

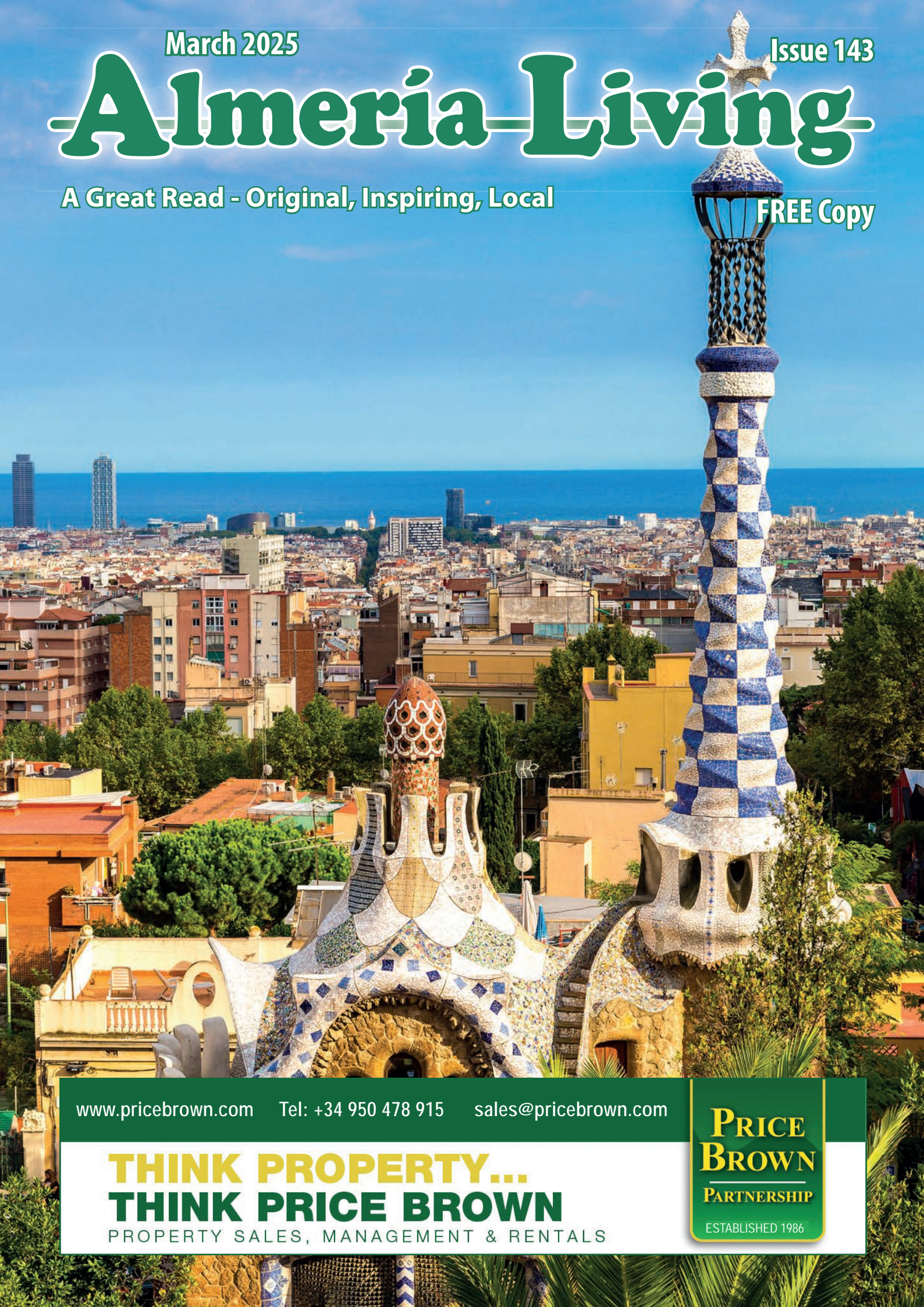
March 2025

Issue 143

Almeria Living

A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local

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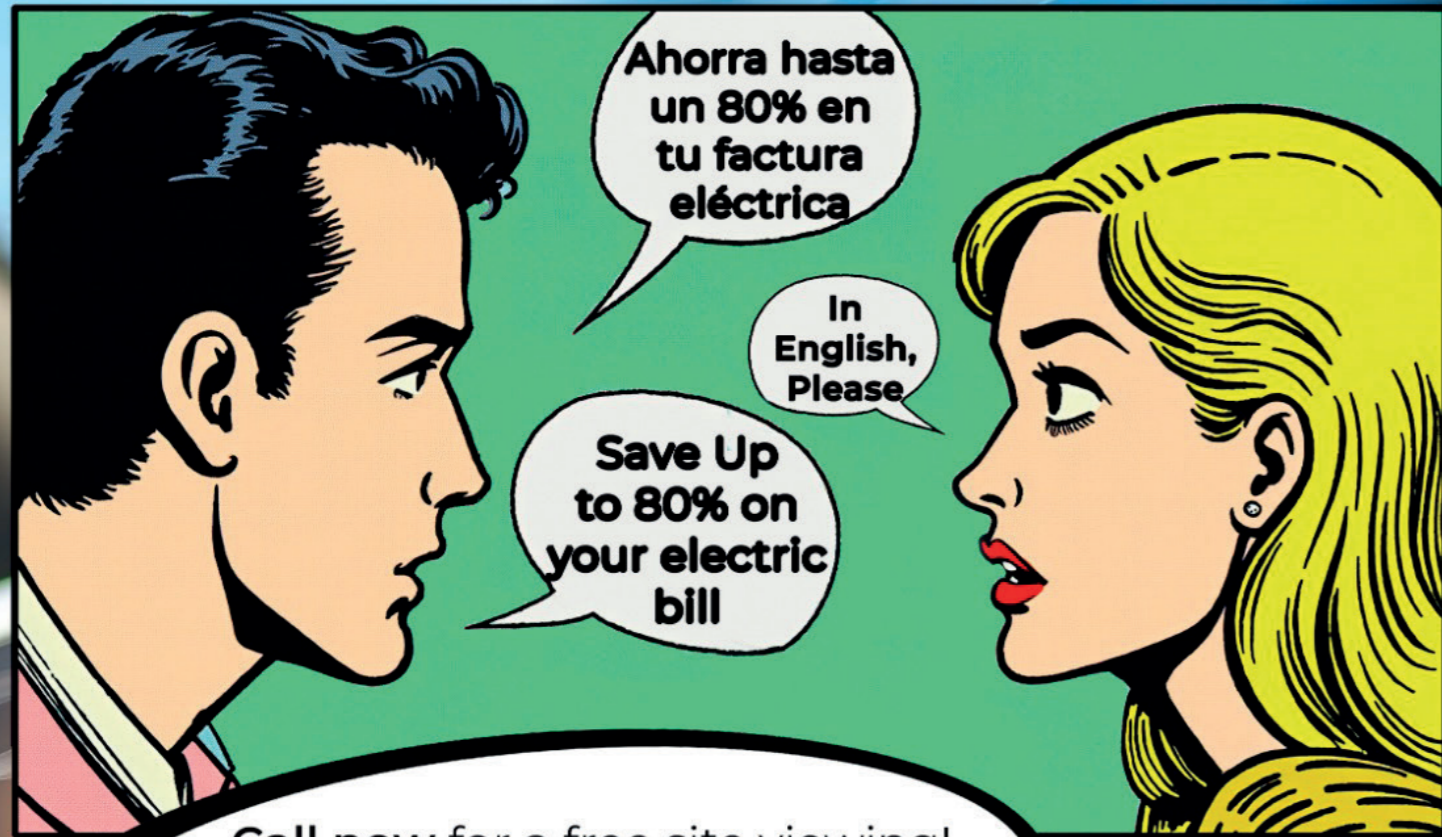
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Welcome to the March 2025 issue of Almeria Living. The 3rd of the year already!!

I would like to take this opportunity to wish my very special Mum a very Happy Mother's Day on the 30th and hope that all other Mums have a good day too.

In this issue...

Gaudí and Barcelona go hand in hand and I could fill this magazine about both. With a Barcelona trip planned in September (p.23) I thought we could whet your appetite with a little about Gaudí this month (P.25-p.28) and conveniently the April province will be all about the city of Barcelona!!

I offer grateful thanks to all my scribes, who help keep our magazine a great read.

Many thanks, as always, to our advertisers, who continue to support our magazine and reap the benefits of doing so. Local businesses rely on our trade so please try to use them whenever you can.

We hope you enjoy your read this month. Please don't forget to tell our advertisers that you saw them in the Almeria Living.

Take care and stay safe. Talk again in April!!

Karen (Ed)



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Spanish Wills and Inheritance

Making a Spanish Will is very important if you have any assets in Spain.

Dealing with all aspects of bereavement & inheritance can be very difficult at such a sad time.

How Spanish Inheritance Works

In the sad event of a death, if the person had any Spanish assets it is necessary to carry out several actions in order to complete the inheritance process.

Even if the survivors are sure that they have a copy of the last Spanish Will, it is first necessary to obtain a certificate of Last Wishes from the Ministry of Justice in Madrid. This certificate states if there is a Spanish Will and if so, where the last lodged one is held.

With this certificate the Notary can release the Will and the inheritance process gets well underway.

If there is no Spanish Will, the process becomes complex and a Grant of Probate will be required from the native country. A Will from the native country does make obtaining the Grant of Probate more straight-forward but the process is still more complex. This is why we strongly recommend taking time to make a Spanish Will.

Once the certificate and Will have been obtained, if there is property involved then the next step is to the Notary to sign the Inheritance Deed (Escritura de Herencia). The inheritor(s) or representative



(with power of attorney) presents all assets, such as property deeds, bank certificates, vehicle documents etc, and these are all recorded in the document.

After the Notary, it is the Tax Office (Hacienda), where any inheritance tax is calculated and must be paid before the Notary releases the Inheritance Deed. This is then presented to Land Registry so the property is put into the inheritor(s) name(s).

If there is no property involved, generally the Notary does not get involved and the process moves straight on to the Tax Office. The certificate issued by the Tax Office is required by the bank, along with all other documentation gathered along the way, including the Will and death certificate.

Please bear in mind that every office dealt with requires payment for the process and their services so it does become quite a costly business.

Spanish Inheritance Tax

If you are the spouse, natural born child or adopted child, then as direct relatives there is usually no inheritance tax to pay, unless the inheritance is more than one million euros.

If you are siblings or parents, then you move into the 2nd band and there is a low inheritance tax to pay.

Nieces, nephews, and other such indirect relatives move into band 3, where the tax is higher.

If there is no blood line, including step-children, then the inheritance tax is much higher.

We can discuss this with you further and even obtain an approximate cost based on current assets value.

If you would like to discuss making a Will, or other inheritance issues or would like help with the processes involved, please do get in touch with us at C.A.T. Services.

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Spanish Provinces

There are 50 provinces in Spain, each with its own capital city which usually, but not always, carries the same name as the province. In February we journeyed to Avila and now our next of Spain's provincial Capitals takes us to the border of Portugal to



Badajoz in Badajoz

Badajoz is one of the two provinces that constitute the autonomous region of Extremadura. It is the most southerly. It is the largest of the Spanish provinces at 21,766m². However, it is thinly populated with 666,029 inhabitants and only the 25th most populated province in Spain. The population density is 30.6 souls per km².

It borders on the provinces of Cáceres, also in Extremadura; Toledo and Ciudad Real in Castilla la Mancha; Córdoba, Huelva and Seville in Andalusia and, to the west, Portugal.

Badajoz is not a mountainous province; its highest point is Tendudia at 1,112 MASL, and this is the only point in the province that reaches more than 1,000 MASL.

But what the province lacks in mountains, it makes up for in water. Although it does not border on any sea, it is in fact home to its very own coast: Costa Dulce, which translates into 'The Gentle Coast'.

This is the shore of the largest water reservoir of the Guadiana River, Embalse de Orellana. It has a surface of 5,084 ha and forms part of nine municipalities.

On the shore there are infrastructures for aquatic sports and bathing, and it is a very popular destination in summer with more than 80,000 visitors per season. In 2010 it became the first inland beach in Spain to receive the Blue Flag, due to the quality of the infrastructure, the services and the water.

Badajoz is crisscrossed by numerous rivers, some of them seasonal, others permanent. The largest of them is the Guadiana River. The Guadiana rises in Castilla la Mancha, to the east of Badajoz, enters

the province and crosses it to Badajoz city, close to the border with Portugal, then turns south. It runs along the Hispano-Portuguese border to Huelva, where it runs into the Atlantic.

Badajoz province is home to the regional capital for all of Extremadura, Mérida.

Mérida, a small city of just under 60,000 inhabitants, is home to all the regional government institutions. But that is far from being its greatest claim to fame! The city was founded by the Romans in 25 BC, and today the city boasts a wealth of Roman ruins and remnants, most of them in very good condition.

The Roman theatre is probably the most famous of them all, and it is still being used for various performances on a regular basis.

The capital of Badajoz is Badajoz, and it has 150,570 inhabitants, 22.26% of the population of the province and 14.3% of the population of Extremadura. It is the largest and most populated city in Extremadura. It is at 184 MASL.

Just like last month's capital, Ávila, Badajoz boasts a magnificent city wall – in fact the longest in Spain. It's 6.5 km long and all of it has been restored completely. Furthermore, its Arab citadel is not only the largest in all of Europe, but one of the largest in the world, both extension and perimeter-wise.

The city's location just on the border to Portugal means that it has always been heavily fortified, right from when it was founded in 875 by Ibn Marwan at the site of an old Visigoth settlement which had by then been long abandoned. It became the largest independent

kingdom during the Taifa era and home to the most important Arab library of the époque.

In 1230 the city was conquered by Alfonso IX of León who incorporated it into his kingdom and the Christian world.

During the reign of Alfonso the Wise (1252-1284) Badajoz became a bishopric and the construction of the Metropolitan Cathedral of Saint John the Baptist was commenced.

Over the centuries the city has been the scene of many sieges and battles, but in spite of this, in the historic district there is still a host of historic buildings that are listed as Property of Cultural Interest: palaces, churches, towers, bridges etc.

The city

The central part of Badajoz is dedicated to shopping areas, the shopping street par excellence being Menacho, where you will find most of the national and international chains. This street together with the surrounding area has been turned into the largest open air shopping centre in Extremadura, under the name of 'Centro Comercial Abierto Menacho'.

Thousands of Portuguese visitors pop across the border every year to spend time and do their shopping in this area which, partly for



this reason, is treated with special care by the town's authorities, who have even installed a water nebulization system to create a pleasant microclimate on hot days.

There are other popular shopping areas in the city as well; the historic district has been fighting its way back onto the 'shopping map' over the last few years, and many streets have awnings for shade, and new establishments are cropping up.

Badajoz gets very hot in summer, the temperature often rises above 40°C in July and August, and the winters are cool, although not as cold as in other interior parts of Spain; the thermometer does not often fall below 0°C.

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Look Good - Feel Great

Be it by plane, train, bus, or car, travelling can take its toll on your appearance

18 Travel Beauty Tips -- to Go

Whether you're driving to a family party, taking the train for a weekend getaway, or jetting halfway around the world, there's no question that travelling is stressful. Trying to look good while you're travelling is pretty much on the top of the stress-o-meter.

The good news is that experts say beauty and travel aren't mutually exclusive. With just a few travel beauty survival tips you can face your next holiday, business trip, family homecoming, or even that weekend getaway with a smile - and the confidence of knowing you could run smack into George Clooney in the coffee shop and not have to hide.

From flight attendants to travel-show stars, these are some of their best tips to look your best when you're on the go.

1. Moisturise

Apply intense moisturiser the night before you are going to fly. This will help increase hydration in your skin before you're exposed to the dehydrating effects of cabin pressure.

2. Forgo the Foundation

Skip foundation on the day of your trip, and instead wear only moisturiser. Before you land, add a tinted moisturiser for a fresh, healthy look. If you just can't leave the house without some foundation, be sure to put on a primer first - a silicone-based liquid or cream that puts a layer of protection between skin and makeup. It



will help foundation and blush last longer and help keep your skin from becoming dehydrated.

3. Mist With Mineral Water

To refresh makeup while travelling, never put on more foundation or blush. Instead, use a mister of mineral water and add a dab of moisturiser.

Continued on page 10

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..... Continued from page 9

4. Blot Out Oily Skin

To keep oily skin from getting out of control while travelling, bring blotting papers or rice papers and dab the "T" zone as often as necessary. You'll dab up the shine and excess oil without stripping out the moisture, so you'll arrive looking fresher.

5. Add Some Shimmer

Does travelling leave you feeling a bit green in the gills? Perk up a tired or sallow complexion with a soft shimmer powder or cream. Stroke it lightly on the tops of cheeks, bridge of the nose, and lips for an instant pick-me-up no matter how tired (or queasy) you feel. Or use a combination of cream blush and lip balm to add colour and moisture without dehydrating skin.

6. Skip Long-Lasting Lipsticks

To give lips colour that will last through your trip, skip the long-lasting lipsticks - they'll only dehydrate and parch your mouth. Instead, colour your lips with several coats of a lip stain, let it dry, then top with a clear gloss. Reapply the gloss throughout the trip and your lips will look "just-made-up" fresh.

7. Apply Lip Treatment Liberally

You can further protect your lips by packing a lip treatment in your carry-on bag and using it liberally while travelling. A medicated lip balm won't rub your lipstick off and it keeps lips hydrated while flying. It also works on bus and train rides when high heat or air



conditioning can also cause lips to feel dehydrated.

8. Chill Out Puffy Eyes

To reduce under-eye puffiness after a long trip try putting crushed ice in a washcloth and apply it under the eyes. It's an automatic wake-up call that makes you look and feel immediately fresher.

9. Perk Up Your Eyes

Watching back-to-back in-flight movies, or reading that paperback novel cover to cover, can also cause you to arrive at your destination with red, watery, not-so-attractive eyes. To avoid this, bring some eyedrops, which will lubricate and soothe tired eyes.

10. Love Your Naked Lashes

Avoid wearing mascara while travelling. If you take a little nap you will usually find the mascara has left a migratory trail down to your cheeks. The same goes for cream eye shadows, which have a tendency to move around on your face as you snooze.

11. Banish Bright Nail Polish

Skip the brightly coloured nail polish when travelling. It chips too easily and leaves you looking unfinished. Instead, try buffing and polishing nails to a natural sheen for a clean, crisp look, or applying a neutral, sheer colour that won't call attention if it does chip.

12. Keep Your Hands Off Your Face

To minimise breakouts while you're on holiday, try to avoid

touching your skin while you travel. You can pick up any number of unknown bacteria that can result in all sorts of skin problems after you arrive. If you're going to apply makeup while you're in transit, use an antibacterial hand wash on your hands first to further protect your skin.

13. Take Your Cleanser With You

If you can only take one skin care item from home, let it be your cleanser. An abrupt change in cleansers can disrupt skin's acid balance and cause a vacation breakout.

14. Get Your Beauty Rest

If you're going to nap on the plane, dab some super-rich night cream around your eyes and don a sleep mask. Both will help you look fresher and more relaxed when you wake.

15. Slather on the Hand Cream

Never leave home without a tube of your favourite hand cream in your handbag and use it liberally throughout the trip. This will not only keep your hands from drying out but in the event you do need to wash them, it can help counter the effects of harsh commercial-grade soaps found in public restrooms.

16. Pack Your Beauty Products

If you're travelling outside the country and you are able to, bring your favourite facial products along because most are much more expensive or not available abroad. Safe buys overseas usually include body lotions, shower gels and soaps, talcum powders, and fragrances.

17. Tame Your Tresses

To keep hair looking good without igniting a firestorm of static electricity, keep a natural bristle brush in your carry-on. And, never underestimate the power of a great beret or cloche hat to hide the



sins of plane hair. A big European scarf wrapped around your neck makes the whole dishevelled hair look more chic.

18. Get the Grease Out

To help cope with greasy hair that often took an hour or more to wash and dry, try using a dry shampoo that cleans and deodorises and adds volume. It comes in shades to match or blend with your own hair colour.

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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 74

Enter digits from 1 to 9 into the blank spaces. Every row of each 9x9 cube must contain one of each digit. So must every column, as must every 3x3 square.

		5	1	2		3		
		6						9
3					7	1		
			5	8	1			
	1	3			9	2	4	
2	8	9	3	4	1	6		5
3			1	7	6		8	
1	4		8		3	5	2	7
7		8	4	2	5		1	

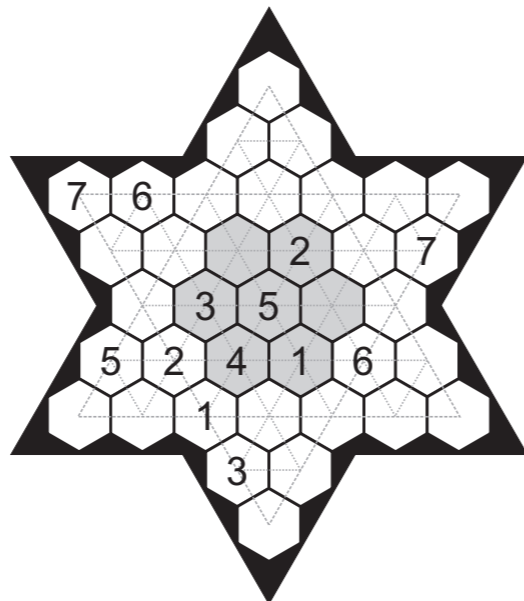
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						1			8		
		6	1	5	9	2			4		
		4	9		3		7		2	5	
1								9	3	8	7
2			5			4	3	2	7		
	5		3	2	4			8	5	3	
1	3		5		8	6					
5		2			1	7	3	8			
7	6			3	9		1				
6	2	1	7	9			8	4			
			4			3		1			
		5	8	1							

Star Puzzle

To complete the puzzle fill in each of the empty hexagon cells with numbers between 1 & 7 following the 3 rules below;

1. No numbers in a horizontal line can be repeated.
2. No numbers in a diagonal line can be repeated.
3. No numbers in the 7 gray hexagons can be repeated.



* Note that each white hexagon belongs to a line of 7 that must contain each of the numbers between 1 and 7

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Healthy Skin Care Tips For Older Women

Wouldn't it be great if instead of talking about "younger looking skin," we could focus on having "healthy skin" at any age?

Here are a few skin care tips for how women over 60 can achieve healthier skin – and feel better!

Don't Try to Look "Younger"

As women over 60, we need to embrace the power that we have and say goodbye to the old-fashioned notion that all women should constantly try to look "younger." Instead, let's embrace the beauty, character and honesty that are embedded in our faces.

We are who we are – 60 and proud! With that attitude firmly in place, there are some practical things that can be done!

Protect Your Skin from the Sun

Sun damage is one of the leading causes of wrinkled, spotted skin. Try to limit your sun exposure, wear hats and use sunblock. A lot of sun damage doesn't become fully apparent until later in life – but it's never "too late" to make a difference in the health of your skin by reducing your sun exposure. Using sunblock and avoiding excessive sun can also reduce your risk of skin cancer.

Wash Your Face Before Sleep

Dry skin is one of the most common challenges for women over 60, because people's skin tends to become drier as we lose oil glands when we get older.

One of the best ways to reduce dry skin is to wash your face every night before bed – but don't use soap, as soap will pull away the natural oils from your skin that are needed to keep your skin healthy. Drink lots of water as well!



Use Natural Skin Care Products

Many skin care products are packed with chemicals and heavily processed ingredients. You can often get better results with natural skin care products that contain herbs, or even coconut oil or olive oil.

The same ingredients that can be healthy in the kitchen can also help you achieve healthier skin.

Give Your Skin the Nutrition it Needs

Beyond the usual advice of eating a balanced diet with plenty of vegetables, there are several specific foods that can help you to achieve naturally radiant skin. Some favourites include dark chocolate (over 70% cacao), coconut oil and red bell peppers.

OSTEOPATHY???



"IT'S JUST BACKS....RIGHT?"

Although Osteopathy is perhaps best known for the treatment of back pain, it can also be very effective as a treatment for other issues too.

Developed in 1874 by Andrew Taylor Still, Osteopathy is based on the principle that the wellbeing of an individual depends on their bones, muscles, ligaments and connective tissue functioning smoothly together.

Drawn from the principles of human physiology, anatomy and embryology, Osteopathy uses a hands-on approach in the diagnosis and treatment of pain and dysfunction, caused by trauma, repetitive movements, bad posture and degenerative joint and spinal changes.

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- knee, hip & ankle problems
- arthritis pain
- sports injuries

Can Osteopathy help me?

Osteopaths use a variety of techniques, such as gentle mobilisations, joint manipulations, massage, Medical Acupuncture and kinesio-taping, with the aim of:

- Decreasing pain
- Increasing joint movement
- Relieving muscle tension
- Enhancing the blood supply to tissues
- Helping the body to heal
- Getting you back to your normal activities

Get in touch, and find out how Osteopathy could help you.

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Pets Corner What's Your Pet's Carbon Footprint?



'Carbon footprint' is one of the many terms born in this millennium. It is a reflexion of our times and shows awareness of our impact on the environment and the results of our choices and actions.

But whilst endeavouring to calculate and hopefully reduce your own carbon footprint – have you ever wondered about your pet's?

When talking about domestic pets, the general rule is, the bigger the animal, the bigger the carbon pawprint.

The main factor when making this calculation is the food. Partly the amount of food the animal eats – obviously the larger the animal, the more it eats – but also the components of the feed.

Cat food has a higher protein content than dog food. In most processed animal food, the protein is vegetable rather than animal protein, and it mainly comes from soybeans. Apart from soybean proteins, dog food contains cereals such as corn and wheat, and these emit more CO2 than soybeans. So, kilo per kilo, dog food has a larger carbon footprint than cat food.

However, as opposed to our own choice of meat, you needn't fret over carbon footprint when deciding which feed to choose for your pet, chicken, pork, or beef (or turkey or lamb...). Because dog and cat food is made from the parts of the animals that are not considered fit for human consumption, no cow or chicken or whatever is raised specifically to be used for pet food. In other words, giving Fido or Felix beef does not enlarge their carbon pawprint

anymore than feeding them chicken does.

Apart from the food, there are other factors that influence your pet's carbon pawprint. Ordinary cat litter is not biodegradable, neither are your bog standard dog poo bags. Dogs may influence you to use your car when you wouldn't otherwise, for example to take him out for a walk on the beach or in the countryside, or to training or play date. All these factors play a part.

So we can generally say that, between the two, cats have a smaller carbon pawprint than dogs.

But what about other pets?

The greatest sinner amongst the most popular pets is the pet snake – at least the larger variety. It's not their feed – they eat once or twice a month. They don't have to make a carbon footprint heavy journey to get here as most snakes are bred nationally these days. No, it's the energy it takes to keep his terrarium nice and warm. A 500 watt bulb to heat up his terrarium will emit 112 kg of CO2 every year, far more than any dog or cat.

On the other end of the spectrum are hamsters and canaries and those kinds of little pets. They only eat seeds, cereals and the like, and they have a negligible carbon footprint.

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CLÍNICAS ABC



The importance of deworming our pets:



Why is it important to deworm our pets?

Deworming has the function of eliminating internal and external parasites from our pets in order to improve their quality of life and prevent both them and us from contracting diseases.

Dogs and cats can be infested with external and internal parasites that cause a number of important health problems because they can transmit and/or cause serious diseases. This is why it is important to deparasitize our pets regularly, but there are other reasons:

- To prevent the spread of zoonotic diseases. (spread to humans and vice versa, such as Equinococosis - Hydatidosis)
- To ensure their well-being.
- Because they may reduce the effectiveness of vaccination.
- Because they can cause skin diseases and allergies.
- Because many are carriers of other infectious diseases: such as Leishmaniasis, Filariasis, etc.

When should dogs and cats be dewormed?

Puppies and kittens should usually be dewormed before the first vaccine. That is, between 21 and 45 days after birth. This is very important, because the mother of the puppies can be a carrier of parasite larvae and infect them during lactation.

Once the dog/cat ceases to be a puppy/kitten, it is necessary and vital that you comply with the deworming schedule you set with your veterinarian.

This deworming should be given depending on the animal, its environment and lifestyle.

Types of parasites in dogs and cats

On the one hand, we can find internal parasites that are those that are housed inside the body of dogs and cats. Among the main ones, we distinguish:

- Intestinal worms: transmission can occur directly when dogs and cats lick and sniff the soil.
- Lung worms: can be transmitted when the dog or cat eats some other animal such as snails, slugs or larvae.
- Heart worm: through the bite of certain species of mosquitoes that are vectors of the parasite.

External parasites: The most common are fleas and they have more presence during the warmer seasons of the year. Other common external parasites are ticks, lice and mites.

That is why for the treatment and/or prevention of internal and external parasites there are a number of antiparasitics such as pills, syrups, collars or even spot on pipettes.

Feel free to make your consultation in Faunavet Clinic, we can advise you which is the best option for your pet to have a healthy and happy life free of parasites.

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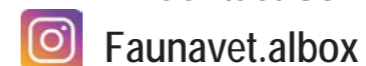
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Dakota – She Is - Agile!!

As I told you last month, Dakota and I have started going to agility. It's in the same club as our normal training, just an extra hour and a half every week before normal training on a Monday night. As you may imagine, we are both well knackered when we get home at a quarter to ten on Mondays!

As with all 'dog' training, it is very much a question of training the handler to give the right signals. The dogs tend to learn their bit faster than we learn ours, and we, in our eager efforts to get it right, often give out the wrong signals.

Although agility is a fun activity, it has actually taught me something I use in obedience as well; to be far more upbeat with my commands and let Dakota see that doing it right is not only rewarding, but also a lot of fun!

When we train at home, we enjoy a constant change between play, obedience, agility and hide-and seek, and it keeps her far more interested and enthusiastic than doing the things separately.

Of course, we have the advantage at home of her being off the lead all the time, whereas at training, where I can still not be sure she won't suddenly decide to have a go at another dog, she has to be under strict control and vigil.

However, in agility, Diana, the instructor, encourages me to trust her a bit more. I try, but having once been a small dog owner, I feel very strongly for those owners who are worried that my dark angel may suddenly swoop down and bother them.

I say bother rather than attack, and I must stress that the times, when she was younger, she did go for other dogs, she never actually bit them, more like tried to dominate them physically. And if they growled and barked at her, she quickly backed off.

Nonetheless, it is not a pleasant experience for neither dog nor owner on the receiving side.

But in agility, Dakota enjoys the challenges and obstacles so much that she is really not that bothered about the other dogs. This, of course, earns her more freedom, so I suppose you could say it's a virtuous, as opposed to a vicious, circle!

They have a fabulous agility course there with numerous hurdles, tables, loops, ramps, zigzags and even a couple



of clapped-out old cars the dogs can jump onto, but which, I hasten to add, do not form part of the regular agility obstacles.

When we first started, Diana told us to always say the name of an obstacle when the dog approached it. We could call it whatever we wanted, as long as it was always the same.

At the beginning it seemed silly to be shouting 'table', 'loop', 'ramp' or whatever, but I did as I was told and soon learned what purpose it served.

When we arrived last Monday, Diana set up three cycles with just three or four obstacles in each. And we had to stay in the middle and get our dogs to do the obstacles without physically accompanying them, just saying the name of each obstacle.

It goes without saying that none of us or our dogs were able to do that straight away, but Dakota (she was obviously the only one I was observing) soon got the idea, and I didn't have to move many steps within my zone to get her to do the round.

Afterwards, we did longer rounds, and stayed closer to our dogs, but it was an eye-opener for me how we were able to direct the dogs with our voices and gestures as well as physical presence.

This has really given me inspiration to practice more at home, where, unfortunately, I only have a loop and a zigzag. I'm gonna rig up a hurdle as well and am trying to think of a way to construct a ramp. And of course, we have her grooming table which I include as well.

At the moment, we're working on what I think of as a triangle. Dakota and I are the baseline points of the triangle, and the loop is the top point. The idea is to get her to come to me going through the loop, rather than coming straight over.

She's understood what I want and does it more often than not, although not every single time. I'm also working on getting her to do an obstacle in front of me. At the moment I get her to jump through the loop without me by throwing her ball through, but I hope that soon my voice will be enough.

You see, if she will jump through in front of me, I can already be on my way towards the next obstacle by the time she lands. At least that's the idea... we're nothing if not ambitious!

In the meantime, we're having great fun practicing and at the end of the day, that's what it's all about!



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Running of the Wine Horses

Caravaca

16€
per person

2nd May

On this day, locals recreate the legend in which the Knights Templar braved the Moorish armies besieging the castle to bring wine to the thirsty inhabitants, barricaded within. Horses dressed in spectacular embroidered mantels parade during the morning and then run up the hill to the Sanctuary in a race against the clock.

There is also a splendid Moors & Christians Parade
Comfortable flat shoes and a packed lunch are highly recommended

Caravaca De la Cruz & the Wine Horses

From the 1st to 5th May, Caravaca De la Cruz dresses up to enjoy its festival in honour of the Santísima y Vera Cruz de Caravaca. A main part of this festivity is the outstanding celebration of Wine Horses that takes place during the two first days. This has been declared of International Tourist Interest.

As well as the horses there are parades, battles of Moors and Christians and religious events, such as the Bathing of the Cross.

The history of this unique fiesta centres around the extraordinary story of the Vera Cruz (True Cross). This fragment of wood is said to have been part of the cross upon which Jesus was crucified and it has protected the city since the 13th century.

The presence of the Vera Cruz in Caravaca is the reason for its status as a Holy City, one of only 5 in the world, on par with Rome, Jerusalem and Santiago de Compostela.

The legend dates back to the days of the Knights Templar, who had to seek refuge in the castle with the townsfolk because they were besieged by the Muslim armies. At one point the water supply became contaminated, people were becoming sick and dying of thirst, so the Knights were forced to leave the castle to look for fresh supplies. They couldn't find any water, but they did find flagons of wine! These were tied onto their horses and without delay raced back up the hill to the castle before the Moorish armies realised what was happening, bringing the precious liquid to the townspeople.

The wine was first blessed in the presence of the Vera Cruz, which was then bathed in the wine and when this was given to the people miraculously the sick and wounded were healed, and the contaminated water became drinkable!

On 2nd May each year, to commemorate this happening, 60 horses are dressed in spectacular embroidered cloaks and run up the hill to the sanctuary one by one, in a race against the clock. Four young men have to run together with each horse without ever releasing their hold so as not to be disqualified.

It can be extremely exciting and dangerous, as the streets are packed with onlookers who part to allow the horses to rush past just centimetres away!

Prizes are awarded for both the fastest horses and those with the most exceptional embroidered outfits.

The cloaks and hoods have all been embroidered by hand, often using gold thread, by members of the Peña (a group of family/friends), who work tirelessly all year to prepare for this special occasion.

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per person

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Three nights in 3* hotel
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Toledo & Aranjuez

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per person

26th - 29th
October '25

Price Includes:
Coach travel to Toledo
Three nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4
Visit city of Aranjuez

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Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

Gibraltar

3 Nights
***253€**
per person

17th - 20th
November '25

Price Includes:
Coach travel
Three nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4

Staying at:
4* Hotel OH Campo
Spain - 800m from border

* Price based on 2 people sharing a room
Single supplement upon request

Pick-Ups Possible From:
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Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

HOMES & GARDENS

Antoni Gaudí - Art Nouveau architect

Antoni Plàcid Guillem Gaudí i Cornet was born in the province of Tarragona on the 25th June 1852. His parents, Francesc Gaudí Serra and Antònia Cornet Bertran, both came from families of coppersmiths.

He was a student at the Escola Tècnica Superior d'Arquitectura in Barcelona from 1873 to 1877, where he was awarded the title of architect.

In 1878 Gaudí won his first commission, via a competition, to design lampposts for Barcelona's Plaza Real. He also undertook a number of commissions for furniture and altarpieces and a showcase for gloves for the Comella firm for the Paris Exhibition of 1878, and it was these works that got him a big break.

Fellow Catalan, Eusebi Güell, was so enchanted by the work which he saw at the Paris fair that he tracked down the



artist in Barcelona and became Gaudí's close friend and an important patron of his works - notably commissioning the architect to design the Palau Güell and Park Güell, amongst other projects.

Some of his first works were designed in the style of gothic architecture and traditional Catalan modes but he soon developed his own distinct sculptural style. He went on to contrive highly original, irregular and fantastically intricate designs.

Gaudí was a devout Catholic, to the point that in his later years he abandoned secular work and devoted his life to Catholicism and La Sagrada Família. He designed it to have 18 towers, 12 for the 12 apostles, 4 for the 4 evangelists, one for Mary and one for Jesus. Soon after he came up with this idea, his closest family and friends began to die.

Continued on page 26

Malaga Christmas Lights

2 Nights
***265€**
per person

9th - 11th
and 15th - 17th
December '25

Price Includes:
Coach travel
Two nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2 + 3

Staying at:
4* Hotel Soho Boutique
Equitativa
Central to the Lights

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Benidorm Christmas

4 Nights
***445€**
per person

23rd - 27th
December '25

Price Includes:
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Four nights in 4* hotel
Full Board
includes wine and water

+ Gala Meal on 25th

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4* Hotel Presidente or
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..... Continued from page 25

His father passed away in 1906, followed by his niece, Rosa, in 1912, aged just 36. He then lost two close friends in 1914 and 1916, and finally his dear friend and patron Eusebi Güell in 1918.

Always an ardent Catholic, Antoni became more fervently religious and gave up all secular commissions (after completing the Casa Milà in 1910) to concentrate on his monumental life work, La Sagrada Família - a project that occupied him for the final 16 years of his time on earth and which he never finished and it still isn't finished today.

Gaudí became reluctant to talk with reporters or have his picture taken and solely concentrated on his masterpiece. The one-time dandy allowed his appearance and clothes to deteriorate and he became even more isolated from society.

He died on 10th June 1926, just three days after being hit by a tram. At the time of the accident, no-one recognised him and because of his ragged look and empty pockets, passers by were reluctant to help, but he was eventually taken to a pauper's hospital in Barcelona where he was eventually identified by the chaplain of the Sagrada Família. He is buried in the crypt of La Sagrada Família.

Gaudí's originality was at first ridiculed by his peers. Indeed, he was first only supported by the rich industrialist Eusebi Güell. His fellow citizens referred to the Casa Milà as La Pedrera ("the quarry"), and George Orwell, who stayed in Barcelona during the Spanish Civil War, admittedly loathed his work. As time passed, though, his work became more famous and he stands as one of history's most original architects.

Throughout his life, Gaudí studied nature's angles and curves and incorporated them into his designs and mosaics. Instead of relying on geometric shapes, he mimicked the way men stand upright. The hyperboloids and paraboloids he borrowed from nature were easily reinforced by steel rods and allowed his designs to resemble elements from the environment.

Because of his rheumatism, the artist observed a strict vegetarian diet, used homeopathic drug therapy, underwent water therapy, and hiked regularly.

Gaudí loved for his work to be created by nature as he used concrete leaves and vine windows to create his ideas for him. His work is not just because of him but because of nature as well.

La Sagrada Familia

Gaudí's association with the architect Martorell landed him what was to become his most important commission which was designing La Sagrada Família Cathedral. He began work on it soon after graduating in 1883 and finally dedicated the last 16 years of his life entirely to the project. At the time of his death in 1926 less than a quarter of the project had been completed. The famously unfinished church is the city's most visited attraction and will be the largest Catholic church in the World.

Gaudí was constantly changing his mind and recreating the blueprints for La Sagrada. Unfortunately, the only existing copy of his last recorded blue prints was partially destroyed by anarchists in 1938 during the Spanish Civil War when they set fire to the crypt and broke into the workshop. The present design is based on reconstructed versions of the plans that were burned as well as on modern adaptations.

In 2007 completion of the Sagrada Família was anticipated to be in 2026. This was confirmed to be the case in March 2024.

Continued on page 28

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..... Continued from page 26

Construction on La Sagrada Família is not supported by any government or official church sources. Private patrons funded the initial stages while money from tickets purchased by tourists is now used to pay for the work, and private donations are still accepted. The construction budget for 2009 was €18 million.

In October 2018, La Sagrada Família trustees agreed to pay city authorities €36 million for a building permit, after 136 years of unlicensed construction. Most of the funds would be directed to

improve the access between the church and the Barcelona Metro

Casa Vicens

Commissioned in 1878 and built between 1883 and 1888, Casa Vicens was Gaudí's first major work to be finished. A private house designed for the industrialist Vicens, can be found in the Gracia district.

The work belongs to Gaudí's orientalist period (1883-1888), an era in which the architect made a series of works with a distinctly oriental flavour, inspired by the art of the Near and Far East (India, Persia, Japan), as well as Hispanic Islamic art, such as Mudéjar and Nasrid. During this period, Gaudí used an abundance of ceramic tiling to decorate his work, as well as Moorish arches, columns of exposed brick and temple-shaped or dome-shaped finishes.

Park Güell

Eusebi Güell, Gaudí's principal patron and closest friend, wanted to build a remarkable park for the Barcelona aristocracy - and no prizes for guessing who he turned to. The site is located in the La Salut neighborhood. It was built between 1900 and 1914.

Park Güell captures a particular moment in Gaudí's artistic evolution. The park is associated with his naturalist phase, which occurred in the first decade of the 20th century. During this period, Gaudí's study of nature and organic shapes began to influence him creatively. Reflecting this shift, Gaudí introduced a series of new structural solutions rooted in geometric analysis.



Characterised by its pavilions and undulating mosaics (made from broken tiles), the Park has become one of Barcelona's must-see destinations.

Palau Güell

This sumptuous palace was created as the Güell's family residence, on the Nou de la Rambla and was built between 1886 and 1888.

The flat roof is home to 20 surreal chimneys with polychrome ceramic cowls in fantastic colours, and a central spire topped off by a bat-winged monster.

The two magnificent parabolic portals of the front façade allowed horse-drawn carriages to enter the home through one door and exit through the other.

Casa Batlló

The local name for the building is Casa dels Ossos (House of Bones), and indeed it does have a visceral, skeletal organic quality. Built in 1877, it was originally designed for a middle-class family and situated in a prosperous district of Barcelona.

The building looks very remarkable, like everything Gaudí designed, only identifiable as Modernism or Art Nouveau in the broadest sense. The ground floor, in particular, is rather astonishing with tracery, irregular oval windows and flowing sculpted stone work.

It seems that the goal of the designer was to avoid straight lines completely. Much of the façade is decorated with a mosaic made of broken ceramic tiles (trencadís) that starts in shades of golden orange moving into greenish blues. The roof is arched and was likened to the back of a dragon or dinosaur.

A common theory about the building is that the rounded feature to the left of centre, terminating at the top in a turret and cross, represents the sword of Saint George (patron saint of Catalonia), which has



been plunged into the back of the dragon. (Restored 1905-1907)

Casa Milà - aka 'La Pedrera'

Casa Milà, built between 1906 and 1910, also known by its nickname La Pedrera (The Quarry), was the last great work Gaudí finished before dedicating himself entirely to La Sagrada Família. The building was commissioned in 1906 by Pere Milà.

It got the nickname due to the naturalist forms of its façade, an authentic architectural sculpture of undulating volumes that evoke a surge of stone with audacious wrought-iron railings that suggest a hodgepodge of algae and foam from the waves.

For these and so many more reasons, Barcelona is a city not to be missed.

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Sea Turtles of the World

There are seven species of sea turtles in the world:

- Loggerhead
- Green
- Leatherback
- Hawksbill
- Kemp's Ridley
- Olive Ridley
- Flatback

Of these, five have been observed in Spanish waters. The two that have chosen not to honour us with their presence are the Olive Ridley and the Flatback.

All turtles are migratory creatures who use Spanish waters for foraging, growing up – or even just to pass through on their long transoceanic journeys. But sometimes they also approach our coastlines to lay their eggs.

All turtles are endangered species due to numerous human factors: pollution and eradication of their habitats – including coastlines for laying; fishing, which causes them to get caught up in nets, and illegal international trafficking in turtles or products derived from them.

The turtle most frequently encountered in Spanish waters is the loggerhead turtle, but the leatherback and the green turtles are also frequent visitors.

Although the green turtle does not lay in Spain, its young ones spend time around the Canary Islands. As they grow up, they change their colour which starts off as grey and slowly changes to become the dark olive green the adults sport.

The 'green' in 'green turtle' does not actually refer to the colour of their skin and shell, but to the fact that their body fat is bright green – probably a result of their seagrass and algae diet.

Adult green turtles are a rare sight in Spanish waters; the leatherback is more frequent. It is a very large turtle, and it is named for its leathery shell which comprises a mosaic of small bones covered by firm, rubbery skin with seven longitudinal ridges or 'keels'.

The leatherback turtle is a great lover of jellyfish and other gelatinous delights. It finds its food in the Mediterranean Sea and the North Atlantic Ocean, from the Canary Islands to Cantabria and even Great Britain and Scandinavia.



Leatherback turtles share their time between tropical waters where they reproduce, and very cold waters where they find their favourite food.

Hawksbill and Kemp's Ridley turtles are rarely, though occasionally, spotted in Spanish waters when passing by on their busy itinerary.

The most common of turtles in Spanish waters is undoubtedly the loggerhead turtle.

Although it rarely used to lay its eggs on our beaches, there has been an increase in incidences over the last few years, a change scientists put down to the increase in water temperatures caused by global warming.

The loggerhead turtle is the largest of all the hard-shelled sea turtles. It grows up to 120 cm long and can weigh up to 140 kilos.

The female reaches sexual maturity at about 35 years of age. The mating season goes from March to June, and the female is able to store sperm from several different males inside her until ovulation in June and July.

The females lay 4 to 9 lots of eggs with a couple of weeks between each. They then have a resting period of 2.3 years before mating again.

The gender of sea turtles is determined by the temperature of the sand during the incubation period. If it is above 29°C the baby turtle is more likely to come out female.

The newly hatched turtles are extremely vulnerable, and as soon as they are out of their eggs, they use the light of the moon to direct them to the sea. Many perish in this process and also in their early days in the sea.

Once they reach maturity their only natural enemies are sharks.

Loggerhead turtles are omnivores. Their beaks are made from horn.

The beaks are very hard with strong muscles and together with downward pointed horn spikes in the turtles' esophagus, break down the hard parts of the loggerhead turtles' diet, which consists of shellfish, snails, crustacea, fish and sea plants.

There are two practically genetically isolated origins of the populations: the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. Their migration in the Atlantic has not been mapped accurately, but Mediterranean loggerhead turtles have been seen in Florida, Nicaragua and Cuba.

Migration in the Mediterranean Sea is a little clearer as the turtles follow mapped out sea currents.

They tend to stay where the water is warmer, although they can turn down their metabolism if need be and stay underwater for hours and only rise to the surface to breathe every so often if they get caught out by the cold.

Loggerhead turtles are long-lived and can live to 70-80 years or more



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SPRING SONG

The long harsh winter had taken its toll on Carol. She had spent weeks battling a stubborn bout of flu that left her frail and feeling despondent. Days had blended into nights. Spring had seemed like a distant promise, a season she might never see again.

But spring came, as it always did, bringing with it a sense of renewal. The fever was gone, her breathing easier. She had some colour on her cheeks.

Determined to rebuild her health, Carol ventured out into her small patch of garden. The air was fresh. Snowdrops peeked through patches of melting snow, and the bare branches of trees were tipped with green. Soon daffodils would be nodding by the paths, tulips standing like sentinels, with carpets of violets underfoot.

As she pushed open her front gate, the old lady across the road greeted her with "Are you all right, luv?" Carol smiled shyly, unused to attention but nevertheless grateful.

Returning home, a little out of breath, she was surprised to find among her post an official looking envelope. She flopped down on the sofa and opened it, her mind racing. Inside was a formal looking document headed by a well-known firm of solicitors.

The letter explained that a distant relative she barely remembered - an older cousin named Marion (?) - had passed away. To her astonishment, the letter revealed that Marion had named her sole heir to a sprawling estate in the Devon countryside, with the slightly worrying proviso that she live there for at least a year.

With eyes on stilts, she read the contents twice more to make sure she hadn't misunderstood. It seemed unreal. She was being offered an amazing gift - not to mention financial security.

Carol paced up and down her small sitting room. Could she leave the only home she and her late mother had known for decades? Yet, as the days grew warmer and the landscape blossomed around her, she felt a stirring of hope. This was an opportunity to embrace change and step out into a new world.

By the end of the month, after an exciting flight to Exeter and a visit to Marion's impressive property, she had packed her belongings. A rather jaded looking estate agent had put her hurriedly spruced up cottage on the market. It was all happening!

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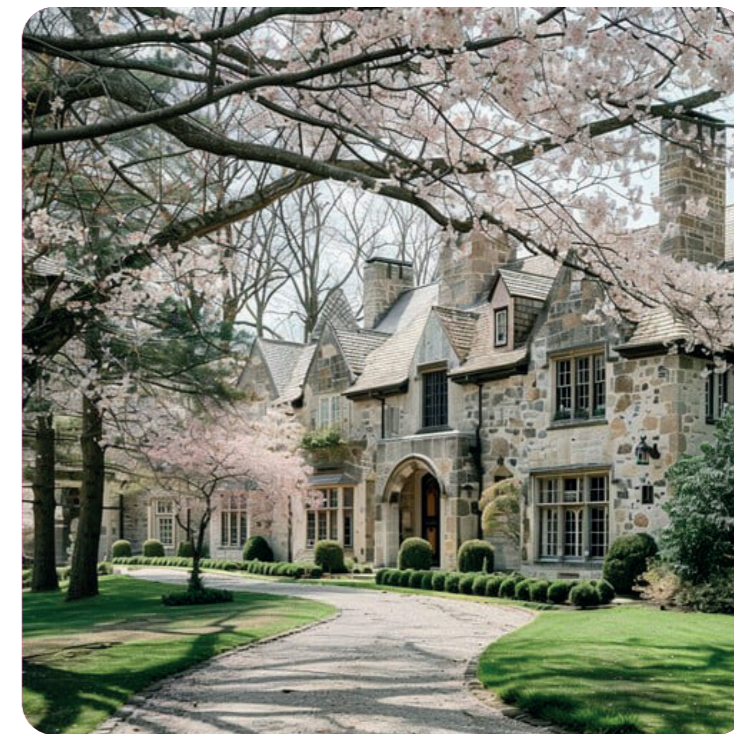
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By Evelyn McCrorie



Then on a crisp spring morning, Carol bounded into the unknown as she once again took her seat on the plane, the countryside below her unfurling like a fresh canvas. For the first time in years, she felt a deep, unfaltering sense of possibility.

Spring felt different this year - more alive, more tender, as though the past was brushing up against the present. And, as she sipped her first ever cocktail, Carol silently saluted dear cousin Marion.



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Two Questions and a Wish

By Jos Biggs

The sun was shining and the little waves, all energy spent, lapped gently up the sandy beach. Matilda was walking along the tide line, enjoying the cool feel of the water on her bare feet.

A tangle of seaweed interrupted her progress. As she bent to move it out of her way she noticed a small bottle caught up in the middle of it.

Intrigued, she picked it up. It was about 6 inches tall, with a bulbous body, a long slim neck and an iridescent sheen.

She swept her long blond hair out of her eyes as she turned the bottle over in her hands. Then she noticed the stopper.

'Aha!' she thought. 'I know what this is!'

She pulled the stopper out. There was a slight whooshing sound as a green, gold, blue and red flame filtered out of the bottle's neck.

She watched with calm interest as the genie solidified in front of her. He yawned, stretched, cracked his knuckles and scratched himself in a place where it is rude to scratch, even for genies.

'Doh, no! A blonde. No kind of a challenge.'

He leant forward, inches from Matilda's nose. 'Well, whaddya want? Riches? Beauty? Fame? You get three. Hurry up, I don't want



to hang around here all day.'

'Good afternoon.' Matilda smiled at him. 'Who are you?'

'Al Hadrin Bin Saud. One.'

'Nice to meet you Al Hadrin. I'm Matilda. What do you mean, one?'

He clicked his tongue. 'You get three wishes. That was one. Two.'

Matilda narrowed her eyes. 'They were questions, not wishes.'

'Questions, wishes - all the same to me. You've got one left.'

She regarded him steadily. He kicked the sand with the toe of his curly sandal.

'Allow me to introduce myself.' She spoke clearly and calmly. 'I am Matilda Bonham, King's Counsel. I specialise in prosecuting cases of misrepresentation and fraud. You are a very rude genie, who is misrepresenting questions as wishes in order to defraud me out of my statutory right to three wishes.'

'So?'

'My third wish, which you are obliged to grant me, is for you to go back into that bottle.'

'NOOoooo' He wailed as he evaporated into a flame and disappeared back into the bottle.

Matilda stuffed the cork in quickly. 'That's not fair. It's not supposed to go like that.' The genie's voice was no louder than the squeak of a mouse whispering.

Matilda shook the bottle.

'Ow! That hurts!'

She drew back her hand and pitched the bottle into the waves as far as she could throw it.

Moral of the story; Do not underestimate blondes!

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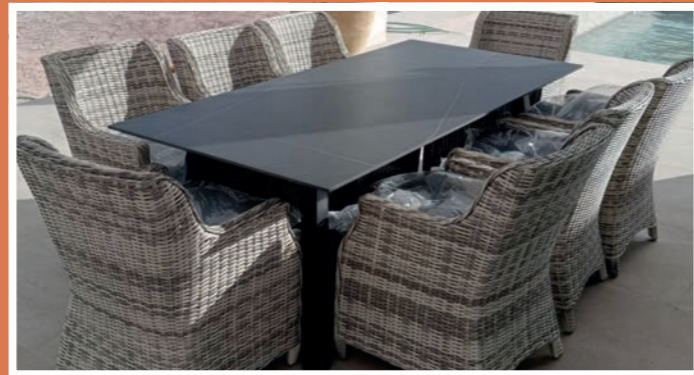
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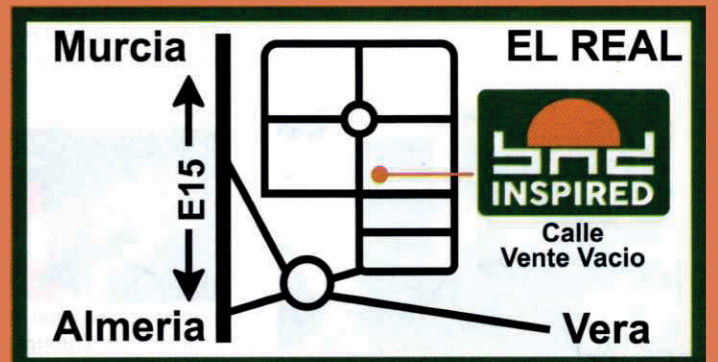
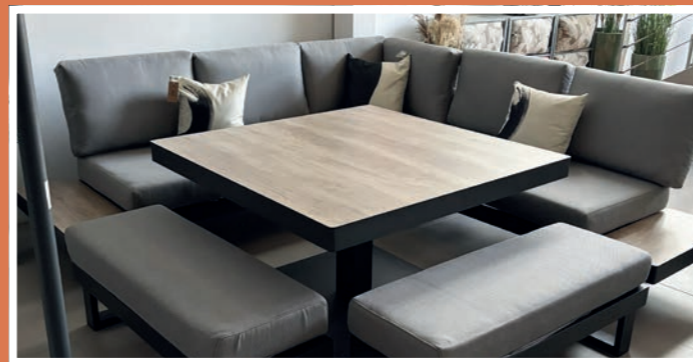




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I remember

By Aileen Cleave

March has arrived with its promise of renewal, the start of spring when we aspire to put our best foot forward, recollect old achievements and hopefully cleanse our minds of any lurking regrets. Reminiscing is something I've been doing a lot recently, probably an age thing! It helps that I enjoy the benefit of an amazingly selective memory, anything dark or hurtful I give short shrift, consigning to a mental archive of bad experiences and lessons learned.

So, it's with a degree of self-indulgence that I allow my mind to wander back several decades to an event that was life changing for me and my family. I recall March 1983 and my drive south. I remember my elation, my anxiety, my hopes and my doubts. We were returning to live in London, now a family of five distinctly different from the excited, carefree newly-weds who made the same journey northward 13 years previously.

We loved the North; my husband, a Londoner born and bred, especially so. He loved the openness of the people, and their genuine interest in others, he loved the easy access to beautiful countryside, and, inevitably, the low cost of living, especially of housing. But this was the early eighties and the recession that was to devastate so many the length and breadth of the country, was already wreaking havoc with companies, jobs and livelihoods in the Northeast.

It seemed to happen overnight. One day our company was doing so well, life was good, then quite suddenly no-one had money for home improvements, and it became both practically and morally harder to sell to people whose houses were plummeting in value. So, tough decisions had to be made. With three children to feed and educate relocating seemed to me the only solution, I knew only too well the difficulties of finding employment in an area where, were you lucky enough to get a job, you were advised to stay there for life. I didn't want that for my children.

My husband applied and was accepted into the Metropolitan Police Service and our house was put up for sale. That's when I knew it was really happening, the house I loved to be sold! I loved the high ceiling reception rooms, the wide, curving staircase, and there was even a breakfast room. It took a year to sell, a year in which our options to buy were rapidly narrowing. The Church of England bought it eventually to house an incoming vicar and totally ground us down on price. I was quickly learning to be philosophical.

I drove our new Chrysler Sunbeam, with the children in the back (no seat belts yet, of course) and my brother with me to share the driving. My husband would arrive later with his newly acquired motor bike. His first posting was to be Kennington so this was deemed the cheapest way to cope with the shifts he would have to work and the traffic into London.

The children, then aged 9, 7 and 3 were wonderful on the journey, as though they knew it was a momentous step for us all. They didn't want to leave their friends, or their school, but leaving at this stage would give them time to settle before moving up to senior school. That was our optimistic thinking.

I paid them scant attention on that journey, I recall. My mind was full of other matters, such as the mortgage we had just tripled, the half size house we had just bought - a pretty house, white stucco, leaded windows and Cypress trees in the front garden, but tiny, and our children were growing. Their school had already been arranged, the same one my niece had attended, their uniforms bought, and a pre-school kindergarten organised for our 3-year-old - because, of



course, I would have to work.

An overriding memory I have of arriving in the south London borough of Bromley is trees; tall, beautiful trees just about to break into full leaf. The small industrial towns along the length of the River Tyne sadly are bereft of trees, despite an abundance of open space. This is, I suppose, a consequence of the heavy industry of the past two centuries. Bromley, blessed by its proximity to London and the Home Counties, was never called upon to sacrifice its pleasing aspect to build the nation's ships or mine its coal.

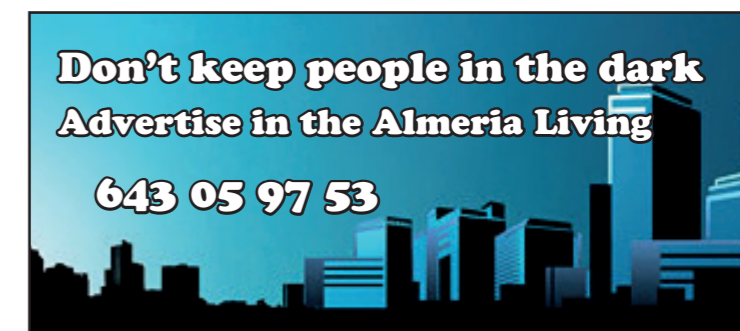
The next few months were both exciting and painful. I got a job easily, as I knew I would so close to London, this was the age of high secretarial demand. But how I missed my mother! She had happily looked after the children when I worked part-time in Newcastle. This was a different affair, 9 to 5, five days a week and no one at hand to help. The worst part for me was my son, my three-year-old, having to go to an all-day nursery. Again, times were different then. Women worked, of course, but not so much with three young children. I felt a terrible guilt, missing netball practices, dance class, especially as the move was at my instigation. My husband, having worked successfully for himself for 12 years, found himself in a disciplined organisation very different from anything he had known before. My admiration for him and the way he adapted was enormous.

My thoughts jump forward exactly 20 years to my next big move, our move to Spain in 2003, a piece of delicious cake in comparison, though not without some pain. Leaving behind our children and grandchildren was a big wrench and renting out our family home was difficult. This time my husband was the prime instigator, so it took me a little time to accept all that it entailed.

Suffice to say, they were both moves that worked out well, and ones which I have never regretted, but to this day I consider adjusting to the first one, one of the hardest things I have done in my life.

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St Patrick the Welshman

By Tom Fynes

England's dragon slaying hero is a Greek born in Turkey, called George. Scotland's hero is called St Andrew, one of the twelve apostles. So not a true-blue Scot. The Welsh patron saint St David though, is amazingly Welsh. As is St Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland.

Legend has it he was kidnapped by pirates and sold into slavery in Ireland. Escaping, he returned to Britain where he found religion, and a voice told him to go back to pagan Ireland and convert them to Christianity. Which he did, and according to more legend he threw all the snakes out of Ireland. The fact that there have never been snakes in Ireland, was a very small detail. Never let the truth get in the way of a good legend.

St Patrick's Day in the year 2025 is big business. It's celebrated worldwide. There's very little religion attached to it. In the USA it's a huge party time where everybody is Irish for the day. Irish politicians are welcomed into the Whitehouse to hand out the Shamrock, which, as well as being a symbol of luck, is very much attached to St Patrick's Day.

The island of Montserrat has St. Patrick's Day as a national holiday. This small Caribbean Island, known as the "Emerald Isle of the Caribbean," hosts an annual 10-day celebration leading up to the holiday on March 17th, known as the St. Patrick's Festival.

Chicago dyes their river green, in honour of St Patrick. But back in the mists of time, blue was the colour associated with St Patrick. It wasn't until one of the many failed Irish rebellions, that it switched



to green.

We have been told, we have Budweiser and their clever marketing department, to thank for pushing the heavy beer drinking on St Patrick's day. But I'm inclined to believe the Irish would've found a way to drink beer, with or without a Budweiser campaign. It's reported that nearly 56% of Americans celebrate St. Patrick's Day, spending a vast fortune on booze. Spain also celebrates Ireland's favourite Welshman. The Spanish connections with Ireland are very strong and there's always been Irish people coming to study at Spanish Universities, well before Ireland was annexed and became part of the British Empire.

Legend has it that St Patrick's real name was Maewyn Succat. Until he changed it to "Patricius" or "Patrick."

So how will you celebrate St Patrick's Day on the 17th of March? Dress up in green with a large St Patrick's Hat? Drink green beer? Watch a parade of floats with various St Patrick's waving to the crowd? It has become a global green event and a mighty testament to how an enslaved Welshman went from the chains of captivity to a massive Budweiser beer marketing campaign.

I salute you Maewyn Succat, didn't you do well.

I hope everybody has a "Happy St Patrick's Day."

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"Got the Time 'guv?"

By Vic Davey

"One thing I like doing on tour is finding independent watch brands from the country I'm touring and then wearing them for the duration of the tour in that country"

Ed Sheeran

I haven't worn a wrist watch since the Summer of 2023. It's the heat. The straps get sweaty underneath and I'm forever taking them off, drying my wrist and putting them on again. So, I decided to leave them off, at least while at home and then, altogether.

There are clocks around the house and on my Tablet and knowing the exact time is not an issue. Outside, there are reminders, Mrs D's mobile, clock in the car and the green Pharmacy clock in town which tells you the Temperature too.

I have a couple of really nice watches, one a gift from Mrs D some Christmases ago and one from my son and his wife when they got married. Many watches are real decorative pieces, like jewellery, especially for women for whom wrist watches were first designed in a time when men carried pocket watches.

I watched a film recently where an obscenely rich guy opened his wardrobe and slid open a drawer which was stuffed with high-end, eye-wateringly expensive watches. There must have been at least 30 in there. I wondered how he chose which one to wear each day. I'm guessing, most of them were Swiss made since they are regarded as the best of the best in terms of their intricate movement systems.

It's all down to Religious Reformer John Calvin who in the 1500's decided to ban the wearing of jewellery. The Swiss had to turn their



attention to watch making and fortunate for us that they did. As mentioned before, men wore pocket watches, but they started out as being worn like pendants around their neck since waistcoats with pockets weren't invented until the 1600's.

Wrist watches as such were for the ladies, as much for a decorative piece of jewellery as a time piece. Men's wrist watches were, at first, developed mostly for the military since it was important that soldiers were able to synchronize movements etc. in the field of battle. This was especially so during the Boer War and WW1.

These days, we take wrist watches pretty much for granted, they are cheap to produce and affordable for most people since the invention of quartz crystal watches and those driven by battery. They are no longer just timepieces. Smart watches can tell us just about everything about ourselves and the world around us. I find them amazing, but there is still a huge market for traditional watches.....at the luxury end.

Many moons ago, while on holiday, Mrs D and I bought two fakes. I chose a Rolex and she a Cartier. They were very cheap and fooled everyone who thought we had inherited money or robbed a bank. They probably wouldn't have fooled an expert, but they lasted us for years.

And that got me wondering, which is the most expensive watch in the world? It turns out to be the "Graff Hallucination" worth a bottom-clenching 55 million dollars! Apparently, it is encrusted with 110 carats of rare coloured diamonds. Its maker, Laurence Graff, started as an apprentice in Hatton Garden, went on to form his own company in the 1960's and has over 50 stores worldwide. His customers have included Elizabeth Taylor, Oprah and Donald Trump.

So there you are. Next time you fasten your Smart watch, Omega, Seiko or just humble timepiece, you are strapping on a piece of Social History which has been 500 years in the making.

Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 74

5		8	4	9	
			9	7	2
	8	1			5
4	7		2		
1					3
				7	
2					4
3	6		4	2	
	9			6	8

Easy

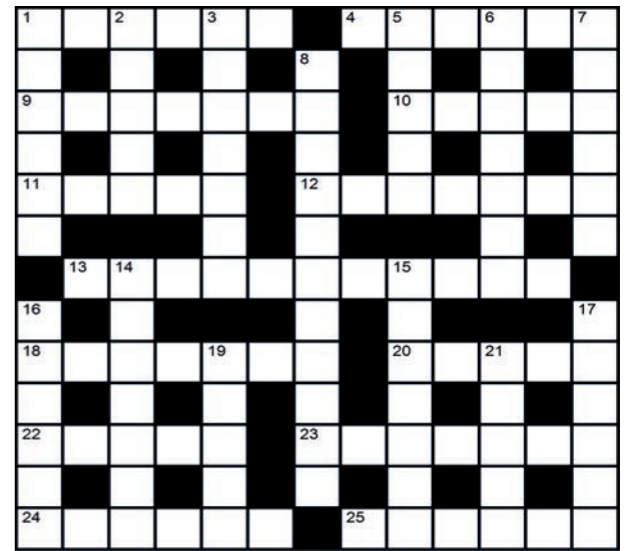
Regular Sudoku

Every Sudoku has a unique solution that can be reached logically.

Enter numbers into the blank spaces so that each row, column and 3x3 box contains the numbers 1 to 9.

4	6		7			1
				8		3
	7				8	
1	2	5				8
6						5
			1	2		9
			3	5		
9						3
	1		4			

Medium



- | | |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|
| Across | Down |
| 1 Vacation destination | 1 Noisy disturbance |
| 4 Charts | 2 Yell |
| 9 Mixed breed | 3 Set aside |
| 10 Form | 5 Valentines Day flowers |
| 11 Come in! | 6 Level area of elevated land |
| 12 Oriental | 7 Observing |
| 13 Daring | 8 Marketing |
| 18 Outcomes | 14 Give up hope |
| 20 Nab | 15 Get |
| 22 Dead-on | 16 Commands |
| 23 Much louder | 17 Craving |
| 24 Hide | 19 Unit of liquid measure |
| 25 Were not (contraction) | 21 Ethnic family |

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What is Happening in the Local Property Market. March 2025

By Voss Homes Estate Agents with offices in Huércal Overa & La Alfoquia

Well! Each month just keeps getting better and better. January and February were record months for us and March etc. will be even better. As usual we see buyers coming from everywhere especially the UK, Ireland, Spain, Belgium, The Netherlands, Italy, Scandinavia, Germany etc., etc. and budgets have certainly got higher.

Property sellers... Now is a fantastic time to get your properties on the market and sooner rather than later. Why? Because property prices continued to rise during 2024 and early 2025. Many, many properties have been selling but not enough properties are coming on to the market to keep up with demand. This means properties are now selling quicker and for a higher price.... But how long will this last?

For property sellers it is your estate agent's duty to get you as much money as possible. However, sellers should not believe the hype, get too greedy and allow their properties to be advertised for more than their true value.

Today's buyers know the property market and if a property is priced too high. If it is too high they may chose not to view and buy someone else's property.

Our second piece of advice for properties sellers is to stop listening to their friends, family or the people down the pub who insist on

giving you their opinion on what they think the value is of your property. When they tell you that they think your property is undervalued, then please ask them how long they have run a local estate agency and how many local properties have they sold? Too many sellers have lost their buyers due to "advice" from friends or family telling them to hold out for more money and the buyers walk away and buy someone else's property.

Our third piece of advice to property sellers is to make sure they get a full break down of their selling costs and taxes from their solicitor before they put their property on the market. Sometimes your costs and taxes will be much lower or higher than you think. Before you accept an offer, it is vital you know your costs. Again, your friends and neighbours are not solicitors or tax experts so please don't take their advice instead of your qualified and experienced solicitor who does this 52 weeks of the year for years.

Lastly, please make sure your properties are presented as well as they possibly can be. This is when you can ask your friends round to give you a few hints and tips on how to declutter your house and garden. If you are going to get rid of your clutter and take it to the charity shops or bins anyway, it is best to do it now.

Cojondongo from Badajoz



Cojondongo is a typical summer dish from Extremadura, especially from the towns of Aceuchal, Palomas and Puebla de la Reina in Badajoz.

It was originally a mid-morning meal on hot days for harvestmen and shepherds, which they made out in the fields in their shelters, where they kept the ingredients: Cold water, oil, vinegar and salt, which they stored in horns of oxen, and garlic and bread. The bread was usually wholemeal made from strong flour, which made it durable, and it would keep for several days when wrapped in canvas bags

It was not unlike the original gazpacho, and the people of Badajoz consider cojondongo the forefather of gazpacho.

Obviously, we all think 'tomato' when we think of gazpacho, but tomatoes were not available in Europe until the 16th century, and gazpacho goes back further. Before the tomato was introduced, people added broad bean flour, bitter oranges or almonds to the main ingredients.

¡Buen Provecho!



An important utensil in the making of cojondongo was the 'dornillo', not unlike a mortar and pestle, except larger and more open, and made from hardwood, usually holm oak.

To make cojondongo the traditional way, crush garlic, bread and plenty of oil in a 'dornillo', then add vinegar, salt and water to taste. This was often accompanied by some grapes or olives. It was important not to get too full as that would make the rest of the morning's work too heavy.

With the arrival of the products of the New World to Badajoz, the recipe was changed and less water added, to create a paste to which were added plenty of chopped (never crushed) tomatoes, peppers and onions.

This is what forms the base of today's recipe for cojondongo.

The elaboration today is obviously much more complicated – after all, why leave something simple if we can turn it into an elaborate task!

But to be fair, we all prefer our food to be a bit more sophisticated these days, and in the modern version, you add a paste made from breadcrumb, garlic and oil to chopped tomatoes, red and green peppers, onion and toasted croutons, season to taste and leave it in the fridge for at least two hours before serving it very cold.

Buen Provecho!

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Cooking with Nina



Time of Change!

March is a month of change – we go from winter to spring, and the hour changes too. In other words, when it has finally got light enough in the morning to take Dakota out without a torch, the clock jumps forward, and we're back to our walks in the dark.

It won't last, though, that's our consolation.

That and, of course, food. Being able to enjoy food makes up for any inconvenience in my world, and I'm treating you to some rather enjoyable dishes this month. Two very different ones with chicken, an alternative moussaka and good old Boeuf Stroganoff.

Read, cook and enjoy!

Beef Stroganoff

I did beef stroganoff many, many years ago, and because I'm always keen on trying new things, I never did it again.

But the other day I just so fancied it, so I made another batch.

It truly is the King of Casseroles!

Ingredients for four:

600g stewing beef, cut into thin strips	6 thick slices smoked, streaky bacon
3 tbsp sweet paprika	3 bay leaves
2 tbsp plain flour	2 tbsp tomato purée
4 onions, chopped	500ml beef stock
2 tbsp butter	250ml double cream
2 tbsp olive oil	Salt and freshly ground pepper
250g mushrooms, wiped and quartered	

Place the paprika, flour and salt & pepper in a large plastic bag and shake to mix well. Dry the meat with some kitchen roll, add it to the bag and shake again until it is evenly coated all over.

Fry the bacon slices over moderate heat in a heavy based casserole pan until they are crisp. Take out, cut into cubes, and set aside.

Turn up the heat a little and throw in the mushrooms and onions. Fry them, stirring, until the mushrooms take colour. Reserve.

Time to brown the meat now. Heat the butter till golden, add the olive oil and fry the meat in batches to brown it on all sides.

Add the tomato purée, the reserved mushrooms, onion and bacon. Mix well and pour over about two thirds of the beef stock. Stick in the bay leaves.

Bring to the boil and let it simmer for at least an hour, checking from time to time whether you need to add more stock.

When the meat is tender, add the cream and adjust the seasoning.

Serve with mash, rice or pasta – this time I had mine with rice.

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Spicy Chicken and Potatoes

This is a truly delicious combination, and even though the recipe at first seemed a bit hot for my taste, the spices used are those that I know and love. So I decided to give it a go, and that was a very wise decision indeed.

I remember seeing ajvar (red pepper relish) here, although I don't remember where or when. If you can't find it and don't mind it being quite hot, you can use harissa paste instead.

According to Google you can also use something called Pindjur as a substitute if you can't find ajvar, but you'll have to take Google's word for it, as I don't know this product.

Ingredients for two:

- | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| 2 whole chicken legs | Marinade: |
| 400g potatoes, scrubbed and cut into wedges | 1 large clove garlic, finely chopped |
| 100g small carrots, scrubbed and halved lengthwise | 1 tbsp maple syrup |
| 75ml ajvar | ½ tsp soy sauce |
| 200g cherry tomatoes | 2 tbsp olive oil |
| 100 ml green olives, stoned | 1 tsp sambal oelek |
| Spinach leaves, optional | Salt |
| Salt | |

Mix all the ingredients for the marinade and pour it into a plastic bag. Place the chicken legs in the bag as well and manipulate and cajole until they are covered all over.

Place the potatoes and carrots in a bowl and add the ajvar relish. Stir to cover the vegetables all over.

Drain the chicken legs and place them in a roasting tin, skin side up.



Arrange the potatoes and carrots around them and place tomatoes and olives on top.

Roast in the oven for 40-45 minutes until the chicken is cooked through.

If you fancy a splash of green, tuck some spinach leaves in between the vegetables 5-10 minutes before the end of the cooking time.

This is a truly tasty dish!!



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Chicken Tagine with Instant Preserved Lemons

I'm fascinated with preserved lemons, but the one time I actually pulled myself together and did some I didn't know what to use them for and eventually I had to waste them.

I have often found that I run into recipes again and again using a slightly unusual ingredient, and when I finally obtain it, all of a sudden, I can't find any recipes that call for it.

So I jumped at these instant preserved lemons and made (with the help of a recipe) the most lovely, tasty tagine dish.

This recipe serves four eaters.

Instant Preserved Lemons:

- 1 lemon, scrubbed and quartered
- 200ml water
- 1½ tsp coarse salt

Boil the lemon quarters in the water with the salt for about half an hour until the peel is tender. Set aside.

Ingredients for the chicken:

- | | |
|---|---|
| 4 whole chicken legs divided into drumsticks and thighs | parsley and coriander |
| 2 tbsp olive oil | 2 quarters preserved lemon |
| 15g butter | 1 tsp paprika |
| 1 onion, peeled and finely chopped | ½ tsp ground cumin |
| 2 cloves garlic, ditto | Pinch of saffron or ½ tsp ground turmeric |
| 20g fresh ginger, ditto | 300ml chicken stock |
| 2 tbsp each fresh chopped | 75g black or green olives, pitted |



Brown the chicken pieces in oil and butter in a large, heavy based pan, take them out and reserve. Mix the chopped onion, garlic, ginger, parsley and coriander; scrape the pulp out of the lemon quarters, chop it and add it to the mix.

Cut the lemon rind into thin strips, mix them with the olives and set aside.

Stick the mix in your tagine or a stew pot, add oil and butter and heat it through while stirring. Turn the chicken pieces into the mix and let them bubble gently for five minutes.

Add the stock, lid the tagine or pot and let everything cook gently for 25-30 minutes until the chicken pieces are cooked through.

Sprinkle the lemon rind and olive mix over the top, return the lid and let it simmer for another five minutes.

Ready to serve!



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Potato Moussaka

I've often seen recipes for moussaka using potato slices instead of aubergine, but this particular one grabbed my attention because the potato slices are roasted in the oven, and I thought that sounded delicious. And it was!!

I'll give you ingredients for four, 'cos that's what I made and then just froze three portions.

When I made it, I decided to make less bechamel sauce than what it said in the recipe, as I knew it would be far too much to my taste. I've given you my version, you make more if you want - we're all different.

I'm looking forward to my next portion already!!

Ingredients for four:

- 800g potatoes, peeled and sliced (1 cm thick)
- 4 tbsp olive oil
- 2 onions, chopped
- 4 stalks celery, finely sliced
- 400g mince (I used beef)
- 1 tin chopped tomatoes
- 2 tbsp tomato purée
- 2 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 tbsp oregano
- 100ml stock (I used lamb stock 'cos I had it)
- Salt and pepper

Bechamel sauce:

- 20g butter
- 1½ tbsp flour
- 300ml boiling milk (I used skimmed)
- Freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 egg
- 100g grated cheese

Place the potato slices on a lined baking sheet. Brush them with olive oil and sprinkle with salt. Roast in the oven at 225°C for 25 minutes.

Heat the rest of the olive oil in a deep pan and fry the onion and celery for a little while, then add the meat and cook until it turns brown.

Pour in the tomatoes together with the purée, garlic, oregano and stock. Bring to the boil, cover and let it cook for about half an hour.

For the bechamel sauce, melt the butter in a saucepan, add the flour and let it toast for about a minute, stirring all the time. Add the milk little by little, stirring between additions. When you've used it all, let it bubble gently with occasional stirrings, for about ten minutes. Add grated nutmeg and take it off the heat.

Leave it for a few minutes before whipping in the egg.

Taste and adjust the seasoning of the meat sauce

Grease an oven proof dish and cover the bottom with potato slices. Top with a layer of meat sauce and carry on with more layers until you've used up everything.

Top it all with the bechamel sauce and sprinkle the cheese over the top.



Cook it in the oven at 200°C for about 40 minutes, until the top is golden.

Serve with a tomato-rocket salad.

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Make Your Fruit and Veg Last!

We are privileged here with the many markets where we can buy no end of fresh fruit and vegetables, and if you're anything like me, you often end up giving in to the temptation of buying something that was neither on your list nor in your cooking plans.

But don't despair, if you treat them right, they will keep until you need them.

For a start, keep ripe bananas, apples and tomatoes apart from other fruit and veg as they emit ethylene, which is a substance which speeds up the ripening process.

Do not put your bananas in the fridge, they lose flavour and get spotty. Keep them on the work top and wrap the stem tightly in plastic if you want them to keep longer.

Keep your apples outdoors, e.g. in a polystyrene box. They don't like high temperatures but are a hazard to your other fruit and veg in the fridge, so they should be banned.

Tomatoes lose flavour in the fridge and should be kept on the work top – well away from other fruit and veg. If they ripen too fast, do put them in the fridge, but at your own peril. Tomatoes that are just about to go off can be chopped and frozen to be used for cooking instead of tinned tomatoes.

If you buy fresh carrots, trim off the tops and discard them. They go gooey and affect your carrots adversely. Put the carrots in a plastic bag and keep them in the fridge.

Celery keeps for up to 10 days in a jar of water on the worktop. Do however change the water regularly.

Onions and potatoes want to be kept in a dark and cool place, but not in the fridge. Keep them in a dark place in a newspaper lined box. But not together. Storing potatoes and onions together will drastically



shorten their shelf life. The reason? Onions produce ethylene gas, a gas that causes potatoes to spoil prematurely. Conversely, potatoes' high moisture content can cause onions to turn brown and mushy.

If your lettuce goes limp, put it in a bowl of cold water for a while to liven it up – and in fact the same goes for radishes!

To keep your mushrooms as fresh as the day you bought them, cut off the root and wipe them as soon as you bring them home, or at least the same day. Then roll rows of three or four in a tea towel so that they don't have too much contact. Keep them in the fridge, and after a week they still feel completely fresh and non-slimy!

A lot of the vegetables that come with their stem, such as broccoli, lettuce, asparagus etc., will benefit from having a centimetre of the stem and being wrapped in damp kitchen roll followed by aluminium foil. This will keep them fresh for days longer.

It is strawberry season now, and when you see these bright red jewels, they are hard to resist. When you get them home, place them in one layer on a tea towel – you can do several stories, as long as there's a tea towel between them. Cover with another tea towel or kitchen roll. Do not wash or prepare them in any way until just before you are ready to use them.

Avocados keep ripening after they have been picked. To keep avocados fresh, store them at room temperature until they ripen. Once they're ripe, you can extend their freshness by storing them in the refrigerator. If you have cut your avocado, cover the exposed surface with plastic wrap or store it in an airtight container with a little lemon or lime juice to prevent browning.

In these days of focus on food waste, it is as important as ever to make the very most of our purchases; the new brown containers are not an excuse for throwing out food!

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Aljambra is now celebrating being open for just over a year!

Carl, owner and chef, first opened the doors in January 2024 after successfully owning and running restaurants both here in Spain and in the UK.

Aljambra offers a superb menu including Tapas and full menu choices.

Gluten free options are available and easy for Carl as he makes everything fresh to order, so most items can be adapted to suit.

A delightful choice of delicious specials are available using locally sourced ingredients.

After our refreshing break, we'd like to welcome customers old and new to the restaurant. We've made a few tweaks to our menu but all your favourites are still there!



We are excited to announce that all our dessert options will now be available with the locally made FUGLY'S ICE CREAM - mmm...delicious!

Aljambra is open for food and drinks Friday - Tuesday from 11.30 until late. Wednesday and Thursday closed

Sunday lunch is served from 12.00 noon until 18.00 with a full menu also available from 17.00.

Aljambra is situated just along from the Corner shop in Albox.

Private events catered for and can also be organised on Wednesdays and Thursdays.

All menus can be found on the Albox Aljambra Facebook page.

Fully airconditioned restaurant and a delightful courtyard for al fresco dining.

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What Did They Do Before the Fridge?

As we all know, there are lots of ways to conserve fresh produce without cooling or freezing it. Since time immemorial, man has salted, dried, cooked and pickled food to make it last longer and have it available even when it was not in season.

But the preserved version is never quite the same as the real deal fresh food, and although the refrigerator as we know it is a relatively new invention, man has known for thousands of years that cold was the way to go to keep produce fresh for as long as possible.

In northern Spain, as late as the 1970's, you could still see delivery lorries loaded with long rods of ice, which the driver handled with a hook. He would carry the ice rods up to the apartments on his shoulder, which he kept protected with sackcloth.

The fridges back then consisted of a cupboard with two compartments. The smaller one, which was on top, was where the ice rods were kept (together with certain foods), whereas the larger one at the bottom was where the rest of the food was kept cool by the cold that penetrated from the top.

The original Spanish word for refrigerator was 'nevera' derived from the word 'nieve' (snow) because food had been preserved in the snow for millennia. People kept foodstuffs in natural or man-made shelters in the snow at the top of the mountains to be able to enjoy it all year round.

Those who were not lucky enough to have access to this kind of natural fridge, and who were able to pay for it, could buy ice and snow gathered in the mountains by ice traders; the mountain villages made a handsome penny from taxes they imposed on the extracted snow and ice, and the ice trade was a prosperous profession.

Man has appreciated cold drinks in summer for thousands of years, and natural ice and snow have been the coolers par excellence. The Romans in their era as well as the Muslims, while they were occupying the Iberian Peninsula, made the most of the snow and ice on Spain's mountain tops.

The Chinese had taken the concept one step further and created ice-cream, which method Marco Polo brought back to Italy after his



travels. The rest is history...

Today it is difficult for us to imagine life without a refrigerator, but Mother Nature is generous and even before modern fridges, she supplied man with a way of keeping his food fresh.

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More than just our First Anniversary!



Welcome to **Mucho Mas** – Celebrating their ‘1 Year Anniversary’ this March

Owners Michael & Fleur first met over 15 years ago and had a combined dream of opening their own bar & restaurant – a dream that came to fruition on the 19th of March 2024. The date has even more significance for Fleur as it just so happens to be her birthday – so more than just an anniversary!

Having initially moved to the Albox area in late 2022 they took their time to observe the various food & drink offers that were available in the area and decided to offer mainly Dutch & Belgian inspired food whilst also adding an International selection along with vegetarian & vegan options.

With their passion for providing freshly prepared food – the vast majority is made fresh to order – you can be sure of consistently great quality.

They offer a variety of breakfasts, lunches, dinners & snacks including home made pies & pastries

You can enjoy a simply great cup of coffee, try one of their freshly made cocktails or choose from the big selection of Belgian & International beers.

They have also installed a Pool Table, Electronic Darts, Dutch Sjoelbak and have a variety of games which you are welcome to use.

As time moved on since their opening they have organised various events including Jazz Nights, Dutch Kings Day, Halloween Dinner, Christmas Fair and ‘**Mucho Mas**’!

The plan is to hold many more events throughout the coming year so check their Facebook page (Bar Mucho Mas Albox) to see what events are coming up.

Their client base has been steadily growing and there are many, many different nationalities visiting frequently – they are very proud that they have been able to reach out to the whole community!

Birthdays, Parties and Special Events can be catered for – please ask for details.

Michael & Fleur look forward to seeing you!

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21

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MAR
30

ENGLISH MOTHER'S DAY
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APR
20

EASTER DINNER
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APR
26

DUTCH KINGS DAY
Live Music - FREE entry



Trades & Services

Spanish Home Decor Ideas

While you may think of Spanish culture as hedonistic and fun, the Spanish design style is actually rooted in functionality. In fact, some may argue that good design is more important to Spaniards than it is to Americans (thanks to warmer weather) since so much time is spent inside with the family.

There are certain features that are common across all examples of Spanish-style decor. A Mediterranean flair is present in almost all instances, which means you'll find warm colours and soft patterns throughout the home.

Spanish style decor also extends to furnishings, resulting in comfortable and durable pieces that stand up well over time. Furniture pieces typically feature curved lines for ornate details, but always with a purpose – such as elegant legs or sturdy wood bases.

The same is true for Spanish wall decorations. Intricate moulding styles dominate the space above doors or windows, with their curvy patterns adding depth while avoiding being overly gaudy or bulky.

Spanish Hacienda style decor is one of several popular home decor styles. The Hacienda style is most commonly associated with Andalusia, a region in Spain's south.

Traditional Andalusian architecture—used mainly for country homes and city palaces alike—revolves around courtyards or patios, called Quintas in Spanish. If you're not lucky enough to own a hacienda or a large garden space, hacienda-style works equally well on smaller-scale interiors too!

The Spanish Hacienda-style home decor is typically characterized by neutral colours like beige, cream, tan, and white paired with rustic elements like wrought iron furniture and terracotta tiles.

Another type of popular decor is Spanish Colonial, however, before we get into Spanish Colonial home decor, let's start with a brief history lesson. The Spanish Colonial style actually refers to a period of history between 1521 and 1821 in which Spain owned land around the world from India to Mexico.

While most commonly associated with Latin America, the Spanish architectural style also made its way over to British America as well. It is widely believed that these imported styles led to an influx of other colonial designs within our European style home decor during much of that time period as well.

With an emphasis on clean lines and bold colours, Spanish interior



design can be a great choice for anyone looking for something new or interesting to spice up their living space. While there are many different variations in Spanish Colonial designs, they all have a few things in common: they tend to be larger than other styles; they often feature arches and columns, and they almost always include lots of earthy colours! Whether your style leans towards traditional or contemporary, you can find elements that work well with your personal tastes if you know where to look.

Today, modernism of residential interior design is typically associated with clean-lined furniture that makes heavy use of metal and steel, with a focus on functionality. However, in its original context, modernism was about embracing new technologies and exploring natural materials like wood and clay.

The iconic home furnishings from Spain's early 20th century are examples of modernism at its most decorative, incorporating natural materials into unique designs that still feel fresh and innovative today. In fact, some pieces can even be considered ahead of their time: It wasn't until several decades later that designers such as Charles Eames would begin experimenting with bent plywood to create elegant mid-century furniture.

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It's been a slow start to the year here at Olive Tree Farm, but not for our plentiful plans for the not-so-distant future.

We've had brightening days, some surprising hours of t-shirt weather, which not only has been a nice change, but was perfect for hatching!

Unfortunately, our incubator attempt only succeeded in giving us two Muscovy ducklings, and I imagine that is due to the fact that these girls have only just gotten to maturity to lay recently, so some misfires are to be expected.

Those two little guys are currently living it up in the growing tank, and they often make quite a mess of it — so much more so than 6 chicks could do with the same amount of time. Alas, you cannot prevent the spread of water when the ducks love a good old splash!

You may also recall from last month's diary that we also had another clutch of eggs preparing to hatch around the same time, but these ones were growing under the care of a first-time mother. She endured much better success than we did! Of 12 eggs, she managed to hatch a whopping nine ducklings.

We were worried, and Ben was brooding and fretting like a mother hen himself. "Nope," he insisted the day after we heard the tiny cheeps indicating hatching was in progress. "I can't leave them up here, what if something happens?"

To be fair, a lot of somethings to tend to happen in farm living, so he had a right to take extra care. We'd already agreed upon barricading them, but ducklings are adventurous creatures, and if they managed to squeeze out without mum able to follow, it could brew trouble.

There was nothing else for it but to collect her and her babies before she was ready to bring them out for their first walk.

I let Ben do the honours of catching mum — her instincts are strong, and so are her beak and wings! Yet despite her indignation, Ben managed to keep a secure hold on her, while the kids and I transported the tiny ducklings into a box, and down everyone came into the second aviary.

Mama had also laid a couple of late eggs as well, and upon candling them (where you hold the eggs against torchlight in a darkened room to see what's happening inside), we found some squirming dark masses. Into the incubator they went! Mum wasn't going to be able to sit any longer, as she needed to teach the others how to find their food and water.

Everyone settled in well — though we did discover that, unfortunately, if the ducklings fall on their backs they are very much like tortoises if not assisted. We lost two, which was a sad thing to find, but Ben did manage to save some from a similar fate — even if mum duck left a mighty bruise on his hand for doing so.



They've all found their feet now as the week has progressed, so we are thankful there's another worry out of our minds.

Not to be defeated by a lacking success, Ben has the incubator back up and running with another collection of eggs, aside from the ones we took from Mum — did we mention the ducks are our favourite farm animal? Did you perhaps guess?

And for some final goose news, our predictions were correct with the change in behaviour recently — Mrs Goose has laid her first egg, which we will leave in place to encourage her to lay more. The pair are moving together, and Mr Goose is doing a very, very good job at keeping the nest box well protected — poor Lucas (5 years) is a little intimidated, understandably so, and needs a little more guidance and encouragement to coax him into the farm. Once he's in and in his designated "safe-zone", it's all go for playtime with his siblings!

As usual, it seems we have a lot going on, and even more to do, but we wouldn't have it another way. I hope you enjoyed the news of

the month and join us again in the next for all our farm-life updates! You can follow the progress of the family and farm on our Facebook page: www.facebook.com/OliveTreeFarmSpain/

You can also find our YouTube channel, just search for Olive Tree Farm! We will be adding new videos soon as we dig into some projects, so subscribe now so you don't miss any.

To contact us regarding the restoration of your swimming pool, find Olive Tree Farm Pool Services on:

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Food For Thought!

Hello there one and all!

March already, eh? Not soon enough in my humble opinion.

I have heard many people going on about preferring to be cold rather than hot, over the last few months. Are you kidding me? Being cold is a miserable experience. It gets into your bones and it takes far too long to warm up.

If you're too hot, you can jump into a cool shower or as many of you do, a pool. Sorted in seconds. It's nice and refreshing and being hot is better for your health all-round, avoiding depression, blood clots and heart disease. I guess that Scotland's high coronary mortality rate has less to do with deep-frying everything in sight than it does with needing blood with the consistency of treacle to stave off the cold.

Many so-called studies have come up with sensational new "discoveries", designed to unnecessarily scare people into a specific mindset; "Don't eat red meat, don't drink, watching too much TV makes you stupid"... hmmm, I think they may have a point about the last one, especially if you watch the news.

The problem is that behind all this Ministry of Truth nonsense there is a nugget of, well, truth. Yes it is smothered by the bias that paid for it in the first place. If you only ate red meat (other food types are available) then you'd be missing out on a balanced diet (which would obviously include chocolate) but at the same time, labelling bacon as a harmful narcotic, only consumed by climate-denying degenerates is not helpful.

Our bodies rely on an intricate blend of elements and compounds in order to function; fats, fibre, protein, electrolytes and especially [in Spain] water. Common sense will tell you (unless you have a genuine medical need to avoid certain foodstuffs) that a bit of what you fancy isn't that bad for you and has been proven to be beneficial to mental



well-being (chocolate again). Talking of which, we are rapidly approaching one of my favourite events – Pancake Day.

Pancakes are one of the groups of foods that could convince me of the existence of a higher consciousness, including curry, bacon and chocolate (again). It's an amazing thing, able to be both savoury and/or sweet! The problem I have with Pancake Day is that it's never on the same day each year. The accepted reason for this is that the whole event is based around the lunar cycle and not the calendar we use for everything else (?). Shrove Tuesday (to give it its proper name) is the last chance to fill your face before the Lent fasting period. It all ties in with Easter, which for those of you that have been under a rock is the celebration of Christ's crucifixion and resurrection.

Now I'm going to have to be a little careful here as I don't want to upset too many people, but... It is generally agreed that Christmas Day (the birth of Christ) is on 25th December. We all get that and it works so why can we not agree on the day of his passing?

Easter wanders around the calendar like a drunken aunt at a wedding. By all accounts the crucifixion was a pretty big event and although I am not aware of any eyewitness accounts, I'm sure someone would have noticed the son of God carrying his own crucifix through the streets of Golgotha and told someone else.

The logical conclusion is that it didn't actually happen and He made good His escape, laying low at a mate's house for 3 days until the coast was clear. Anyway, back on topic.

As Omnivores, our bodies have adapted to be able to digest a wide variety of nourishment so it makes sense to be open and inclusive with your diet, adventurous even. Much has been said about the wonders of a Mediterranean diet, with the plethora of raw ingredients surrounding us, it's hard not to see why.

One of my fondest Spanish memories was the first time I plucked

an orange from one of my own trees and not from the chilled aisle at Morrison's.

The Mediterranean diet centres around everything being fresh and unmolested and prepared with the minimum of fuss. There has been a direct attribution to the Spanish people's longevity from their diet and there is truth in that but again it's only part of the story. If you combine a healthy diet with a correct work/life balance and a climate that actively thins the blood and relieves rheumatic and other ailments then you have a recipe for success. There is an element of "vegetables are for livestock" in the Spanish psyche but that doesn't seem to extend to potatoes, thankfully.

Where the Spanish diet really triumphs is their inherited dislike of processed foods (except chocolate). There has to be a certain amount of messing about but that's called cooking. Where the Spanish and I definitely agree is our distaste for the manufacture and processing that goes on with ready meals and corporate fast food. These meals are sold to consumers as convenient alternatives to slaving over a hot stove – just pop it in the microwave for 3 minutes. They are prepared by the tonne in factories and don't just need to last until the end of the week but for months, occasionally years.

In order to do this, the meals are loaded with preservatives, many of which are not naturally occurring. Preserving food is nothing new. Our ancestors have been doing it for centuries; salting and drying meats, pickling. I'm sure you could list more but the basics were fundamentally sound and worked with the forces of nature, not against them. Some of these foods are delicacies, what would a Spanish Christmas be without a leg of Jamón Ibérico on show?

The difference is that this kind of preservation was born out of necessity and an understanding of nature and not purely for profit. There is a proven link between the consumption of highly-processed food and digestive/developmental issues in the Northern European population. These include widespread diabetes, poorer brain health,



remember one American food blogger who actually lost weight when he toured the UK last year, eating whatever took his fancy. He pointed out the much longer and questionable ingredient list on U.S. versions of products when compared to the UK.

It is easy to be seduced by timesaving and I'm all in for efficiency but when it comes to food there is no substitute for freshly-cooked. It's not as difficult as it's painted, just a bit of preparation and thought and you will taste the difference.

I've recently acquired a Panasonic bread maker and will admit to getting the baking bug and it is sooo easy! You can't tell me that you wouldn't be proud of your first loaf rather than just picking one up in Lidl. Go on – try it!



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digestive issues (including many allergies).

The chemicals added as preservatives and flavour enhancers are often used inappropriately and in such a high concentration that they effectively provoke an allergic reaction.

Fortunately the EU has been cracking down but that horse may well have escaped the paddock. The problem seems to be worse in the USA (strangely enough) where the processed food companies pretty much please themselves. I do

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Sir Bernard Lovell's Jodrell Bank

I admire engineers that paved the way for so many technical advances and yet often seemed to be somewhat unsung. Bernard was one such chap.

As a child and teenager, in addition to his love of physics, he had a passion for cricket, playing the piano and was an organist at his local church. In fact, colleagues recount that during his working life, everything stopped for cricket, work coming second! Studying Physics at university, he obtained his degree and then a PhD in '36.



He went to work as part of the Cosmic Ray research Team based at Manchester University. He was fascinated by Gamma-rays, X-rays, photons etc. and the effects caused by Solar flares. This was quite groundbreaking at the time and set the stage for investigating the beginning of the universe, Black Holes and so on. Ask Stephen Hawking. Well not now, he's dead.

At the start of WW2, he was seconded to the Telecommunications Research establishment, TRE. He worked on the H2S radar system which was being designed to be fitted to aircraft. He worked closely with engineers such as Alan Blumlein on the top secret and fundamental component of radar, the Magnetron. That's the bit that generates the high frequency energy, the same thing that heats your food in your microwave oven. Lovell took over this work after the test aircraft along with several of his colleagues, including Blumlein, 'mysteriously' crashed in '42, killing all those on board. More on this under the 'Articles page' on my website. It's quite interesting... honest.

At the end of WW2, Lovell went back to his study of cosmic rays, at Manchester University. Finances were tight, and he managed to obtain ex-military radar, radio and other electronic gear, that he had been working with at the end of the war. Post war, a lot of high-quality equipment was sold off to surplus stores. This was a real winner for radio hams and electronics enthusiasts. The army provided him with an old arc lamp searchlight. It was supposed to be a loan, but they never saw it again. Lovell used this metal frame to build his first Yagi antenna array (type of aerial). The main problem he had, when searching into the night sky, was interference caused by local Manchester trams (things used to transport poor people 't mill) and ignition from cars. He persuaded the university to let him use

some land near Goostrey, Cheshire. It was remote and distant from electrical noise.

The area was called Jodrell Bank. Considering his setup was very Heath Robinson and working from the back of a van and trailer, the results were remarkable. This is where he set up his Observatory, which has become a household name. Using his cobbled together second-hand kit, he managed to demonstrate how radar could detect meteors entering the earth's atmosphere. With government and university funding, he built what was at the time, the largest directable radio telescope.

The "Lovell telescope" is still in use today and forms part of the MERLIN network. Multi-Element Radio Linked Interferometer Network. Interferometry, I hear you cry... what's that? I think it's the analysis of radio waves with a military, weapons bias. Too complex for me.

Jodrell Bank was used for, amongst other things in the '50s-'60s, as part of the Cold War's early warning system, keeping an eye on the naughty Ruskies. In fact, The Russians used Jodrell Bank to keep a track of their early-days space rocket launches. That always seemed a bit ironic, the fact they could stuff a rocket, complete with dog into space, but couldn't find them afterwards. Lovell claimed that during a working trip to the Centre for Deep Space Communications (Ukraine), during the Cold War, the Russians tried to bump him off by exposing him to a nasty dose of radiation. I am not sure if this was ever proved to be correct, but the story has it that he wrote a detailed account of the episode only to be published after his death. Next time I speak to Putin, I will ask him and let you know. A friend here recalls a school trip many years ago to Jodrell bank, where he fiddled with and broke a piece of equipment. Lovell happened to be there at the time and gave him a jolly good ticking off.

Certainly, as far as Britain is concerned, Bernard's contribution to Radio Astronomy is second to none. Many have built upon his early work and spectacular results of the telescopes sited at Jodrell Bank. He received his well-deserved Knighthood in 1961.

Now this is praise indeed. Nigel Kneale, who wrote the brilliant Sci-Fi series, Quatermass, (Remember?), took Lovell's first name Bernard as the key player, Professor Bernard Quatermass.

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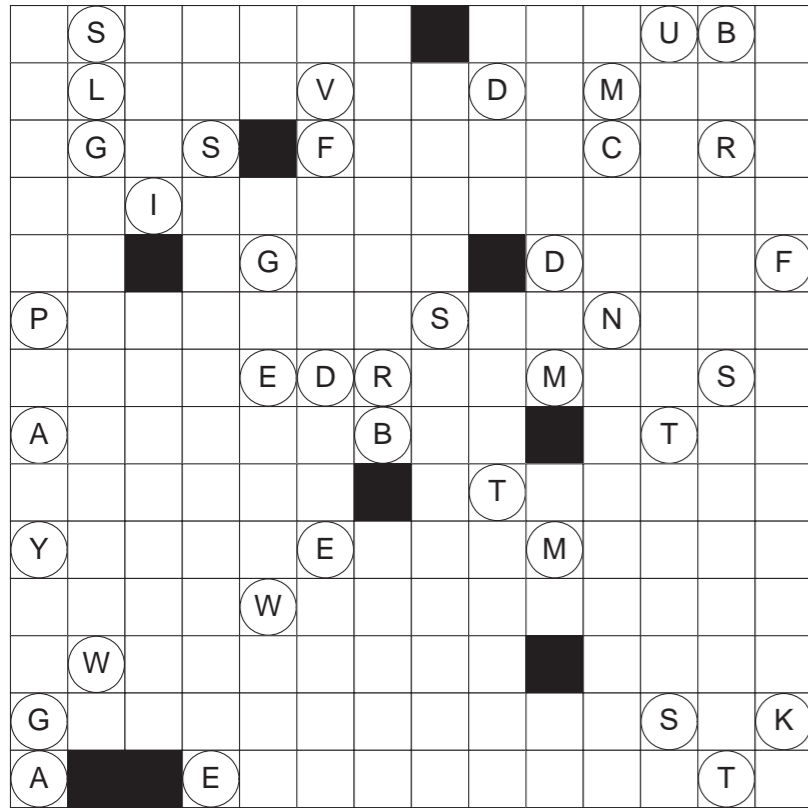
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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 74

Reverse Word Search



Each of these circled letters is the first letter of one or more of the words on the given word list.

Your task is to fill in the grid completely using only the given words. No word will repeat itself. Words can be positioned the same as in a regular word search – horizontally, vertically or diagonally, reading frontwards or backwards.

Remember, any starting letter may be used by more than one word at the same time!

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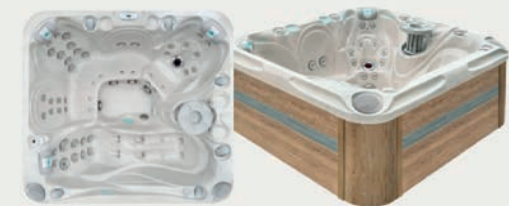
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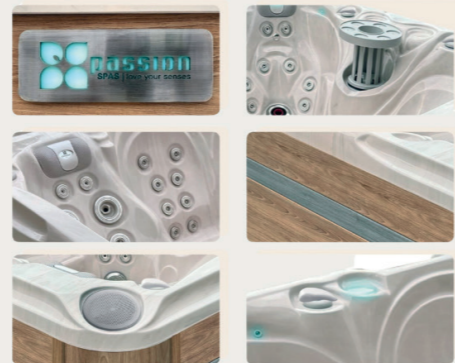
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Is 2025 the Time to Switch to a Hybrid Car?

With the global push towards greener, more sustainable transportation, you might be wondering if 2025 is the right time to make the switch to a hybrid car. Over the past decade, hybrid vehicles have evolved significantly, offering a perfect middle ground between traditional petrol or diesel cars and fully electric vehicles (EVs).

As environmental concerns, government policies, and technological advances continue to shape the automotive industry, 2025 could be the ideal time to consider going hybrid.

Increased Environmental Regulations and Emission Targets

Governments worldwide are tightening emission regulations in a bid to combat climate change and many are encouraging the transition to cleaner, more fuel-efficient vehicles.

The UK, for instance, has committed to banning the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2030, with stricter emission standards being enforced before then. While fully electric vehicles are the ultimate goal, hybrids offer an excellent alternative for drivers who aren't ready to go fully electric just yet.

By 2025, automakers will be producing even more efficient hybrid

models to meet these stricter regulations. Hybrids emit significantly lower CO2 compared to traditional cars, and switching now could help you avoid future restrictions, penalties, or congestion charges imposed on high-emission vehicles.

Keep an eye on local and national legislation regarding vehicle emissions, as it could influence your decision to switch sooner rather than later.

Evolving Hybrid Technology

Hybrid technology has come a long way since the first models hit the market. In 2025, we can expect even more advanced and efficient hybrid systems. Some of the latest developments include:

- Better fuel efficiency: Modern hybrid cars combine petrol or diesel engines with electric motors, significantly reducing fuel consumption, especially in stop-and-go city driving.
- Longer electric-only range: Plug-in hybrids (PHEVs) have made it possible to drive short distances entirely on electric power, and by 2025, the electric range is expected to increase even further.

Continued on page 72

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..... Continued from page 71

This means you can do your daily commutes without using any fuel at all, while still having a petrol or diesel engine for longer journeys.

- **More regenerative braking:** Regenerative braking, which captures and stores energy from braking to recharge the battery, is becoming more efficient. This feature further reduces fuel consumption and increases the lifespan of the brake system.

These advancements make hybrid cars more cost-effective and environmentally friendly than ever, providing a great compromise for those looking to lower their carbon footprint without fully committing to an electric vehicle.

Lower Running Costs and Government Incentives

One of the biggest advantages of switching to a hybrid in 2025 is the potential for lower running costs. With rising fuel prices and the ongoing transition to cleaner energy, hybrids can offer significant savings over traditional vehicles.

Hybrids use less fuel, especially in city driving conditions where they rely more on electric power. This can lead to major savings at the pump, particularly as petrol and diesel prices are expected to continue rising.

Many countries, including the UK, also offer tax breaks, grants, and incentives for purchasing low-emission vehicles. While these incentives may phase out for fully electric cars as they become more mainstream, hybrids are still eligible in many regions.

In 2025, you could benefit from reduced road tax, discounts on congestion charges, and even government grants to lower the initial purchase price. Hybrids are also often less costly to maintain than



traditional cars. The electric motor reduces wear and tear on the engine and brakes, potentially leading to fewer repairs and a longer lifespan for parts.

The Growing Network of Charging Infrastructure

One of the biggest concerns for potential hybrid and electric car owners is access to charging infrastructure. However, this is rapidly changing. As more people adopt plug-in hybrid and electric vehicles, charging stations are becoming more common in cities, workplaces, and along major motorways.

By 2025, the charging network is expected to be more widespread and efficient, making it easier for hybrid drivers to charge their vehicles on the go.

Public charging stations will also likely offer faster charging times, reducing the time spent waiting for a charge and increasing the convenience of owning a plug-in hybrid. Check charging station



availability in your area or along your regular routes to determine whether a plug-in hybrid would fit your lifestyle.

Increased Resale Value for Traditional Cars

With the upcoming 2030 ban on new petrol and diesel vehicles, the market for traditional combustion engine cars is expected to shrink. However, hybrids (especially plug-in hybrids) are likely to retain their value for longer, as they offer a transitional option for people not yet ready to go fully electric.

In 2025, the demand for fuel-efficient and environmentally friendly cars will likely increase, meaning traditional cars may still fetch a good resale price — but this window won't last forever. Switching

to a hybrid now allows you to take advantage of a higher resale value on your current car while moving toward a more sustainable option.

If you're planning to sell your current car, 2025 could be a good time to do so before traditional petrol and diesel vehicles lose significant value as the 2030 deadline approaches.

Important Considerations Before Making the Switch

While 2025 seems like a prime time to switch to a hybrid, there are still some important factors to consider before making the leap:

- **Driving habits:** If most of your driving involves long highway trips, a hybrid may not offer as many benefits, since their fuel savings are most noticeable in city driving. A traditional or fully electric vehicle may be better suited to your needs.

- **Initial costs:** While hybrids tend to have lower running costs, the initial purchase price can still be higher than traditional petrol or diesel cars. However, incentives and tax breaks can help offset this cost.

- **Future technology:** With electric vehicles improving rapidly, consider how long you plan to keep your next car. Fully electric cars are expected to become the norm by the 2030's, so if you're looking for a longer-term vehicle, you may want to weigh the pros and cons of going hybrid versus waiting for an electric vehicle with a longer range and better infrastructure.

If you're looking for a versatile, efficient, and eco-friendly car that meets the demands of today and the near future, a hybrid could be the perfect fit for 2025.

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The processionary caterpillar, the pine processionary, or the *thaumetopoea pityocampa*, seems to be coming earlier every year and in ever increasing numbers. We have already received reports of the first sightings.

The official description sounds like something out of a horror film: 'Along its body each caterpillar has some 500,000 poisonous hairs, or trichomes, shaped like little darts or arrows. Their small size and also the fact that they break off easily mean that they constitute an important risk of urticaria, not only through physical contact, they also travel on the wind. People and animals that come into contact with the trichomes usually suffer skin reactions and sometimes eye and bronchial affectation and even severe anaphylaxis.'

The caterpillars start their lives in nests in pine trees. They descend from their nests in spring in a one line procession (hence their name) usually led by a female, and after a while they transform into moths.

At the caterpillar stage they are extremely dangerous. And the risk comes not only from touching them. Just getting too near and

making them feel threatened can cause them to launch some of their hundreds of thousands of little arrows, so it's important to keep our animals, children and ourselves at a safe distance from them.

If your dog does come into contact with one, take it straight to the vet. Children, and sometimes even adults, should go straight to A&E.

In the advent your animal tries to scratch its mouth or shakes its head excessively because it hurts, or seems nervous and restless this can be symptoms of it having been poisoned by processionary caterpillars. The most visible symptoms are inflammation of the tongue, lips and even the whole head. It may get a temperature and sometimes problems closing its mouth.

In case of poisoning you can try to gently wash its mouth with tepid water, but the most important thing is to get it directly to your vet, who can give it rapid action cortisone treatment.

Your dog may lose part of its tongue, but the important thing is to get it treatment before its larynx is affected as this can cause death from asphyxia.

If you see one or more nests in your pine trees, burn them straight away (the nests!), that is the only safe way of disposing of them. If the caterpillars have reached the ground before you spot them, spray them vigorously with cockroach spray which will kill them. But always beware of the risk of the 'arrows' and wear goggles and a mask before embarking on your caterpillar terminator quest.



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9	7	4	5	1	2	8	3	6
8	2	1	6	3	7	4	5	9
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Puzzle Time Solutions

5	1	2	8	6	4	9	7	3
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9	5	6	2	1	7	4	8	3
2	1	3	8	4	6	9	7	5

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