

# OUR PLACE *News*

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

MARCH 2024

*Inside this issue...*

## **Diggin' it:**

12 of Britain's best archaeology sites, events and family days out

## **Sweet spuds:**

The health benefits of sweet potatoes - a nutritional powerhouse unveiled

## **Outdoor kitchens:**

10 stylish ways to cook alfresco and impress your family & friends

## **Play outside and sing together:**

What living in Denmark taught me about raising 'Viking' children

**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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## CRUFTS - The world's largest dog show is back!

### Thursday 7th - Sunday 10th March 2024

### NEC Birmingham

The BIGGEST and BEST dog show in the world is back! Get your tickets now to Crufts 2024 for an unforgettable day out full of furry fun. From 7th-10th March watch over 22,000 dogs compete for the world famous title of Crufts Best in Show Champion, plus enjoy hundreds of trade stands full of wonderful products for both you and your canine pal. You can also watch pawsome pups raise the roof of the NEC with Agility, Flyball, Heelwork to Music and inspiring doggy displays. Thinking of buying a puppy? You can meet 200 different dog breeds at the Discover Dog area, in association with Frontline; say 'hello' to your favourites and get to know the breeds you've never before heard of! It's the perfect family day out AND under 8s go FREE.



- Day 1 - Thursday 7th March - Toy and Utility breeds**
- Day 2 - Friday 8th March - Gundog breeds**
- Day 3 - Saturday 9th March - Working and Pastoral breeds**
- Day 4 - Sunday 10th March - Terrier and Hound breeds**

Each day runs from 8.15am to 6.30pm, though Best In Show is from 4.45pm to 9pm Each day also features an Obedience Ring starting at 8.15am.

**Tickets: [www.crufts.org.uk](http://www.crufts.org.uk)**

You'll need to leave your pooch at home however, as the only dogs allowed in Crufts are those invited by the Kennel Club, or assistance dogs.

**Shopping Heaven** - over 400 stands with special treats and offers for you and your dog.

**Fantastic Family Fun in the Arena** - jam packed with agility, flyball, displays and competitions including the Scruffts final!

**Eukanuba Discover Dogs** - come meet, greet and discover over 200 breeds.

**Best in Show** - over 22,000 dogs striving for the title of Crufts Best in Show 2024.



## WINTER CAT WARNING

**At this time of year please check under your car and wheel arches for cats trying to keep warm, before you set off on your journey!**



**During the cold winter months cats will often seek out any warm space they can find. One particularly irresistible lure seems to be the cosy confines of a warm car engine.** Unfortunately, cats that seek shelter under the bonnets of cars can then be injured or killed when that car is started. Help keep your own and your neighbourhood cats safe this winter by tapping the bonnet of your car before you start the engine.



# Play outside and sing together: What living in Denmark taught me about raising ‘Viking’ children

**Nordic children are out in nature for hours a day - and they top rankings in both education and happiness. So here are seven parenting tips I’ve picked up along the way...**

I knew I was in trouble the day my pre-schooler came home smelling of woodsmoke and told me he’d been practising “knife skills”. When his twin siblings requested a saw for their second birthday, I realised I’d crossed the Rubicon: I’d become an accidental mother of Vikings. It wasn’t supposed to be like this.

I relocated from London to Denmark, carefree and childless, but despite planning on staying just a year I’m still here a decade and three children later. So I have skin in the Viking game. And Nordic children do things differently. They eat differently, learn differently, play, dress, even sleep differently - with babies left to nap outside in their prams in sub-zero temperatures. They sing, fight, climb, fall and get up again. They are out in nature for hours a day - despite the fact that the weather’s terrible (we’re talking Mordor from October to March).

Nordics seldom come across as happy-go-lucky - preferring “scheduled fun” to anything approaching spontaneity. And yet... Nordic countries regularly top Unicef rankings in terms of happiness, education and equality with the highest rates of wellbeing, globally. Some aspects of their parenting can be applied wherever you are, while others can act as inspiration. So here are a few things I’ve learned about how to raise a Viking.

## Every day in every way, play

Play is so big in the Nordic countries, they named it twice. The verb forms of “play” in Danish, Finnish, Swedish, Icelandic and Norwegian refer specifically to enjoyable, unstructured and intrinsically motivated activities.

But if you’re playing sport, a board game, or a musical instrument, you use spille in Danish and Norwegian, spela in Swedish, spila in Icelandic and pelata in Finnish. Professor Ellen Beate Hansen Sandseter at Queen Maud University College Norway says: “Studies following children from birth show that it’s not the ones who climb a tree, fall and break a leg who have a fear of heights - it’s the ones who never climbed a tree.” Playfighting is another important part of a child’s development, teaching cooperation, confidence and appropriate judgment. “You have to let kids fight sometimes,” one Danish mum tells me. They need “to have conflict, to see if they can solve it and get themselves to the peace table”. Terrifying in the short term, helpful in the long run (or so I’m told).

## Teach children how to think not what to think

Vikings don’t start school until six years old (seven in Finland). They’re eased in with short days, no grades, tests or homework until around age 11. Sabilah Eboo Alwani from the Faculty of Education at the University of Cambridge thinks this is a good thing, since: “the early onset of lots of homework erodes quality time from a developmental point of view.” The Danish system is based on teaching according to interests and, “They’re taught to think - not just pass exams,” says teacher Louise Linaard. Children learn to stand up for themselves, with public speaking part of the school routine from six, while reading comes later - around eight. By the age of 15, Nordic countries rank above the OECD average, with Finland ahead of the UK and the US overall. The lesson here, regardless of different schooling systems, is to let a child develop their own interests and read at their own pace. Research shows that putting pressure on children to read too early causes stress and later readers easily catch up with, and even surpass, early ones.

## There’s no such thing as bad weather

Nordics of all nationalities have variations on this mantra and studies show that spending time outdoors improves cooperation, reduces stress, helps with concentration and evens out differences between low-achieving and high-achieving children. And yet, three-quarters of UK children spend less time outside than prison inmates. In Norway, friluftsliv - or “free air life” - is akin to a secular religion and many Swedes attend Saturday “nature school”. From childhood, Nordics develop what Stanford University social psychologist Kari Leibowitz calls a “positive wintertime mindset”. Learning to dress the part is key. “In much of the world when it’s cold, people still dress normally to go out, then wonder why they’re uncomfortable,” says Leibowitz. My children now own snowsuits, rainsuits, “windsuits”, balaclavas, thermal underwear, gloves, waterproof mitten “shells”, snow boots and rain boots. Develop a positive mindset by wearing more winter-friendly clothes and remember, there’s no such thing as the wrong weather, only the wrong clothing.

## Not every picture needs to go on the fridge

While many cultures adopt the idea that constant praise enhances the development of self-esteem (“Who’s my CLEVER BOY! That’s the BEST poo EVER!”), Danes don’t. Vikings believe that over-praise leads to inflated egos and a poor sense of self. This instils the idea that everyone is worthy, just because.

“When kids say, ‘Look at this!’ it’s their way of requesting our attention,” says Danish family therapist Sofie Münster. “They’re not actually asking for praise. So it’s better to teach them to evaluate things for themselves, otherwise they’ll spend their lives looking for external validation.” As one friend put it: “I would never know if my parents thought something I’d done was good, but also, it wasn’t important. I assumed they loved me. It was taken for granted, not based on achievement.”

Danes replace praise with interest and ask “How did you do that?” or “Tell me more.” “This shows children that we care about them - not their ‘results’,” says Münster. As well as less positive praise, there tends to be less negative judgment, too. When toddlers discover their autonomy in English-speaking countries, they’re categorised as in the “terrible twos”. But in Danish, this is known as “the boundary age” since pushing boundaries is normal - not “terrible”.

## Singing together is good for society

Danes love to sing and many schools still have group singing every morning, proven to release the bonding hormone oxytocin, which lowers stress, while the synchronicity of breathing together creates feelings of connectedness. Researchers from Aarhus University found that singing strengthens feelings of community and social cohesion. During the pandemic, Danish choir master Phillip Faber led daily singalongs on the Danish equivalent of the BBC to boost morale.

“Many confuse ‘group singing’ with ‘beautiful-sounding choirs’,” says Faber, “but it’s the experience rather than the outcome that matters. In a world where everything is ‘me me me’, singing together is like a starry night. You feel small and insignificant, but also not alone and as though you belong. It’s the best feeling in the world.” Disappearing into group singing is the perfect communal pursuit for the nation that brought us Jante’s Law - a set of attitudes said to govern Danish life where everyone is equal and showing off is frowned upon. It doesn’t have to sound good - it just has to feel good.

## Family meals are sacred

The idea of sitting down and eating as a family is highly valued in Nordic society. Even a CEO is allowed to say in a meeting at 4pm, “I have to leave now to pick up the kids.” And then go home, to eat as a family. Most Danish homes are centred around a dining table for the express purpose of prioritising family mealtimes. Wherever you live, there are still real benefits in aiming for a homemade family meal once a week to reconnect. If you can cook from scratch even better, but bear in mind it’s less about what you eat for dinner and more about who you eat it with.

How to Raise a Viking - The Secrets of Parenting the World’s Happiest Children by Helen Russell (4th Estate, £16.99) or £14.95 from guardianbookshop.com

(Article source: *The Guardian*)

# Don't be afraid to slouch and always wear trainers: six simple tips for healthier joints from the experts

**Doctors, osteopaths and physiotherapists advise how to avoid wear and tear, from toe yoga to jogging and daily exercises.**

**The physiotherapist**  
**'A simple yoga flow routine will save a world of pain'**

**Liam Goode, physiotherapist, White Hart Clinic, London**

Our brains are interested in the easy route and will learn pathways of movement that expend the least amount of energy. This can create imbalances in a joint by overworking muscles in a specific range of rotation. If we want to have healthy joints, we need to combat these repeated movements by keeping our exercise very general.

Since nothing in the body is done in isolation, we must build strength across the body. Strength and conditioning programmes are very helpful in engaging all of our muscles and joints, from pilates to yoga, or completing weights exercises in the gym.

Find your starting point with the aim of building up to regularly move your joints in as full a range of motion as possible, such as squatting to get your bottom as close to the ground as you can. Ultimately, if the cartilage surrounding our joints doesn't move enough, it won't get enough blood flow and it will dry out and crack.

The earlier you can build a range of movement into your daily life, the better. If you are in your 20s and reading this, a simple regular yoga flow routine will save you a world of hurt later on.

**The foot and ankle surgeon**  
**'Wear trainers for everything'**

**Nick Cullen, consultant orthopaedic foot and ankle surgeon, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore**

When it comes to our feet and ankles, what we wear is really important. Part of my mission is to try to persuade everyone to wear solid, broad-soled trainers for everything. If you have to wear a heel, try to offload your weight better with a lower heel or wedges, since the higher the heel the more pressure you put on the balls of the feet which are very prone to problems.

The optimal shoe is structured and lace-up; if you have flat feet, you need arch support for stability and with high-arch feet you need a more neutral running shoe. Asics, Brooks and Saucony are all good brands and I would recommend going to a sports shop with a treadmill to decide which shoes fit your foot shape, even if you never run.

It is also important that we get the small muscles in our feet working regularly. You can look up toe yoga exercises on YouTube or while you are sitting, press your toes into the ground and hold for 10 seconds. Lots of people also have tight calf muscles, which puts more pressure on the balls of your feet when you are walking, so make sure to stretch your calf with a towel or scarf looped under the ball of the foot and held tight, keeping your knee straight and pointing your toes towards your nose.

**The orthopaedic surgeon**  
**'Run or cycle to avoid replacements'**

**Prof Alister Hart, chair of orthopaedics, University College London**

People often think that running will damage their knees, but over the past decade I have conducted studies with the research group Exercise for Science that have shown how distance running can actually be good for rebuilding the health of middle-aged knees, provided injury-prevention exercises are done beforehand.

Non-runners shouldn't be scared of taking up running, since we haven't seen evidence of the sport damaging joints further than what might be normally expected by middle age. In fact, exercise as a whole has been shown to improve bone quality in the knee by increasing blood supply and providing muscle strength and definition, allowing the surfaces around the joint to move better.

Equally, cycling can be very good for working the knees and hips with its simple, inline motion. Building up to 30 minutes of movement on an exercise bike every other day can really help to reduce the destruction of our knee and hip joints. Even though we have metal joints that we can surgically substitute, nothing quite compares to our own bone and cartilage, so we must look after these joints to begin with.

**The osteopath**  
**'Move every 20 to 30 minutes'**

**John Mallinder, osteopath, Osteopathy London**

Movement is central to our health. It is essential to keep us strong and flexible. Even great posture won't prevent potential stiffness or future joint pain without regular movement. Ideally during working hours, especially if you are seated for most of the day, try to move away from your workstation every 20-30 minutes. Walk for a few minutes, make tea, or have a chat with a colleague.

By breaking our routine we can become aware of our posture when we sit again and avoid the negative impact of prolonged periods in one position. If your capacity for movement is limited, during these short breaks you can try some gentle shoulder rolls backwards and forwards, or simple seated spinal twists and side bends, all to a level you find comfortable.

If your job is active but involves repetitive movements or extended periods in one posture, explore movements in different directions during these breaks to give yourself balance. Discomfort can often prompt the avoidance of movement for fear of causing harm, but waiting to be pain-free before gently exercising is a mistake, as it leads to slower healing, weakness and vulnerability.

# Five million over 50s in the UK set to retire early, according to new research

**New research finds that 5.3m workers over 50 could retire early, risking significant further pressure on the workforce.**

*FE News* reports that new research from tech company Multiverse finds that approximately 5.3m of workers over the age of 50 are considering retiring early, providing a large risk to an already strained workforce.

The analysis finds that two-thirds of workers nearing retirement age (64%) have considered early retirement, while four in ten (38%) think it is likely that they will retire early.

The rapid acceleration of technology and AI in the workplace has been a factor leading some to retire early. Of the workers considering retiring early, 450,000 are at risk of being forced to do so primarily due to not having the modern skills employers are currently looking for.

Multiverse is calling on businesses to take action to prevent these employees from dropping out of the labour market. Almost four in ten of those who are planning to leave the workforce in the next twelve months (37%) would be willing to stay in their current job if their employer offered them the opportunity to go on training courses and develop new skills.

This approach would have the greatest impact on those aged between 50-54 - half of those in this age group (50%) say they would consider remaining in their job if offered workplace training.

Training and development has the potential to keep over 50s in the workplace for a significant number of years, the figures show. If employers invested in their learning, half (50%) of these workers predicted they would remain in their job for up to five years, almost a quarter (23%) for six to ten years, and a fifth of these workers (22%) would likely remain for an additional eleven to fifteen years. A year on from the Government's back-to-work Budget, Multiverse today publishes a new report calling on businesses and Government to work together to invest in major reskilling efforts as the most effective solution to keep more over 50s in the workforce.

Gary Eimerman, Chief Learning Officer at Multiverse, said: "The rapid pace of technological change means there are growing skills gaps right across the workforce and this has one clear result: over 50s dropping out of the labour market in droves. This is exacerbated by a lack of emphasis on the importance of lifelong learning. "The impact of this is stark: when people are forced into early retirement, businesses and society lose out on knowledge and skills that contribute greatly to the labour market. Individuals lose out too: working is about more than just making money, and we should ensure the best roles are accessible and remain accessible throughout someone's working life.

*(Article source: FE News)*

Regular, gentle movement should always be seen as part of the solution. Seek advice if you are unsure of what is safe for you.

**The clinical director**  
**'Lean on your arms to help your shoulders'**

**Anju Jaggi, clinical director of therapies, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore**

The shoulder is inherently the most unstable joint in the body and relies heavily on muscular structure to offer support and stability. We need to strengthen the muscles that move and rotate the shoulder by exercising our arms regularly and doing things that might seem a bit unnatural, such as weight-bearing with our upper arms.

By leaning on your desk while you're seated or leaning your bodyweight through your arms against a wall for 20 minutes per week, we can build our bone density in the shoulder and allow the joint to better align itself. There is also a strong correlation between grip strength and shoulder strength. If you work on your grip, it will have a knock-on effect for helping your shoulder. Squeezing your hand into a tight fist and then releasing to fan your fingers 10 to 15 times per day is a simple and effective exercise.

As we age we naturally stiffen, which is why it is so important to change your behaviour if you aren't exercising and become more aware of your body so you can identify the areas that might need more attention.

**The musculoskeletal physiotherapist**  
**'Don't be afraid to slouch'**

**Aoife O'Meara, musculoskeletal physiotherapist, Royal National Orthopaedic Hospital, Stanmore**

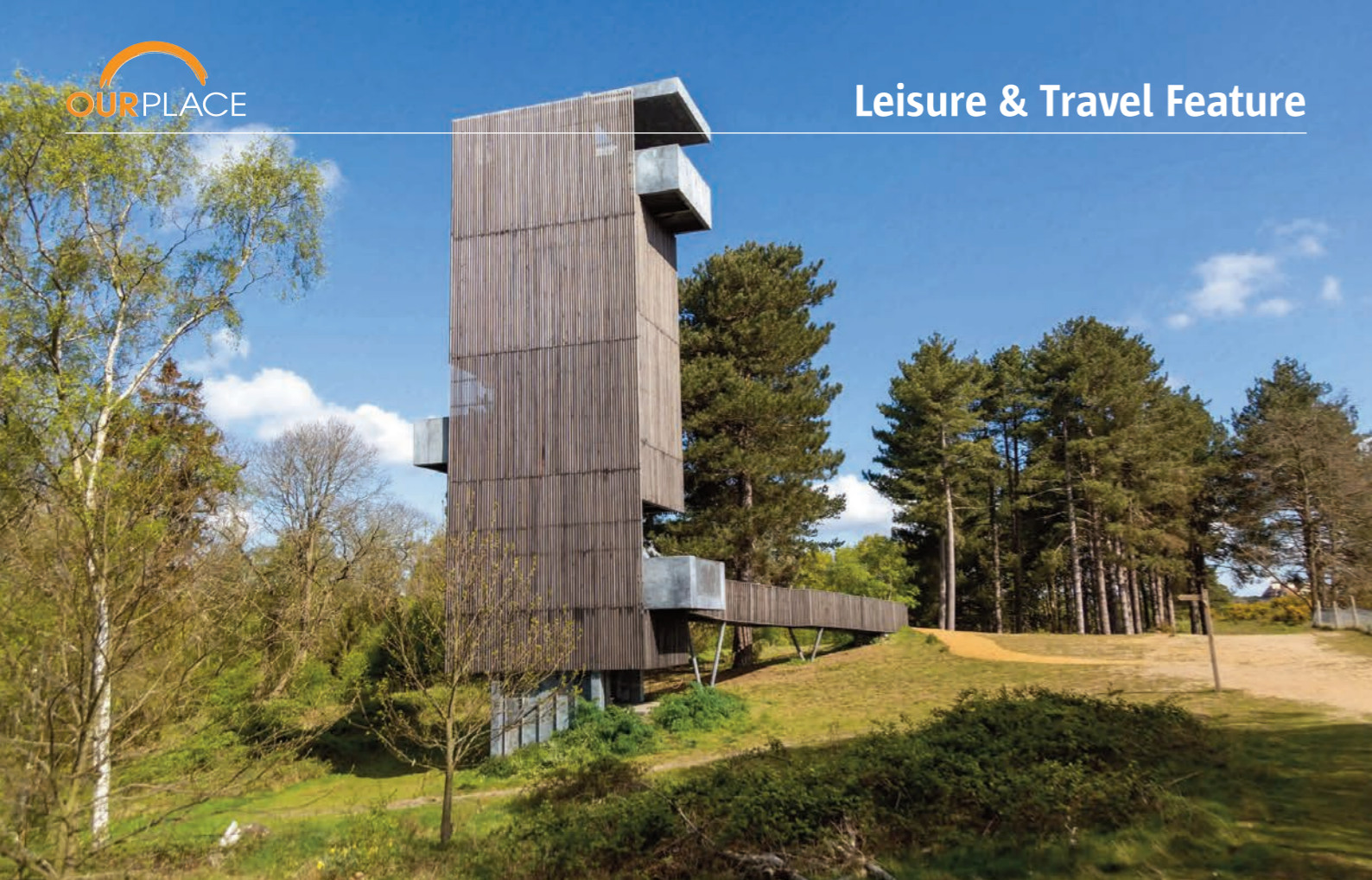
A lot of research has been conducted to show that there is no such thing as perfect posture. In fact, if you spend all day sitting with an upright, straight spine, it causes your back and core muscles to work hard and that can eventually cause pain - it's like walking around with fists clenched all the time.

Since every body is different, there is no true neutral when it comes to posture. Instead, we should prioritise changing posture every 30-40 minutes when seated and encourage mobility in the spine. It is safe to slouch, since there is no evidence that it will cause harm when you move regularly.

Equally, when you sleep there is no perfect position to protect your spine: find what feels comfortable, since it is more important to get a good quality of sleep for your overall health. I often find a pillow between the knees works well for patients. If you are experiencing pain, it is important to listen to your body but also to incorporate movement as soon as you can, because long periods of bed rest are ultimately what becomes most damaging for the spine.

*(Article source: The Guardian)*

*Do you have an interesting story or article?  
If so, send us an email by visiting:  
[www.ourplace.co](http://www.ourplace.co)*



# Diggin' it: 12 of Britain's best archaeology sites, events and family activity days

Learn the skills to unearth our ancient history - from excavations for children in York to guided walks along the Thames and residential courses in Wales.

## Vindolanda, Northumberland

As the north-west frontier of the Roman empire, Northumberland is scattered with Roman sites, including numerous forts that housed the soldiers who guarded these unruly borderlands. Many are still being excavated, including Vindolanda and Magna forts just south of Hadrian's Wall. The first modern excavation kicked off at Magna last spring, and the dig season at both runs from April to September - visitors can watch the archaeologists at work Monday to Friday (they take volunteers too, although 2024 is fully booked).



One of Vindolanda's most important treasures is the Vindolanda writing tablets (thin hand-written wooden notes of life there 2,000 years ago), which will be on display as part of the new Legion: Life in the Roman Army exhibition at the British Museum in London (until 23 June). £12.50 adult, £6 child, vindolanda.com

## DIG: An Archaeological Adventure, York

Eboracum to the Romans, Eoforwic to the Anglo-Saxons and Jorvik to the Vikings... York has two millennia of history buried beneath its streets. Curious young archaeologists can unearth it for themselves at DIG, which has four excavation pits - Roman, Viking, medieval and Victorian - each based on real digs around the city. Armed with trowels, kids can scrape back the (synthetic) soil to reveal replica finds such as Latin inscriptions or shards of pottery. It's put together by York Archaeology, which also runs the nearby Jorvik Viking Centre, and this Easter the educational charity is running hands-on Kids Dig York sessions for accompanied eight- to 12-year-olds at its excavations at Willow House (25 March-6 April, £65 for one adult and one child). £9 adult, £8.25 child, digyork.co.uk



## Sutton Hoo, Suffolk (pictured top left)

The discovery of the Anglo-Saxon royal burial site at Sutton Hoo - which has been described as England's answer to the Valley of the Kings - in 1939 was one of the greatest archaeological finds in British history. It was given the Hollywood treatment in the 2021 film *The Dig*, with Ralph Fiennes playing the amateur archaeologist Basil Brown, who unearthed the treasures of a king laid to rest in his ship beneath a series of muddy mounds in the Suffolk countryside. Most of those 1,400-year-old riches are now housed at the British Museum, but at Sutton Hoo visitors can walk around the burial mounds, see replicas of the intricately carved helmet and jewelled clasps, and learn more about Anglo-Saxon life with costume-making workshops and Gruesome Graves tours. You can also stay overnight in one of the apartments at Tranmer House, former home of Edith Pretty, played by Carey Mulligan in the film. £15 adult, £7.50 child, nationaltrust.org.uk/visit/suffolk/sutton-hoo

## Butser Ancient Farm, Hampshire

Experimental archaeology takes digging up the past one step further: learning about how people did things by trying to replicate the today. Butser Ancient Farm, in the fold of the South Downs, started in 1972 as an experimental research site exploring prehistoric and Roman agriculture and building techniques.

Today there are recreated homes to explore, spanning 10,000 years of history, all based on real archaeological discoveries nearby: a Saxon hall inspired by one found at Church Down Chalton; an earth-walled bronze age roundhouse based on remains uncovered at Dunch Hill in Wiltshire. There are also heritage crops and rare-breed sheep as well as bronze casting workshops, Saxon cookery classes and the sold-out Beltain Celtic Fire festival. Open to the public weekends and school holidays, £12.30 adult, £8.30 child, butserancientfarm.co.uk

## The Scottish Crannog Centre, Perthshire

About 2,500 years ago, stilted wooden roundhouses called crannogs rose from lochs across Scotland, the water preserving their remains to this day. The Scottish Crannog Centre on the banks of Loch Tay offers an immersive look at this ancient way of life.

The crannog at the original location on the southern shore was sadly destroyed by fire in 2021, but this April the centre opens a new Iron Age village at nearby Dalerb, with houses faithfully woven from hazel branches or constructed with dry stone walls. Work will begin this year on three crannogs that will eventually rise from the water.



The open-air museum will also offer pottery making, yarn spinning and fire-starting demos while its collection includes artefacts discovered here, including a wooden dish that contained residue of 2,500-year-old butter. Reopening April, £15 adults, £10 children, crannog.co.uk

*Continued on pages 10-11...*



## Archaeology Field School at Strata Florida, Ceredigion

This hands-on training teaches a host of archaeological skills, from trowelling and geophysical surveying to finds processing, and aims to be the most inclusive course in the UK, welcoming people with differing physical and mental health needs. The one-to four-week sessions, as well as one-day Digger Days, take place in the ruins of a 12th-century Cistercian abbey, which - archaeologists are discovering - was a centre for Welsh culture and the resting place for several medieval Welsh princes. Students camp out beneath the Cambrian mountains at nearby Pantyfedwen Hall, and this summer will be helping out on a brand-new trench, where the remains of the Cistercian infirmary and a mill are thought to be located. 17 June-15 July, £650 for one-week residential or £495 non-residential (bursaries available), [strataflorida.org.uk/archaeology-field-school](http://strataflorida.org.uk/archaeology-field-school)



## Ness of Brodgar, Orkney (pictured above)

Off the north coast of Scotland, the Orkney Islands are a treasure trove of ancient structures, from the incredibly preserved village of Skara Brae, built about 3180BC, to the tomb of Maeshowe ceremonial stone circles to the big Neolithic complex of Ness of Brodgar. This is the last summer of excavations there, and visitors can join daily weekday tours between 26 June and 16 August (11am, 1pm and 3pm) - with open days on 14 July and 4 August. At the end of this year's dig, the trenches will be filled in and the thin strip of land between two lochs returned to green field. Dig It Scotland lists other archaeological digs across the country that volunteers can sign up for. 26 June-16 August, free [nessofbrodgar.co.uk](http://nessofbrodgar.co.uk)

## Archaeological experience days, Sherwood Forest, Nottinghamshire

Robin Hood's Sherwood Forest hides a wealth of secrets: Saxon battles and Viking meeting places, medieval royal hunting grounds and Roman villas. Mercian Archaeological Services aims to record it all through its community Sherwood Forest Archaeology Project, which in the past has excavated at the village of Edwinstowe (where, according to legend, the outlaw married Maid Marian). It also offers introduction to archaeology days at its King John's Palace excavations at the heart of the ancient woodland, as well as more in-depth training to drill down on core site skills alongside professional archaeologists. 15-25 April, £75 per person, [mercian-as.co.uk/intro\\_days](http://mercian-as.co.uk/intro_days)

## Foreshore archaeology guided walks, London

Twice a day at low tide, the River Thames turns into the country's longest archaeological site, and over the years mudlarkers have pulled everything from bronze age skulls to Tudor shoes from the foreshore.

You can go DIY mudlarking, but it requires a permit from the Port of London authority (requests for new ones are now paused, such is the popularity) and all finds of interest should be reported to the Portable Antiquities Scheme. It's much easier to join one of the Thames Discovery Programme's archaeologist-guided foreshore walks along sections of the river.

The next walks take place on 25 February and 10 and 30 March, £20 adults, £10 concessions, [mola.org.uk/get-involved/events](http://mola.org.uk/get-involved/events)



## Navan Centre & Fort, County Armagh

This gentle hill outside Armagh City was the earliest capital of Ulster, the site of Emain Macha (Navan Fort), believed to have brought Saint Patrick to the area.



Archaeologists last year found evidence the site could have been in use as early as the fourth century BC, but in Irish mythology it was the seat of the demigod Cú Chulainn and the Red Branch Knights.

At the Navan Centre wannabe Celtic warriors can dress up and try their hand at spear throwing and sword wielding while hearing stories of ancient kings and queens who lived here. Look out too for special events marking Celtic solstice festivals Imbolc and Lughnasadh. £11 adults, £7.50 child, [visitarmagh.com/navan](http://visitarmagh.com/navan)

## DigVentures, various locations

DigVentures launched its first crowdfunded and crowdsourced archaeological excavation at bronze age Flag Fen near Peterborough in 2012, a solution to cuts in academic funding and to make the work more accessible to the public.

Since then, it has connected keen diggers with community-backed archaeology projects all over the country.

Currently featuring on its website are a lost medieval village at Sudeley Castle and early Roman history to unearth at Elmswell farm in East Yorkshire.

They also run DigCamps (for six- to 12-year-olds) and DigClub (12-16), searching for clues from the past at the likes of Earth Trust in Oxfordshire or Lindisfarne in Northumberland.

Various dates, one adult and one child for DigCamp from £75, [digventures.com](http://digventures.com)

## Festival of Archaeology, nationwide

The Council for British Archaeology's annual celebration is a bounty of in-person and online events aimed at everyone from serious historians to budding young diggers.

This year's edition kicks off at the Scottish Crannog Centre in Perthshire exploring the iron age, and closes two weeks later at Elizabethan Hardwick Hall in Derbyshire.

In between, there will be behind-the-scenes tours, finds handling, sandpit excavations for kids and experiential demos of ancient life at sites around the country, as well as online talks and an #AskAnArchaeologist Day hosted on X (formerly Twitter). 13-28 July, many events free, [archaeologyuk.org/festival](http://archaeologyuk.org/festival)

(Article source: *The Guardian*)



# Sweet spuds: The health benefits of sweet potatoes - a nutritional powerhouse unveiled

In the realm of health and nutrition, sweet potatoes emerge as a vibrant and versatile superfood.

Renowned for their sweet flavour and rich texture, these root vegetables are not just a staple for festive meals but a powerhouse of nutrients that offer myriad health benefits.

Packed with vitamins, minerals, antioxidants, and fiber, sweet potatoes are a delicious way to boost your health.

Here we look into the nutritional profile and health benefits of sweet potatoes, shedding light on why they deserve a place in your diet.

## Nutritional Profile

Sweet potatoes are rich in carbohydrates, dietary fibre, and a host of vitamins and minerals. Here's a quick glance at what these colourful tubers contain:

- **Vitamins:** They are an excellent source of beta-carotene, which the body converts into vitamin A. They also contain vitamins C, B6, B5 (pantothenic acid), E, and are a source of riboflavin, niacin, and thiamin.
- **Minerals:** Sweet potatoes offer a good dose of manganese, copper, potassium, and iron, among others.
- **Antioxidants:** Beyond beta-carotene, they are rich in anthocyanins (particularly in purple sweet potatoes) and other antioxidants that help fight oxidative stress in the body.
- **Fibre:** They provide a good amount of dietary fibre, which is beneficial for digestive health.

## Health Benefits

### Promotes Eye Health

The high levels of beta-carotene, which is converted into vitamin A in the body, are crucial for maintaining healthy eyesight. Vitamin A deficiency can lead to a condition known as xerophthalmia, a major preventable cause of blindness in children. Including sweet potatoes in your diet can help prevent vitamin A deficiency.

### Enhances Immune Function

Vitamin A is also key for a healthy immune system. It helps the body to ward off infections and fight illness. Additionally, the vitamin C and antioxidants present in sweet potatoes support the immune system further.

### Supports Digestive Health

The dietary fibre in sweet potatoes helps to prevent constipation and promotes a healthy digestive tract. Regular consumption can contribute to the growth of healthy gut bacteria, essential for overall health.



### Reduces Oxidative Damage and Inflammation

Antioxidants in sweet potatoes, such as beta-carotene and anthocyanins, help reduce oxidative stress and inflammation in the body. This can lower the risk of chronic diseases such as heart disease, cancer, and diabetes.

### Aids in Blood Sugar Regulation

Despite their sweetness, sweet potatoes have a relatively low glycemic index (GI), especially when boiled. This means they can provide a slower release of glucose into the bloodstream, which helps maintain stable blood sugar levels, beneficial for people with diabetes.

### Supports Healthy Skin and Hair

The vitamins A and C in sweet potatoes are vital for healthy skin and hair. Vitamin A helps in the production of sebum, which keeps hair moisturised, while vitamin C is essential for collagen production, aiding in skin and hair health.

### May Improve Brain Function

Research suggests that the antioxidants in sweet potatoes, particularly purple sweet potatoes, may possess neuroprotective properties. These can help improve brain function and reduce the risk of mental decline.



## How to include sweet potatoes in your diet

Sweet potatoes are incredibly versatile and can be included in your diet in numerous ways:

- **Baked or Roasted:** As a simple side dish, seasoned with a bit of olive oil, salt, and spices.
- **Mashed:** A healthier alternative to mashed potatoes.
- **Soups and Stews:** Adds thickness and sweetness to your recipes.
- **Salads:** Roasted sweet potato cubes add a delightful sweetness and texture.
- **Snacks:** Baked sweet potato fries or chips are a healthier snack option.

Sweet potatoes are not just delicious; they are a nutritional treasure trove that can contribute significantly to overall health and well-being.

Whether you're looking to boost your immune system, improve digestion, or simply enjoy a versatile and tasty ingredient, sweet potatoes are a worthy addition to your diet.

By incorporating this superfood into your meals, you're not just pleasing your palate but also doing a great favour for your health.

*(Article source: Silver Surfers)*



# Outdoor kitchens: 10 stylish ways to cook alfresco and impress your family & friends

**Move over humble barbecue; it's time to embrace the full outdoor kitchen setup. It's the latest must-have for those who take their al fresco entertaining seriously. Whatever your style, we've got you covered, from bespoke built-in kitchens to rustic wooden kitchens to outdoor kitchen walls.**

Sharing the joy of cooking outside with friends and family is a real game changer. With an outdoor kitchen, brunch, lunch or evening meals can become a leisurely affair where everyone can pitch in as and when needed. It's also the perfect excuse to flex those culinary skills and experiment with innovative cooking techniques.

'One of the things I love most about cooking in an outdoor kitchen is the way it takes away the drudgery of cooking everyday meals,' says Russ Faulk, Chief Designer and Head of Product at Kalamazoo Outdoor Gourmet.



'But the most important joy of outdoor cooking in my life is the techniques I can utilise outdoors that are impractical indoors. I can work at much higher temperatures, without worrying about filling my house with smoke.' Guaranteed to be a great talking point, all these are possible in any outdoor space.

Here are 10 ideas to inspire you to get outdoors and cook...

## Covered outdoor kitchen

From canopies to bespoke-built structures, adding shelter means you can cook and dine alfresco whatever the weather.

Designs with retractable roofs mean you can open them up on a good day.



## Simple set up

The beauty of buying individual elements is that you can design your kitchen to suit your space and needs - and add to it if you want to. It also means you can pick it up and take it with you if you move house.

Ikea's Grillskär collection includes everything from a barbecue with a built-in thermometer in the hood, to storage units with adjustable shelves and a sink that connects to a garden hose. The Ikea configuration shown below costs £1,015.



## Outdoor kitchen wall

If you're looking for small and simple outdoor kitchen ideas, this WWOO outdoor kitchen wall idea by Garden House Design includes a concrete surface prep space, a sink, simple storage and an egg-shape barbecue. While the iconic Big Green Egg, which bakes, roasts and barbecues, ranges in price from £795-£1,795.



## Brickwork BBQ station

This brickwork BBQ station is a great option if you have leftover material from an extension or renovation. Bricks are a great option for a DIY outdoor kitchen and creating your own large, built-in cooking space makes a real statement.

Or you could factor it into your renovation for a seamless addition to a traditional redbrick home.



Continued on pages 16-17...





### Rustic outdoor kitchen

This creation at a coastal Cornwall home uses reclaimed wood and concrete surfaces to give off a mix of rustic country kitchen and industrial chic vibes.



While outdoor fridges and wine coolers are fairly common appliances, it's also possible to buy electric hobs and ovens for exterior use.

Whatever you choose, ensure the model is specially designed for installing outside. You'll also need to extend a power supply from your home to your garden.

### Moveable outdoor kitchen



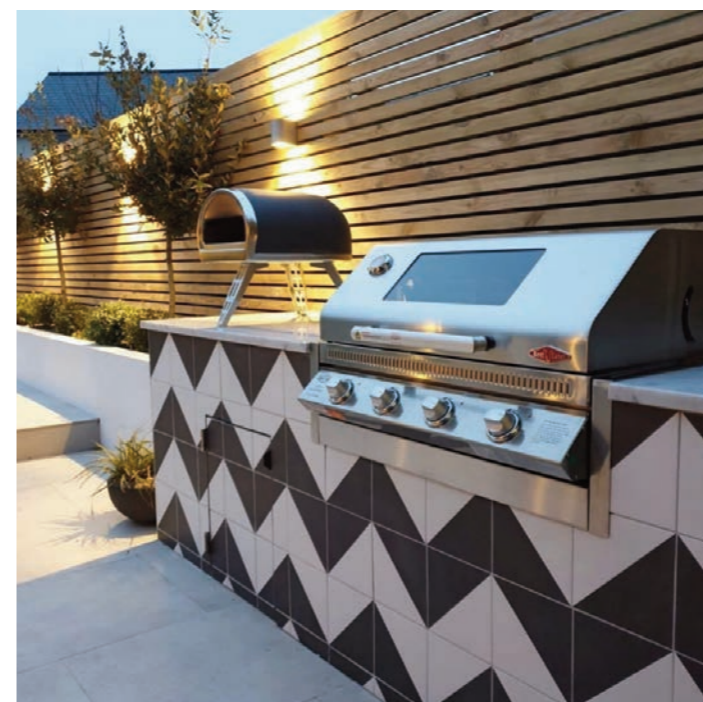
When you are stuck for space or want the flexibility of an indoor-outdoor set up, furniture and appliances that can be moved around make for one of the simplest outdoor kitchen ideas.

Freestanding kitchen units from Vlage Adapt can be moved from indoors to outside. They can also be made to accommodate barbecues and pizza ovens.

### Outdoor tile style

The phenomenal growth of the outdoor living trend means that garden design is catching up with interior design in terms of the desire to create unique and functional spaces.

Exterior tiles are not only a practical choice that stands up to wear and tear and requires minimal maintenance, they also come in an ever-increasing range of styles. The below design using encaustic Ca'Pietra tiles makes a real style statement.



### Wooden outdoor kitchen

This lust-worthy wooden outdoor kitchen has been built as a semi-covered structure to help shelter from the sun, rain and other extreme weather conditions. Even when covered, you'll need to consider materials that are durable for outside use when creating your garden cooking space.



### Jungle kitchen



Create an outdoor kitchen that blends right into your garden, with a wild alfresco feel. Talking Tables have created some brilliant outdoor Waterproof Paisley Outdoor rugs (from £40) that will withstand the elements and add a bold, contemporary feel to your outdoor kitchen.

### Stone outdoor kitchen

When planning an outdoor kitchen, give the same consideration to materials that you would indoors. Work surfaces should be truly resistant to water and able to take the heat of a hot pan.



Durable and resilient natural stone is an ideal choice. If you want a sink and running water, include it at the early planning stage to allow for pipework and waste to be installed first.

*(Article source: Good Homes)*

# 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:

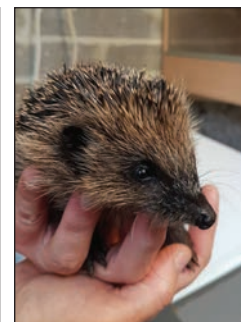
"We Brits seem to love hedgehogs for a whole range of reasons, including their cute appearance, their role as slug controllers and the way they have colonised our gardens with such aplomb. This is why it is so sad to see them decline, with one in three lost since the millennium."

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:

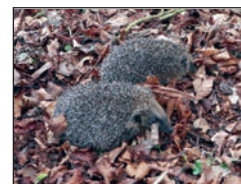
## 'Julie'



'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

Registered Charity No: 1126812 (England & Wales)  
Registered Charity No: SCO47720 (Scotland)