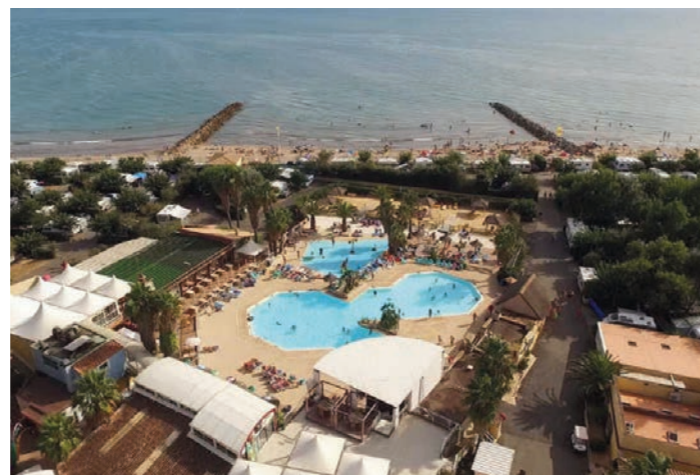
Kick off your shoes at these campsites along the coast of France, staying in a tent on the dunes, a posh tipi or a cool cabin right on the beach.

Le Club Farret Vias Plage, near Béziers, Languedoc

Yelloh! has campsites across France and is popular with young families thanks to its excellent facilities: numerous pools, restaurants, kids' clubs, a wellness spa for grown-ups, which can be booked direct or through operators such as Eurocamp and Thomson Al Fresco.

Le Club Farret Vias Plage is on its own exclusive-use beach and with unfancy but functional units clustered in themed areas (pirate has pool, a waterfall and rope bridges; Pacific has a tiki vibe with straw roofs on the cabins).

The best are in the Beach area, right on the sand but with gated gardens, so parents can relax. The site is a 15-minute taxi ride from the tiny Béziers airport (served by Ryanair from Bristol and London), so is handy for those who don't want to hire a car.



www.yellohvillage.fr. Open 10 April-27 September, camping from €18 a night, units from €39 a night.

Kon Tiki Riviera Village, Côte d'Azur (pictured left)

On an expensive stretch of coast, Kon Tiki is one of three resorts run by the Riviera Villages company. Its thatched cabins (which sleep two to six and range from basic to fully equipped) are on Pampelonne beach, where bling-lovers pay over the odds to access the area's private beach clubs.

Huts are linked by sandy paths and shaded by palm trees but you're not here to chill out: five restaurants have a party vibe, there are lots of watersports and kids activities, and the site has a circus.

There are no tent pitches, but this is St Tropez, so it's the closest you'll get to roughing it with the jet set.

www.en.riviera-villages.com. Open 11 April- 10 October. Huts from €60 a night.

Domaine Les Moulins, Ile de Noirmoutier, Vendée

When you cross the cobbled causeway to the Ile de Noirmoutier off the west coast of France, you could be forgiven for thinking you've arrived in the Mediterranean of the 1960s.



You'll see people digging for clams, cyclists rolling through villages of whitewashed cottages and rows of salt pans for the harvesting of fleur de sel (fine sea salt).

In the village of La Guérinière, behind the dunes, is Domaine Les Moulins: a campsite with a difference.

Instead of the static caravans that have been a fixture of French campsites since the 1970s, you'll see woodtrappers' tents, cabins and double-storey tipis. It's all very tasteful, as you would expect from an enterprise run by the former CEO of Cartier.

There's a pool, a spa, a restaurant and a kids' club, plus a pétanque park, table tennis and crazy golf.

Inside, the cabins are rustic chic, with plump duvets and rain showers, and fully-fitted kitchens where you can cook the mussels you buy from the seafood shacks and the samphire you collect from the beach.

None of this comes cheap, but there are a few more affordable pitches for traditional camping. The best thing is that you feel so close to nature, where a stroll down a track by the side of a windmill will bring you to the beach.

www.domaine-les-moulins.com. Pitches on a five-hectare site with tipis, cabins, lodges from €59 a night for canvas and wooden tents and €22 a night for DIY pitches.

Village Camping Les Pêcheurs, Roquebrune sur Argens, Provence



This classy campsite is 100 metres from a river and a lake but close enough to the coast to bike there along a family-friendly cycle path.

There are lots of activities on site and a watersports centre at the lake. The campsite arranges events such as wine tastings; and, as well as two kids' pools, there is an adults-only spa.

The best accommodation is the fishermen's cabins, 20 wooden huts on stilts on lovely landscaped pitches.

www.camping-les-pecheurs.com. Open 5 April- 30 September, camping from €18.20 a night for two, cabins from €51 a night for five.

Camping Le Pin Sec, Naujac-sur-Mer, near Bordeaux (main picture overleaf)

Amid pine forests and dunes just 50 metres from the sea, is a pop-up camp where surfers can stay in tipis with beds, carpets and electricity.

An onsite chef cooks your meals, and there are nightly campfires and beach parties.

Continued on pages 12-13...



It's suitable for all, including beginners, and a daily surf lesson is included in the price. The site is 25 minutes from Lacanau-Océan, a surfer hangout with bars, restaurants and clubs.

www.feralsurftours.com. Open June-September, three nights from £210pp, including accommodation, two surf lessons, equipment and all meals.

Camping Le Rompval, Mers-les-Bains, near Dieppe



You can bring your standard two-man tent to this campsite in wooded parkland on the chalk cliffs of the Baie de Somme, but for a treat book an eco-pod.

These grass-roofed structures look like brightly painted hobbit houses and are perfect for couples.

The beach, less than two miles away, is small and shingly at high tide but the sea recedes to reveal a sandy stretch.

www.campingerompval.com. Open 4 April-6 October, camping from €21.50 a night for two, pods from €51 for two.

L'Anse du Brick, Maupertus-sur-Mer, Normandy



This terraced site has panoramic views of the sea and leads to a sandy beach. On the inland side is a 300-hectare protected area of woodland, river and waterfalls. The site has indoor and outdoor pools and waterslide, a sea-view restaurant serving regional dishes and a snack bar. The ferry port of Cherbourg is just over six miles away to the west, making it easy to get to for a weekend break.

www.anse-du-brick.com. Open 1 April-30 September, camping from €23 a night for two, cottages from €186 for a weekend for six.

Panorama du Pyla, Bassin d'Arcachon, Aquitaine

The Bassin d'Arcachon in south-west France has 47 miles of beaches. This camping village is right next to one of them: a 100-metre path leads from the campsite to a sandy beach and sheltered, calm sea. It is a spectacular spot in a pine forest at the foot of the Dune du Pyla, the tallest sand dune in Europe. The restaurant terrace is in a prime position under the trees, overlooking the water.



www.camping-panorama.com. Open 11 April-29 September, camping from €18 a night for two, wooden bungalows from €30 a night for four.

Camping Les Baleines, Île de Ré, near La Rochelle

Get back to nature at this campsite at the westernmost tip of the Île de Ré, reached by a bridge from the mainland. The site is on the edge of the island, by the lighthouse, and opens directly on to La Conche beach and a wild stretch of coast. The remote setting is great for simple pleasures such as beachcombing, walking and birdwatching. Stay in one of the two-bedroom safari lodges for added pioneer spirit.



www.camping-lesbaleines.com. Open 19 April- 20 September, camping from €16 a night for two, lodges for four from €300 a week.

Bot Conan Lodge, Beg Meil, Brittany



This gorgeous mini glampsite is a collection of six safari lodges and three atoll tents in a secluded cove next to a white sandy beach. Each tent and lodge has its own wooden deck, outdoor kitchen and dining table, and there are two bath houses with power showers. Bikes and canoes are free to campers, and the clifftop walks start right on your doorstep.

www.botconan.com. Open May-October, tents from €59 a night for four, lodges from €97 a night for five.

Want to take your dog?

To bring your dog to France, they must be over 12 weeks/three months old (the age at which dogs may be vaccinated for rabies), be microchipped, and have been vaccinated for rabies at least 21 days prior to travel.

The Channel Tunnel is an easy way to travel between the U.K. and France. The Eurotunnel shuttle runs between Folkestone and Calais 24/7, 365 days a year and takes around 35 minutes.

What documents do you need to take your dog on the Eurotunnel?

You will need to bring the following documents with you:

- Booking confirmation;
- A microchip
- A Pet Passport or Animal Health Certificate; and Proof of rabies vaccination
- Proof of tapeworm treatment administered 1-5 days before travel (Calais to Folkestone)

How much does it cost to take your dog on the Eurotunnel?

To book your dog on the Eurotunnel, it will cost £22 each way.

However, there are additional costs that you should take into consideration.

These include the cost to obtain a pet passport or animal health certificate, microchip, rabies vaccination, tapeworm treatment, a dog travel carrier and supplies such as food and puppy training pads to soak up any accidents.

(Article source: *The Guardian*)



Organic September: What actually makes a food organic?

This year marks the 50th anniversary of organic certification in the UK. In 1973, accreditation schemes were launched, allowing farmers to gain certification proving they don't use harmful chemicals in their growing or production methods.

These were the salad days of climate activism - Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth were founded two years earlier - and the movement has gone from strength to strength ever since.

"It's something that's been going for half a century and couldn't be more searingly relevant for what we need our food system to be for the next 50 years ahead," says Alex Cullen, commercial and marketing director at the Soil Association, one of eight approved certification bodies.

"Both in the EU and now in the UK post-Brexit, it's really strictly legislated - organic food essentially needs to be independently verified and inspected."

To mark Organic September, we asked experts to describe what organic really means when it comes to food, and why it's beneficial for us and the environment...



What is the definition of organic food?

"Lots of people associate organic with the things that farmers aren't allowed to do," says Harriet Bell, regenerative farming lead at organic veg box company Riverford.

"For example, an organic farmer is not allowed to spray crops with chemical pesticides or artificial fertilisers, use GM crops, or routinely (and wastefully) use antibiotics."

However, there are other important steps producers must take to gain certification: "Organic offers the highest level of animal welfare, higher than RSPCA assured or free-range and it also promotes healthy soil biology."

What does it take to gain organic certification?

Some farms are organic from day one, while others start out using conventional methods and later apply for certification.

"There are specific requirements for different sectors, and with certain rules for each," says Bell.

There are different rules for growing fruit or vegetables, rearing cattle for meat or dairy, and once a producer is certified they are subject to an annual inspection, sometimes unannounced.

"For example, on a dairy inspection, you're looking at are antibiotics being given to the cows? What level of feed is being bought in?" says Cullen.

"They're really informed inspectors who know what to look for and really provide that due diligence in terms of how a particular farm or factory is being run."

Environmental benefits

"Organic farmers use things like compost, green manures (living plants) and farmyard manure to bring fertility to their system and feed their soils," says Bell, which is a lot less carbon-intensive than fertilisers produced from natural gas.

"We know that nearly a third of emissions from a carbon point of view come from agriculture," says Cullen.

"If we stopped using fertiliser, there would be about a 20% drop in agricultural emissions, and if the whole of the UK moved to organic farming principles, we'd see a 40% drop."

Banning harmful chemicals also increases biodiversity.

"Organic farms can have, on average, 50% more plant, insect and birdlife," says Bell.

"A big part of that is because they don't use pesticides, which also means they're not contaminating our streams and rivers with these chemicals."

Health and nutrition

"Scientists and juries in places like America are increasingly concluding that exposure to pesticides isn't great for human health either," says Bell.

And it's not just a case of washing produce thoroughly to remove chemical traces, says Cullen: "A pesticide called glyphosate that's used to dry crops has been found in bread - it survives the cooking process."

There's increasing evidence about the impact of pesticides on gut health and the microbiome.

"We've seen Professor Tim Spector - who's leading a lot of thinking around this - he came out and talked about why he's switched to organic, particularly on the things that he eats most often," Cullen says.

Plus, organic crops have been shown to be more nutrient-dense, she continues: "(They have) higher levels of antioxidants and micronutrients - there's lots of studies about the prevalence of those micronutrients."



A worrying knock-on health effect is air pollution, even in urban environments far from farms.

"A quarter of all inner city air pollution in London is coming from agriculture, and hundreds of miles away," says Cullen.

"Particularly nitrogen fertiliser - when it gets applied on the field, it will react and turn into air particles, and they can travel for hundreds of miles."

(Article source: Silver Surfers)

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Darker spaces don't have to be dreary: 8 of the coolest plants for shady gardens

The sun may be shining, but if you have a north-facing garden, which has more than its quota of shade, don't worry, you can still lighten it up with some impressive plants.

Tropical-looking large-leaved hostas and feathery ferns, blousy hydrangeas, and colourful rhododendrons and azaleas can all withstand a fair amount of shade, given the right soil conditions.

If you have a shady wall, which offers plants a cool root run, you could brighten it with a vigorous Virginia creeper, which will light it up when its leaves change to vibrant deep red in autumn, or camellias for their rose-like blooms, or delicate-looking hellebores with their nodding late winter and early spring flowers.

Damp sites near ponds or streams will be welcomed by candelabra primulas, ligularia and gunnera (giant rhubarb), while Cyclamen hederifolium, lily turf and dusky cranesbill geraniums will tolerate dry shade, perhaps under trees or alongside hedges, so there really isn't a reason you can't brighten up a shady spot.



Best for...

Pots

Hostas:

If you love these tropical-looking leafy plants and want to keep the slugs off them, plant them in pots and get them off the ground, preferably on a metal stand, and not near a wall where slugs and snails may climb up and lean far enough over to get on the leaves. Hostas also produce beautiful spikes of purple flowers in summer.

Heucheras:

These are such versatile plants, whether as standalone specimens in a pot or added to container displays. They come in a wealth of colours, from acid green to burgundy, providing foliage interest throughout the year, and in summer produce airy sprays of small pale green, white or pink flowers, which are a magnet for bees. They are happiest in damp shade.

Under trees



Carpets of shade-loving plants can be situated under trees in damp shade, although the addition of bulky organic matter will help to conserve moisture and enrich the soil, which is likely to have had its nutrients sapped by the trees. Woodland plants are often the most suitable candidates.

Lily-of-the-Valley:

This sweetly scented, dainty-looking but tough perennial provides great ground cover, producing small, highly fragrant little white flowers in late spring, adding perfume and colour in woodland areas under trees.

Cyclamen Hederifolium:

These pretty pint-sized cyclamen bear pale to deep pink flowers in autumn, which appear before the ivy-like leaves and make colourful ground cover in dry shade beneath trees or shrubs, or in containers. They also self-seed easily, creating colonies if protected from summer rain.

Shady walls and courtyards

Camellia Japonica:

These elegant shrubs can be grown as a free-standing specimen either in the ground or a pot, bearing large rose-like flowers in shades ranging from white to pink and deep red. They do best in dappled shade, but try to avoid placing them where they get the morning sun, as this can damage their shoots, especially after frost.

Ferns: These should do well in a shady courtyard as they are shade and moisture-loving, and make terrific architectural plants, especially when their unfurling fronds offer a feathery, rich green hue in spring, which remains in place well into autumn. You can plant them in pots or in a raised bed to bring them closer to you in a courtyard.



Shady borders

Japanese Anemone:

Some gardeners find these tough perennials a bit of a bugbear, because once they're established, it'll take some work to get rid of them. But they do add a boost of colour, bearing tall spikes of white or pink flowers in autumn, when many other blooms are spent.

Cranesbill Geranium:

These are not like your annual geraniums that you can buy as bedding from garden centres. In fact, they are among the toughest perennials that make ideal ground cover at the front of borders, thriving in poor, dry soil in the shade, and growing vigorously to form large clumps. Among the most impressive is 'Rozanne', which produces masses of purple flowers in summer.

Fatsia Japonica:

For a showstopping plant, this shade-lover, also known as the false castor oil plant, with huge palmate leaves, will not disappoint. It's as tough as old boots and you can grow it virtually anywhere in the shade, growing up to 1.5m high and 1.25m wide. Look carefully and you'll see that it also flowers in late autumn, producing greenish-white globes that look a bit like ivy flowers.

(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**



HEDGEHOG RESCUE
 REHABILITATION AND CARE CENTRE

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