

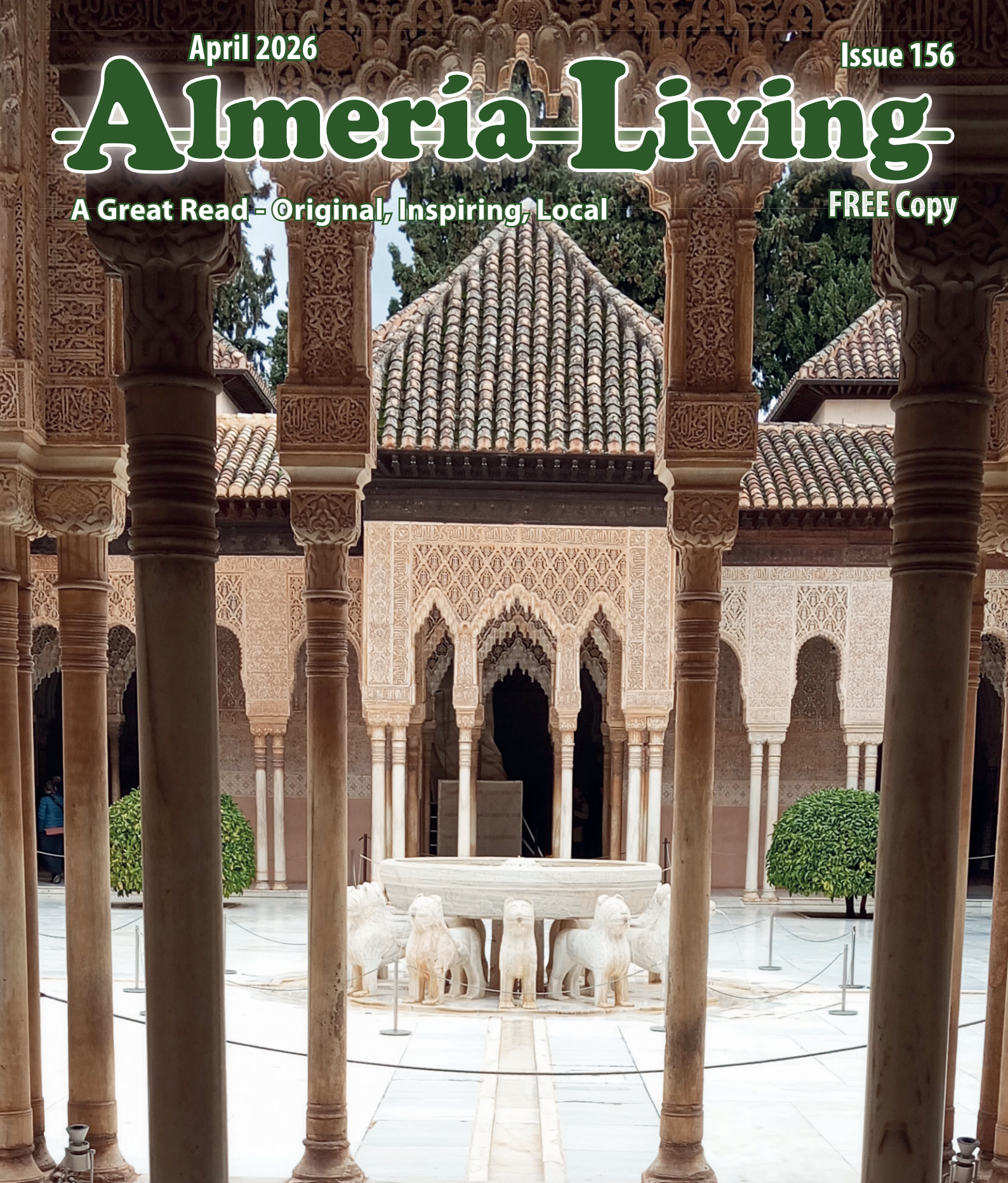
April 2026

Issue 156

Almeria Living

A Great Read - Original, Inspiring, Local

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SPANISH RESIDENT TAX RETURN TIME

Anyone who holds Residencia in Spain is required to declare their income and assets to the Hacienda (tax office). The 2025 tax return must be submitted before the end of June this year (2026).

Those of you who have lived here for many years will already be aware of the requirement to complete the annual Modelo 100. However, there are many new people around who may not be aware of the requirements and time frame.

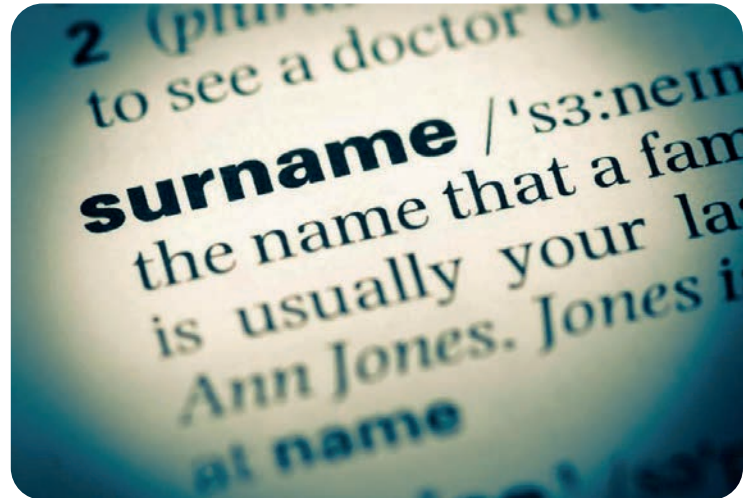
Most accountants will get you to complete a questionnaire and/or submit proof of income and assets. Despite dual taxation agreements, it is important that all income and assets are declared so the accountant can indicate where taxes may have already been paid.

It may be that a person's income is low and below the threshold, but it is still important to complete a tax form at least at the end of the first year so that it is declared and you are regarded as a fiscal resident.

So, if you became a resident in Spain during or before 2025 you need to get yourself organised and visit someone like the team at C.A.T. Services to help you on the right road.

For general information, non-residents who own property in Spain are required to complete the annual Modelo 210 before the end of the year.

Do you really want to change your surname?



In the UK it is very traditional to change our surname, particularly when we get married.

However, if you are already a resident in Spain with an NIE number and other documents relating to this then you should think twice before making the decision to change your surname.

It becomes a very complex series of processes and also becomes a very expensive exercise.

This is what will be involved.....

Once a new UK passport has been issued then the first step in Spain is to get the Spanish TIE/Residencia amended. This document is required to go on and sort all the other documents associated with the NIE number.

The marriage certificate will need to be dated within the last 3 months, Hague apostilled and legally translated. There is now also another new document required by the Foreign Office which is issued by the UK Passport Office, verifying previous and current passports, which also needs legally translating and most likely Hague Apostilled. These documents, along with passports, current TIE card & Padron are taken to the Foreign Office by appointment for the fingerprint appointment and subsequent collection.

On completion of that stage, all other documents must then be amended – medical card, driving licence, vehicle documents, tax office, bank account etc.

The other consideration would be any notarised documents such as the property title deed, Will and POA as the Notary may be required to issue a supporting document to validate the existing paperwork.

If this is a process that you would like to pursue or need help with then please contact the team at C.A.T Services.



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Los Gallardos and many surrounding towns

Welcome to the April 2026 issue of Almería Living.

Spring is here - it may not feel like it but it is! Nature certainly doesn't stop because it's cold and windy. The swallows are back, chirping merrily, and the orange trees are laden with flowers that fill the air with a fragrant scent.

April is a special month for C.A.T. Services and the Almería Living as we both celebrate another year in business. On 12th April 2010 I opened the doors for the first time as C.A.T. Services and we have never looked back. A couple of years later in April 2012 I launched the Almería Living magazine and here we are 14 years and 156 issues later!! It has been the result of a lot of hard work and determination and the team have all played their part in making us what we are today. I would like to say a big thank you to all our clients and readers for their support over the years and long may we continue.

New this issue is an extension to our out of hours Farmacia list. Thank you Jane for making the suggestion that we include more locations! I know that many of you frequently need this information so we hope it helps!

The magazine wouldn't be the same without the penmanship of my scribes. Some have been writing for many years and for others it has become a new hobby. It is always a pleasure to receive and print their passion.

Many thanks, as always, to our many 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 Almería Living.

Take care and stay safe. Talk again in May.

Karen (Ed)

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The Importance of a Lasting Power of Attorney

In undertaking any type of activity in Spain, you must have full faculties to be aware of what you are doing.

But time is unforgiving, and once you reach a certain age you may develop health problems that can affect your neurological or physical health. In such a situation, you may be constrained in making important operational decisions.

A Spanish POA enables a trusted individual to undertake responsibilities on your behalf, such as selling property, overseeing bank accounts, or making critical medical decisions.

Whether it's a general, specific, or a lasting POA, it is crucial to draft it in compliance with Spanish legal stipulations.

Unlike a general power of attorney that becomes non-valid if you become incapacitated, a poder preventivo, equivalent to a lasting power of attorney in the UK, is a resource designed to ensure that you are not limited in the future. Granting someone this authority ensures that important tasks, such as addressing legal matters, managing assets, or making healthcare decisions, are executed in accordance with your preferences.

A Lasting Power of Attorney is a way of securing your future and guaranteeing that everything will be organised the way you want it to be when the time comes. Therefore, anticipating yourself and making this Lasting Power of Attorney is important so that you can have peace of mind about the future.

In the event that you become incapacitated, having a power of attorney in place ensures that a trusted individual can make medical decisions on your behalf. Without this legal provision, there exists the risk that your healthcare preferences may not be adhered to, potentially resulting in treatments or care that you wouldn't have chosen.

You can make the Lasting Power of Attorney work in two different



ways. On the one hand, the Lasting Power of Attorney can be established to be used from the very moment it is granted and remain valid in the event of invalidity.

On the other hand, it is possible that the Lasting Power of Attorney granted only takes effect at the point in time when the donor is declared to be invalid or incapacitated.

In all cases, the Lasting Power of Attorney, after being signed in the Notary, must be registered in order to become effective. The Notary will ensure that this is carried out.

All POAs can be revoked or modified at any time so long as the donor of the power is still of sound mind to do so. The revocation does not have to be carried out in the same Notary as the original was signed.

If you would like help to prepare or need more information regarding power of attorneys then do get in touch with the team 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 March we journeyed to Gerona and now our next of Spain's provincial Capitals takes us into the heart of Andalucia

Granada in Granada



Granada province boasts both mountains and beaches, and it is the only place in Spain where you easily can go skiing in the morning and swimming in the sea in the afternoon.

The province covers an area of 12,531 km² and has a medium altitude of 840m above sea level; the climate varies between mountainous, Mediterranean and subtropical, and its Costa Tropical is famous for its production of subtropical fruits such as avocados and cherimoyas.

Granada's coastline is very rugged, often with steep cliffs overlooking small coves and beaches with stones, gravel or dark sand – or indeed, a mixture of all. Far from being problematic, this proves a welcome counterpoint to many other Andalusian beaches with their perfectly white, fine-grained sand. Difficult access leaves these small beaches and coves minimally crowded and adds to their quaint charm.

Granada is much visited by tourists, not only for its famous capital, but also for Guadix with its cave houses and cathedral, and the province's stunning and varied countryside.

The province of Granada is one of Andalucía's seven provinces, and it borders on the provinces of Almería, Jaén, Córdoba, Málaga, Albacete, Murcia and the Mediterranean Sea.

Granada is home of the Sierra Nevada National Park, which it shares with the provinces of Almería and Málaga. There, we find Andalucía's and indeed mainland Spain's, highest summit, the Mount Mulhacén, towering 3,482 m above sea level. It is exceeded in Spain only by Mount Teide in Tenerife at 3,715 MASL.

The term 'sierra nevada' implies the existence of a snow field, an accumulation of permanent snow and ice. This is true at the higher levels where the world-famous ski station Sierra Nevada is situated. However, further down on the southern facing slopes, which include the Alpujarras, most of the snow melts in the spring and summer, allowing the lower levels of the Sierra to remain green and fertile most of the year, despite the heat of the summer sun. Water emerges from innumerable springs; human intervention has channelled it to terraced plots and to the villages.

To find the origin of the cave houses in Guadix, we have to go back to prehistoric times, when they were first used by humans who sought shelter and protection from the elements and other threats to their survival.

During and after the Reconquista of Granada in the 15th century, many Muslims hid in the caves to avoid deportation from what was the only country they knew. As time passed, they turned the caves into comfortable and clean homes where they lived until they were ousted by Christian settlers from other parts of Spain, who had been transferred under Fernando III's resettlement plan.

Today, these cave houses constitute what is undoubtedly one of Spain's, and indeed Europe's, most unusual residential areas. There are about 2,000 dwellings spread across some 200 acres, some of them open to the public.

Granada province is home to 945.797 souls, approximately a quarter



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of which live in the capital of the same name. The city of Granada lies in a depression in the south-western part of the province at an altitude of 680m. It gets very cold in winter and very hot in summer. However, it usually cools down at night in summer, so although the average maximum day temperatures range in the mid-thirties, the average temperature on a 24-hour basis lies in the mid-twenties.

The city's greatest claim to fame is undoubtedly the Alhambra Palace which is visited by over 20 million tourists every year. The palace and its gardens are testimony to Granada's glorious past and the brilliant architecture of al-Andalus.

There had been a small fortification on the spot since the 9th century, but construction of the palace we know today started in 1238 and continued until it was finished in 1358.

On a rocky hill of difficult access, on the banks of the river Darro, protected by the mountains and surrounded by forest, among the oldest districts of the city, the Alhambra sits like an imposing castle of reddish tones in its walls with a stern exterior which belies the delicate beauty within.

Designed as a military zone at the beginning, the Alhambra became the royal residence and court of Granada in the mid-13th century after the establishment of the Nasrid Kingdom.

It went on to become a Christian court in 1492 when the Catholic Monarchs conquered Granada. Later, several structures were built to house prominent citizens, military barracks, a Church and a Franciscan Monastery.

Continued on page 8



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..... Continued from page 7

The palace together with the Albaicín and Sacromonte quarters are the most visited places in the city of Granada.

Albaicín is predominantly influenced by the Nasrid period, the Nasrid dynasty being the last to rule Granada before the Catholic Kings reconquered the city in 1492. It has maintained the narrow, steep streets typical for the period and it stretches from its highest point, the Mirador de Albaicín, which has one of the best views of the Alhambra Palace to be found in the whole city, down to the river Darro.

Below, on the banks of the river Darro lies Sacromonte, the Gypsy quarter, in the valley of Valparaíso. The neighbourhood is surrounded by riverside woodland and mountain forest.

Granada is noticeably a university city. It is home to the fourth largest university in Spain with approximately 80,000 students, and it is the most popular destination for international students under the Erasmus programme. The university also has campuses in the enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla.

The biggest economic sectors in Granada are service and construction. Tourism fuels the service sector with more than 25 million visitors annually.

Granada may be famous for its monuments and its past, but it is also a modern city with an extensive public transport network, large industrial estates and shopping centres.

It boasts no end of tapas bars and restaurants offering all the best of Andalusian and Spanish cooking. In spite of its status as one of Spain's most visited cities, Granada is not expensive, and apart from being a tourist city it also very much has the feel of the resident city that it is.

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Plato Alpujarreñoa from Granada Province

¡Buen Provecho!



Leave in the fridge for 24 hours.

The next day you cook the pieces of lomo in a large quantity of extra virgin olive oil, and when they are almost done, pour in the marinade and finish cooking.

Cool it down and keep the meat covered with the marinade/oil in an airtight container in the fridge, serving it in thin slices as a tapa or part of another dish. As, for example, plato alpujarreño!

To create our plato alpujarreño, we place the patatas a lo pobre and lomo a la orza on a large plate together with fried chorizo and fried morcilla. Sometimes fried plain Spanish sausages (longaniza, for example) are added, and many recipes also claim that some slices of jamón serrano are a must.

You top all this with one or two fried eggs and serve it with fresh bread.

I suggest you do some hard work or exercise before tucking in, as I reckon doing this majestic dish justice will take a rather considerable appetite!

Buen Provecho!

This is not the world's most original name: It means 'dish from Alpujarra'. (And no prize for guessing where it's from).

It is a simple dish, although with many components, the majority of which are various pork products. Typically the sort of thing plain country folk would have cooked and enjoyed, as the ingredients are all things that were at hand in an ordinary household.

There are actually a couple of recipes within the recipe.

One of the ingredients or, should I say, components, is 'patatas a lo pobre', poor man's potatoes, which is, on its own, a popular tapa all over Andalucía.

It consists of sliced potatoes and peppers, and onion wedges, fried slowly in olive oil until the potatoes are completely done and the onions just start taking colour.

Another component is 'lomo a la orza'. You know what lomo is, pork filet. Orza is a kind of ceramic vessel that was used for storing cooked meat preserved in its own lard, back before the age of the fridge.

Modern lomo a la orza is cooked with, and preserved in, extra virgin olive oil rather than pork lard.

You make a paste from various crushed spices and garlic and mix it with vinegar to obtain a spicy liquid. Pour the liquid over 15-20 cm long pieces of lomo ensuring that they are completely covered.

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Will Spring Be Here?

I'm writing this on a cold and grey March day. Spring is supposed to start in March, but although everything is beautifully green and lush, and spring flowers abound in the hills where Dakota and I roam, there isn't much spring feel about it yet.

So it'll be interesting to see what it's like by the time we go to press.

My recipes this month aren't especially spring-like either, but I promise you they are wonderfully tasty, and that, at the end of the day, is all that matters!

We're having two chicken dishes, baked camembert and - wait for it - baked red cabbage!

Read, cook and enjoy!

Chicken with Tomatoes and Olives

This is the only dish this month which does not go in the oven.

You can serve it with any pasta of your choice; my favourite pasta is spaghetti, so that's obviously what I used. Mash or rice would also go well.

As far as the chicken is concerned, you can use chicken breast or boned upper thigh which was my choice as it doesn't go dry like breast can.

Ingredients for two:

- 250g chicken meat, cubed
- 1 small onion, finely chopped
- 1 clove garlic, finely chopped
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- Salt and pepper
- 1 tsp oregano
- 1 tsp paprika
- 2 tsp tomato purée
- ½ tin chopped tomatoes
- ½ small glass white wine
- A handful stoned, sliced olives

Heat the oil in a frying pan, throw in the chicken, and fry over a high heat until the meat starts to take colour. Reduce the heat to medium and add the onion and garlic. Cook for another couple of minutes, season with salt, pepper, paprika and oregano. Mix well. Pour over the white wine and let it bubble until the alcohol evaporates.

Add tomato purée and chopped tomatoes, bring back to the boil and let it simmer uncovered for about 10 minutes before you throw in the olive slices and adjust the seasoning with salt, pepper and maybe a little sugar.

Serve with pasta, mash or rice.

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Chicken with Orange and Rosemary

I suppose by the time this reaches you, we'll be nearing the end of the orange season, but this lovely citrus is available all year round, although the eating varieties peak in winter.

For cooking, you're fine with what you can get in spring and summer.

My orange slices burnt slightly, but that gave them a lovely flavour, the rinds were crisp and the middle chewy.

I'll give you ingredients for four, as it is, in fact, a dish that would lend itself to entertaining. It can be prepared in advance and then you just stick it in the oven when the time comes.

Ingredients for four:

- 4 whole chicken legs
- 1 orange, scrubbed and sliced
- 1 red pepper, cut into large pieces
- 2 onions, quartered
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 twig rosemary, needles only
- Pepper

Marinade:

- 3 cloves garlic, finely chopped
- 1 twig rosemary, needles only
- 1 orange, grated rind and juice
- 1 tsp salt

First of all, mix the ingredients for the marinade, except the orange juice.

Place the chicken legs in a greased, ovenproof dish. Rub the marinade into the skin and pour the orange juice over the top.

Place the slices on top of the chicken pieces and distribute the red pepper and onion in between.

Spray or drizzle with olive oil and sprinkle with freshly ground pepper and rosemary needles.

Cook the chicken in the oven at 200°C until the chicken is cooked through, about 45 minutes to an hour.

Serve with potatoes of your choice. My choice was a lovely potato bake with cream.

Yum!!



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Sausages with Baked Red Cabbage

This is a really unusual and rather delicious way of enjoying sausages.



I used the Spanish criollo sausages, they are just sooo yummy!! Not to be confused with chorizo criollo, which is also nice, but not nearly as.

You can also use your favourite English sausages or butifarra. Actually, even morcilla would go nicely, but it would make a very dark meal.

Anyway, the sausages are almost secondary to the delicious baked red cabbage. The side dish is the protagonist here.

Ingredients for two:

- 2-4 sausages of your choice (depending on size)
- ½ small red cabbage, cut into wedges
- 250g beetroots, cut into wedges
- 1-2 apples, cored and cut into wedges
- 2 tbsp olive oil
- 1 tbsp apple vinegar
- 1-2 tsp fresh oregano or thyme leaves
- 1 tsp sugar
- Salt and pepper

Cook the sausages the way you prefer. I like cooking mine in the oven, so I stuck them in with the cabbage (though not for quite as long).

Whip together the olive oil, apple vinegar, herbs, sugar, salt and pepper in a big bowl.

Place the cabbage, beetroots and apples in a fairly snug, greased ovenproof dish and pour over the olive oil mixture. Shake the dish to distribute everything.

Bake in the oven at 200°C for about 45 minutes until the vegetables are al dente.

Serve the cabbage with the sausages and mustard.

And, if you must, some crusty bread, but it really isn't necessary.

The vegetables and sausages alone constitute a tasty, full and satisfying meal!



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This constitutes an absolutely heavenly light meal if you want to eat 'properly' but don't fancy a big meal.

Normally, when we talk about cheese, walnuts and pear are associated with blue cheese, but they go a treat with camembert as well!

A few rocket or other tender leaves would have added extra freshness; however, I didn't have any, and it was fine without as well.

Ingredients for two:

- 1 round camembert cheese
- 50g butter
- 50ml cane sugar
- 1 tbsp honey
- 1 tbsp milk
- 75g walnuts, halved
- 1 pear, halved lengthways and sliced

Bake the camembert in the oven at 200°C for about 15 minutes until it starts melting.

In the meantime, melt the butter and sugar in a small saucepan. Add the milk (if you wish, you can dissolve a little corn flour in the milk before adding it, it will make the mixture thicker). Turn in the halved walnuts and mix to make sure they are coated all over.

Arrange the pear slices and place slices of fresh crusty or toasted bread on two plates. Cut the camembert in half and quickly transfer the cheese onto the bread slices.

Spoon over the nut mixture and enjoy while the cheese is still warm and runny.

Baked Camembert with Walnuts and Pear



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facing the rambla





Jason's Meat Free Recipe: Roasted squash and carrot soup

As we're well into Spring, this is possibly the last 'hearty' offering until the nights start to draw in again. Originally, this was a genuinely accidental concoction one afternoon when there was veg to be used up. I've made it several times since then, and it's on the firm favourites list. It's warming and zingy with the addition of the sumac, which is widely used in middle eastern cooking and gives a citrus flavour. The Za'atar and the roasted squash seeds give a bit of crunchy texture as well. If you can't find Za'atar, it's easy to make. Make up a load and you'll soon get through it, as it's a great seasoning for lots of different dishes. I've added the blend instructions at the end.

Soup for two

- 2 large carrots, peeled and chopped into large chunks
- 1 medium butternut squash/500g pumpkin, peeled and chopped into large chunks
- 1 medium onion, peeled and halved
- 4-5 cloves of garlic, unpeeled but squashed with the back of a wooden spoon
- 3 tbsp olive oil
- 1 litre veg stock (I use 3 cubes)
- 2 tsp Sumac (Zumaque in Spanish)
- Salt and pepper to taste
- 2 tsp Za'atar (optional)
- Extra virgin olive oil to drizzle

If you can save the squash/pumpkin seeds, they're great roasted and then sprinkled on the top of the soup, with some Za'atar, and a drizzle of extra virgin olive oil. Put in a small heat proof dish with a little bit of oil and a sprinkle of pepper and put in the oven until they start to pop...about 5-10 mins. Any that you don't use are a great nibble with drinks.



Heat the oven to about 200 degrees. Add the carrot, squash, onion, garlic and oil in a roasting tin, and roast for about 20-25 minutes, checking occasionally, until the veg are cooked through and starting to caramelise.

Take out the garlic cloves and put the rest into saucepan with the ¾ of the stock. If you want to, and when they're cool enough to handle, you can squeeze the insides of the garlic cloves into the soup at this point – it will add a bit of garlic favour, of course, but it is generally a lot milder once roasted. Simmer for 5-10 minutes and then blend, either in a blender or using a stick blender, until you have a smooth, silky soup. If it's too thick, thin with a bit of the reserved stock.

If you're using the sumac, swirl it through the soup just ahead of using it. If you're not, a teaspoon of lemon juice will give it a bit of a similar 'tang'. Divide into bowls, sprinkle a tsp of Za'atar over, if using, drizzle some extra virgin olive oil and add the roasted seeds.

To make your own Za'atar, mix ½ tbsp of each of the following: dried thyme, dried oregano, cumin powder, coriander powder, toasted sesame seeds and sumac with about ¼ tsp salt. Keep in an airtight jar.

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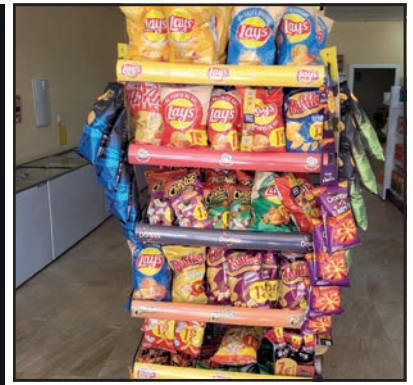


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Sunday Closed



What's Really in Your Tap Water in Almería?

Most of us moved here for the sunshine, the lifestyle, the relaxed pace of living. But there's one question that quietly niggles away: is the water from my tap actually any good?

The honest answer? It's usually legally safe to drink — but that's not the whole story.

Water in the Almería region is drawn from a variety of sources: deep boreholes tapping into mineral-rich aquifers, surface reservoirs, and desalination plants like the massive Campo de Dalías facility near El Ejido. Each source brings its own challenges, and by the time water reaches your home, it may have come from several of these sources combined.

The result? Water that is frequently very hard, carrying high levels of calcium and magnesium that silently scale up your boiler, dishwasher, and washing machine — shortening their lives and testing your patience. Water that can taste flat or 'chemically' from heavy treatment. Water that leaves white marks on everything from your shower screen to your glasses.

None of that is covered by the legal definition of "safe."

At Almeria Pure Water, we test water in homes across the

ALMERIA PURE WATER

region every day. We've encountered supplies that have passed through as few as three treatment stages and as many as 39. We've found water sourced from a single origin and water blended from four different sources. No two homes are quite the same.

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We look forward to hearing from you soon



Market Day



Roquetas del Mar

Thursday 7th May

Spend the morning strolling through one of the biggest and best street markets in the area and then visit some of the retail & food outlets in the Gran Plaza Shopping Centre or visit the beach and the old town.

17.00€
per person

MINI BREAKS

Following a very successful choice of destinations during 2025, Parra Travel would like to hear from you about places you would like to visit in Spain.

We are already working on 2027, we would like to continue to put together programmes that suit every budget and dream.

So please let us know and we will do our best to make these trips happen.

Day Trips & Mini Breaks arranged exclusively by Parra Travel
 Tickets and further information available from Parra Travel/C.A.T. Services (La Alfoquía)
 Reservations also available in Total Entertainment in Albox & Turre
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Guadix



22nd April
19.50€
per person

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Los Gallardos 0800,
 Hotel Overa 0820, La Alfoquía 0825,
 Arboleas 0835, Albox 0845
 Return leaves at 1700

The coach will take you to Guadix city with plenty of time to browse, see the sites and take a leisurely lunch. Why not take a trip to the famous troglodyte caves in Purullena where the locals are more than happy to show you around.

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.

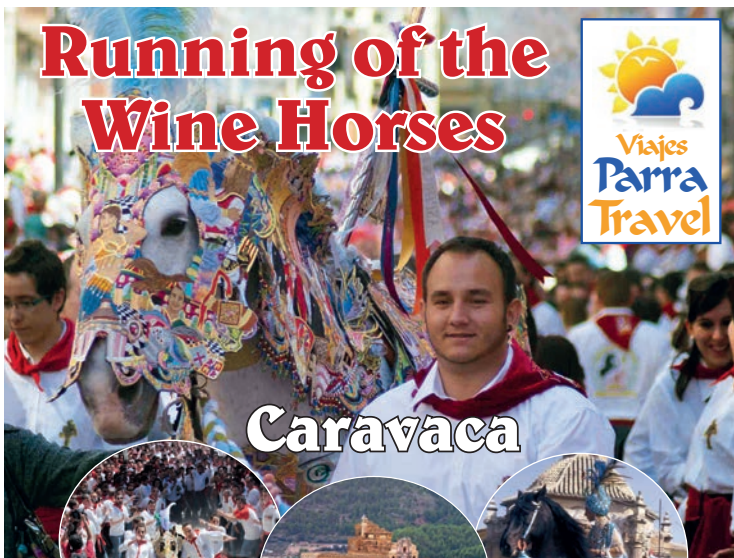
The wine was first blessed in the presence of the Vera Cruz, which was then bathed in the wine and when this was given to the people miraculously the sick and wounded were healed, and the contaminated water became drinkable!

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.

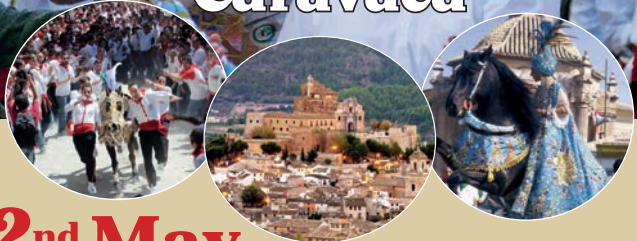
The cloaks and hoods have all been embroidered by hand, often using gold thread, by members of the Peña (a group of family/friends), who work tirelessly all year to prepare for this special occasion.



Running of the Wine Horses



Caravaca



2nd May
FROM 16.50€
per person

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Albox 0850, Arboleas 0900,
 La Alfoquía 0910,
 Hotel Overa 0915 &
 Huércal Overa 0925, Turre 0845
 Mojácar 0835
 Return leaves at 1730

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 mantles 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

Salamanca

3 Nights
*358€
per person



04th ~ 07th May 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Abba Fonseca -
central location

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Three nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4
Visit Ciudad Rodrigo
Visit Alberca

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



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

Cádiz / Jerez

3 Nights
*355€
per person



18th ~ 21st May 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Soho Boutique Puerto
in Puerto de Santa Maria

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Three nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4
Visit to Jerez - day 2

Pick-Ups Possible From:

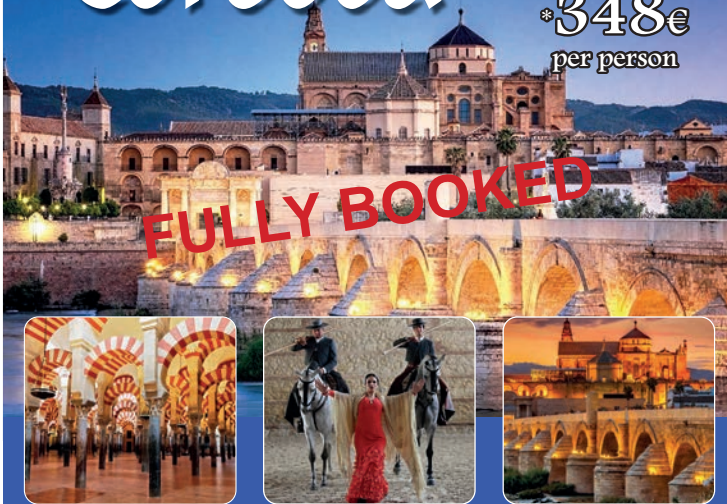
Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



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

Córdoba

3 Nights
*348€
per person



15th ~ 18th June 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Hesperia
central location

Price Includes:

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

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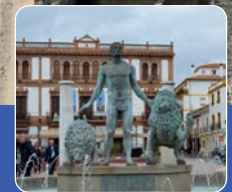
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Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



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

Ronda

3 Nights
*349€
per person



14th ~ 17th September 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Maestranza
Central city (opposite Bullring)

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Three nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4
Visit Setenil de las Bodegas

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand



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

Sevilla

3 Nights
*422€
per person

FULLY BOOKED

12th ~ 15th October 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Doña Maria
Central Sevilla (near Cathedral)

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Transfer to/from hotel
Three nights in 4* hotel
Breakfast - days 2, 3 + 4



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

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Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

Granada

2 Nights
*tbc€
per person

9th ~ 11th November 2026

Staying at:

4* Soho Boutique
Central Old Granada (near Cathedral)

Price Includes:

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



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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

Gibraltar

3 Nights
*263€
per person

NEW

16th ~ 19th November 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel OH Campo
Spain - 800m from border

Price Includes:

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



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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

Malaga Christmas Lights

2 Nights
*295€
per person

NEW

9th ~ 11th or 14th ~ 16th December 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Soho Boutique Equitativa
Central to lights

Price Includes:

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



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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

Benidorm Christmas

4 Nights
*491€
per person

Self-drive Option
also available

NEW

Benidorm Christmas

4 Nights
*467€
per person

Self-drive Option
also available

NEW

23rd ~ 27th December 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Presidente
Room with pool view

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Four nights in 4* hotel
Full Board includes
wine and water
Gala Meal (25th)



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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

23rd ~ 27th December 2026

Staying at:

4* Hotel Ambassador Playa II
Standard room

Price Includes:

Coach travel
Four nights in 4* hotel
Full Board includes
wine and water
Gala Meal (25th)



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

Pick-Ups Possible From:

Vera Consum, Mojácar, Turre, Albox, Arboleas, La Alfoquia, Hotel Overa
Pickup points and timings will vary depending on demand

Lisbon, Portugal - Spring 2027



Why not join us on our
first adventure out of
Spain!



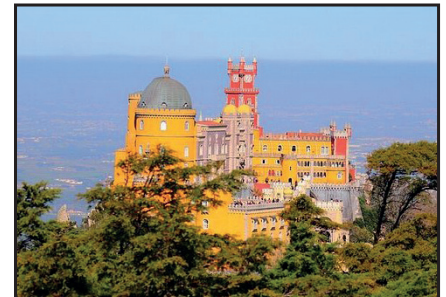
5th ~ 10th April 2027

1 night in Badajoz

3 nights in Lisbon

1 night in Huelva

(Pending hotel prices)



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El Jardín Nazarí in Vélez de Benaudalla

The Mini Generalife

A magical place, steeped in history. This is a good description of the Nazari garden in Vélez de Benaudalla, also known as the Mini Generalife, which has become one of the most visited places in the province of Granada.

The garden is an exceptional example of a Hispanic Muslim garden, and it has outstanding historical value.

Vélez de Benaudalla means 'Valley of Allah's Sons', and the town is famous for its Moorish pastries, special Christmas cookies called 'pestiños', its restaurants, Moors and Christians parade, honey, and farm products, apart from its splendid Nazari garden.

After the reconquest by the Catholic Kings, the town was given to Don Juan de Ulloa as his dominion.

The Al-Andalus gardens were designed to provide five benefits to the men and women that visited them:

Spiritual: Because you felt like you were in Paradise

Aesthetic: Because it made the countryside more beautiful

Psychological: A place to relax body and spirit

Scientific-botanical: Where new species brought in from the far East were acclimatised

Nutritional: Because its orchards provided people with food

The gardens are traversed by numerous narrow, stepped paths which take you through stalactite caves and past the many sights and wonders of this magical spot.

Water is an essential part of the Nazari Garden, and it is led through irrigation canals which follow the contours of the land, and which provide all the many smaller branches with water to supply the orchards, springs, spouts, and waterfalls. The sound of the water blends with the aromas of the many flowers and plants.

In these gardens an abundance of plant species can be found: Acacias, palm trees, myrtle, hydrangea, oleander, violets, jasmynes, roses, ivy, lavender, and thyme, as well as broad beans, lettuce, aubergines, onions, cucumbers, spinach, courgettes, and much more.

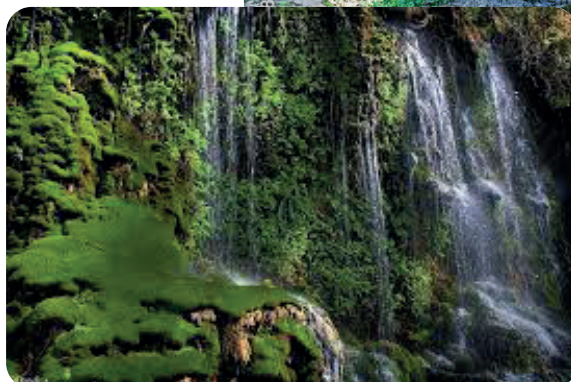
There is a legend about how this Mini Generalife came about:

Many centuries ago, in Vélez de Benaudalla, there was a Nazari prince called Benalí, who was a relative of the royal family of Granada. He was invited to the Alhambra to participate in a five-day celebration of one of the Muslim army's victories.

One day as he was walking around in the gardens of the Alhambra, the Generalife, he saw a very elderly gardener who was struggling to pick up a bunch of branches. He slipped and fell into an irrigation canal. Benalí ran to help him and asked one of the other gardeners to assist him to get the old man back on his feet.

It turned out that Yusuf, as the gardener was called, had broken a leg when he fell, but he was afraid of offending the prince with his wailing so he kept quiet. Nonetheless, Benalí was aware of his suffering, and he asked the other gardener to fetch the Alhambra doctor; the gardener refused this as they were servants and not worthy of receiving such treatment.

Then, oblivious to the difference in their social status, Benalí collected some strong branches to immobilise the broken leg and then he accompanied Yusuf to his house in Albaicín, where Fátima, his daughter, was waiting anxiously for his return.



Benalí told her that her father needed to be seen by a doctor and not to worry about the cost. 'Your father,' he said, 'will be seen by the Alhambra doctor, who is a good friend of mine'.

This was when Fátima realised that their benefactor was a Nazari nobleman. She immediately bowed her head in a gesture of obedience and respect.

The doctor soon arrived and set the bones, immobilising the leg with bandages and cane, and he prescribed pain-relieving herbs.

The days passed, and Benalí visited the old gardener regularly. As Yusuf's leg got better, a friendship blossomed between them, and Benalí fell in love with Fátima. When the time came for him to return to his home, he promised her that he'd come back one day to ask for her hand in marriage.

He kept his promise, and after some months he asked Yusuf for his daughter's hand. Yusuf replied that his daughter could give nothing but her love, and the prince said that was all he wanted from her.

The marriage was agreed upon. As Yusuf knew about Benalí's passion for the Generalife gardens, he sprang a surprise on him: 'As I cannot give my daughter neither treasures nor precious stones, and my fortune is non-existing, please let me give you the best I can offer: a small garden on your land for the pleasure of your senses'.

And that, according to legend, is how the Jardín Nazarí de Vélez de Benaudalla, one of the most beautiful and interesting gardens in Andalucía, was created.



HOMES & GARDENS

A Brief History of Spain....part 8

By Mike Woolnough

First of all, I must thank Martin for pointing out an error in a previous article; Catalonia is on the EAST coast, not the west as I said. It's an age thing, so I'd better hurry up and finish these articles before I lose it completely! What makes it worse is that Geography was my subsidiary subject! At least I know that somebody out there is reading this stuff. Perhaps I should award a prize to those who find any mistakes in this article. But back to the plot.....

Since I have mentioned Catalonia over there on the east coast we will have a quick look at that bit of Spain. It was originally part of France, but in the late 800's managed to secure independence thanks to one, Count Wilfred the Hairy.

Although they did not make a push for more territory in mainland Spain, the Catalonians did manage to take Majorca, Minorca and Ibiza from the Moors during the 12th century. They also, for a while, ruled most of southern Italy, including Sicily and Sardinia. The Catalan language, although being related to Spanish is actually derived from a French dialect "Langue d'Oc".

The Catalonians valued their independent background, and still do today!

Continued on page 26



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Meanwhile, our man of the hour, Christopher Columbus, had returned from his travels. He found Isabella and Ferdinand in Barcelona, which was where the court was now sitting. He came bearing gifts, gold, silver, pearls and, to prove that he had really been there, exotic parrots and six “Indians” in all their finery. He told Isabella he had discovered a new trade route to China. The fact that he was wrong did not matter one little bit, for he had given Spain much more – access to a huge new empire.

For 700 years the Christians had been fighting an on/off battle with the Moors, the Reconquista. Now that had been achieved things were a bit tame so the opportunity to sail off to new lands and

convert them to Catholicism was too much to resist. It started off slowly but by 1519 things had got into their stride. Herman Cortez had been working his way through the Carribean and, using Cuba as a staging post he set sail for what we now know as Mexico. His task force consisted of 508 Spanish soldiers, 16 horses and about 1000 Indians. They made their way up through a steep pass, pausing for breath at the top they looked down onto a vast plain below and had their breath taken away again! In this plain lay a huge lake and within it, there were many islands, some natural some man-made. Upon these islands was a magnificent and huge city. Around the edges of the lake were other smaller cities. Cortez had stumbled upon Lake Texcoco and the capital of the Aztec Empire, Tenochtitlán. This was not a collection of mud huts, this was vaster and grander than anything Cortez

had seen in his life. With a population in excess of 100,000 with sumptuous palaces, vast temples, cool gardens and world-beating sanitation!

But Cortez was there with a mission. To take this magnificent empire for Spain. He had three things the Aztecs had never seen before; horses and canons, oh, and the third, white men! The Aztec religion foretold of the coming of the Gods. Montezuma thought they were Gods and offered little resistance!

In 1531 an even smaller task-force landed on the coast of S. America, in what is now Peru. It was led by an even more devout and ruthless Catholic named Francisco Pizarro. His army consisted of 180 men and 37 horses. They fought their way inland killing anyone who offered the slightest resistance and a good many who offered none at all. Hearing of their arrival the Emperor of the Incas, Atahualpa invited Pizarro to come and meet him. When they met Pizarro presented Atahualpa with a Bible and called upon him to become a Christian and to submit to the rule King Charles I of Spain. (Isabella and Ferdinand had died a few years before, but we’ll come back to that another time!) Either accidentally or deliberately Atahualpa dropped the Bible, whereupon the Spanish discharged their canons into the 6,000 strong, unarmed entourage of Atahualpa, hacked his personal bodyguard to pieces and dragged him from his golden litter. The Emperor was then held to ransom. The amount demanded was enough gold to fill a nearby room. It took five months to collect sufficient gold to pay the ransom. When they had done so Pizarro gave Atahualpa an ultimatum. Be burned alive or convert to Christianity, in which case he would only be strangled! So he converted. Pizarro’s logic was that having converted he would go to heaven! With the Emperor out of the way Pizarro proceed to Cuzco, the Inca capital and from there he set about plundering and destroying the Incan civilisation.

These Spaniards were known as “Conquistadores” as they saw their task as extending the earlier work of the “Reconquista”. They even used the old Reconquista battle cry of “Santiago”!

It was not long before much of the Carribean, Central America and vast swathes of S. America were under Spanish control and sending galleon upon galleon of treasure back to Spain. Spain became the richest country in the western world. But vast wealth brought with it envy and enemies!

My inspiration for these articles comes from “SPAIN, an amazingly short history” by Bob Fowke. Published by Travelbrief Publications. ISBN 0-9548351-0-7



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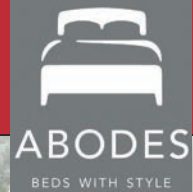
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Although the blue whale cannot be said to be a particularly Spanish beast it does, like us, quite enjoy a visit to the Canary Islands in winter, and it can also occasionally be seen off the coast of Cantabria.

So being a great lover of whales, I have permitted myself to include the blue whale in our monthly fauna feature.

The blue whale (*balaenoptera musculus*) is the largest living creature on Earth. Some specimens have been observed to be up to 33 meters long, weighing 190 tonnes. However, this was in the 30s, and these enormous creatures did not survive the ruthless whale hunting of times gone past. The largest specimens today measure up to 25 metres, the females being slightly larger than the males.

The blue whale is easily confused with his cousin the fin whale which has a similar shape and size; however, the fin whale's colouring goes between dark grey and black as opposed to the blue hue of this month's protagonist.

The stomach of the blue whale often looks grey or yellow-ish due to the algae that adhere to his underside. The upper side of the whale is blue or blue-grey. He has a large, slim head which measures almost a third of his total length with lengthways stripes on his throat. Of all the species of whale, the blue whale has the biggest baleen plates – half a meter wide and one meter long. They are suspended from the upper jaw and are used for filtering the crustaceans that constitute his staple diet.

On top of his head, the blue whale has two blowholes used for breathing. Every so often when the whale breathes out he emits a column of vaporized air which can be up to 9 meters tall.

The individual blue whale specimens can be identified by their dorsal fins which are proportionally small and different in each individual.

When the blue whale is exerting himself his heart rhythm is between 18 and 20 beats by minute as opposed to 120 in humans in the same situation. An adult person could stand straight inside the whale's widest arteries which measure 1.80m. His heart weighs almost 200 kilos.

In the right circumstances, a blue whale can live up to 90 years.

Blue whales live in all the world's oceans, and in winter they can

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The Blue Whale



be seen around the Canary Islands; they prefer spending the warmer months in Arctic waters.

The blue whale reaches sexual maturity at the age of five. The mating is a quick affair, however preceded by complex courtship rituals with plenty of male rivalry, although this is not fatal. The female appears to make her decision according to the rituals and the 'singing' ability of the male.

The gestation takes 10-11 months. When the calf is born it measures 6-7 meters and weighs 3 tons. It lives off the mother's milk for seven months, and it takes two to three years before mum is ready to mate again.

The most important part of the blue whale's diet is krill. He can eat up to three tonnes a day (2-4% of his weight). He can also eat small fish (sardines, anchovies and herring) depending on where he is and the time of year.

His top speed is 30 km/h, but he usually moves about at less than 10 km/h. The young ones enjoy making spectacular jumps out of the water from time to time.

The blue whale can stay emerged for up to 30 minutes and go down to a depth of 150 meters although he usually only feeds down to a depth of 100 meters.

Normally blue whales live alone or in pairs. In the mating season they all tend to meet up in certain areas and the females often form groups when they bring up their calves, and sometimes even share the babysitting with female fin whales.

The whales' singing has been much investigated, but even so no firm conclusions have been made. It seems clear that the whales use their singing as a means of communication although what it is for nobody is sure. According to some studies, a large whale's singing can be heard and understood by another individual at up to 4,000 km's distance; if this is true, the whales have the oldest and most extensive communication network on earth.

The blue whale's singing is very slow and monotonous, and only partly distinguishable to the human ear.

The blue whale was almost extinguished through intensive hunting in the 20th century, but thankfully worldwide bans and public awareness have turned the tide, and it is thought that there are between 10,000 and 25,000 blue whales alive in the world's oceans today.

THE ARTIST

By Evelyn McCrorie



Mary was coming to art late in life. At school she had been, by her own admission, distinctly average. Only twice in four years had her paintings made it onto the art room wall - a modest triumph that hardly suggested hidden talent. Her husband, on the other hand, freely confessed that his skills did not extend beyond stick men. "Haven't you heard of L. S. Lowry?" Mary had once teased.

So, when she finally put her name down for an art class for retirees, it was with some trepidation. She knew there was a long waiting list, as voluntary teachers were in short supply. Then life got in the way - creative writing, tai chi, visits to her mother in the care home - and the thought of painting drifted to the back of her mind.

Two years passed before the unexpected phone call.

"I understand you're interested in Art. I have a place for you," said a brisk voice. "Village Hall. Ten o'clock. Tuesday."

"Yes," squeaked Mary, her heart quickening. She had, until that very moment, forgotten all about it.

Monday morning found her in the local stationers, overwhelmed by the choice of sketch pads, brushes, paints, and pencils. Not sure of what was required, she bought a little of everything - plus a folding easel - and carried the lot home with a strange mixture of excitement and dread.

Tuesday dawned dark and drizzly. Buttoned into her raincoat, Mary caught the 9:20 bus. Her neighbour, peering nosily over the hedge, had remarked, "Out early?" Mary had nodded, clutching her oversized bag as though it contained treasure.

By the time she arrived at the village hall, she was flustered. The bus had been late, her coat was dripping, and she was met with the sight of a room full of people bent intently over their canvases, oblivious to newcomers. In the corridor, two other fresh recruits lingered, equally damp and uncertain. "It's like being back at school, isn't it?" whispered the woman. The man gave a wan smile.

The trio entered the main room just ahead of a rather formidable woman who took up position at the front.

"We have three new members," she announced crisply. "Carry on with your work, everyone, while I attend to them."

This was Carol, the teacher - her presence both commanding and reassuring. She quickly set them to work at a side table. "Draw a few trees, some grass, perhaps a flower or two."

Mary breathed a sigh of relief. That sounded manageable. She sketched busily, only to feel Carol's shadow fall across her paper.



"Trees don't look like solid blobs," Carol said, her tone brisk but not unkind. "Foliage is made up of leaves. Notice how they overlap. Think about it."

Mary wanted to pack up then and there. But Carol picked up a brush, and in a few swift, fluid strokes, leaves appeared where before there had been a green lump. Grass seemed to ripple, flowers suddenly bloomed. Mary watched, spellbound.

In that moment, she made a decision. She would not give up. Next Tuesday she would return, determined to listen, to learn, and - just possibly - to discover the artist within herself.

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Buyers are responding not only to the design, but to the long-term value. Each villa is built with energy efficiency in mind, incorporating high-performance materials, advanced insulation, and optional upgrades such as solar solutions and underfloor heating — delivering a modern home that is both

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Milena Ojiri, Area Manager at ADC Property, says:

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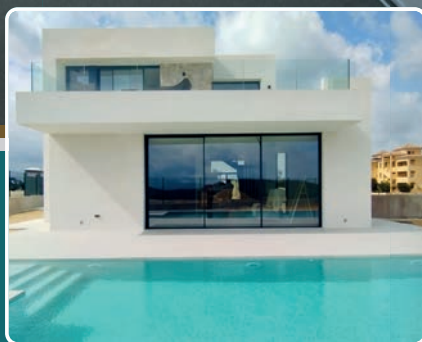
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The Wrong Shoes

By MGM

They say, amongst other things, that you can judge a man by his shoes. I do hope so as over the years considerable time, effort and money has gone in to my choice of footwear, and apart from the practicalities of comfort it's nice to think that my sartorial efforts were noticed if not admired.

The city of Granada is a favourite treat and out of season is even better. Sure, there are still plenty of tourists around, and of which we number, but it is less intense, and with the wonders of the internet there are bargains to be had. We were here, care of such a bargain and what a bargain it was. The apartment was close to the city centre, only one block up from the river and with fantastic views of the Alhambra. It had its own terrace. We were face on, central and with nothing to block the view. In the foreground I could look down on the tiled roofs, potted and brightly flowered patios of the houses below. The November sky had been a bright blue all day and as the sun descended and evening light approached, the city's colour started to come alive. I had been to the Alhambra before, many years ago, in the days before you had to prebook your slot. It is definitely worth the effort but I didn't need to go again – this perspective was all I needed and I was content to sit on the terrace studying the architecture of the old palace and notice how its mood changed with the light as dusk fell and finally the flood lights were switched on.

The next morning, after a late night wandering from tapas to tapas, I rose leisurely, eager for fresh coffee and toast. I stepped out of the apartment door onto the terrace to a fresh, damp morning. It had rained in the night, the air was cool, the sky a malevolent grey, the

Alhambra still impressive. I took two paces to the start of the marble steps down to street level and found myself on my backside, surprised and puzzled. The wet marble of the terrace had become as slippery as an ice rink. I clung to the bannister and hobbled my way down to the street. Outside there was a steep hill down to the river and I eyed its gleaming tarmac surface suspiciously but managed to walk down without incident. At the bottom I turned right and stepped onto a roadside pavement, my leg muscles tensed immediately as I detected the familiar slippery sensation between sole of shoe and wet marble. I walked slowly and cautiously; my toes curled inadvertently inside my shoes in an unconscious effort for extra grip. The pavements all the way down to the city centre were marble and treacherous. Architects, city planners and committee functionaries were cursed. I made it to a large square and viewed an ocean of wet marble. I took to the road, preferring my chances with the scooters and electric taxis, circumnavigated the square and sought safety in the first place we could find serving breakfast.



After ordering, I studied the other pedestrians. Nobody else seemed to be having any trouble as they walked, ambled and strode with confidence. I studied their footwear with a keen and critical eye. There was a preference for training shoes, a style I last wore in the gym at school and had scorned ever since.

Surely I couldn't be the only person that day in Granada struggling to walk its streets. I considered local knowledge. Growing up in such a place you would have appropriate footwear next to the umbrella stand for such days. Flip flops for the beach, ski boots for the Sierra Nevada, a stout pair of walking boots for the Camino Mozarabe



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and the right kind of rubber soles for wet Granada pavements. It would make sense.

There were probably Spanish laboratories inventing new compounds with test tracks laid out in marble, cobble, tarmac and flagstone, lightly oiled and misted with water where human guinea pigs were paid derisory sums to negotiate mock streets in experimental slip-ons. There would be shoe shops in Granada's backstreets doing a roaring trade in the latest slip over non-slip soles.

I sipped my café con leche and munched my tostada as I watched and contemplated. The tourists were having no problems either, perhaps it was a well-known phenomenon and the warnings were all over the tourist literature and websites, a red circle showing a pair of stout brogues and pair of stilettos with 3 fat rain drops above and a thick red cross through them, I just hadn't noticed.

I looked down at my shoes, black leather uppers with a brogue style pattern in the surface, a fine and stylish city shoe, well suited to the slim Italian style treds I preferred and showing an inch of argyle sock. They were, on reflection, suspiciously light. I slipped off one shoe and flipped it over. The sole did look a bit odd, certainly not leather or rubber, there was no kind of tread or pattern at all. I peered closer, took my coffee spoon and poked with the handle. It had a slightly soft open texture like dense foam, quite unusual and not something I had come across before. There was nothing for it but



to conclude it was just me, I clearly had the wrong shoes.

I looked at the sky, the clouds were threatening. It didn't look like the streets were going to dry out anytime soon and I had no other shoes with me. We ventured forth, a whole day of exploring to do. In an hour we became experts on paving materials and street construction – stone, marble, tarmac, cobbles; pavement to road ratio; incline percentage; off and on ramps; step and curb heights. We would turn a corner, peer down a street to check the nature and construction of the surfaces before deciding to enter. Entire plazas and shopping malls were no go areas and we would consult maps and take large detours to get to where we wanted to go. After two hours I was walking with an unnatural gait

and had to stop frequently at bars to rest my aching leg muscles. At one such stop an itinerant street trader doing the rounds of the tables with an array of unlikely items hanging off his fingers arrived at our table where I tried to convince him of a missed opportunity to improve his business. Slip over non-slip soles.

I have been back to Granada a few times for short unseasonal breaks, one of which featured snowshoe walking in the Sierra Nevada where, ironically, you get to wear the largest non-slip specific shoe invented. So, if you have been considering a Spanish city winter break, you may like to make use of my S.C.W.B checklist – coat, hat, scarf, umbrella and sunglasses, ID, credit card, EHIC card, or sufficient medical insurance and the right shoes.



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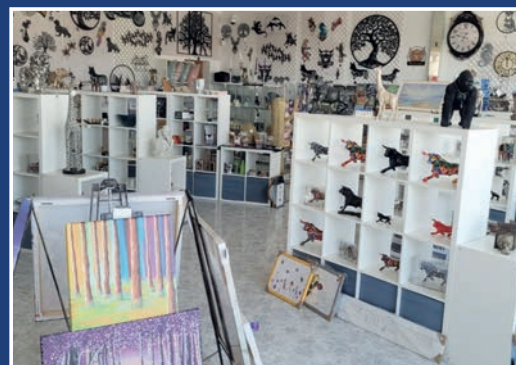
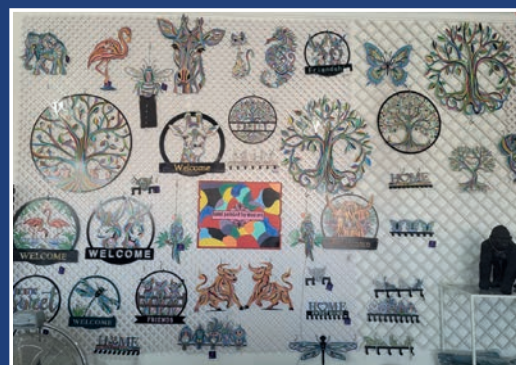
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The Seville Fair – Feria de Abril



presence, because ‘the men and women of Seville, with their dancing and singing, made trading difficult’.

The following year the fair was celebrated at its present location, and in 1849 the first streets were laid in.

The fair had a rural feel for the first few years, but more and more visitors from the city slowly changed its character. By 1859 there were 119 marquees, and the entertainment part of the fair took up more space than the agricultural area.

And a hundred years later, between 1947 and 1959, the last vestiges of agricultural aspects to the fair were phased out, and it became all festive.

For a whole week, Seville immerses itself in the fair. The music, the gastronomy, the dance, and the festive mood create a very special environment, and it is Seville’s most international and popular fair.

The annual fair in Seville, known as the Feria de Abril, is celebrated every year two weeks after Easter – unless Easter falls so late that it would start in May, then it is only one week.

The first fair was inaugurated on 18th April 1847 in Prado de San Sebastian with 19 marquees, and it was a big public success. It was an agricultural and livestock fair for people from near and far, but obviously must have also attracted people from the city of Seville, as already the following year the organisers requested more police

This year (2026) it starts on Tuesday 21st April and finishes on Sunday 26th.

The fair is kicked off with all the lights on the fairground being lit, starting with the spectacular gate, which is almost 50 metres tall and constitutes the entrance to the fair. Then all the streets of the fair, which are named after famous matadors, are lit one by one until the whole area is a sea of lights.

That same night, known as Noche de Pescaíto, the traditional fare is small fried fish (pescaíto) which is served in the innumerable establishments that constitute the fair, accompanied by plenty of Fino (dry sherry from Jerez) or Manzanilla (dry sherry from Cádiz).

The sherry continues being the traditional drink at the fair, although there is no lack of barrelled beer, good wines, and soft drinks, too.

The marquees, in Spanish called ‘casetas’, are nowadays fixed structures that are in situ all year round and then decked out every April for the fair.

They follow strict rules as to the construction and appearance which gives the whole fair an air of uniformity, although every marquee houses its own organisation, business, or association.

The marquees become second homes for their members for the duration of the fair, places for people to meet, share food and drink, dance, and have fun until the early hours of the morning.

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accompanied by members, but there are also plenty of public marquees where anybody can enjoy the ambiance and satisfy hunger and thirst.

During the Seville Fair, the women dress up in the traditional flamenco and gipsy dresses with combs and flowers in the hair; the men dress more soberly in short jacket and trousers, topped off with a wide-brimmed hat – the traditional Spanish rancher outfit.

Stunning Andalucian horses prancing about with a traditionally clad man on his back, a woman sitting behind him with her colourful, wide skirt draped over the animal's hind quarters is a common sight throughout the fair.

Equines are still an important part of the fair, and bar official and emergency vehicles, the only allowed means of transport within the fair is horse and carriage. A 2012 ordinance established that 1,400 permits for carriages to circulate in the fair could be issued.

Right from the start the visitors to the fair moved about in horse and carriages, initially to negotiate the flocks of livestock that were being herded through the streets.

Today, the carriages are decorated with finery, and the well-fed and -groomed horses wear tassels, bells, and flowers as they parade around the fair serving as taxis from one end of the huge area to the other.

Next to the area is the so-called 'Calle del Infierno' (Street from Hell), which is a giant funfair. It is installed every year to coincide with the Feria de Abril; the attractions come from all over Spain, and it is Spain's largest transient funfair.

When night falls, the paper lanterns of the fair are lit together with all the other lights. There are no horses or carriages during the night. The marquees serve food and drink until the wee hours of the morning.



Those who manage to stay awake can enjoy churros and hot chocolate for their breakfast.

Since 2005 the lights have been turned off at 3 am, except on the last Saturday when they are on until 6 am; and that night when they are turned off at midnight and the fair is rounded off with a spectacular firework display.

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Woop Woop Land

By Tom Fynes

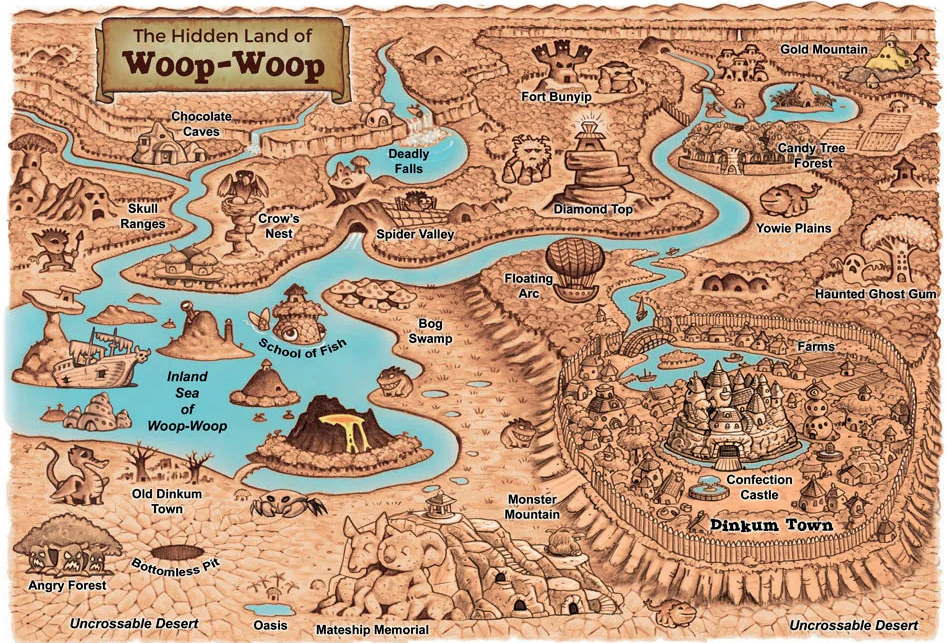
I sometimes have to travel from Vera on the coast, inland, to either Albox, Arboleas or Tabernas, to meetup with friends and colleagues. I've always referred to this travelling inland, as going to 'Woop Woop Land.'

One in our writer's group believed I had made up this wonderful saying myself but sadly no. It's a very old Australian humorous saying, from the Oz outback. 'Woop Woop Land,' is a saying referring to a remote, out-of-the-way place, essentially it means, "in the middle of nowhere." Its origins contain elements of Australian culture, humour, and a touch of the Aboriginal languages.

A lot of people have heard of a town in Australia called Wagga Wagga. And this reduplication seems to have come from the native Aboriginals naming system. Within their language it signifies a reinforcement of a place or name. Giving it more importance. Say it once it's important. Say it twice it doubles up the importance.

The phrase, 'Woop Woop' draws on this reinforcement of what you would only call extreme isolation. The first documented use of 'Woop Woop' dates to around the 1890's, around the same time as other weird names like Oodnagalabhi, Bullamakanka, and Bandywallop pop up.

'Woop Woop' quickly became a byword for backwardness, remoteness, or a lack of sophistication. Essentially, a place far far from civilization.



While 'Woop Woop' was just a made-up expression of remoteness, there was a real place, that for whatever reason, (marketing?) took this name for their own. In 1925 the Adelaide Timber Company established a 'Timber Mill' and called it 'Woop Woop.' It was near a town called Wilga, in Western Australia. It was abandoned in 1928 after the local timber was exhausted.

It's a place I would love to visit but all that remains of the legendary 'Woop Woop Timber Mill' are rusted metal stumps and bricks slowly disappearing into the bush, near that very forgettable town called Wilga. There must be an opportunity for a type of Disneyland Paris Megalopolis to be built to pull in the crowds. Come visit 'Woop Woop Land.' A place so remote even the dinosaurs avoided it.

The nearest the Spanish have to the expression 'Woop Woop Land' is the phrase: "Me pilla un poco lejos" which is commonly used in Spanish, to express that something is physically far or inconveniently distant for the speaker, making it challenging to attend or participate. It is often employed in casual conversations to politely decline invitations or explain why one cannot go somewhere. Examples include:

Declining an event: "Me gustaría ir, pero me pilla un poco lejos" (I'd love to go, but it's a bit far for me)

I have never declined to go to Albox, Arboleas or Tabernas but I have said, "I'll see you all in 'Woop Woop Land,'" which always draws a smile. In New Zealand, a similar term "wop-wop" is used with the same meaning. In Ireland they'd say, "Out in the sticks," England it's, "Back of beyond."

I've often wondered do people living in Sergio Leone movie locations know they are living in way-out "Woop Woop Land!"

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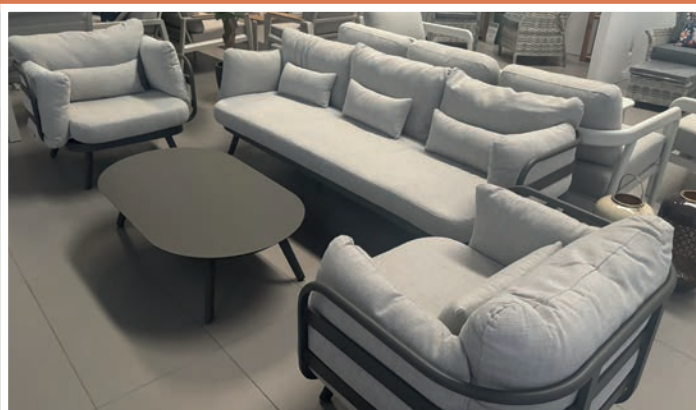
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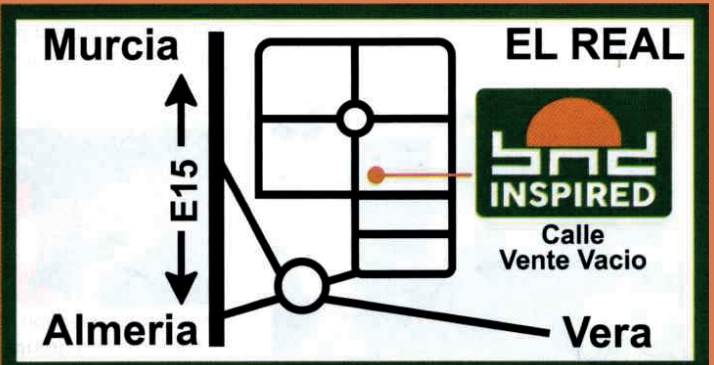
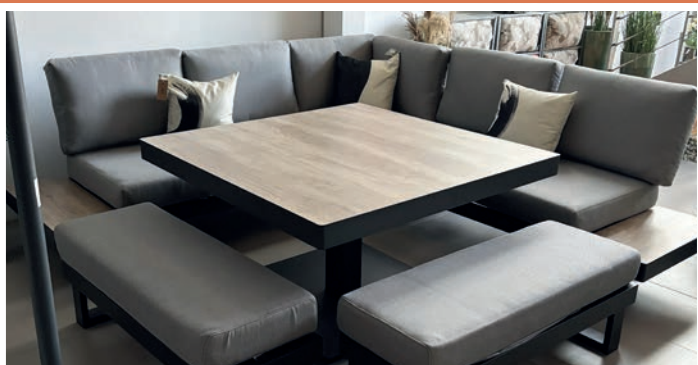


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Why are mushrooms soft?

By Jos Biggs

‘Ow!’ Bing the Pixie stood up, stretched and rubbed his bottom. ‘Stones are so hard, I hate sitting on stones.’

Flit the Fairy fluttered down from a tree and stood next to him. ‘I agree. Trees are no better, they’re just as hard. And they’re full of birds!’

She thought for a second. ‘And caterpillars. And ants. And...’

Bing interrupted, ‘I’ve got beetles! Nothing is as bad as a beetle...’

‘You should give ‘em a good whack with one of these! That usually works.’

Hub the Gnome strolled up carrying a shovel. ‘Well, must get on. Got some diggin’ to do.’

He mooched off. His parting words were ‘Worms! I hate worms!’

A robin flew down and settled on Bing’s stone. ‘You should do something about it.’

‘What?’ queried Bing.

‘I don’t know. Make a nest like I do. Nice and cosy, a good nest.’ He ruffled his feathers. ‘I’m going to follow Hub. I love worms.’ And in a brown and red flash of feathers he was gone.

Bing and Flit looked at each other. A big fat raindrop plopped on the ground next to them. Immediately they ran, heading for the nearest plant with big leaves, and took shelter underneath it.

They ran, they didn’t fly. When you are as small as a pixie or a fairy a raindrop is huge; it’s like having a whole bath emptied on you in one go, and that tends to make flying risky.

Flit shivered. ‘I don’t want to live in a contraption made of twigs. It doesn’t sound comfy.’

‘Or safe.’ She added. ‘If only there was something soft and comfy to sit on.’

‘Or sit underneath.’ Added Bing, peering out at the rain.

There was a fluttering sound, a soft thump and the space under the leaf was suddenly full of butterflies.

Each butterfly was holding a gossamer, and each gossamer was attached to a delicate filigree open topped phaeton.

The occupants, King Oberon and Queen Titania scrambled awkwardly out of the phaeton and pushed past the butterflies to get under the shelter of the leaf.

Flit curtsied and Bing bowed. ‘Your Majesties.’

Just then Hub trudged up. ‘Too muddy to dig. ‘Ere, budge up you lot, make a bit of room for a poor wet gnome. Oh, hello your Majes. I suppose you’ve come to sort out their sitting problems?’ He tipped his head towards Bing and Flit.

King Oberon stiffened. Queen Titania put her hand on his arm. ‘Now dear, never mind. He’s a gnome, and you know gnomes are always rude -it’s just how they are.’

‘What sitting problems?’ Oberon enquired haughtily.

Unabashed Hub answered ‘They were complaining about having to sit on hard things, like stones. They said it gave them sore ar..... Go away, this leaf is full. And take that bloody worm with you.’ Hub waved his shovel at the robin, who had arrived with a middle-sized worm in his beak.



‘Is this true?’ Titania turned to Flit.

‘Er, well yes, Your Majesty. Sometimes we have to wait between jobs, and...’

‘Stones are hard.’ Bing broke in.

‘Couldn’t we have soft stones?’ Flit interposed.

Continued on page 46



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..... *Continued from page 45*

‘Sort of raised off the ground so that we can shelter under them if it rains?’ Bing was on a roll.

‘And a bigger one for me, ‘cos I’m heavier.’ Hub was not going to get left out.

Oberon gurgled. He really didn’t like Hub.

‘Yes, my sweethearts. I’m sure I can manage something.’

She waved her magic wand and a small frog appeared.

‘Oh.’ Flit didn’t know what to say; this was not what she meant, and she could see a multitude of problems with sitting on a frog.

‘Tell the frog what you want, and he’ll get it for you.’ Seeing her hesitate Titania explained ‘He’s an Amazon frog. Amazons get you anything.’

Flit screwed up her courage. ‘Please, Mr. Amazon Frog can you make us something soft to sit on...’

‘And shelter underneath.’ Bing wasn’t going to let the moment slip by.

‘Aaaark.’ Said the frog, turned round and hopped off.

‘Oh.’ Flit sounded disappointed.

‘Watch.’ Said Titania.

Sure enough, wherever the frog had trodden a mushroom sprang up.

‘Try it. It’s stopped raining.’ Titania urged.



Flit and Bing scampered out to the first mushroom and clambered on top of it.

Flit bounced and laughed. ‘It’s wonderful. Just the right amount of soft.’

Bing peered over the edge. ‘And a good overhang to shelter under. And look! We can even rest our backs by leaning against the pole in the middle.’

‘You mean the stalk.’ Titania corrected.

‘Oi! Not you!’ Oberon thundered at Hub, who was trying to climb on the mushroom from the other side.

‘You’re not getting a mushroom, you’re getting a hat.’

With that a pointed hat appeared on Hub’s head. He reached up and felt it. ‘Aw, meanie.’

‘What did you say?’ Oberon glowered.

‘I er...meanie....I er.’ Hub flustered.

‘And just for that you’re never going to shelter. You are going to stay out in all weathers, day and night.’

And that is why you see pixies and fairies sitting on nice soft mushrooms, but gnomes are always outside working.

When next you pick a mushroom remember why it is soft like an armchair, and think - a fairy or a pixie might have been sitting on it only hours before.

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GOING GREEN

By Jason Lowther

The Anthropocene: real or imagined?

This month might seem a bit random – or more random than usual – but I hope you’ll indulge me. This subject was supposed to be last month’s column, but time and the deadline beat me, which is ironic given the subject matter. Anyway, here we are now. This topic arose as a result of a late-night conversation with my wife about a term, the ‘Anthropocene’ which purportedly describes the time in which we live. It stems from two Greek words: ‘anthropos’, meaning human or person; and ‘cene’, which derives from the word for new or recent. I say purportedly, because the jury, it seems, is out. I’ve been using the term for a while in my work, and hey, even autocorrect and spellcheck default to it, so it must be real, right?

It would help to start by setting out the basis. Geological time in itself is sometimes difficult to get your head around. A couple of million years here and there don’t really add up to much of a wait. A geological epoch is a subdivision of geological time, shorter than a period and longer than an age, defined by distinct changes in Earth’s strata, climate, and life forms. All of them are a lot longer, despite what you may believe when waiting for a plumber, than mañana, or the Cornish version, ‘dreckly’, (often described

as mañana without the sense of urgency). An epoch acts as a chapter, or reference point, in Earth’s history, marked by significant fossil or rock record changes. You may have seen documentaries for example, where it’s been shown where the layer of sediment lies indicating the abrupt end of the dinosaurs, and what is called Cretaceous–Paleogene Layer. Other examples include the Pleistocene (ice age), Holocene (post-ice age), and potentially, the Anthropocene (now?).

The Anthropocene as an idea started to gain some traction in 2000 when scientists Paul Crutzen and Eugene Stoermer, an atmospheric chemist and a biologist respectively, proposed it as a geological epoch. This was on the basis that human activity has become the dominant influence on Earth’s climate, ecosystems, and geological processes. They argued that the Holocene epoch, which was the relatively stable geological period following the last Ice Age, had effectively ended due to the scale of human environmental impact. The term reflects the argument that humans have altered the planet so profoundly that the changes are comparable in scale to those produced by major natural forces such as glaciations or shifts in the tectonic plates around the globe. Crutzen and Stoermer argued that industrialisation, population growth, fossil fuel use, and

EON	ERA	PERIOD	EPOCH	Ma		
Phanerozoic	Cenozoic	Quaternary	Holocene			
			Pleistocene	Late	0.011	
		Tertiary	Neogene	Pliocene	Late	0.8
					Early	2.4
					Late	3.6
					Early	5.3
			Paleogene	Miocene	Late	11.2
					Middle	16.4
					Early	23.0
				Oligocene	Late	28.5
	Mesozoic	Cretaceous		Late	34.0	
				Early	41.3	
				Late	49.0	
		Jurassic		Early	55.8	
				Late	61.0	
				Early	65.5	
		Triassic		Late	99.6	
				Early	145	
				Late	161	
				Middle	176	
		Paleozoic	Permian		Early	200
					Late	228
					Middle	245
			Pennsylvanian		Early	251
					Late	260
			Mississippian		Early	271
					Late	299
Devonian			Early	306		
			Middle	311		
			Late	318		
Silurian		Early	326			
		Late	345			
Ordovician		Early	359			
		Late	385			
		Middle	397			
Cambrian		Early	416			
		Late	419			
	Early	423				
	Middle	428				
	Early	444				
	Late	488				
	Middle	501				
			513			

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So, what physical markers or other geological signatures might we offer in support of this idea? By way of comparison, the transition from the Pleistocene to the Holocene is marked by the end of the last major glaciation, and some readers will doubtlessly remember geography classes studying glacier-shaped landscapes. Supporters of the Anthropocene label argue that human activities have produced similarly clear geological signatures. A number have been proposed identified, which I'll briefly introduce.

First, human activities since the Industrial Revolution have shaped atmospheric processes, increasing, dramatically compared to the geological time clock, atmospheric carbon dioxide and methane concentrations. Fossil fuel combustion, cement production, and deforestation have altered the global carbon cycle at a rate unprecedented in recent geological history. Linked to this is the biodiversity losses which are part of what some term a "sixth mass extinction", whereby species' extinction rates are occurring at a far higher level than natural background levels. It is argued that this biodiversity loss is driven primarily by human activity such as habitat destruction, pollution, and overexploitation. Again, somewhat linked, is the way that humans have transformed land. Large

scale agriculture (Almeria's greenhouses, anyone?), urbanisation, mining, and infrastructure have reshaped vast portions of the Earth's surface. Forests have been cleared, rivers dammed, and landscapes engineered on continental scales.

Continued on page 50

land transformation had altered Earth's systems SO dramatically that a new epoch should be recognised. Since then, the Anthropocene has become adopted as major framework for understanding global environmental change. However, whilst it is a familiar term in science, environmental policy, law and beyond it is not universally accepted as a formal geological epoch.

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..... Continued from page 49

As to things that we humans have created, there are plenty of examples out there which would stand the test of time in a sediment sample. We've mastered chemistry and made substances like plastics, aluminium, and concrete, let alone the tens of thousands of forever chemicals (PFAS etc.). While some of these are presenting a conundrum as to how to manage them, they are also accumulating in sediments across the globe. These materials may become distinctive geological markers millions of years into the future, just like the shells in the cliffs on some local beaches. Perhaps the strongest candidate as a geological marker is radioactive material released by nuclear weapons testing (mostly by the USA, USSR, France, the UK) in the mid-twentieth century. These isotopes spread globally and have become embedded in sediments, ice cores, and soils. There's a definite pre/post nuclear age distinction that has humanity's fingerprints all over it!

So, the Anthropocene idea certainly has at least some foundation. Perhaps because of this, it has become a familiar concept in environmental science, geography, and even philosophy, because it emphasises the scale of human influence on the planet. Up until fairly recently (as in the last 100 years or so) there was a different understanding of the relationship between peoples and nature. For centuries, nature was often understood as something very separate from human activity. The



Anthropocene suggests that this distinction is no longer meaningful: humans are now a planetary force comparable to volcanoes or ice ages. Arguably that presents us with an ethical dilemma, because if humans have become the equivalent of a geological force applied to the natural world, then humans must surely also bear responsibility for managing Earth's systems? Climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution (the unholy trinity of our times) become not just environmental problems but defining features of the age. Thinking about the Anthropocene can lead us to view human history as not just

solely through political or economic changes, but as transformation of Earth systems. For example, with that thinking, mass industrialisation becomes a geological event as well as a social one.

As I noted at the start, despite the wide and popular use of the term, the Anthropocene remains scientifically contested. The main disagreements concern whether it meets the formal criteria for a geological epoch. First of all, non-adopters argue that it is too recent to be clearly visible in rock strata. Many proposed markers, such as plastics or industrial pollution, have only existed for decades or centuries. Some scientists, specifically geologists – who are never knowingly

in a rush - argue that geological time should be defined over much longer periods. Others question whether our influence as a species is truly distinct enough to define a new epoch, or if it is, when did it actually begin? Some researchers hark back to the development of agriculture, which altered landscapes, increased greenhouse gases, and reshaped ecosystems. Others have suggested that it should be the late-eighteenth century, which is linked to industrialisation and fossil fuel use. Most though point to the mid-twentieth century, and specifically 1952 following the global spread of nuclear fallout from more and bigger H-bomb tests.

Perhaps surprisingly, the issue has been the subject of a vote by the gatekeepers of the naming of the 'cenes', the International Union of Geological Sciences, which oversees determination of whether proposed epochs meet strict criteria. A special working group worked on the issue for a decade – yes, a decade! – and while many members supported formal recognition for the change from Holocene to Anthropocene, it was rejected in 2024. A Holo victory no less...I'll get my coat. Its informal use is widespread however, and it is a convenient way to frame the current state of the Earth.

Of course, the minute you get more than one academic in a room there will be often heatedly, divergent views. Some argue that it tars all of humanity with the same brush, so that those nations which have traditionally caused the problems with large scale industrialisation, and high levels of resource consumption, are lumped in with those who didn't really contribute to the problem at all. There is merit in that view, but I feel what we call it is less important than how it manifests. Others have argued that describing humans as a geological force may normalise environmental damage by making it seem inevitable rather than avoidable. But what should we humans do? Should we try to deliberately manage the Earth's systems, or try and minimise our interference with them? We don't have a great track record in environmental management, and given that even remote regions such as the Arctic and deep oceans show evidence of human influence through pollution and climate change, where to start?

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When unprotected and exposed to water, wood has a tendency to stain, to warp, and to rot. For anyone trying to maintain a valued piece of furniture or beautiful floors and decking, this can be a real concern.

Although an easy and regular option, rather than buying chemical products from the supermarket such as spray furniture polish or varnish, why not turn to the kitchen cupboard for a few milder, more natural solutions. Better for you and much better for the environment. And better still, these natural wood polishes and preservers really work.

Olive Oil and Lemon

Mix three parts olive oil to two parts lemon juice. This can be put into a spray bottle and applied that way, or a polish rag can be dipped into the mixture. The solution can be stored in a glass jar or a spray bottle. That's it. There's that lovely lemony scent in the air and the wood is being looked after.

Coconut Oil

Sometimes it seems we have really over-complicated our lives with chemicals. Coconut oil can save the day again. Give the wood a once-over with a damp rag, let it dry, and rub in some straight coconut oil. It will moisturise, revitalise, and protect the wood. Plus, though it isn't the smell associated with furniture polish, coconut is a pleasant aroma for the nose.

Oil and Vinegar

Oil and vinegar is the crux of most salad dressings, so it can't get much safer to use. Believe it or not, a bit of canola oil (3 parts) and vinegar (1 part) makes a dandy wood sealant, protecting wood from burrowing insects, wear, and water. Plus, this can be reapplied to revitalise the wood, something that doesn't work without sanding off the varnish.

Linseed Oil

This is a natural substance, linseed oil being from flax. In truth, it gives off strong odours and has the reputation of taking forever to dry. However, it is safer and perhaps worth the wait. While raw linseed oil is actually taken as a medicinal food, when boiled, linseed



is used as a natural ingredient for sealants, check that it doesn't have petroleum additives. To avoid possible additives, buying raw linseed oil and boiling it at home is another option.

Good Preserving Practices

Like with health, too often we wait until it's too late, working to fix a problem we could've prevented. Wood works the same way. Over-exposure to sunlight and water will degrade it faster, so we should take preventative aims to preserve our wood in the first place.

If possible avoid direct sunlight for extended periods of time and clean up any spills, being especially mindful in the kitchen and bathroom, where water tends to be.

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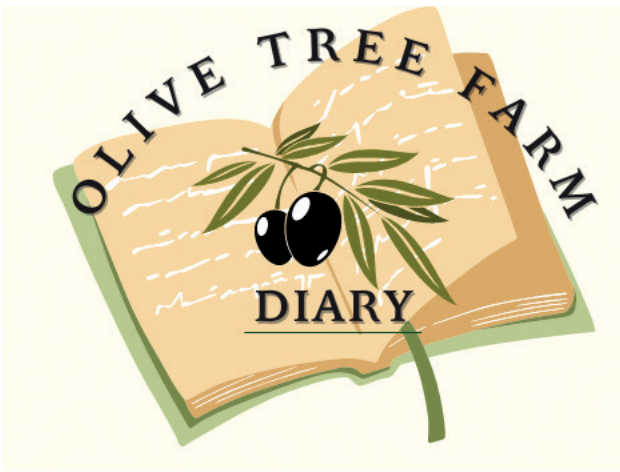
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The sun has finally graced us with its presence here at Olive Tree Farm, and I have already been finger-wagged by Spanish friends for daring to wear short sleeves and tempting the cold back! It has certainly been overdue, though. I don't remember having quite a prolonged winter as we had this year. Rain and wind are constant annual guests, but normally with a spot of sun in between. Better late than never!

The pair of ducklings we managed to save have grown on so much in the last four weeks that I now call them our little teenagers. We've had them in their outside enclosure during the days now, which has certainly spurred on their growth, but we've still been bringing them into the house at night. The evenings remain very cool, and their adult feathers are still trying to come through, and without a mum and a group of siblings to huddle up with we decided to play it safe — although it has meant mopping the floors a lot more!

Once Spring fully settles its roots, they will be moved permanently



into the garden, where they will eventually be joined by some small relatives.

Mum duck is now sitting on a clutch of 14 eggs, and we expect them to start hatching over the next couple of weeks. Hopefully, without the wild wind and rains, she will have greater success in getting more ducklings along — although we will certainly be keeping an eye on her progress and intervene if needed.

Up on the farm itself, things are finally drying out. As the weeks go, and the sun stays with us for longer in the evenings, we will be up there more and more and getting everything in order.

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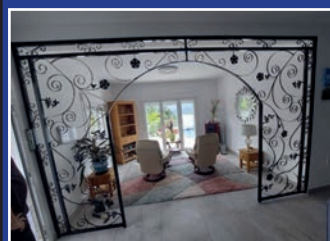
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We are keeping an eye out for fertile goose eggs, or even just young goslings for sale. They make the farm feel like a farm, and it just hasn't been the same up there without a load of honking excitement over feeding time. They also make excellent guards, usually alerting us even from the house if there is something afoot.

We are also going to be looking at growing on some vegetables this year, something small to start with to not overwhelm us while we try to get back on top of things. It is always a great experiment for the children, who take great pride in watching their seeds become fruits or vegetables that are then served at the table — not to mention that it always seems to taste so much better, but maybe that is just biased taste buds knowing we grew it on ourselves.

In other words, Luna, our large crossed Spanish mastiff, has taken big steps to become the ultimate Farm Dog in the last four months too. She has become quite proficient in helping Ben to guide the animals back into their enclosures in the evenings, a job she takes quite seriously! If Ben goes up without her then she will sulk for an hour for having been left out, so even if he is only nipping up to cast an eye on everyone, he can't help but invite her up too, and she races him up the hill to oversee her fairly diverse herd.

We've certainly been through a lot in this farm life since November, and learned a lot too, and its nice to finally have everything calm down and for us to renew our appreciation for what we have here. Friends have come visiting and have had nothing but praise for what we're managing to do, which has really helped us keep and maintain a positive mindset with everything going on.

I can't wait to see where we get to by the time summer is here, and hopefully that means a lot of news to share too... we shall see!

Thank you for reading. 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.

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Who is this young lady I hear you ask. Well, if you have heard the theme tune to Dr. Who, then, that was she! A wonderfully talented woman, unsung hero of electronic music and a “thinker outside the box”.

During her primary school years, she could be found teaching her classmates reading, writing and playing tunes on the piano. After Grammar school, she was awarded a scholarship to study maths in electrical engineering at Oxford and Cambridge but changed studies after a year or so to concentrate on music. She obtained her degree in maths and music in 1959. She then approached Decca Records. They told her that women couldn't operate tape recorders (and reverse cars around bends), she didn't get the job! Decca also turned down the likes of the Beatles... See the pattern? Haha! That will teach them.

After a year or so teaching and working in the newly set up telecoms sector, she joined the BBC as an assistant studio manager, working on classical music schedules. It was here she heard about the new “Radiophonic Workshop”. The BBC was under pressure to move with the times to create more spectacular sound effects for programs. Up until now, sound effects were people walking on gravel and crunching paper. They de-mothballed some quite outdated equipment, tape machines, mixers, signal generators etc and told this small group to get on with it. In 1962, she worked with a composer, Ron Grainer who was asked to write a theme tune for

the new Sci-fi series Dr. Who. Delia went away and electronically produced the masterpiece that we all know and love and hid behind the sofa when hearing it. She did this by recreating the main tune as written by Grainer, using a batch of signal generators, scraping bass guitar strings, recording the sounds of industrial metal lamp shades being hit with screwdrivers.... All this was recorded on tape machines running at different speeds to create the out-of-the-world feeling. She was known to have loops of tape running up and down the corridors of the studios at BBC's Maida Vale. Her main



challenge was to get the tape recorders to run in synch, so these were modified with variable speed controls so she could manually make tiny changes as required. The result speaks for itself! Grainer, the composer, was so impressed, he wanted Delia to be known as a co-composer. But the BBC being what it was and is still, wouldn't have this. It was only 50 years later was she accredited for her input. Remember, this was way before computers and synthesizers. Painstaking work of recording, rerecording, cutting and splicing tape, playing backwards and forwards, slow, fast and upside down. Time consuming.

Toward the end of the latter part of the '60s, she set up a team, with some of her colleagues from the Radio Workshop, called the Delta project. This was aimed at making the first “electronic” music and

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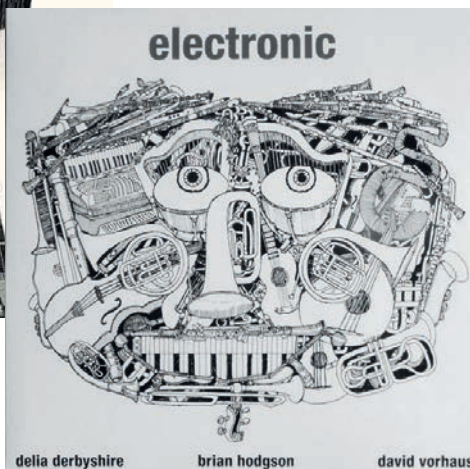
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accompanying sounds, which became popular with the “free love” music festival scenes.

Shortly after, Delia and colleague Hodgson and musician Vorhaus, established the Kaleidophon Studios in Camden, North London. This venture was to create music and sound effects for the theatre business and that was to become very successful. The three of them, working as the band called White Noise, produced an avant-garde album, “Electric Storm”. It is said by those in the business that it has become a milestone in electronic music history.

Toward the ‘70s, Delia worked on and off in the music business with the likes of Royal Shakespeare Co, Paul McCartney, Yoko Ono and

various West End production companies. Early computer-generated music and the Moog synthesisers were now being used. Delia was never really at home with this sort of equipment, although she did use it to a small degree. She felt it not to be analogue, organic enough for her likes.

She left the music business in the ‘80s. Like many a free thinker, her personal life was less than tidy, not helped by her alcoholism.

She had married and divorced a year later. She took several jobs, including working as a radio operator for a British gas project. Shortly before her passing she did some more work with electronic music, producing material for Peter Kember, creating a catalogue of sound effect clips.

After her death in 2001, approx. 300 reels of recording tapes capturing snippets of her history were found in the attic of her house. They are now preserved and digitised for safe keeping. She has a blue plaque on the house where she was born in Coventry, where the ceremony was conducted by a past

Dr. Who, Colin Baker. She also now has a posthumous Doctorate in electronic music given by Coventry University.

So next time you watch Dr Who, please think of Delia, surrounded by yards of recording tape and cobbled together vintage recording gear!

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Declassified: What Donald Trump Really Knows About Area 51

The truth, it turns out, is not actually out there—it's here, buried under mountains of paperwork.

For decades, speculation surrounding Area 51 and Roswell, New Mexico has existed in that peculiar cultural overlap between conspiracy theory, science fiction, and late-night radio. Grainy photographs, anonymous whistleblowers, and a rotating cast of “experts” have all contributed to a mythology so dense that it has, at times, seemed almost self-sustaining.

Now, however, a cache of documents—purportedly declassified as yet another diversionary tactic of the Trump administration—suggests that the truth may be both simpler and stranger than anyone had imagined. According to the files, extraterrestrial life does indeed exist.

It has, in fact, been in limited and carefully managed collusion with United States authorities for roughly as long as expected. And it has generated a truly remarkable volume of paperwork. Some of the documents have been quietly leaked to a select few. However, I have managed to extract an excerpt from:

<https://april-2026.github.io/usdod-archive/index.html>

They have yet to be taken up by the mainstream media who are,



understandably, reluctant to be the first to finally admit that not only is E.T. here, but he may have a more reliable line to Washington than most elected officials.

First Contact: A Modest Beginning

The documents—many heavily redacted, others oddly formatted in what appears to be a hybrid of bureaucratic shorthand and technical notation—place the first confirmed extraterrestrial interaction “sometime in the mid 20th century” (1947 sounds plausible).

The event itself is described not as an “encounter” or “incident,” but as an “unscheduled arrival requiring administrative oversight.” This phrasing sets the tone for much of what follows. Rather than the dramatic imagery popularised by films and fiction, the initial response appears to have been procedural. A temporary task force was assembled. Jurisdictional authority was assigned and a working definition of “visitor” was drafted and revised several times.

One early memo, dated 1958 but unsigned, notes: “Entity presence confirmed. Behaviour non-hostile. Communication attempts inconclusive but not discouraging. Recommend containment within existing reporting frameworks until further clarity is achieved regarding classification.” In the margin, a handwritten annotation reads simply: “Does this fall under

aviation?” Curiously enough, this was the same year that the Federal Aviation Authority was formed.

The earliest references in the documents describe what is carefully termed an “unscheduled arrival.” There is no dramatic language, no sense of crisis. Instead, the tone is measured, almost politely inconvenienced, as though someone had turned up early for a meeting that had not yet been organised. Initial contact, such as it was, appears to have consisted of observation, a handful of tentative communication attempts, and a great deal of note-taking.

At no point does anyone seem to have said, “This changes everything.” Instead, they appear to have said, in effect, “We should probably keep an eye on this.” What followed is not a story of invasion or revelation, but of prolonged, faintly awkward coexistence.

Continued on page 60



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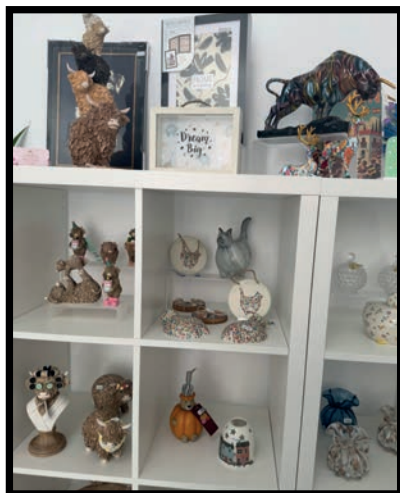
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THERE IS ALWAYS A SOLUTION AT REVOLUTION

..... Continued from page 58

The entities themselves—referred to in the documents with a rotating selection of vaguely nondescript labels—do not conform to expectation. There are no towering figures, no dramatic gestures, and no offers of wisdom or warning. One group is described, rather unhelpfully, as “mostly gaseous and poor conversationalists,” which, while scientifically intriguing, does limit the scope for meaningful exchange. Another is noted to be “technologically advanced but deeply uninterested in meetings,” a trait that, while disappointing to those involved, does at least place them comfortably within the spectrum of known intelligent behaviour.

Attempts at communication seem to have been met with a kind of distant politeness. Not hostility, exactly—more a sense that humanity is an interesting but slightly irrelevant detail. One fragment of recorded interaction captures this tone with quiet precision:

“We would like to understand your intentions,” a human representative states.

There is a pause, the duration of which is not specified.

“Clarify outcome,” comes the reply.

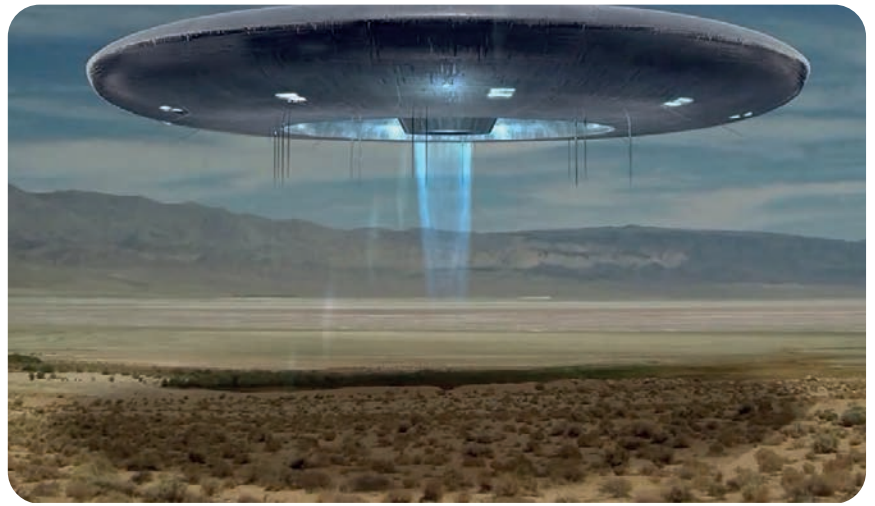
“Mutual understanding.”

Another pause.

“Outcome not required.”

Ouch!

That would go a long way to explaining their lack of influence over human affairs. Sure, there have been rapid technological advances over the last 70-odd years – hinting that a deal may have been



struck but no intervention forthcoming. Whether this was by mutual agreement or not is unclear which is unfortunate, given the current state of affairs.

There are no dramatic accounts of shared knowledge, no scenes of collaborative breakthroughs. If anything, the tone suggests a series of near-misses—opportunities for interaction that never quite materialised. And yet, the advances continued. By the 1990s, the digital age is fully underway. The internet emerges, expands, and begins to reshape communication, commerce, and culture. Officially, this is the result of decades of research and development, much of it publicly documented. The files do not contradict this, but they do include occasional references to “unexpected optimisation pathways” and “solutions identified prior to problem formalisation.”

It is, perhaps, the most subtle suggestion of all: that at times, we may have arrived at answers slightly before we had fully articulated the questions.

The files released so far suggest that the absence of any public revelation may have a simpler explanation than secrecy alone. There is, ultimately, very little to announce.

What would be the point of a grand disclosure if the visitors themselves decline to participate? One risks staging a historic moment only to discover that the guests of honour have chosen not to attend.

The existence of life elsewhere in the universe has long been the subject of serious scientific inquiry. Frank Drake famously proposed the probability of intelligent life beyond Earth in 1961, estimating dozens of potential civilisations within our galaxy. It is tempting, in light of these documents, to wonder whether that estimate was entirely theoretical.

Countless studies have scanned the skies above our heads, prompting a quieter question: how many of them were, in effect, confirmations rather than searches? We like to imagine that such a discovery would change everything. That it would redefine our place in the cosmos, reshape our priorities, and unite us in the face of something greater. The documents suggest something rather more understated.

That we are not alone and we may never have been.

And that, having established this, the appropriate response—at least from their perspective—was simply to carry on. It is not, perhaps, the revelation we were expecting but it does resolve one or two longstanding uncertainties. If nothing else, it is oddly reassuring to know that somewhere, out there—or possibly just slightly to one side—there exists an intelligence advanced enough to cross the stars, yet still entirely uninterested in attending meetings. When you think about it that might make them the most relatable beings in the universe.

At least it will be once I’ve found my tinfoil hat.

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Pets Corner



The passage of time is not only visible in us. Our dogs and cats age too, always by our side, sharing routines, memories and a bond built on unconditional love.

During the juvenile stage, everything is discovery. Play, curiosity and learning shape their days. This is when the foundations for lifelong health are built: proper nutrition, up-to-date vaccinations, regular parasite prevention and veterinary visits that help them

Your pet grows older with you: how to support them through every stage of life



grow strong and confident.

In adulthood, many pets appear to be in their prime. They are active, balanced and seemingly healthy, which often leads to fewer veterinary visits. However, this stage is crucial for preventive care. Regular check-ups allow early detection of conditions that may not yet show visible signs, helping to protect their long-term wellbeing.

As pets enter their senior years, changes tend to appear gradually. Reduced activity, stiffness, altered sleep patterns, appetite changes or subtle behavioural shifts should not be dismissed as "just old age". These signs deserve attention, understanding and proper veterinary guidance.

Adapting the home environment, respecting their new pace, offering age-appropriate nutrition and increasing the frequency of health checks can significantly improve their quality of life. Ageing does not mean losing joy or comfort; it means caring for them in a different, more mindful way.

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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

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

Easy

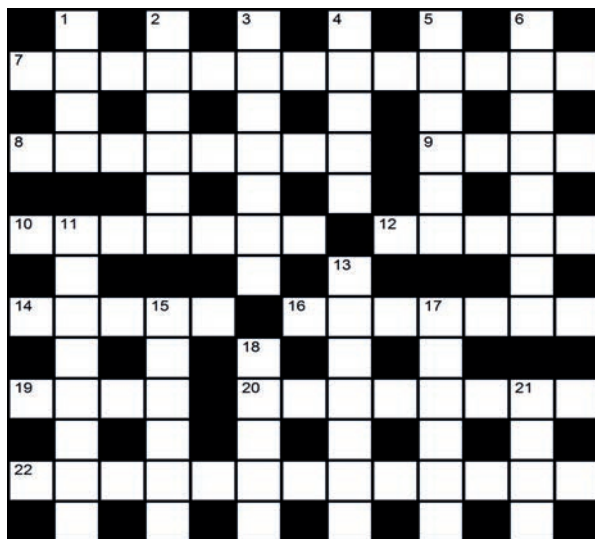
Regular Sudoku

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

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

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

Medium



Across

- 7 Secretaries
- 8 Artistic
- 9 Male cow
- 10 Learned
- 12 Dissolves
- 14 Palm fruits
- 16 Eel
- 19 And
- 20 Apertures
- 22 Miscalculate

Down

- 1 Back
- 2 Profit
- 3 Hits
- 4 Adored
- 5 Dainty bite
- 6 Runners, e.g.
- 11 Following
- 13 Iterates
- 15 Less taxing
- 17 Mystery
- 18 Blasé
- 21 Grit

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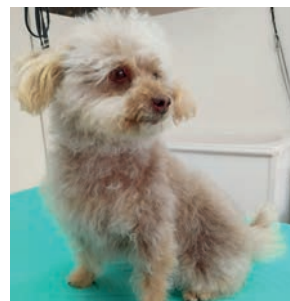
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Dogs' Leashes and Collars Part 1

The leash and collar are the first and most basic items on the list of accessories for dog owners; we use them for walking, teaching, training, encouraging and lots more, and their history goes back as far as man's relationship with dog.

The earliest documented examples of dogs' leashes that have been found come from the Saudi Arabian region of Shawaymis. These are etchings of hunters accompanied by their dogs, the latter with marks on their necks and a line that goes back to the hands or belt of the man.

These etchings are over 8,000 years old and provide proof of early domesticating and training of dogs – at the time probably mostly for hunting.

The first examples of collars being used in fashion were found in a tomb of a nobleman in Egypt and stem back from Ancient Egypt; the Ancient Egyptians held their dogs in higher esteem than most other cultures and they associated them with the jackal-god, Anubis, guide to the afterlife.

The Ancient Egyptians crafted dog collars from leather and metal, and the examples found in the tomb were ornamented with images of lotus flowers and dogs on the hunt; they had brass studs and even gave the dog's name: Tantanuit.

Also, the Ancient Greeks valued their dogs, which can be seen in Greek Mythology, where dogs often play a role.

Originally, their collars were inspired by Egyptian collars, but there was an added necessity of protecting their dogs against wolves. An



important dog job was guarding flocks of animals against predators, and the Greeks put long, outwards pointing spikes on their collars to keep wolves and other predators from biting their necks.

The Romans added a crueller twist to the collar.

They fitted a spike turning inwards toward the neck to the collar which would hurt the dog when its handler pulled on the leash. This would enrage the animal and cause it to attack. These collars were widely used in the Roman games.

Continued on page 64



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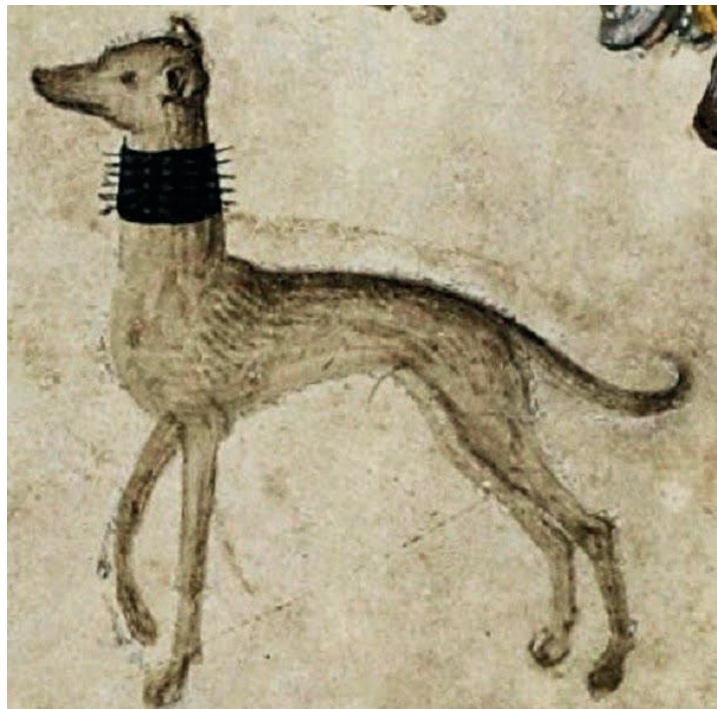
..... Continued from page 63

They had different types of collars for other purposes; from simple leather collars for tying up the dog to thick, iron-spiked collars used in war. But the Roman collars were always utilitarian and served a purpose, never used just as an ornament.

Even the gold collar mentioned by Pliny the Elder was given to a dog because it was thought to calm the animal and stop it from barking unnecessarily.

The outwardly spiked collar was also used in the Middle Ages on dogs that were used for wolf hunting. Often one of the dogs would be used as a decoy, and the spikes were to prevent the wolves from killing it by biting through its neck.

This was also the time when ownership of a dog became enough of an issue for the owner to mark the dog as his own. This was done by attaching a padlock to the dog's collar, and only the owner would possess the key to open the padlock.



Dog collars with tags as we know them today were first seen in the renaissance; as more people were able to afford keeping a dog as a pet or as a working dog, a demand arose for a way of marking the dog to state who was its owner.

Most collars in that era were made from leather with a metal ring

for fastening a leash or a tag. Unregistered and unmarked dogs were often destroyed immediately.

After the end of the 2nd World War, dogs' status largely changed from being working animals to being pets, and this created the necessity of obedience training. During the wars, dogs had been trained and used in combat and acts of war; and the training methods used therein laid the foundation for the modern training methods and leashes and collars that we use today.

Nowadays, most dogs have more than one collar, and many owners use one collar as a fashion statement, another for training and a third one for whatever purpose.

Some frustrated dog owners who are tired of hearing their precious little girl dog described as 'he' by strangers often choose feminine collars; others show off with haute couture collars, or designer leather collars.

There is no end of choice of dog accessories today, some stranger than others. You can get doggy booties, doggy raincoats, doggy sweaters – yes, even doggy swimming goggles!

There are special poo bags, poo bag holders, dog treat bags and holders for those too, titbits, special water containers for walks, and an endless variety of different toys and gadgets.

We all want the best for our dogs, but at the end of the day what really matters is having the right leash and collar to suit our dog.

In the next issue we will have a look at some of the different types and which ones to choose.



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Look Good - Feel Great

Essential Oils For Healthy, Flawless Skin



Oils have amazing healing properties and can restore and maintain healthy, flawless skin. Here is a guide on how to choose the right oil.

Research in skin care has introduced several kinds of products and face oil is one of them. Like serum, face oil is the buzzword today. Oil, by itself, does not moisturise the skin, but it helps the skin to hold moisture better.

Face oils help people with persistently dry, dehydrated skin, by softening it and preventing loss of moisture. The skin feels and looks soft and smooth after application of oil. Olive oil and coconut oil, for instance, moisturise the skin by preventing moisture loss and helping the skin to retain moisture. In fact, oils have many properties, including healing properties that help to restore and maintain healthy, flawless skin.

The Rise Of Argan And Jojoba Oils

Argan oil and jojoba oil are ideal as face oils. While jojoba oil is very close to the skin's natural oil in nature, argan oil is rich in unsaturated fatty acids, antioxidants and Vitamin E. Therefore, it helps to delay the visible signs of ageing and even rejuvenates the skin. It is easily absorbed by the skin and helps to nourish and moisturise it.

A few drops of argan oil can be applied directly and massaged on the face after cleansing. It can also be used as a serum, applying only a few drops. Or, add a few drops of the oil to 100 ml rose water to make a skin tonic.

Benefits Of A Combination Of Oils

Face oils that are a combination of essential oils and carrier, or pressed oils, help to control certain skin conditions and also impart a natural, healthy glow. Jojoba oil, or argan oil are getting more importance as face oils, but that does not mean that oils like sesame seed oil or olive oil are less effective.

Continued on page 66



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..... *Continued from page 65*

Sometimes, a combination of oils may be more effective. Face oil can be a combination of pressed and essential oils, or only pressed oil, like sweet almond oil, olive oil, or unscented oils for sensitive skin.

Best Oils For Your Face

Sweet Basil Oil

This oil can be used for oily skin. It helps to build immunity too and also fights acne. It can also be used for normal and dry skin to rejuvenate the skin and brighten it.

Neem oil

This oil is a very potent essential oil and cannot be used directly on the skin. It can be combined in the prescribed proportion with sesame seed oil or sweet almond oil and is good for acne, fungal infections and even warts. Therefore, it can be used for oily skin too.

Frankincense oil

Research has shown that this ancient oil can reduce the appearance of scars and stretch marks, and it seems to have the same effect on wrinkles and fine lines. In one study, researchers instructed study subjects to apply frankincense oil to one side of their face for thirty days. The treated side showed significant improvement in sun damage, skin texture and fine lines as well as an increase in skin elasticity. Mix two to three drops of the oil with equal parts coconut or jojoba oil and apply to your skin.

Ayurvedic face oils

Ayurvedic is an alternative medicine system with historical roots in the Indian subcontinent. Among the Ayurvedic face oils is the well known Kumkumadi Tailam or oil for the skin. It contains about



24 herbal extracts. Among the ingredients of the oil are precious extracts like saffron, sandalwood, himalayan cherry, Indian barberry, leaves of the Banyan tree and many more. Sesame seed oil (or til oil) is the base oil.

Bio-organic face oil

A bio-organic face oil, usually contains vitamin E oil, sunflower and soya oils, combined with essential oils of chamomile, rosemary, lavender and calendula, to protect the skin and restore ideal balances.

Final thought

Before adding essential oils to your daily regimen, be sure to read up on essential oil safety so you know which essential oils can go directly on your skin, which essential oils should be diluted with carrier oils such as jojoba, the ones to avoid during pregnancy and the essential oils that are bad for your skin.

The right face oil is the route to a healthy, radiant skin.

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Herbs and Spices for Brain Health

Research suggests that a number of herbs and spices may help improve your brain health, and some of them may be already sitting in your fridge. Several of these herbs and spices have been studied for their effects on Alzheimer's disease, while others have been tested for their overall effects on cognition.

Sage - A spice known for its pungent scent, sage may possess memory-enhancing properties, according to a small study published in *Pharmacology, Biochemistry, and Behavior* in 2003.

A research review published in *Evidence-Based Complementary and Alternative Medicine* identified sage as one of the several herbs that may be beneficial to Alzheimer's patients.

Try adding sage to butternut squash, roasted chicken, turkey, tomato sauce, or in a white bean soup. Sage can also be consumed in tea form.

Turmeric - Turmeric contains a compound called curcumin, which has antioxidant and anti-inflammatory effects (two factors that may benefit brain health and overall health).

Preliminary research suggests that turmeric may boost brain health and stave off Alzheimer's disease by clearing the brain of beta-amyloid (a protein fragment). The build up of beta-amyloid is known to form Alzheimer's-related brain plaques.

In addition, turmeric may shield brain health by inhibiting the breakdown of nerve cells in the brain.

Turmeric is a key ingredient in curry powder, which typically also includes such spices as coriander and cumin. To increase your intake of turmeric, try adding curry powder or turmeric to stir-fries, soups, and vegetable dishes. Include a couple dashes of black pepper to enhance the absorption of turmeric.



Lemon Balm - A herb often taken in tea form and frequently used to ease anxiety and insomnia, lemon balm may help improve cognitive function.

For a study published in the *Journal of Neurology, Neurosurgery, and Psychiatry* in 2003, 42 patients with mild to moderate Alzheimer's disease took either a placebo or lemon balm extract for four months. At the end of the study, those given lemon balm showed a significantly greater improvement in cognitive function (compared to those given the placebo).

Ginseng - One the most popular plants in herbal medicine, ginseng contains anti-inflammatory chemicals called ginsenosides. In preliminary studies, scientists have observed that ginsenosides may help reduce brain levels of beta-amyloid. It's also sometimes taken to fight Alzheimer's disease.

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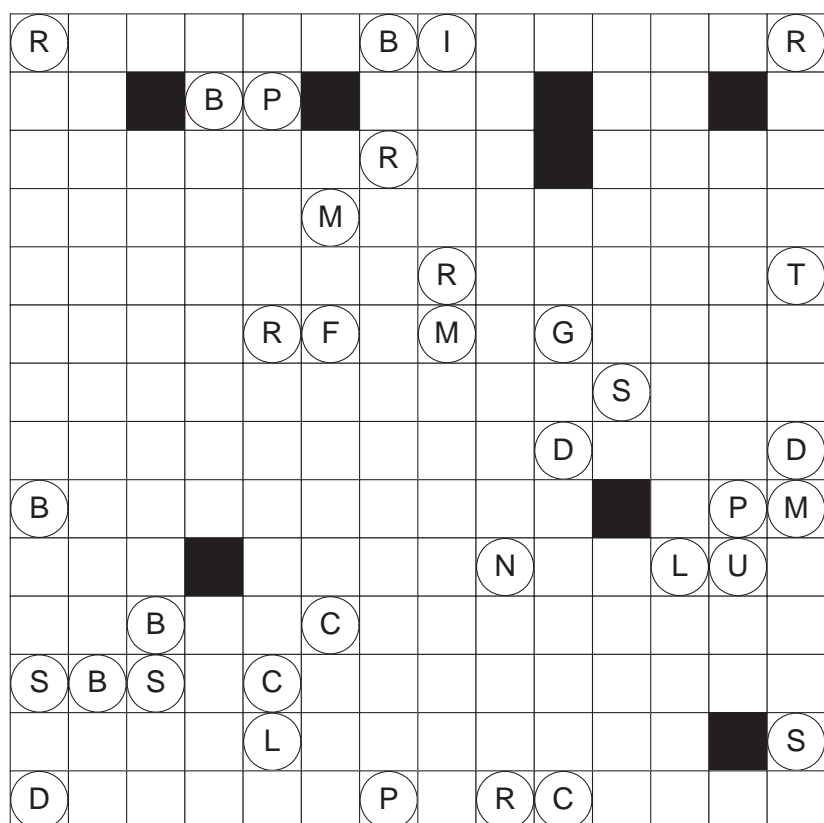
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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

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!

- | | | |
|-----------|----------------|----------------|
| Babble | Filth | Reconciliation |
| Balloon | Froze | Redid |
| Barrens | Goads | Region |
| Brag | Insurmountable | Reviled |
| Build | Lessen | Rodeo |
| Bungler | Lowly | Rotated |
| Coed | Mantle | Shoot |
| Could | Meets | Sixty |
| Crush | Moles | Sport |
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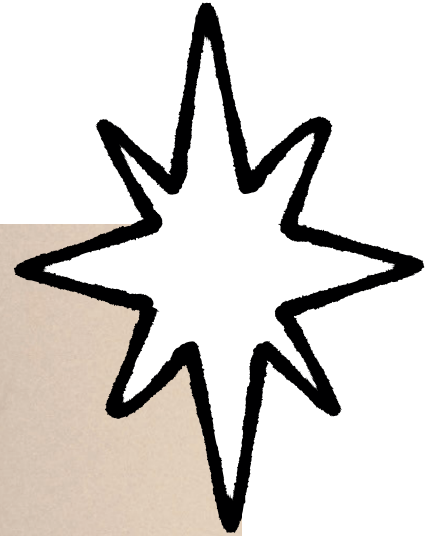
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Although lying down can minimise stress on the lower spine, it can also create other problems and do more harm than good.

Too much time in bed:

- Weakens muscles
- Can lead to gastrointestinal problems, such as constipation, which can make low back pain a lot worse
- Increases the chances of developing a blood clot
- Can increase sensitivity and pain

If you need to be horizontal, to ease the strain on your back, try putting pillows between your knees when lying on your side, or under your knees when lying on your back - But always aim to get the body moving at frequent intervals throughout the day.

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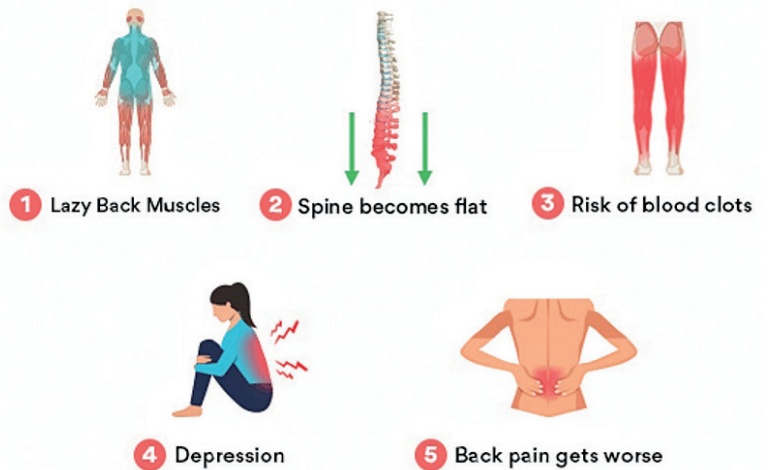
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Hands With Heart Foundation

After the most incredible few days in the depths of the Talamanca Jungle, on our final morning, as each morning before, I awoke in pitch darkness, to the rustlings of the matted roof of our house on stilts, and the pre-dawn screeches and howls of the Costa Rican jungle. Our time with the indigenous Bribri community had flown by, and now here we were, on our last day, before taking the long journey back to the capital San José, to board my flight home to Spain.

But before that, we had somewhere very important to be: We'd been invited to attend a traditional cacao ceremony, and I just knew that it was going to be the perfect way to end our time in the jungle.

The Bribri have a long-standing connection to cacao; not only is it a source of income; it holds spiritual significance. According to their beliefs, cacao was a gift from the god Sibö (pronounced SHEE-boo), the creator of the universe and mankind. Not viewed merely as a plant, cacao is recognised as a sacred, feminine entity, known as Tsuru - a young woman who showed unique kindness to Sibö, and who is recognised within Bribri teachings as a guide for wisdom, healing, and emotional connection.

As the legend goes, one cold night, Sibö (in the shape of an elderly man) was passing through Tsuru's community. Tsuru was the only person to offer him food and a place to sleep, and to show his gratitude, Sibö transformed Tsuru into a cacao tree, that would provide for all future generations.

For this reason, the Bribri people consider the cacao tree to be female, and never use its branches for firewood or construction. Also, in accordance with tradition, only women are permitted to prepare and serve cacao. So, within each generation, a woman is chosen by the community to have this honour bestowed upon her. The sole tribe member permitted to prepare and serve the sacred drink for her community, she must also pass on the traditions, skills and teachings to a novice, who will one day take over the mantle of this noble position.

The ritual of drinking cacao is considered to be an opportunity for introspection, reflection and personal renewal, and is believed to purify the spirit, balance energies and facilitate the connection with



the spiritual world. And now here I was, after five intense, amazing days with the Bribri tribe, perched on rickety wooden benches balanced around the edges of a traditional circular hut, with my new Hands with Heart family, to experience my first ever cacao ceremony.

Sweat dripping from our faces in the intense heat of the roaring fire, the acrid smoke catching in our throats and stinging our eyes, we watched as the cacao nibs roasted in a pot balanced on a glowing stack of Inga wood. As the fire crackled and spat, the sounds of the jungle trilled around us, and the ceremony began.

After blessings and thanks were given to the god Sibö, each woman in our group was invited to step forward. One by one we each stood behind the fire pit and took our turn to stir the cacao nibs five times in a clockwise direction, as ceremonial Bribri words were softly chanted in the background.

Continued on page 71

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nostrils. As the bitter, chocolatey liquid soothed our smoke scorched throats, the only sound, the occasional tumble of a dying ember of Inga wood, it was a moment to reflect on my time in Costa Rica. To feel grateful for the amazing people around me, to feel at peace, to feel happiness, to feel blessed to have been able to be there in that moment, and also to feel sadness that our incredible journey was coming to an end.

The Hands with Heart Humanitarian mission in Talamanca was certainly challenging, both physically and emotionally, but it was also absolutely unforgettable. It was a truly life changing experience, and for me it was a sincere privilege to be able to put my training and experience to use in such a fantastic way. Working as part of a team of highly skilled Osteopaths, Osteopathic doctors, and medical



..... Continued from page 71

This part of the ritual completed, the pot of roasted nibs was carried across the dirt mud floor by the novice, and carefully tipped out onto an enormous rock with a surface flattened and smoothed by generations of use. The female elder then positioned herself, took a smaller sacred rock in both hands, which the tribe's shaman had discovered decades before, guided by Sibö, and expertly ground down the nibs. The now fine powder was then scooped up into a precisely folded banana leaf, and taken away to be dissolved in a pan of boiling water.

Each of us now nursing a half filled coconut shell, polished to a perfect glossy finish, the delicious smell of cacao rose up to fill our

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rivers and in the back of trucks, who had guided us safely through the dense jungle, and who had opened their homes and hearts to us, had also imparted a great wisdom: Our time here is gone in a flash. Our actions and choices impact our environment, and all living beings - Each one of us is responsible for what we leave behind.

Hands With Heart Foundation is a registered charity, founded in 2016. Providing free healthcare services to children and adults with disabilities in Indonesia, Argentina, Ukraine and Costa Rica, who have limited or non-existent access to healthcare services, the foundation seeks to empower communities through healthcare, education, and social action, and to raise awareness about disability and inclusion.

<https://handswithheartfoundation.org/>

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students, delivering free treatment to children with disabilities and their families, in locations where there's little to no access to healthcare, was both rewarding and incredibly humbling.

The Bribri live their daily lives in a manner that honours the gifts of Sibö and embraces their responsibility to Mother Earth; their connection to nature is one of profound respect and care. They view the Earth as a being, often referred to as the girl Iriria (Sibö's creation), with whom they coexist through a social-spiritual contract of mutual respect.

Having spent 5 days observing the Bribri living in harmony with the environment, I had been left with an inescapable truth, that modern progress, whilst having the potential for positive change, can erode simplicity, and also threaten our connection with nature.

The indigenous tribe who had welcomed us into their community, who had honoured us, placed their trust in us, who had given us fresh guanábana juice to restore us when I thought I couldn't take one more step in 95 percent humidity, who had filled our bellies with delicious home cooked delicacies, who had transported us across



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Equatorial Guinea

Most people know that Spain had a number of colonies in Central and South America; in fact the majority of the countries on the American continent belonged to Spain back when. Except of course Brazil, which belonged to Portugal, Guyana (British), French Guyana (French) and Surinam (Dutch).

The Philippines are also well known for having been a Spanish colony, as well as a few islands in the Caribbean Sea. And of course we all know of the Spanish enclaves of Ceuta and Melilla in Northern Africa. But how about Equatorial Guinea? Did you know that it was a Spanish colony – and that the official language of Equatorial Guinea is still Spanish? Shared with French, which is spoken by a minority. There is also a handful of local tribe languages in evidence, but an estimated 70% of the population speak Spanish.

La República de Guinea Ecuatorial, as is its real name, is a small central African republic on the west coast of Africa. It borders on the countries of Cameroon and Gabon as well as the Atlantic Ocean, and it consists of an area on the main land as well as five volcanic islands which are all inhabited. The total area that it covers is 28,050km² and it is inhabited by 1.3 million people.

Just like Cameroon, Equatorial Guinea was originally inhabited by pygmies, but unlike its neighbour there are none left of the original population.

The first occupying power in Equatorial Guinea was Portugal, who discovered it in 1472 and colonised it 1474. The colony was an important collection point for slaves who were being shipped out to the Americas. In 1778 the country became a Spanish colony, and the colonists established coffee and cocoa plantations, especially on the island of Bioko.

In the 1950s several nationalist parties popped up, and the increasing demand for independence finally paid off in 1968, when the country was recognised as an independent republic.

Sadly, the first president, Francisco Macias Nguema, turned into a tyrannical dictator, and during his ten year rule the population was reduced by a third; people had either been killed or they had fled the country.

Eventually he was toppled by his nephew Obiang Nguema in 1979, but the change did not lead to an improvement of the conditions.



Obiang was no better than his uncle; today he is the world's longest ruling president, and the population still lives in abject poverty.

The capital of Equatorial Guinea is called Malabo (formerly known as Santa Isabel), and it is situated on the largest and northernmost of the islands, Bioko. However, a new planned capital, Ciudad de la Paz, is under construction on the mainland. The central government has already been moved there, and according to the plan the new capital will be fully functional in the near future.

The new situation is more central, access is better and the climate is much more pleasant.

In spite of its name, Equatorial Guinea does not lie on the equator, but close, and it has a warm, tropical climate. The country is home to one of Africa's most important rain forests, but sadly, lack of long term planning and the desire for a quick profit mean that the forest is being cut down for timber for export instead of being preserved for eco tourism, for which it would be ideally suited with a bit of

planning and improvement of the country's infrastructures.

Equatorial Guinea's fauna does not include the typical African savannah species such as lions, zebra, wildebeest etc., but the rain forest is home to a number of interesting and exciting animals, not least the so-called forest elephant, a smaller sub species of the large savannah roamer.

Large oil reserves were discovered offshore in 1996 and today Equatorial Guinea is one of the largest oil exporters south of the Sahara. You would have thought that this would be the country's ticket out of poverty, and it does have the potential of becoming one of Africa's wealthiest countries; but corruption is rife and the majority of the riches generated by the oil end in the coffers of the president and his family.

Thus, almost all visitors to Equatorial Guinea go there for work related matters in connection with the large oil industry, not for pleasure or leisure. Oil revenue constitutes 85% of the country's GNP, but none the less 70% of the working population are employed in forestry and agriculture, although these two sectors contribute with only 5% of the GNP.

The country has the physical attributes to become a great tourist destination, and one can only hope that soon its leaders will wake up to realise that if the oil money is invested in sustainable eco-tourism, the income from this will, in the long run, supersede the oil revenue, and benefit the whole country and its inhabitants.

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WHEELS

MOTORING SECTION

Top 10 Ways to Protect Your Car From Sun Damage

We all know that sun exposure can harm our skin, but did you know the sun's rays can also damage your car? When you leave your car in the sun for extended periods of time, the temperature inside can reach as high as 145 degrees Fahrenheit, while the surface of the car's exterior can reach much higher – up to nearly 200 degrees Fahrenheit!

Your car is not immune to negative effects caused by such heat. Here are 10 simple ways to protect your vehicle from sun damage:

1. Regularly check your fluid levels: When it's hot outside, the fluids in your car can get used up more quickly than under normal circumstances. If you happen to be low on coolant, transmission fluid, or oil anyway, then that suboptimal condition coupled with high temperatures increases the chance of damage to your car.

2. Have your battery tested once or twice each summer: When it's hot outside, there is often a higher load placed on your car's battery from running systems like the air conditioning. Periodic testing of your battery and charging system in general prevents you from unpleasant surprises (i.e. the car not starting) on hot days.

3. Get the air filters checked: There is typically more dust and debris



circulating in the air during the warmer months, particularly in arid climates, and this can clog the air filters in your car. If this happens, your gas mileage may suffer, and it could even damage your mass air flow sensor, which helps regulate the air and fuel levels in your engine.

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..... Continued from page 77

4. Use reflectorized sun panels on your front and rear dashes: While it may seem like a hassle to whip these fold-out panels out every time you go to the store, it pays off in the long run. These panels greatly reduce the overall temperature inside your car, which you'll appreciate when you return, and need to use less air conditioning to cool the car. These panels also help to prevent the bleaching effect the sun has on your interior surfaces and upholstery, which can lower the value of your car should you wish to sell it.



5. Perform tyre pressure checks monthly: Extreme heat, trapped air, and rubber can be a volatile combination, and it's one on which your entire vehicle rests in the summer months. Underinflated tyres are more likely to blow out in high temperatures, so prevent accidents (and poor fuel mileage) by checking your tyre pressure at least once a month. Do this as early in the day as possible when the temperatures are coolest for the most accurate pressure readings.

6. Park smart: If you have the choice between parking your car in the middle of a blazing parking lot or under a broad tree, opt for the shade. This doesn't require any fancy props and will keep your car's interior as cool as possible.

7. Regularly clean your car's interior: The pairing of dust and hot sun can wreak havoc on your interior, essentially caking grime onto your dash and other surfaces. With periodic cleaning, however, this



becomes a non-issue; just be sure to use cleaners intended for automobile use to avoid stains and unnecessarily drying out materials at risk of cracking.

8. Wash and hand-dry your car often: Just as dust and debris can cake onto your interior surfaces when exposed to high temperatures, your exterior paint can suffer in the summer sun. Frequently wash your vehicle to keep the surface

clean, and dry it thoroughly by hand with a soft cloth, so bits of minerals and grime don't stick to the residual moisture after a rinse.

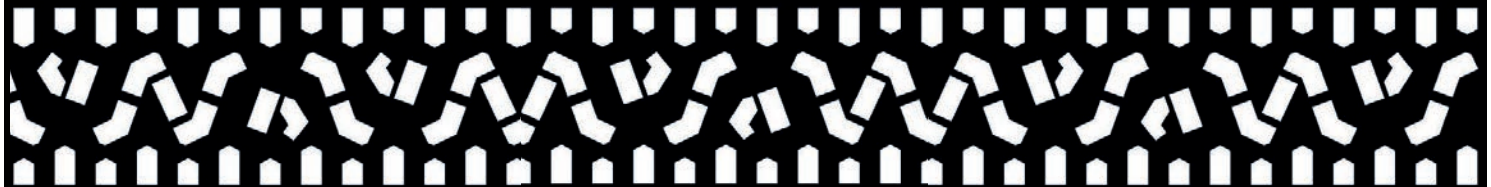
9. Use a protective wax: It's not enough just to clean your car from time to time; you should wax it at least twice a year to lock in the natural oils in the exterior paint and provide a layer of protection not just from grimy bits that can scratch the surface, but also from the sun's rays.

10. Consider paint protection film: If you truly want to be vigilant against potential sun damage to your car, you may want to invest in a paint protection film kit. Some kits only cover the acrylic headlights,

but some kits are available that cover your entire vehicle.

If you adopt some or all of these simple tips to provide protection from the hot sun, your car will age more gracefully, much like your skin will with the regular application of sunscreen. They don't take much effort to implement, and these small actions can save a lot of money down the road and help retain your car's value over time.

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DON'T FALL ASLEEP!!!

At the wheel



All drivers have experienced tiredness at the wheel and felt how our eyes suddenly start feeling heavy. It may be accumulated tiredness or due to long, non-stop driving. No matter the reason, our body knows that our reaction capacity has been reduced, and it is asking for a rest.

This far too common phenomenon is an extremely dangerous situation which puts both ourselves and other road users at risk. 'I want, I can, and I will' is not the correct response in this situation; this may easily lead to an accident. According to the DGT, between 15 and 30 per cent of accidents are caused by sleepy drivers.

So let us look at some other ways of combating tiredness at the wheel.

No driver falls asleep suddenly. First, we will feel signs of tiredness: blurred vision, difficulty in responding correctly to other drivers' manoeuvres, and problems concentrating. These are symptoms we have to take seriously, and they are not going to go away on their own.

Often, we just want to reach our destination and ignore the signs of fatigue. However, do listen to your body and pull into a resting area or somewhere safe to stop, and shut your eyes for 20 minutes. You'll be amazed by how refreshed and alert it will make you feel.

Long journeys are tiring, the monotony of them makes us sleepy. Travelling long distances without stopping is a bad idea, and especially the hours between 3 and 5 am and 2 and 4 pm are times with a heightened risk of falling asleep.

The DGT recommends that you have a 20 – 30-minute rest every two hours or 200 kms of journey.

When you are driving, although you want to be comfortable, do not sit exaggeratedly slouched or relaxed. Sit upright and keep both hands on the wheel. If you listen to music, make it something upbeat, or listen to the radio or talk to your passenger. While at the same time, of course, keeping an eye on other cars and vehicles and any other obstructions you may find on the road.

It goes without saying that you should not consume alcohol or drugs before setting out on a journey. But do not drink an exaggerated amount of coffee either; once the initial high of the caffeine has worn off, it can produce tiredness. Also, avoid heavy meals just before a journey.

These simple rules are well worth taking into consideration before setting out on a journey, and they may well help saving lives.

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<p>CITROEN C1 CITY EDITION 1.0Petrol 75cv 16.000km YEAR 2021 9.900€</p>	<p>FORD FOCUS TREND 1.6TDCI 95cv YEAR 2012 8.500€</p>	<p>KIA X-CEED ECO DYNAMICS TECH 1.0Petrol 120cv YEAR 2021 18.300€</p>
<p>PEUGEOT 208 ALLURE HYBRID 100cv 16.000km YEAR 2024 18.900€</p>	<p>CITROEN C5 AIRCROSS SHINE PACK 1.5BHD 130cv YEAR 2023 21.500€</p>	<p>PEUGEOT 5008 ALLURE HYBRID 145cv 18.000km 7 seats YEAR 2025 27.500€</p>

* prices are subject to minimum financing *

<p>HONDA INSIGHT ELEGANCE 1.3Hybrid 90cv YEAR 2009 5.500€</p>	<p>NISSAN QASHQAI N-CONNECTA 1.3Petrol 160cv YEAR 2024 28.900€</p>	<p>SEAT IBIZA REFERENCE 1.0Petrol 80cv YEAR 2021 12.500€</p>
<p>RENAULT KANGOO EXPRESS 1.5DCI 95cv 67.000km YEAR 2021 12.500€</p>	<p>PEUGEOT BOXER COMBI 2.2BHD 140cv 68.000km 9 seats YEAR 2020 23.900€</p>	<p>SEAT ARONA ECOMOTIVE STYLE 1.0Petrol 115cv YEAR 2020 15.800€</p>
<p>PEUGEOT 3008 GT 1.5BLUEHDI 130cv 37.600km YEAR 2023 23.800€</p>	<p>PEUGEOT 208 ALLURE HYBRID 100cv 15.000km YEAR 2024 18.900€</p>	<p>RENAULT ARKANA ZEN 1.3TCE 140cv 24.000km YEAR 2022 21.800€</p>

English Speaking Staff

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AUTO

FORD CMAX | 2.0 DIESEL | 2015 | 95,000

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PRICE DROP



CITROEN C3 CACTUS | 1.2 PETROL | 2019 | 52,000

10,500 €



DODGE NITRO | 2.8 DIESEL | 2008 | 155,000

13,750 €

PRICE DROP



FORD TOURNEO | 1.0 PETROL | 2019 | 59,500

23,500 €



PEUGEOT RIFTER | 1.5 DIESEL | 2023 | 24,000

17,850 €



AUTO

MINI COOPER | 1.5 PETROL | 2017 | 90,000

13,500 €

PRICE DROP



MINI COOPER S | 1.6 PETROL | 2012 | 140,000 KMS

30,995 €



AUTO

KIA SPORTAGE | 1.6 PETROL | HYBRID | 2023 | 15,000

3,995 €



PEUGEOT 307 | 1.6 PETROL | 2006 | 155,000

5,250 €



FORD FIESTA | 1.2 PETROL | 2014 | 224,000

13,995 €



KIA SPORTAGE | 1.7 DIESEL | 2014 | 161,000

27,500 €



AUTO

JEEP GRAN CHEROKEE | 2016 | 3.0 DIESEL | 189,000

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Puzzle Time

Puzzle solutions on page 82

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.

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

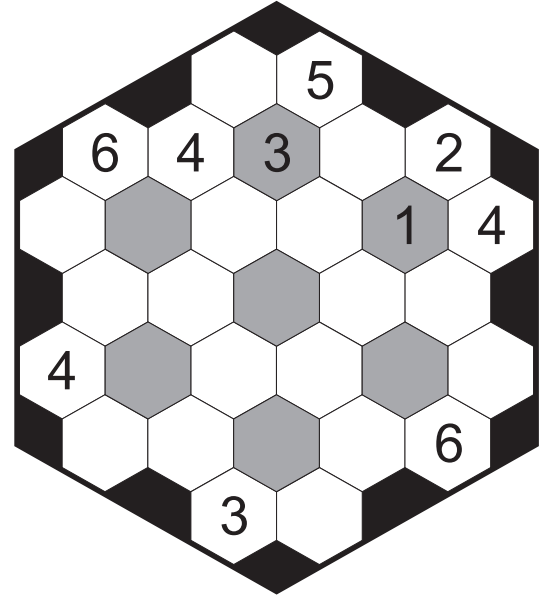
Samurai Sudoku

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

Rosetta

A Rosetta is made up of a centre coloured hexagon encircled by 6 white hexagons. To complete the puzzle, fill in all 7 Rosettas with each number between 1 and 7 in no particular order while ensuring that:

1. No number is repeated in a horizontal row
2. Each number from 1 to 7 is represented in the 7 grey hexagon cells



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FORD PUMA HYBRID AUTO. 199€/MES	FORD PUMA HYBRID AUT 2022	FOCUS AUTO. DIESEL 11750€	FORD FIESTA AUTO. 11450€	FORD FOCUS PETROL 9750€	MIT PAJERO 7STR AUT DID 9800€
MINI PETROL LIKE NEW 10850€	SEAT IBIZA DIESEL SIV Great Mpg 6650€	BMW X5 AUT 7STR 10750€ DIESEL	FIESTA DIESEL 6900€	VW GOLF DIESEL 9150€	PICK UP TOYOTA HILUX 14950€

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