

# OUR PLACE *News*

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

DECEMBER 2023

## *Inside this issue...*

### **Eat the rainbow!**

These are the foods to eat to avoid colds and flu this winter

### **Clever cleaning:**

Cleaners on 20 easy ways to do your most hated household chores

### **The nature cure:**

How time outdoors transforms our memory, imagination and logic

### **Chilled destinations:**

7 must-visit winter wonderlands around the world

### **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](http://www.ourplace.co)*

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### Data Privacy

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## Winter Wonderland in Hyde Park November 2023 - January 2024 Hyde Park, London.

### PRE-BOOKING ESSENTIAL

This family event features a host of festive fun and activities, including Winter Wonderland ice skating, circus shows, an observation wheel and a huge Christmas market.

### Winter Wonderland activities include the chance to:

- Skate to live music on the Winter Wonderland ice rink, the UK's largest outdoor rink.
- Discover mythical creatures made from ice and snow in the Magical Ice Kingdom's Secret Forest.
- Watch the Imperial Ice Stars' world-class skaters perform a thrilling Peter Pan on Ice.
- Marvel at the acrobatic wonders at Zippos Christmas Circus or Cirque Berserk.
- Soar into the sky on the iconic Giant Observation Wheel and see the twinkling London lights below.
- Ride a traditional carousel or brave the giant loops of nine different rollercoasters at the fairground.
- Go on an immersive cinematic adventure with The Snowman™ Experience, presented by Backyard Cinema.
- Create your very own ice sculpture at the Ice Sculpting workshops.

## Christmas at Kew

Until 7th January 2024

Kew Gardens, Richmond-Upon-Thames.

Take an enchanting journey into a glittering wonderland with Christmas at Kew at the Royal Botanical Gardens, Kew.

The popular after-dark Christmas event returns with its mile-long trail through the famous botanic gardens, lit up with more than 1 million lights. Get together with family and friends and follow the illuminated path around the gardens, enjoy live performances, and be treated to immersive installations and spectacular displays.

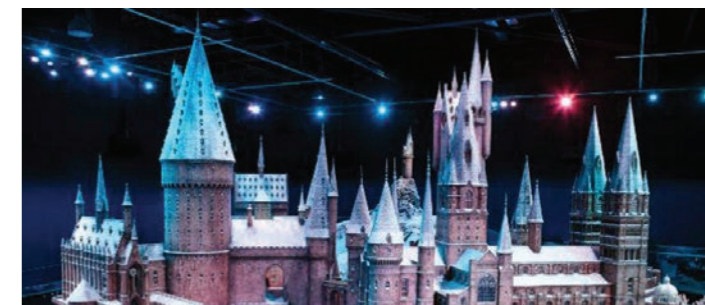
### Highlights of Christmas at Kew:

- Encounter hundreds of moving lights with the Field of Light, as you head towards the Great Pagoda.
- Venture into the Laser Garden, where darting beams of light illuminate mature trees.
- Gaze at 300 sparkling origami boats floating on the lake.
- Discover a magical trail featuring firework trees lit up with bright colours, an Instagram-worthy walkway filled with ribbons of light, and the 100m-long (328m) Cathedral of Light tunnel.
- Be mesmerised by flickering flames from sculptures in the fire garden.
- Enjoy a drink beneath a dome made from tubular lights.
- Marvel at The Great Broad Walk Borders, which are surrounded by illuminated benches and 11m-high (36ft) flower sculptures.
- See a spectacular light, music and water display in front of the iconic Palm House.
- Take the little ones to catch a glimpse of Santa and his elves along the trail, and enjoy vintage fairground rides.
- Indulge in delicious Christmas treats and warming winter drinks at the end of the trail.

## Hogwarts in the Snow - The Making of Harry Potter

Until 14th January 2024

Warner Bros Studio Tour, London.



Celebrate a very magical festive season with Hogwarts in the Snow at Warner Bros. Studio Tour London - The Making of Harry Potter.

Winter has arrived at Hogwarts. Glittering Christmas trees line the Great Hall and a replica festive feast including flaming Christmas puddings is laid out on the long tables; while the top section of the hall is transformed for the Yule Ball with snow, icicles and an orchestra of magical instruments. Around the rest of the studio, special-effect fires roar in the fireplaces, the Gryffindor common room is filled with Christmas treats and the detailed Hogwarts castle model is covered in a special blanket of snow. Get up close to props, costumes and models used in the Harry Potter films. Take a look around the studio's famous movie sets decorated as they were for the festive scenes. And find out how different types of artificial snow and ice were created and used in the films. You can also tuck into a 2-course meal in magical surroundings with the return of Dinner in the Great Hall this Christmas.





# The nature cure: How time outdoors transforms our memory, imagination and logic

**Without engaging with natural environments, our brains cease to work well. As the new field of environmental neuroscience proves, exposure to nature isn't a luxury - it's a necessity.**

It's a grey December day; rain gently pocks the surface of the tidal pools. There is not much to see in this East Sussex nature reserve - a few gulls, a little grebe, a solitary wader on the shore - but already my breathing has slowed to the rhythm of the water lapping the shingle, my shoulders have dropped and I feel imbued with a sense of calm.

I'm far from alone in finding the antidote to modern life in nature. "It's only when I'm outdoors and attentive to the wild things around me that my mind holds still," says James Gilbert, an ecologist from Northamptonshire. Despite his job, it is not visits to nature reserves boasting rare species that provide what he describes as a "mental reset" - "simply the everyday encounters I chance upon in my daily life. These touches of wildness freshen my mind, broaden my perspective and lift my spirits."



Such testimonies to the power of nature are nothing new. What is new is the emerging field of environmental neuroscience, which seeks to explore why - and how - our brains are so profoundly affected by being in nature.

You are probably aware of studies showing that green (vegetated) and blue (moving water) environments are associated with a reduction in stress, improved mood, more positive emotions and decreases in anxiety and rumination.

But there is growing evidence that nature exposure also benefits cognitive function - all the processes involved in gaining knowledge and understanding, including perception, memory, reasoning, judgment, imagination and problem-solving. One study found that after just 40 seconds of looking out at a green roof, subjects made fewer mistakes in a test than when they looked at a concrete one.

Dr Marc Berman, director of the Environmental Neuroscience Laboratory at the University of Chicago, taxed subjects' brains with a test known as the backwards digit-span task, requiring them to repeat back sequences of numbers in reverse order.



Then he sent them for a 50-minute walk, in either an urban setting (a town centre) or a nature setting (a park). On their return, they repeated the task. "Performance improved by about 20% when participants had walked in nature, but not when they had walked in an urban environment," he says.

The brain boost from being in nature goes beyond getting answers right in a test, according to Prof Kathryn Williams, an environmental psychologist at the University of Melbourne. "Research has consistently demonstrated enhanced creativity after immersion in natural environments," she says.

One study found that a four-day hike (with no access to phones or other technology) increased participants' creativity by 50%. (If you're wondering how you can put a number on creativity, that study used the Remote Associates Test, widely used as a measure of creative thinking, insight and problem-solving. Subjects are given three words and have to come up with a word that links them. For example, Big, Cottage, Cake = Cheese.)

What might be going on here? According to the biophilia hypothesis popularised by the American sociobiologist EO Wilson, humans function better in natural environments because our brains and bodies evolved in, and with, nature.

"Biophilia makes a lot of sense," says Dr David Strayer, a cognitive neuroscientist who heads the Applied Cognition Laboratory at the University of Utah. "As hunter-gatherers, those who were most attuned to the natural environment were the most likely to survive. But then we built all this infrastructure. We are trying to use the hunter-gatherer brain to live in the highly stressful and demanding modern world."

It's not that life as a hunter-gatherer was easy, of course. But, says Strayer, the fight-or-flight response that we evolved to deal with it is ill-suited to the way we live now.

"Most of the stress we encounter today does not require a physical response, but still evokes the same physiological reaction - raised cortisol levels, increased heart rate and alertness - which can impact immune and cardiovascular function, as well as memory, mood and attention."

Exposure to nature activates the parasympathetic nervous system - the branch of the nervous system related to a "resting" state. This instils feelings of calm and wellbeing that enable us to think more clearly and positively, just as I experienced on my harbourside walk.

One recent theory proposes that oxytocin (the "bonding" hormone) may be behind the phenomenon, exerting its powerful antistress and restorative effects when we are in natural settings that we perceive as safe, pleasing, calm and familiar.

But if its capacity to make us "feel better" were the sole pathway through which nature affected the brain, it would only work if you regard being in nature as a positive experience. Those siding with Woody Allen when he said "I love nature; I just don't want to get any of it on me" would not experience a brain boost. However, research by Berman and others suggests that improvements in cognitive function are not linked to improved mood.

Berman got his subjects to walk at different times of the year. "Even in January, when it was zero degrees outside and people didn't enjoy the nature walk, they still experienced performance improvements in the test," he says. "They didn't need to 'like' the nature exposure to reap the cognitive benefits."

Another explanation for the nature boost is something known as attention restoration theory (ART). Psychologists call the capacity to sustain focus on a specific mental task, ignoring external distractions (such as your phone) and internal ones (such as your rumbling belly), "directed attention". And according to ART, it is a finite resource.

"The areas of the brain responsible for this kind of attention can become depleted by multitasking and high-stimulation modern environments," explains Williams. When that happens, we can't concentrate, we make mistakes and get stuck on problems. "But there is something about nature that engages the brain in a way that's very undemanding and effortless, giving these areas an opportunity to rest and recover."

*Continued on pages 6-7...*





It's not that natural settings don't have lots of stimuli, but the attention they capture is indirect and spontaneous - we are drawn by the movement of a bird or the sound of our feet padding on fallen leaves.

This gentle attendance to our surroundings is known as "soft fascination", and while we are immersed in it, directed attention can be restored. Maybe that's why I often find myself recording voice notes, or tapping ideas into my phone, after spending time in nature.

Excitingly, neuroimaging tools such as electroencephalograms and functional magnetic resonance imaging are helping researchers to glimpse the changes in our brains in real time.

Functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI), for example, uses something known as Bold - blood-oxygen-level-dependent imaging - to determine which areas of the brain are most active during exposure to different stimuli. (Like muscles, the more active parts require more oxygenated blood.)

Studies have revealed a drop in the Bold signal in the prefrontal cortex (an important brain structure in executive function) during nature exposure, supporting the idea that this part of the brain is "off duty" at the time. It has also been shown that a greater number of brain areas are activated when viewing urban scenes, suggesting more effort is required to process them.

The drawback with fMRI is that it requires you to lie still, ruling out real-life nature experiences - which is why Berman is excited about his newest tool, functional near-infrared spectroscopy (fNIRS).

"We have some idea of what the brain looks like when it is working hard," he says. "But fNIRS enables us to shine infrared light into the brain of a person as they walk through different environments to see whether it is working harder or easier."



Having established a clear connection between nature and brain function, scientists are drilling down into what aspects of a natural environment might render it most restorative.

There is some research to suggest that "higher-quality" environments are superior: places with a diversity and abundance of bird and tree species yielded less anxiety and better mood than less species-rich areas. That's not good news for Britons in one of the world's most nature-denuded nations.

Berman is looking at the role that "perceptual features" within the environment play. "The fact that there can be a cognitive boost simply from looking at pictures of nature got us wondering if there was something about the presence of fractals, straight or curved lines, colour hue and saturation that might make it restorative," he explains.

Fractals - naturally occurring patterns that are repeated at different scales within a structure, such as a snowflake, a fern or a tree - have been found to elicit soft fascination.

Another example is the presence of curved lines - hills, paths or rivers, for example - in a landscape. "These natural features may be processed more fluently by the brain because we evolved with them," says Berman.

Urban settings are typically less fractal, with more hard edges and straight lines, offering little in the way of softly fascinating stimuli.

Add to this the abundance of other stimuli - traffic, crowds, adverts, sirens, social media pings - clamouring for your attention and you can see why they could be more taxing on the brain.

Theoretically, if built environments mimicked these patterns from nature, with fewer hard lines, more curves and a high fractal structure, they might have a similarly beneficial effect on cognition. But I can't help feeling alarmed by this kind of research.

Could it lead us to believe that we don't need nature, if we can identify, isolate and reproduce the relevant qualities and features?

I have also come across studies showing that inhaling the extracted oils from conifers - the type integral to the Japanese practice of forest bathing (shinrin-yoku) - lowers heart rate and blood pressure, reduces blood flow to the prefrontal cortex and instils a good mood, dispensing the need for a walk in the woods.

"We're not trying to create a nature pill," Berman insists, pointing to research that shows exposure to "real-world" nature yields greater improvements in mood and aspects of cognitive performance. "We are looking at why we build things the way that we do. Now, it's all about efficiency.

But we could be thinking instead about creating a built environment that elicits the best attention, high levels of wellbeing, cooperation - we could be putting natural elements into streets, offices, schools, homes. And don't forget that not everybody has access to nature."

Regardless of access issues, most of us spend very little time in nature. A government survey last year found that a quarter of people hadn't visited a green or natural space once in the previous 14 days.

And yet, as the BMJ reported in 2021, greater contact with nature is associated with better cognition, working memory, spatial memory attention, visual attention, reasoning, fluency, intelligence and childhood intellectual development.

"This growing body of research is demonstrating that we can't be healthy - that our brains do not work optimally - if we don't spend time in natural environments," says Berman. "It's not a luxury - it's a necessity."



### How to make the most of nature:

#### Aim for at least 30 minutes:

According to cognitive neuroscientist David Strayer, this is the duration needed for measurable benefits to accrue. Longer-term experiences (Strayer talks of the "three-day effect") have additional benefits.

#### Forgo the tech:

"If you're focusing on your watch or phone, or wearing headphones, you aren't engaging with your environment," says Strayer.

#### Get your timing right:

One study found that the boost to cognition lasted 30 minutes after leaving the natural setting, which may help you plan the best time for mentally demanding work.

#### Choose your venue:

Not all natural environments are equal. "You want to be somewhere pleasant and engaging," says Prof Kathryn Williams, an environmental psychologist at the University of Melbourne.

"A sense of safety is paramount to positive experiences in nature, including attention restoration, stress reduction and mind wandering. A feeling of 'being away' - a sense of psychological distance from the things that burden you - is also important."

(Article source: *The Guardian*)



## Vitamin D - are you getting enough?

**Current Government guidelines advise that all of us in the UK, including children from the age of one, should be taking a daily 10 microgram dose of vitamin D from September to March.**



**Silver Surfers** reports that Vitamin D helps our bodies absorb and use calcium and phosphate from our diet which are essential minerals for healthy bones, teeth and muscles.

### Why is vitamin D essential?

We need vitamin D to build strong bones which will reduce our chances of developing osteoporosis, the bone thinning disease. Vitamin D also regulates cell growth, neuromuscular function, reduces inflammation and helps us to keep our immune system in good shape.

### What happens if we don't get enough vitamin D?

A vitamin D deficiency may result in bones becoming soft and weak which can lead to bone deformities. In adults bone pain and sensitivity, a condition called osteomalacia, may occur. Muscle pain and weakness has also been associated with low vitamin D levels.

### How much sun do we need to get enough vitamin D?

UVB rays from sunlight is the best way to get enough vitamin D into our bodies. However, in the UK this is only effective between the months of late March and September which is why the government advises us to take a supplement over the autumn and winter months when sunlight is at its weakest.

Everyone is different but approximately 10 - 15 minutes of sun exposure during the summer months in the UK should help build up our body's stores of vitamin D. Exposure should be on bare skin, particularly on the forearms, hands and lower legs. Vitamin D is fat-soluble so can be stored in fatty tissue.

As UVB rays cannot penetrate glass then sitting by a window will not help us to get the vitamin D that we need. The sun exposure must come from outside, however it is important not to stay in the sun longer than this without sun protection as this will increase the risk of skin damage and cancer.

### Can we get vitamin D from food?

It is very difficult to get enough vitamin D from diet alone as few foods contain vitamin D in sufficient quantities. There are, however, small amounts found in:

- Oily fish (such as herring, salmon, mackerel and sardines)
- Liver
- Egg yolks
- Wild mushrooms

Vitamin D is added to some foods, look out for the 'fortified' label on:

- Cereals
- Margarine
- Reduced fat spreads
- Milk
- Almond milk products

Vegans or vegetarians are at a higher risk of vitamin D deficiency as most foods which naturally contain vitamin D are products of animal origin. It is therefore advised to speak to your GP if you think you may be suffering from a vitamin D deficiency as your levels can be tested.

### Vitamin D supplements

A daily 10 microgram dose of vitamin D is recommended by the Department of Health during the winter months. These can easily be obtained over the counter in most pharmacies, health food shops

### Who is most at risk?

Those most at risk of being deficient in vitamin D are:

- Older people, or those who are frail, housebound, or have limited sun exposure
- People who wear clothes which cover their skin completely
- People with dark skin as they have higher melanin (skin pigment) levels, which slows vitamin D production.
- People with liver disease, malabsorption disorders, cancer and those needing steroids for treatment
- Children from birth to 4 years old.

If you are worried that you may not be getting enough vitamin D and/or you find yourself in the above most at risk list then it may be worth talking to your pharmacist or GP about your symptoms and consider supplementing your diet with a good-quality vitamin D. or supermarkets.

(Story source: Silver Surfers)

## The heat is on as Britain's boom in seaside saunas stirs up some local sweat

**Hot boxes are popping up on the coast, as well as beside lakes and rivers, but not everyone is happy about the trend.**



**The Guardian** reports that seaside saunas were just a wisp of a dream until 2018. Now anyone walking along a beach at one of the UK's main resorts is likely to come across a converted horse box offering heat and steam as a respite from bleak skies and icy winds.

There are now 70 such saunas operating in the UK according to the British Sauna Society, mostly at beaches or lakes, fuelled by the growth in wild swimming and healthy living. But if the customers have sweated, so have the owners. Finding land, dealing with slow-moving councils and wild seas have all taken a toll. And as the number of saunas increases, local opposition is emerging.

Last week, plans to build a sauna at the ponds in Hampstead Heath in London met objections from the swimmers there. Mark Lamb, the founder of Wild Sauna Community Interest Company, had offered to spend £100,000 to install a sauna near the ponds and manage them for free - the first of 50 such projects - but the Mixed Pond Association said the plans were "unworkable" and the sauna would "change the atmosphere".

There has been similar opposition to a proposal to site a mobile sauna in a car park by the beach in St Andrews. More than 20 objections from local people have been lodged with Fife council, including Judith Harding of the Royal Burgh of St Andrews Community Council, who said the sauna would "spoil the view over the sea".

Meanwhile in Bournemouth, another sauna owner withdrew plans for one on Avon beach after the local town council objected. Sam Glyn-Jones and his Finnish wife had hoped to repeat the success of the Saltwater Sauna, which they set up on Sandbanks beach in Poole two years ago.

Glyn-Jones, a surfing instructor who also runs a nonprofit enterprise for surfing, yoga and cold-water swimming, is sanguine about the rejection.

"We were offered a patch of land, and we were like 'we'll take what we can get', but when we went through it, we felt it might obstruct the views," he said.

They have submitted a new application, which would replace six beach huts of the many already on Avon beach, and he believes that it is much more likely to succeed. "We're on a group chat with other mobile sauna operators - there are over 100 of us. From what I've seen on the group chat, it's been really difficult for other people."

Although archeologists have discovered evidence of neolithic sweatboxes in places such as Marden Henge in Wiltshire, Britain does not have much of a sauna heritage. But in 2018, Liz Watson and her friend Katie Bracher set up a pop-up sauna at the Brighton fringe festival. It proved so popular that Brighton council asked them to stay, and now Watson runs Beach Box Spa, a venture that has inspired the seaside sauna movement. "The council have been really supportive," Watson says. "We've created our own Brighton community that's very into saunas - they know all the terminology about leaf whisking and Aufguss, and it's part of the beach psyche."

The single converted horsebox has been joined by four others, corralled around a campfire on the pebbles along with two plunge pools and an ice bath, and 14 staff. Sitting at the campfire, Watson, a former homeopath, talks passionately about the connection people have with löyly, the Finnish word for steam evaporating from a hot stove, and the importance of introducing sauna rituals from Nordic and Baltic countries, such as leaf whisking - brushing and tapping the skin with twigs and leaves - and Aufguss, a German practice involving waving a towel to move the steam. Yet despite the support, things still feel more precarious than Watson would like. "I only get short licences from the council. I have to keep reapplying," she says. "It's a big pain. If anybody wants to give me a building on a beach, I'm here."

Operating on a beach presents plenty of challenges. "Getting water on a beach is harder than it sounds," she says. She collects rainwater run-off from a crazy golf course next door, and all the lights are battery-powered, usually charged by solar panels on site if the sun is good. "Sometimes I have to go home and do it there," she says. "There's always something." That includes the English Channel. "When we had Storm Eunice (in 2022) we were lucky because there's a big bank of pebbles in front of us that soaked up the water," she says. "It got all the way on to the road - we were on a little island."

Tim Smithen runs Steam Punk Sauna in Dover, a venture the tattooist set up after inking a customer who told him about the new wave of mobile saunas. He decided nearby Folkestone beach was ideal. "It took a year of talking with the local council at Folkestone for nothing to happen," he says. Folkestone's harbour authority stepped in and found a space for him for several months, but now Steam Punk Sauna is in Dover. Smithen says it has been "really hard work". He's had "windburn and rainburn on my face" from standing outside his sauna, and gale-force winds tore off the door. "We basically had stones flying up out of the sea during Hurricane Ciaran." Has it all been worth it? "No! Well ... there is no other feeling like going inside a wood-fired sauna. The world is just what's around you. You're in your own cave in 90 degree heat. It's just perfect. You can get into bed with the heating on, but there's nothing like getting into a sauna in your swimwear."

(Story source: Silver Surfers)





# Chilled destinations: 7 must-visit winter wonderlands around the world

From Canada to Croatia, these destinations wear the cold exceptionally well.

Frozen waterfalls. Snow-dusted pine trees. Spectacular natural light shows. Some places were just meant to be viewed and visited in all their wintertime glory, with a fresh layer of powder turning already beautiful landscapes into epic wonderlands.

But what's even better than a jaw-dropping vista? One with less crowds and lower costs. Traveling during winter lets you trade packed trails and peak season prices for quiet hikes, cheaper admission rates, and more affordable flights.

Read on to discover these wintry locales around the world spectacular enough to rustle you out of hibernation.



## Gullfoss Waterfall, Iceland

Partially frozen and surrounded by snow, Gullfoss Waterfall, located 90 minutes from Reykjavik, is an especially dramatic sight in the winter months.

Visit during peak daylight - Iceland only gets five hours in December and January - and be sure to climb the stairs to the ridgeline of the canyon from the upper pathway for the best views of the massive two-tiered waterfall.

During the warmer months, you can catch the rainbow effect as the sunlight reflects off the mist, but in the winter, you're more likely to get sprayed with tiny ice pellets so bring sunglasses to protect your eyes.

Another reason to visit Iceland in the winter? You have a better chance of experiencing the magic of the aurora borealis. Peak season for viewing the phenomenon is October to March. Consider a guided tour of the Golden Circle Route to hit all the top sites.



## Banff National Park, Canada (pictured top left)

The first national park in Canada, Banff is a winter-lover's paradise. The snow-covered Canadian Rocky Mountains are the backdrop to ice-skating on the picturesque Lake Louise, snowshoeing and cross-country skiing on miles of fir-lined trails, sleigh rides across the meadows, and so much more.

Ride the gondola up to the summit of Sulphur Mountain to enjoy some of the best views in the area, or take a tour of Abraham Lake - winter is the only time you can witness the magic of frozen ice bubbles submerged beneath its surface.

The park is about a two-hour drive from Calgary, but stay in Banff to experience a cozy mountain town bursting with holiday cheer. The shops along Banff Avenue know how to deck the halls to the max.

**Travelers say:** "This area is very windy so dress in layers [and] there is no cellphone reception [on Abraham Lake] so plan ahead and download all maps before hand. Don't forget to bring food as there isn't much available to eat nearby [in winter]." - @Hussain110

## Rovaniemi, Finland

Rovaniemi, a small city on the Arctic Circle in Finland's Lapland region, is known as the official hometown of Santa Claus.

The designation may only be thanks to some clever tourism board marketing, but the town more than makes up for its not-so-truthful claim to fame with an abundance of wintry delights, including a bunch of Santa-themed attractions.



There's Santa Claus Village, a theme park with Elf's Farmyard, where you can feed reindeer; SantaPark, an underground fantasy land built in a series of caverns; and Santa Claus Secret Forest, a snowy destination located in the woods just outside the city.

When you've had enough of the jolly ol' guy, you can hit the slopes at Ounasvaaran Hiihtokeskus Oy or take a snowshoe hike to see frozen waterfalls.

Because it's such a popular winter destination, a number of airlines offer direct flights to Rovaniemi from European cities from late October to early April.

## Lake Placid, NY

If "winter wonderland" means winter sports to you, head to Lake Placid, the host city of the 1932 and 1980 Olympic Winter Games.



Continued on pages 12-13...





It's a sports-lovers dream with plenty of Olympic sites to visit, all set amid the scenic Adirondack Mountains. There's the Ski Jump Complex, where you can stand on the platform to see just how high the pros jump, and the Herb Brooks Arena, where the United States men's ice hockey team beat the Soviet Union in the 1980 "miracle on ice" game.



You can pretend you're racing for the gold on the Olympic Speed Skating Oval (be sure to slow down to take in the views) or get your adrenaline pumping as you zoom down the track at the Bobsled and Luge Complex.

You can also rent snowmobiles, hit the slopes on Whiteface Mountain - home to the highest vertical drop on the East Coast - cross-country ski, and ride a toboggan.

## Tromsø, Norway (pictured above)

Part charming fishing village, part energetic college town, Tromsø shows that seaside towns don't just have to be limited to summertime holidays.

Situated along the Norwegian Sea on the country's northern coast, Tromsø is especially fitting for a winter getaway, as it's a popular gateway to the Arctic Circle.

Surrounded by tranquil fjords, jagged mountain peaks, and scenic glaciers, it's hard to get enough of the wintry landscapes in this region.

You'll also find a number of guided tours designed around the area's Indigenous Sami culture and maritime history.

Tromsø proves that seaside towns don't just have to be limited to summertime holidays. Situated along the Norwegian Sea, this fishing village is especially fitting for a winter getaway, as it's a popular gateway for viewing the northern lights.

Surrounded by tranquil fjords, jagged mountain peaks, and scenic glaciers, it's hard to get enough of the wintry landscapes in this region, but keep in mind that its location 200 miles north of the Arctic Circle means the polar night lasts from November through January in Tromsø, so you won't see the sun.

"Conditions vary a lot," says traveler @klimaflykting. "To cover all aspects of the unpredictable weather you should think of dressing in layers with a windproof and waterproof outer layer and waterproof hiking boots with room for warm socks."

## Fairbanks, Alaska

Fairbanks makes an incredible base for exploring some of the most awe-inspiring winter landscapes in the U.S.

Just over two hours' drive south, Denali National Park and Preserve is at its best in winter, with miles of tundra ideal for cross-country skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling.

A number of guided trips and tours are available to be booked from the city, including dozens that aim for a glimpse of the northern lights.



The season is long, lasting nine months from late-August to late-April, but know that cloud coverage can make the lights elusive. Some tours also stop at the nearby Chena Hot Springs Resort, or include other wintry exploits like ice fishing, glacier hiking, and snowmobiling.

Don't forget to visit North Pole; this tiny Alaskan town 20 minutes from Fairbanks is home to the Santa Claus House, a family-friendly spot that celebrates yuletide all year long.

## Plitvice Lakes National Park, Croatia

With its towering limestone cliffs draped in plant growth, Plitvice Lakes National Park is a top destination for nature lovers all year long - but come winter, it looks like something out of a sci-fi novel, with snow-coated branches, placid lakes, and frozen waterfalls stretching over the nearly 75,000-acre expanse.



About a two-hour drive from Zagreb, the national park (Croatia's first, founded in 1949) does close some of its northern trails during the winter, but still keeps key attractions like the Upper Lakes, Lower Lakes, and Veliki Slap (otherwise known as the Great Waterfall) open as long as the weather and access allow.

Remember to check the website for the latest updates before heading out.

One extra bonus: Visiting the park in the winter months allows you to experience the dazzling landscape without the crowds, which tend to flock here in the summer.

Plus, tickets are more than 50 percent cheaper!

**Travelers say:** "Just wow... The magic of Plitvice is unimaginable. We went in the off season and it was great not having thousands of people to fight on the trails. It's magical [in] winter!" - @cheryl53719



(Article source: trip Advisor)





# Eat the rainbow! These are the foods to eat to avoid colds and flu this winter

**Celebrity nutritionist Gabriela Peacock, who counts Joan Collins and Jodie Kidd among her clients, reveals the hero foods your body needs.**

Nutritionist to the stars, Gabriela Peacock, has revealed the immune-boosting foods to get into your diet this winter, if you want to starve off dreaded colds and bugs.

A lot of people don't realise just how interlinked winter health and nutrition are, says the 44-year-old, but our immune system "is directly dependant on what we put within the body to create a chemical reaction - it's really, really important".

Here are her hero foods your body needs this winter...

## Fermented food

"Digestion support is incredibly important for immunity - 70 to 80% of our immunity actually lies within a digestive system," says Peacock, whose celebrity clients include Princess Beatrice, Joan Collins, Jodie Kidd and Amber Le Bon.

She recommends eating live yoghurts, kefir, kombucha, sauerkraut, kimchi and tofu. "They directly increase the beneficial bacteria in your intestine, which supports the healthy microbiome - and the healthy microbiome will in turn support our immunity." They also contain protein. "Protein is really important for any kind of repair within the body, so when you have a cold, when you scratch your arm, when you need more hormones to be produced."

### How to add it:

Peacock recommends using live yoghurt as a base for homemade ice cream with a dash of agave syrup. "Sauerkraut goes really nicely with any kind of rich foods, which is what we tend to eat around this time, quite heavy and oily meals, sauerkraut cuts through it," she says. "Kombucha is just a nice alternative when you get a bit bored of drinking water. Most of them are really, really low in sugar."

## Green tea

"This would be one of my one of my hero drinks, especially over this period of the year because tea is nice and warming. Green tea contains catechins which are polyphenols," explains Peacock. "Polyphenols are phytochemicals - plant chemicals that have numerous health benefits. One of the main benefits is immunomodulating properties [which] stimulate our immune system and decrease the chronic inflammation. Basically, when you're looking at the immunity, you want to decrease the inflammation."

### How to add it:

If you drink coffee, Peacock suggests sticking to one or two a day and then switching to green tea afterwards. "A really good tip is to put lemon in green tea - you increase the absorption of the catechins, plus it gets rid of the bitter taste. Don't make the tea too hot because the heat will kill the vitamin C." Matcha tea - powdered green tea - is another great way to get the nutrients but is higher in caffeine. "I would recommend thinking about it as a caffeine supplement (to coffee)," she says.

## Pigmented fruits

"We are looking for the dark pigments, (they) will contain the polyphenols which will directly stimulate the immunity. So think about black blackberries, red raspberries, red peppers, green kale, orange or yellow pumpkins - if and you see these saturated colours, they are really beneficial. "Eat the rainbow - beige food is not good for us. The pigment is the polyphenol."

### How to add it:

"I would recommend doing smoothies because you are keeping the fibre inside (as opposed to juicing). If you're doing smoothies I always recommend adding some greens that are lying in your fridge. You will not taste it at all but you increase your colours, you increase your fibre," Peacock says. "I don't dislike juicing but I would never have juice on an empty stomach. You should have it with foods or have it after foods. Think of it as more of a vitamin boost - as opposed to food." You can buy supplements of red and green superfood powder too, which she recommends adding to smoothies, live yoghurt or soup.

## Omega-3-packed fish, nuts and seeds

"Essential fatty acids are incredibly important - the reason they're called essential is because your body cannot produce them by itself, you need to obtain them by diet," says Peacock. "Omega-9 and omega-6 we tend to be OK with (obtaining) but most people struggle with omega-3 because we just don't eat enough of it. This would be oily fish; salmon, mackerel, sardines, a bit of tuna, also a vegetarian source; nuts and seeds. "We need to at least three to four portions of oily fish per week in order to cover your basic baseline." Seeds, in particular, are really high in omega-3, says Peacock. "Pumpkin seeds, sunflower seeds, flax seeds, hemp seeds, also a nice variety of nuts is really important. Omega-3 is directly anti-inflammatory. They're (also) really important for our skin, our hair, our hormonal balance, for the way our cells communicate with each other. But the prevention of chronic inflammation is one of the main benefits."

### How to add it:

"You know what's really good and really cheap - mackerel and sardines in a can. They're kind of unattractive but I absolutely love them. You can get mackerel in a spicy tomato sauce (in a tin) - absolutely delicious." She suggests tinned sardines on toast, keeping bowls of seeds on your kitchen counter to add to everything (especially soups and porridge) and carrying nuts in your handbag. "Food source would be preferential but you can get supplements of omega-3 - 99% of my clients need supplementation."

## Garlic

Garlic contains sulphur (as do onions, leeks and eggs). "Sulphur is incredibly important because they stimulate the liver detoxification processes and that in turn will have a really positive effect on immunity." Peacock says.

### How to add it:

"I would add it into everything really - include it as much as possible. With garlic, you only release the sulphur-containing compounds when you crush it, so it does need to be crushed down and not cooked for too long. Add garlic very last minute. The cooking process helps for the absorption but if you overcook it, if you deep-fry garlic, it will definitely reduce its properties."

## Cruciferous vegetables

Cruciferous vegetables - including broccoli, cauliflower, cabbage, Brussel sprouts and kale - are really important for immunity, Peacock says, and it's "probably the best liver-supporting group of vegetables". They contain liver-friendly sulphur, polyphenols and are high in fibre - which is "fantastic for digestion" (immunity and digestion are very much linked).

### How to add it:

Include different kinds in your Sunday roasts, she suggests. "If some clients of mine don't like the taste or texture of cabbage or kale (I suggest) cutting them into really small pieces - you get exactly the same benefits and you don't (notice) the texture."

## Citrus

Vitamin C is very important this time of year. "It's a direct antioxidant, in order to fight free radicals, which is essentially what makes us sick. If you increase antioxidants in your diet, you're increasing the protection, you're giving your immune system protection," Peacock says. "Grapefruit is high in vitamin C."

### How to add it:

"If you want to increase your hydration (because not many people drink enough water), add a teeny bit of grapefruit juice to a lot of other water," she suggests, "I use it for the kids' water bottles. It's important for it to be fresh (citrus) so you can get as much vitamin C as possible."

*(Article source: Silver Surfers)*





# Clever cleaning: Cleaners on 20 easy ways to do your most hated household chores

**From banishing bin juice to blitzing bathrooms, cleaning your home doesn't have to be laborious. Here is how to keep yours sanitary without losing your sanity.**

Everyone likes living in a clean home but how can you take the drudgery out of scrubbing? By being smug about the shortcuts you use to make it shine (and following the safety instructions for all household cleaning products, of course). Cleaners share their top hacks for the worst household chores.

## Unclogging blocked drains

"I view cleaning as a challenge and get excited about solving it," says Brandon Pleshek, a third-generation janitor from Wisconsin in the US who, aside from running several cleaning businesses, produces online tutorials of tips and tricks on TikTok and beyond. His first tip is on unblocking drains: "The drain can be where a lot of the stink and nastiness in a sink comes from," he says.

"It depends on how bad the clog is but if you pour a load of cleaning agents down there, it doesn't work as well as removing the trap, then you can clean it out really easily." Likewise in the shower: remove any kind of grate if possible, he says. Then give both a squirt of vinegar, "because it is acidic enough to really clean those areas".

## Dealing with fridge monsters

"The fridge is always a monster to crack," says Pleshek. "But the hardest thing with the fridge is, unless you move home, it's always in use. Where I am, it is cold eight months out of the year, so I like to clean my refrigerator when I can take most of the food outside so it doesn't go bad. Using a cool box can work, but if it's hot outside there is a time constraint.

When deep-cleaning the fridge, Phleshek also uses the bath to clean drawers and shelves covered in sticky food debris. "Let them soak in there with washing-up soap. Usually, by the time you've cleaned the refrigerator, they've soaked for a while so you can give them a quick scrub and they are ready to go." This comes with a word of warning: "Make sure to leave any glass shelves on your counter to get them to room temperature before you put them into the tub. I've never had it happen to me personally, but if you put cool glass into hot water it could shatter."

## Filthy floors

"The biggest mistake," says Pleshek, "is jumping right to mopping. You always want to make sure you sweep or vacuum the floors before you put any sort of liquid cleaner on or start wet mopping. If you spray cleaner down on dry dirt, it's going to turn into mud and be much harder to remove from the floor. I vacuum and then, if it's really bad, I'll vacuum again. It makes the mopping much faster and easier. Always use a neutral pH floor cleaner. That way, it won't dry sticky and attract more dirt."



## Bin juice

Pleshek recently made a video inspired by a stench in his garage that was originating from the bin. "My go-to for that is simple: white vinegar. Like I mentioned for the drains, white vinegar does a great job of killing odours. Usually, I wash out the bin first, whether that is in the house or outside with a hose. Then I put in two or three cups of white vinegar, filling it up with a bit of water to make sure the whole bottom is covered because most of the time all your nasty garbage juice falls to the bottom and congeals and sticks. Mine had some weird greasiness in there, so I put a few drops of dish soap in to degrease it." The results were transformative: "My garage actually smelled good and not like rotting."

## Rancid toilets

"I've been cleaning toilets since I was born," says Pleshek. "I recently did a video of a toilet that was going to get thrown out - it probably hadn't been cleaned in decades - and I saved it. It was so satisfying."

He likes to remove the loo seat and, as with fridge shelves, pop it in the bath. "There is a 50/50 divide of people saying, 'That's the most disgusting thing ever', or, 'That's the most genius thing ever,'" he says. "So I guess that's up to your interpretation." The other key thing with cleaning loos is "you want to make sure your disinfectant is sitting on the surface long enough. It is super important to spray and then leave enough time for that cleaner to sit there and do its thing, and then wipe."

## The loo brush debate

Gemma Bray, AKA The Organised Mum, lives in a presumably very tidy home in Kent. "I like living in a clean house," she says, but "like most of us, I actually don't like cleaning." That said, she gives the toilet a daily wipe down, which she says is essential if you have a large family and avoids having to deep-clean it too frequently. "Remember to do things such as the flush handle and the spaces around the hinges of the toilet seats, just to make sure that it's not getting a buildup of grime." And now for a slightly shocking admission: she doesn't own a loo brush. "They aren't always used correctly," she says. "Most people will use a loo brush to make it look less dirty, then pop it in the holder and go on their merry way - and there is this dirt and gunk accumulating. So we don't have toilet brushes in our house for that reason. Instead, it is a rubber glove and a cloth. Close your eyes and get on with it." Bray washes the cloth and glove after using it to clean, which she believes to be more hygienic than using a brush - and if she did own one, she wouldn't dream of putting it in the dishwasher.

## Blitzing bathrooms

While you're in there, Bray recommends opening the bathroom window: "That's really important, especially in winter, and because lots of people are dealing with damp and mould. It's nature's air freshener." Next, she will attack the dust bunnies: "Bathrooms are one of the dustiest places in the house and have lots of dust behind the toilet cistern and other often forgotten places, with dead skin cells and all sorts on the floor. So before you even try to do a bathroom deep-clean, sweep or vacuum. Get into all the nooks and crannies, because once you start getting in there with your cleaning products and splashing around with water, you're going to create a paste which is difficult to clean."



*Continued on pages 18-19...*





### Attacking limescale

It's essential to keep on top of this with daily maintenance, says Bray. "If you live in a hard water area, then it is going to be a bigger problem. Some people like to have a squeegee in their shower at all times, and use a limescale remover that is appropriate for the surface that you are cleaning. Never, ever mix cleaning products - it can be really dangerous. If you're cleaning your shower screen and try to get rid of the limescale with vinegar, don't use bleach as well because the two can mix and create a harmful chemical. Don't forget your shower head: if you feel your shower isn't as forceful as it used to be, it could be that you need to unscrew it and deal with limescale in there."

### Tidying utter chaos

Tidying is "like homework maths", says Bray. "The more people that live in your house, the more mess there will be." If kids are involved, she advises investing in a big basket or chest to throw all the toys in at the end of the day. "There is no point trying to do it as the day progresses: kids will keep pulling more and more toys out, and you are fighting a losing battle. So if you have a really big receptacle, you can just do a quick sweep and pop everything in."

### Oven SOS

"After you finish using the oven," says Bray, "wait until it has cooled down to a safe temperature. Then get a damp cloth with some washing-up liquid on and wipe down anything that spilled from that session. So if you've cooked a lasagne, make sure you get it before it bakes in and dries out." She also recommends oven liners to catch any drips. "You whip it out, rinse it under the tap and everything just slides off."

### For good-as-new oven shelves

Ann Russell is a self-described "anti-cleanfluencer" who lives in Hampshire and found fame on TikTok sharing the knowledge she gained from years cleaning people's homes, before writing a book on *How to Clean Everything*. She throws filthy oven shelves into a bin bag with half a small bottle of household ammonia before sealing the bag. Twenty-four hours later, all the brown grease and gunk will slide off into hot soapy water with ease.



### Off the wall

Russell's most-asked cleaning conundrum is how to get marks off the wall. "Crayon comes off beautifully with white spirit: leave for a few days then wash the whole wall afterwards. For anything else, if it is fairly small try a melamine sponge; if it is bigger, then try soapy water. If you can't get it off with that, you need to use solvent - the problem is it tends to spread the mark, so start from the outside and work in. Or, if you are really lazy, put a large ornament right in front of the mark and pretend it doesn't exist."

### Smeary windows

"Wash them with hot soapy water and squeegee them - do not muck around with glass cleaner," says Russell. "Wash it so that you're getting it clean, then squeegee off the water and pick up the free water as it runs down with a well-wrung-out cloth for a smear-free window."

### DIY cloths

Russell says she gets through half a carrier bag full of cloths when cleaning the average home. "I'm fussy about the cloths that I use. Microfibre cloths are lovely but they do contribute to plastic waste," especially when they are used once and then binned rather than washed. Alternatively, "Bits of old cotton clothing that are no longer suitable to be worn can be turned into cloths. After using them, don't throw away - blast in the washing machine and use again."

### Hairy animals

Russell has a staffie cross called Holly and, thanks to her, "My house is slightly black and hairy. I have got one of those triangular metal tool things. It's a bit brutal, because it will pull up carpet, but it does a brilliant job at getting pet hair. I also have a broom with rubber bristles: it pulls out all the pet hair while leaving the upholstery or the carpet in one piece."



### Hairy sofas

London-based Aggie MacKenzie, whose cleaning methods found fame on Channel 4's *How Clean Is Your House?*, has thoughts on pets who insist on joining their owners on the sofa. "Put on a rubber glove and wet the glove under the tap.

Shake it off and then rub the glove across the sofa. Keep rubbing it until all the hair is at one edge. A clean trainer sole also works well, as does parcel tape. I mean, you should train pets to stay off the blinking sofa," she laughs.

### Sofa stains

Less is more, says MacKenzie. "Start off with a microfibre cloth and soapy water. Once you put a lot of product into a fabric, it's quite hard to get it all back out again. What happens is you end up leaving some soap on there and that residue attracts dirt."

### Carpet spillage disasters

"Get on to it asap," says MacKenzie. "In terms of red wine, don't splash it with white wine or salt or any of that nonsense. What you need to do is get fizzy water and a clean towel. Soak the stain in the fizzy water, put the towel on top and just dab it until the red wine comes up on to the towel and keep going until it all comes off. Try not to rub the carpet too much because that sort of thing could damage the pile. Work from the outside in so you're not spreading the stain any further."



### Don't dust where no one will notice

MacKenzie doesn't bother dusting high shelves: "Nobody ever looks up there."

### Changing bed linen

How often does MacKenzie change hers? "That would be telling. It depends how much traffic is going through them." (Every 10 days, for the record.)

Her advice for making it a less tedious task? "When you're taking off the duvet, peel it off and keep it outside in, and then wash it and dry outside in, so that when you come to put it back on, you are halfway there.

You just slip your right hand into the bottom right corner, left hand into the bottom left hand corner, grab those corners, grab the duvet corners, and then peel it back on again." You have to "power through and think about the gorgeousness at the end of it," she says. "And who you're going to have in it."

(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 **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:

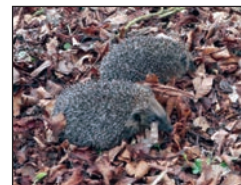
## 'Julie'



'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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