

july 2026 • issue 178

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Letter from the Editor

Hello again and welcome...

July and August are the most popular months of the year to take a trip away from home. Holidays create quite a dent in the annual budget and looking at the delays, some are facing leaving the country, you might question whether it is worth it.

I know that sometimes I have reasoned with myself that I could buy something tangible which I will get longer use out of rather than something which will be all over within a week or two.

I soon realised that whether I take a break for a couple of days or a couple of weeks, the memories will last long beyond the event itself. Nobody ever takes a photo of their new sofa to look back on wistfully, nor will any of us reach old age and think back to the time we 'treated' ourselves to a new set of saucepans.

Even if funds are stretched this year, a sunny day or two away can be just the pick-me-up we need. Smartphones enable us to take an unlimited number of photos and watching your short video clips will transport you back to the time again.

And finally, remember that days out and short UK breaks support local economies and small business owners, and you cannot help but feel good about that too!

And the thought I will leave you with this month:-

*"The tan will fade
But the memories will last forever."*

Until next time...

Sheila

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The Village Breeze is a local community magazine and business directory distributed monthly to 8,000 homes and businesses in Appleby Magna, Donisthorpe, Linton, Measham, Moira, Oakthorpe and Overseal.

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Plugged in

What do you need to know if you're considering installing an electric car charger at home?

Having access to a home EV charger is a big advantage. It brings you cheaper off-peak charging tariffs along with the convenience of topping up on your doorstep. Just make sure you're switched on to all the facts before you install one.

Set yourself a budget

Expect to pay between £800 and £1,500 for the cost of both the charging unit and the installation. If you need a lot more cabling or require the unit to be installed far from the property, installation costs are likely to rise.

Many energy providers bundle the costs for installation and unit, making it easier to budget for and reducing the cost overall. For example, Ohme offers its ePod compact 7kW charger for £949, including installation. However, costs vary depending on installation complexity and the type of charging unit.

Charger type

Charger types vary in speed and how a car connects to them. The tethered charger has a fixed cable built into the unit, which means it's easy to plug your car in. However, tethered units are bulkier, so they may not be ideal if you're short on space outside your property.

Untethered chargers, meanwhile, are not supplied with a built-in cable. Instead, you have to connect the unit manually with the EV's charging cable, which is more time-consuming. On the plus side, untethered units are smaller and take up less space. Most electric vehicle chargers used at home provide 7kW of charging power. That's quick enough to



charge most cars overnight. There are faster 11kW and 22kW home chargers available, which can top-up an EV in around five hours; however, you'll need a three-phase power supply, which a lot of UK homes don't provide. Upgrading your home energy supply can cost between £3,000 and £15,000.

Property considerations

It's important to know that if you live in a rented property, you must get permission from your landlord before you go ahead with the charger installation. It will be classed as "property alteration" under most tenancy agreements.

If you own your own property, then there's no restriction, as long as you have an accessible driveway. If you do, then you need to find the best location for the charger. This is often closest to your home's electrical consumer unit, as it makes it easier to fit and reduces installation costs.

If you park your car in a garage, a charger indoors could be handy. No home parking? Special cross-pavement gullies can be installed, but you'll need to speak to your council first.

Pick an energy provider

Choosing the right EV tariff is almost as important as picking the right charger. Many firms will offer EV-friendly tariffs to help drive down the costs of charging. These special tariffs offer cut-price rates for energy during off-peak times, such as overnight. Many go as low as 7p per kWh.

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She's got the X-Factor



Best known as unflappable FBI agent Dana Scully in “The X-Files”, Gillian Anderson has spent her career quietly – and sometimes boldly – defying expectations.

Born in Chicago but raised between the UK and the US, Gillian Anderson's transatlantic identity has shaped both her career and her outlook. After early stage work, it was her breakout role as FBI agent Dana Scully in “The X-Files” that catapulted her to global fame in the 1990s.

From the steely detective in “The Fall” to her portrayal of former prime minister Margaret Thatcher in “The Crown”, Gillian, 57, has demonstrated a remarkable ability to inhabit different characters. In 2024, she starred as journalist Emily Maitlis in the Netflix drama series “Scoop”, which told the story of the 2019 “Newsnight” interview with former Prince Andrew.

Off-screen initiatives

More recently, Gillian has delighted audiences with her candid, comedic turn as sex therapist Jean Milburn in “Sex Education”. She followed this with a book exploring sexuality in 2025. “Want” is a bold exploration of female desire, drawing on anonymous contributions – including her own. Gillian has also long supported organisations focused on women's rights, LGBTQ+ equality and mental health.

This spring Gillian collaborated with Marks & Spencer when they appointed her Chief Compliments Officer. She's known for her pared-back, elegant style, but she hasn't always found it easy to achieve the right look. Gillian explained: “I spent a long time getting it wrong, feeling somehow I wasn't projecting who I am.”

Independent spirit

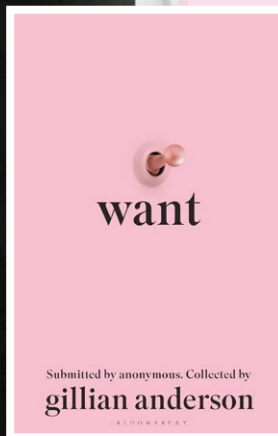
Gillian's private life remains just that – private. According to reports, it was while on the set of “The Crown” in 2016, that she met its screenwriter Peter Morgan, who also wrote “The Queen”, “Frost/Nixon” and “The Audience”. They don't live together but the actor said in 2020: “It works so well as it is and it feels so special when we do come together.”

Her two previous marriages both ended in divorce. The first was to Canadian-born TV art director Clyde Klotz, whom she met while filming “The X-Files”. They married in 1994, welcomed daughter Piper the same year, and divorced in 1997. Seven years later, she tied the knot with documentary maker Julian Ozanne. The couple separated in 2006. Gillian was then with businessman Mark Griffiths for six years. They have two children – Oscar and Felix.

No limits

Firmly based in London, Gillian continues to balance stage, screen and writing projects while raising her family. More than just a performer, she has become a cultural voice – one that encourages curiosity, challenges convention and invites us to look at ourselves more openly.

“I feel proud to be the age that I am. I'm continuing to build and to grow and do what I set my mind to.”



Photograph © Marks and Spencer (www.marksandspencer.com).

“Want”, submitted by anonymous and collected by Gillian Anderson, is published by Bloomsbury Publishing, paperback £10.99.

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Should you choose a cruise?



A cruise could be for you if you...

... love convenience and structure on holiday

For many, one of the best parts of a cruise holiday is that you can visit multiple destinations without the hassle of packing and unpacking, navigating plane journeys and public transport or checking into different hotels. Cruising is particularly appealing if you want to sample a variety of places in a short space of time while not having to handle any of the logistics. Your travel, food, accommodation and activities – all sorted.

... enjoy variety

One of the biggest misconceptions about cruising is that it's a one-size-fits-all experience. The reality is that cruises vary enormously. From small, luxury vessels carrying fewer than 100 guests to mega-ships packed with entertainment, restaurants and activities, there's a wide spectrum. Fancy island hopping around the Greek Islands or exploring the Norwegian fjords or voyaging down the River Nile? A cruise holiday truly can take you all over the globe.

... like sticking to a budget

Another common myth is that all cruises are expensive, whereas in fact they can offer great value for money when you consider what's included. Many packages bundle accommodation, meals, entertainment and transport between destinations into one price, making it easy to stay within a set budget. However, while some costs may be included, it's always worth checking the full list of inclusions as many cruise packages will charge extra for alcohol, Wi-Fi and shore excursions.

Cruises have been popular for over a century but over the last few decades, the industry has really scaled up. Now with over 50 ocean cruise lines to book through (not to mention a handful of river cruise lines too), and with liners setting sail across all corners of the globe, the modern traveller is spoilt for choice.

Of course, a cruise holiday isn't necessarily for everyone. While some might love the prospect of a pre-organised holiday at sea, others might worry about feeling trapped, being sea-sick or that they're simply not the target demographic. So, to demystify cruise holidays, let's take a closer look at the pros and cons, common misconceptions and the key things to consider before deciding whether to board a cruise ship.



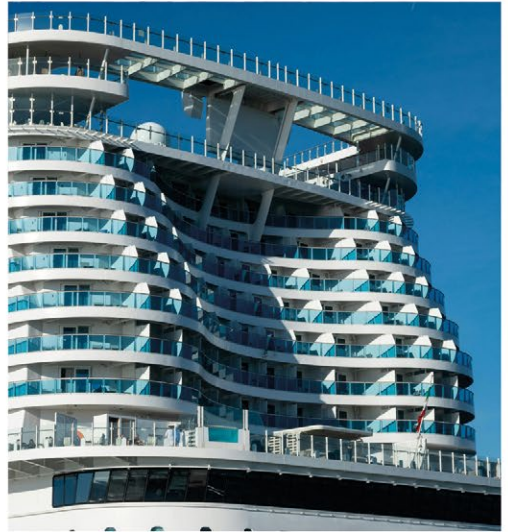


A cruise might not be for you if you... **... need your space**

Cruises are a social affair, with shared dining, group excursions and onboard activities all part of the experience. You'll undoubtedly bump into the same people over and over again throughout your trip, and many cruisers relish the opportunity to chat and make friends. This can be a big plus if you enjoy meeting new people or travelling as part of a community, but if you value your solitude, cruising might not float your boat. While there are smaller or more premium cruise lines that offer a quieter experience, bear in mind you'll still be sharing your space with other passengers for a large portion of your holiday.

... want freedom to explore

Cruises are undoubtedly convenient, but there's a trade-off: limited time in each destination. Port stops may last only a few hours, which can feel rushed if you like to explore a place to its full capacity and venture off the beaten path. While cruises are ideal for getting a taste of different places, they might not suit you if you prefer the idea of fully immersing yourself in one location.



... are afraid of seasickness

Seasickness is an understandable worry for many first-time cruisers. Modern, larger vessels are designed with stabilisers to minimise this risk but, if you're particularly sensitive to motion, it's definitely something to factor into your travel decisions – especially if you end up travelling in rough weather. If you do fancy giving it a go, opting for a larger vessel and choosing a cabin in the middle of the ship and on a lower deck can help. Rest assured, unless you're on a smaller vessel, seasickness is mild and temporary for most people.



The blind leading the blind

I was thirty-five when I lost my sight. It was my own stupid fault. Should've been wearing the safety goggles provided for me by the company. The unexpected explosion blew up in my face. A chemical reaction gone wrong. I could see nothing. Total darkness.

Up to that moment, I'd led a "normal" life: a lovely wife and two beautiful girls, six and eight. And a good, well-paid job in a local research laboratory. But all that changed after the accident. I was designated "legally blind".

After a period of time in hospital, I was sent to a local Rehabilitation Centre in rural Leicestershire – funded by The Royal National Institute of Blind People – for initial assessment and rehabilitation.

On arrival at the Centre, I was met by the Manager who introduced himself as Simon Walsgrave. *'Nice to see you,'* he said, grabbing my hand and shaking it warmly. *'Before we go inside, let me show you the garden.'*

He explained that the building, a sprawling late-Victorian mansion, was set in over two acres of magnificent gardens with far-reaching views over the surrounding countryside. Such a shame I would never see those views, myself. I offered my arm to Simon who held onto it lightly, just above my elbow. As we made our way around the extensive grounds of the Centre, our feet crunching on the gravel pathways, I delighted in breathing in the sweet aroma of spring blossom; and listened in wonder to the incessant buzz of the bees.

My initial assessment was for six weeks. During this time, I'd meet my fellow residents – a dozen or so of them – visually impaired like myself. I'd be taught how to use a white cane and move confidently in different environments. And basic living skills, such as dressing myself, cooking a meal and learning the importance of touch and listening for sounds.

After a week or so, I began to miss the freedom I had once enjoyed as a sighted person. Simple things like going out for a family meal, or meeting my mates for a drink.

Then, early one evening, I was sitting outside alone, enjoying the smells and sounds of the garden when the Manager approached me.

'I've got someone here who I'd like you to meet,' Simon said.

'Hi! I'm Bob,' said a soft, kindly voice.

'Peter,' I replied, reaching out for his hand. *'My friends call me: Pete.'*

'Well, Pete, I was just off to the pub. Fancy joining me?'

'That would be great, Bob! I've not been out for a drink since my ...' I tailed off.

'C'mon then. I'll show you the way. It's a bit tricky, mind you: downhill all the way, a few sharp corners, a couple of gates and several steep steps – but you'll soon get the hang of it. I go to The Red Lion every week about this time.'

I was carrying my long cane, but Bob stayed at my side, guiding me skilfully along the path as we walked slowly together.

A few minutes later, we reached our destination. As Bob opened the door, a wall of noise hit us – the welcoming sounds of a packed pub, everyone enjoying themselves: Raucous laughter; the clink of glasses; the clang of a till drawer being opened; the clatter of coins.

'Whatcha having?' asked my new friend. *'I recommend the Best Bitter.'*

'Sounds great!'

Grasping our cold beers, Bob led me to a table and we sat down.

'So ... you're a regular here, Bob?' I said. *'I take it you work at the Centre – one of the helpers?'*

'Oh no! Had a serious car accident a few years ago. Lost my sight. I'm as blind as a bat!' he joked. *'Can't see a damn thing!'*

'But ...'

'The walk here? Comes with practice. By the time you leave the Centre, you'll be as proficient as me!'

'Amazing!' I replied, and raised my glass. *'Well ... Cheers! Here's to friendship and a positive future.'*

Maybe, they'll be light at the end of the tunnel, after all.

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REMEMBER QUALITY IS AS IMPORTANT AS PRICE



Pecan and maple syrup flapjacks

These quick and easy sweet treats are delicious for breakfast or brunch – and perfect for a picnic!

Detail...

Makes 16 portions

Preparation time 20 minutes

Cooking time 30 minutes

You will need...

- 300g butter, plus extra to grease
- 150ml pure maple syrup (preferably dark for its robust taste)
- 1/4 tsp ground cinnamon
- A pinch of salt
- 75g shelled pecans, toasted in a dry pan and chopped
- 500g rolled oats

For the drizzle topping...

- 25g white chocolate, chopped
- 2 tbsp pure Canadian maple syrup (amber for its rich taste)
- 1 tbsp shelled pecans, toasted in a dry pan and chopped

Method...

1. Preheat the oven to 150°C, fan 130°C, gas mark 1. Grease and line a 20 x 30 cm baking tray.
2. Put the butter, maple syrup and cinnamon in a pan with a pinch of salt and stir until melted. Add the nuts and oats and stir well with a wooden spoon to coat.
3. Spoon the mixture into the prepared baking tray, level the top, pressing down slightly, then bake in the preheated oven for 25-30 minutes.
4. Remove from the oven and score 16 squares, then leave to cool completely in the tray on a wire rack.
5. For the topping, put the chocolate and maple syrup in a heatproof bowl set over a pan of barely simmering water (don't let the bowl touch the water), heat until just melted, then stir and drizzle over the flapjacks.
6. Sprinkle with chopped pecans, then cut into squares to serve.

For more sweet and savoury recipe inspiration using maple syrup from Canada, visit www.maplefromcanada.co.uk



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Lost and found

Searching down the back of the sofa isn't the only way to find mislaid or forgotten financial assets.

In most cases, it doesn't cost you anything to check whether you have pensions, savings, shares or other money that's rightfully yours.

PENSION FINDS

If you've worked a lot of jobs, particularly before transferring pensions became easier, you may have pension pots you've lost track of. The Government is testing a central Pensions Dashboard which will eventually let you see all your workplace pensions in one place.

Until that launches, it's best to compile a list of past employers, then use the free Pension Tracing Service (0800 731 0193) to obtain the current details of who administers the relevant pension. If you do find anything, consider seeking professional advice to decide what to do next, as fees and tax treatment will have a significant impact on your best options.

SURPRISE SAVINGS

If you've moved house a lot or had

many bank accounts, try searching through the free My Lost Account service (www.mylostaccount.org.uk), operated by the financial industry. It can take up to three months to receive results, and it only covers accounts formally marked as lost. This usually happens only if letters sent to you have been returned as undeliverable or if there's been a long period of inactivity on the account.

Another option is Gretel (www.gretel.co.uk), which is independent and free. It uses your credit records (via a soft search that doesn't affect credit scores) to find matching bank accounts, pensions and life insurance policies, and it will rescan every two weeks indefinitely. The hitch is that it only covers financial companies that have agreed to partner with Gretel.

EYE ON THE PRIZE

If you've got Premium Bonds, it's worth checking if you've ever won a prize and not received the winner notification (for example, if you've moved). There's a free prize-checking tool on the official app and website (www.nsandi.com),

and there's no time limit on claiming prizes.

SHARE INFORMATION

To find company shares, including lost certificates, you'll usually need to know what companies you think you hold shares in and then track down which of three registrars (Computershare, Equiniti, MUFG Corporate Markets) handles that company. You do not need to use commercial tracing services.

FAMILY FORTUNES

If you've lost touch with family members, you might have a claim to money on a "bona vacantia" estate. This is where no named heirs could be traced and instead the money is held so it can be paid to a qualifying family member, even if they aren't named in the will.

You'll need to be a close blood relative such as a direct descendant or ancestor, a niece or nephew or a first cousin. You can check the unclaimed estates list on the government website (www.gov.uk) and the time limit for claiming is either 12 or 30 years, depending on what documentation you have.

Selling by Auction Through an Estate Agent

Here's what's included when you choose to sell your property at auction using your estate agent...

Immediate exchange of contracts

Contracts are exchanged on the fall of the gavel with the purchaser paying a non-refundable 10% deposit, giving you the piece of mind that your buyer is committed.

Live Stream Auctions

If you choose to sell in a Live Stream Auction it is conducted online by a live auctioneer, with bidding available online, on the phone or by proxy.

Multi-Lot Timed Auctions

If you choose to sell in a Multi-Lot Timed Auction, lots are offered online in a 48 hour bidding window after several weeks of pre-auction marketing.

Single-Lot Timed Auctions

Selling in a Single-Lot Timed Auction involves setting your own start and end dates to suit your requirements.

Reserve Price

Set the minimum amount you wish to sell for. You have complete control over the sale – your property will never sell for less than your reserve price.

Legal work done up front

By providing a legal pack prior to bidding, all interested parties

can do their due diligence before the legally binding exchange of contracts, avoiding time wasters and unnecessary delays. This is the only thing the seller pays for; the buyer pays the rest.

Competitive bidding

Auctions create a competitive bidding environment, helping you achieve the best price possible.

All Property types

Gone are the days of auctions only being for run down properties – the auction house is able to sell all types, including residential, investment, commercial or land opportunities, whether vacant or tenanted.

Extensive marketing

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SPRING INTO ACTION TODAY



Plants look so innocent in pots at the nursery or garden centre, and in show gardens. It's very easy, therefore, to assume that if you pop a few into your own garden, they'll behave just as you wish. Behind the scenes, a lot of work goes into the preparation of beds.

Organisations and individuals who open their gardens to the public put a huge amount of effort into making sure everything in the garden has what it needs in order to look good. Plants in these situations are curated for exhibition. Many famous herbaceous and mixed borders have earth and compost that is banked up towards the back, for example. This enables the plants to be displayed to the best effect. And as much as you might imagine that you are looking at a "natural" scene, there's generally a lot of careful placing, repositioning and replanting during the season so that members of the public enjoy a feast of colourful sights.

How to prepare

You too might want to do some homework if you hope to achieve a beautiful garden:

- Always read the label of any unfamiliar plant. It gives valuable information, including the required light level and moisture content in the ground.

Many of our sun-loving garden plants originate from dry, rocky parts of the Mediterranean, where they need to be drought-tolerant, so it's easy to see that they won't thrive in waterlogged soil in shade. If you plant a *Cistus*, or rock rose, in a north-facing, damp spot, it won't give you any flowers and then it will die. Lavender is a sun-lover which hates its feet to be wet and *Salvias* won't last long unless they're given well-drained soils in sun.

- Everyone has shady spots in the garden, so choose plants that thrive there. Most ferns are lush, shade-lovers and there are some beautiful *Euphorbias* which provide a rich contrast of colour. Many hardy geraniums are happy in shade, along with *Primula*, *Viola* and *Brunnera*. Once you do the research, you'll realise the huge array of possibilities.



- If you have clay soil which is often waterlogged (and then rock-solid during summer), don't despair. There really are plants that suit every place. Consider *Astrantias*, for example. They are a tough herbaceous perennial that can cope with many different conditions. You might need to give them some water when it's really dry, but it's worth it. They shrug off attacks by slugs and snails, can withstand low temperatures and their "Aunt Hattie's pincushion" flowers come in charming shades of pink, silvery cream and lime.
- Unless the plant you're buying is extremely vigorous, or designed to be a substantial specimen, never buy just one. You need a swathe so you'll notice them. One *Echinacea* flower will be lost amongst the jostling stems of neighbours, but a group will look stunning. You can speed up nature by planting in clusters.



- Be wary of thugs! A plant label won't always reveal the true nature of the plant you're buying. Do your own research too. For example, a seemingly innocent little *Houttuynia cordata*, sometimes known as fish mint or the chameleon plant, spreads like mad, especially near a pond or waterway. Bamboo should also ring alarm bells. It's a beautiful plant, but even the "well-behaved" clumping bamboos need to be planted using a root barrier, because they spread sideways very easily. The Spanish bluebell looks innocent but it's vigorous, and competes and hybridises with our native bluebell. The common snowberry shrub, *Symphoricarpos albus*, spreads by suckering roots, forming thickets very quickly. You really don't want that.
- Think about plant shapes and texture as well as flower and foliage colour. Plants should look good together, or their individual charm will be lost. Contrast creates interest; it's all about pattern. Use rounded shapes in different sizes, punctuated with vertical plants and some spreading plants too. Remember that colour looks better when it's repeated; avoid having every colour under the sun.



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COMMUNITY GARDENING GROUP

DON'T KNOW ONE END OF A SPADE FROM ANOTHER?

Whether you do or not, you would be welcome at our friendly community gardening group. Formed initially as one of Measham Medical Unit's Social Prescribing groups, we aim to offer exercise and social contact as a means to bolster physical and emotional well-being and improve our public spaces at the same time.

We currently look after 3 sites in Measham, meeting on a Monday at 10am, to work until 11.15am or so, when we head to the Age UK Cafe on Measham High St for tea and biscuits. (Own cost : £1)

Some members also tend an allotment in Appleby Magna — organic, zero air miles, fruit and veg!

Call or text Linda on 0745 299 1949.

Beyond the barbeque

An outdoor kitchen can transform your garden into a stylish, all-season space for cooking, entertaining and unwinding.

Our appetite for outdoor living is growing. Gardens have now become a year-round extension of the home. As a result, the humble grill on wheels has evolved into the more sophisticated, integrated outdoor kitchen.

First steps

If you live in a listed building or a conservation area, check with your local authority before starting work. Consider how to use the space. A successful outdoor kitchen typically incorporates distinct zones for food prep, cooking, eating and relaxing. Access to water, gas and electricity will also influence what's possible.



What will you include?

At its simplest, an outdoor cooking area might consist of a compact grill paired with a fold-out table, plus a few storage boxes and some hooks. More ambitious designs might have weatherproof cupboards topped with built-in counters made from durable materials such as granite or stainless steel, while sinks and fridges add convenience. Dedicated bar areas are also popular. A classic barbecue may suffice, or you could opt for a pizza oven, gas burners, induction hob, teppanyaki plate or kamado grill.

The finishing touches

Fire pits, chimineas or patio heaters bring warmth on cool evenings and create a focal point. You'll need bright lighting for food preparation after dark, while festoon lights or ground-level solar lamps set the mood around the dining area.



The right location

A level surface is essential, as is a position away from obstacles or anything flammable (beware overhanging tree branches). Aim for somewhere sheltered from strong winds and direct midday sun. Keep the layout clear of busy pathways or steps. Locating the kitchen close to the house will usually keep installation costs down, particularly when connecting services.

Detailed planning

An outdoor kitchen specialist should help at every stage. When putting something together yourself, however, draw up a simple scale plan. Consider creating a seamless transition between indoors and out through colours and materials, sightlines, size/scale and layout. If the design backs onto a wall or boundary, arrange units in an L-shape or island so the cook doesn't have their back to guests.





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Vive le Tour!

Once again, the Tour de France is set to deliver the dramatic moments – and landscapes – that have long made it cycling's most iconic race.

Every July, the world's greatest cycling race, the Tour de France, draws millions of spectators to both roadside viewpoints and television screens. The Tour de France is more than just a sporting event; it's a three-week exhibition of human endurance set against the backdrop of some of Europe's most magnificent scenery.

WHAT'S THE HISTORY?

In 1903, a French newspaper devised a publicity stunt: a bicycle race that would circle the entire country. That first edition attracted just 60 riders; today, it is one of the most-watched annual sporting events on the planet. Britain's interest in the Tour has surged over the past 15 years, driven by a golden generation of home-grown champions. Bradley Wiggins became the first British winner in 2012, followed by Chris Froome, who claimed four victories, and Welsh cyclist Geraint Thomas, who triumphed in 2018.

WHAT'S HAPPENING THIS YEAR?

The 113th edition of the Tour de France takes place from 4 to 26 July, and it promises to be one of the most spectacular in years. The race starts in Barcelona, with the Pyrenees featuring during opening week, before the route winds into France and concludes in Paris.

The riders cover 3,333 kilometres in total, with a staggering 54,450 metres of climbing across 21 stages. Those who love the mountain stages will be particularly well served: the race features five summit finishes,

including two on consecutive days at the legendary Alpe d'Huez — one of cycling's most iconic climbs — which will be visited for the first time since 2022. Riders will tackle back-to-back finishes there on the penultimate two days, which are expected to produce some dramatic racing in the general classification.

There is also a historic twist to the opening stage: for the first time since 1971, the Tour begins with a team

time trial, with all teams setting off together before their individual times are recorded at the finish line atop Barcelona's famous Montjuïc hill.

WHO SHOULD YOU LOOK FOR?

Reigning champion Tadej Pogačar of Slovenia will start as favourite, with Danish rival Jonas Vingegaard and

Belgian powerhouse Remco Evenepoel expected to mount the strongest challenges. It should be a gripping contest.

WHERE CAN YOU WATCH THE RACE?

Unfortunately, 2026 marks the end of free-to-air coverage on ITV, which showed the Tour for 25 years — and before that, Channel 4 had been broadcasting it since the 1980s. Live coverage now sits exclusively behind a paywall on TNT Sports, accessible via HBO Max for around £25.99–£30.99 per month. Highlights will be available free on Quest, a Freeview channel and almost certainly on YouTube.

Whether you watch every stage live or simply catch the highlights each evening, the 2026 Tour de France looks set to be unmissable. Clear your diary for July!



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The Planning (Hazardous Substance) Regulations 2015 (Regulation 6).

I give notice that Reabrook Ltd. is applying to the North West Leicestershire District Council for hazardous substance consent to store hazardous substances at our site at Rawdon Road, Moira, DE12 6DA.

North West Leicestershire District Council will decide whether or not to grant consent, and if to grant, will decide on what conditions to grant. Members of the public may inspect a copy of the application at the site during all reasonable hours until 8th August.

Anyone wishing to make representations about this application should write to the North West Leicestershire District Council Planning Department at dcontrol@nwleicestershire.gov.uk by 8th August.

TWO MINUTE TRIAL INCREP

You have two minutes to find all the everyday words of three or more letters that can be made from the letters above. Plurals are allowed, proper nouns are not.

3 letters: 9 4 letters: 7 5 letters: 3 6 letters: 2

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CHILDREN'S PUZZLE PAGE

ODD ONE OUT: SUMMER BEACH!

Most of the picture shows a classic UK summer beach day, but one object doesn't belong!



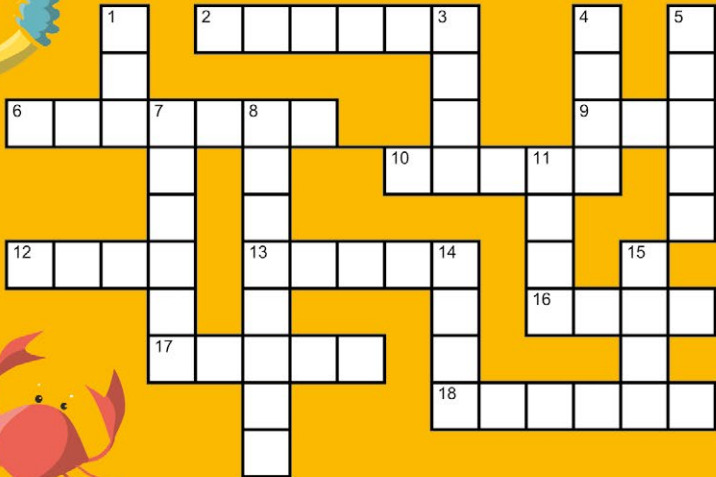
What did the fish say at the seaside café?
"This place is o-fish-ally the best!"

What's an ice cream's favourite day?
Sundae

Why did the big wheel go to the seaside?
To have a wheel-y good time!

SUMMER BEACH WORDFIT

- | | |
|---------|----------|
| BEACH | ICECREAM |
| BOAT | PIER |
| BUCKET | SAND |
| CHIPS | SEA |
| CRAB | SHELL |
| DONKEY | SPADE |
| FERRIS | SUN |
| FISH | TIDE |
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SKODA FABIA 130



To celebrate 130 years, Skoda has introduced the most powerful Fabia yet. Cameron Richards finds out more.

WHAT IS IT?

Skoda has introduced a performance-focused variant of the Fabia supermini into the fast-fading world of hot hatchbacks. The 130 marks the firm's 130th anniversary.

WHAT'S NEW?

The car's standard powertrain has been beefed up, while several exterior enhancements differentiate it from the ordinary Fabia variants.

The chassis has been stiffened and there's a 15mm-lower ride height. It's also based on the Fabia Monte Carlo, utilising the same sporty interior styling features.

WHAT'S UNDER THE BONNET?

The 130 is equipped with a tweaked version of the standard car's 1.5-litre turbocharged EVO 2 petrol engine.

Power has increased from 148bhp to 174bhp and 250Nm of torque, making it the most powerful Skoda Fabia ever. It can take the car to 60mph in 7.2 seconds and tops out at 141mph.

Skoda claims the car can manage 50.3mpg, though our test car averaged an impressive 58.4mpg.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE?

Despite its sporty credentials, the Fabia 130 isn't as hot as you might think. The car doesn't feel as fast as it could be and the standard DSG automatic gearbox also takes away the engagement you'd have with a manual.

However, the 130 is still entertaining to drive, thanks to its tuned chassis and suspension. It's also comfortable.

HOW DOES IT LOOK?

The 130 treatment really livens up the Fabia's profile. All 130s gain chunky 18-inch alloy wheels, a black front and rear spoiler, Fabia 130 badging, twin-exit exhaust tailpipes and a two-tone paint scheme. The car's lowered suspension and red brake calipers finish off the sporty makeover.

WHAT'S IT LIKE INSIDE?

The Fabia 130's Monte Carlo interior means there are thick body-hugging bucket seats, aluminium pedals, a sports steering wheel and carbon fibre-effect upholstery on the seat bolsters and door cards.

The cabin layout is simple, while all the materials feel upmarket. It comes with lots of storage space, including a hidden compartment to the right of the steering wheel.

There's plenty of head- and legroom, and enough shoulder space to seat three in the back comfortably. Boot space is a key selling point with 380 litres on offer, increasing to 1,190 litres with the rear seats down.

WHAT'S THE SPEC LIKE?

All cars come with a 9.2-inch infotainment system, a 10.25-inch Virtual Cockpit, six speakers, dual-zone climate control, rear parking sensors and LED headlights. But, with prices starting at £29,995, it's a bit pricey.

VERDICT

The Fabia 130 is a likeable small car but it's more warm than hot hatch. Its biggest downfall is its sluggish automatic transmission but this Skoda remains competent, practical and good-looking.



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Doggy digestion...

Gut health problems are one of the most common reasons to take your dog to the vet. Digestive issues can have long-term effects, including chronic inflammation, organ damage, weakened immunity, skin conditions, behavioural problems, and reduced longevity.

WHAT TO WATCH OUT FOR

Signs of poor gut health include diarrhoea, constipation, vomiting, excessive flatulence or bloating, and changes in your dog's poo. Other indicators include bad breath, changes in appetite, poor skin and coat health, lethargy, behavioural changes, and weight loss or gain.

Look for the four Cs in your dog's poo: colour, consistency, content and coating. A healthy poo should be firm, log-shaped and chocolate brown.

WAYS TO IMPROVE CANINE GUT HEALTH

- **A balanced diet.** Choose a high-quality complete food that's appropriate for your dog's age, breed, weight and health status. Your vet can advise on a suitable food or diet. Deter scavenging and the consumption of toxic human foods, like grapes, chocolate and onion, by keeping the kitchen door closed.
- **Regular hydration:** Keep a bowl of fresh, clean water on hand at all times.
- **Frequent walks:** Regular exercise keeps your dog's digestion healthy. Swimming and agility training, can also help.
- **Ask about supplements.** Probiotic and prebiotic supplements may benefit digestion and support a healthy gut microbiome.
- **Ask your vet.** Check your furry friend's poo for the four Cs and see your vet promptly if you notice any changes.



Strike oil

The health takeaways of six different cooking and salad oils

VEGETABLE

Generally considered to be healthier to cook with than butter, which is high in potentially artery-clogging saturated fat. Vegetable oil can be a blend of oils from different plants or extracted from a single fruit, seed, grain, or nut. In the UK, it's often rapeseed oil. It has a high smoke point, making it suitable for high-temperature cooking. The smoke point is the point at which the fatty acids break down, releasing free radicals linked to cell damage. However, vegetable oil may be ultra-refined and processed, making it short on nutrients and flavour.

RAPESEED

Containing high levels of heart-healthy unsaturated fats and being lower in saturated fats than any other oil, rapeseed (or canola) oil is one of the healthiest to cook with. It may help lower the risk of diabetes, heart disease, and inflammation, and is a good source of vitamin E, which is vital for skin and eye health.

Use it for roasting and frying or for salad dressings. As with other oils, cold-pressed tends to be best for health.

SUNFLOWER

Look for a sunflower oil that is high in monounsaturates. This means it'll have more oleic acid, which is believed to be particularly beneficial in lowering cholesterol and the risk of heart disease. It's also packed with vitamin E and is a versatile oil in the kitchen.

AVOCADO

Another oil high in oleic acid – or omega-9 – and vitamin E. When cold-pressed, the oil retains more of the pear's heart-healthy chemicals, making it similar to that well-known dietary hero, olive oil. Avocado oil is good for both dressing salads and cooking at high temperatures.

COCONUT

Great taste – but controversial! Coconut oil is very high in saturated fats, so it can contribute to high cholesterol. One German study found it was less detrimental to total cholesterol and low-density

lipoprotein (LDL), the “bad” cholesterol, than butter, but not compared to sunflower and rapeseed oil. Some research has suggested that coconut oil could be used to treat Alzheimer's, but scientific evidence is sparse so far. So the jury's still out on its health benefits.

OLIVE

Lauded as a superfood, olive oil is a staple component of the healthy Mediterranean diet. It is rich in plant compounds known as polyphenols, which may protect against cancer and heart disease. Its high levels of monounsaturated fats can help lower bad LDL cholesterol. One American study of around 100,000 people found that higher olive oil intake was associated with a 15% lower risk of cardiovascular disease. Research has also credited it for cutting the risk of type 2 diabetes and Alzheimer's. Go for extra-virgin, processed without high heat or chemical solvents. But this gives it a low smoke point, making it more suitable for salad dressings, dips and drizzling than cooking.

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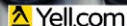


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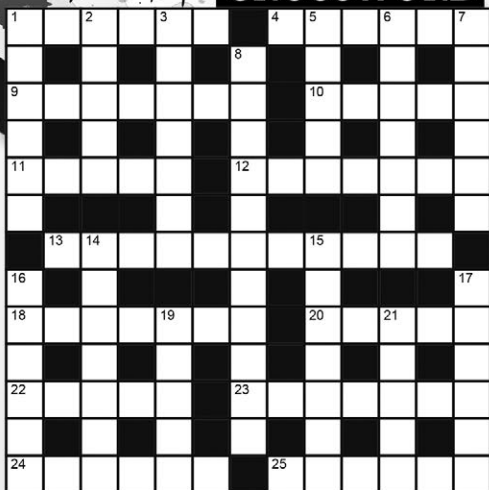
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CROSSWORD



ACROSS

- 1 One of the seasons (6)
- 4 Heaviness (6)
- 9 Massive (7)
- 10 Beside (5)
- 11 Surrounded by (5)
- 12 Tenth month (7)
- 13 Powerful optical instruments (11)
- 18 Anguish (7)
- 20 Complete (5)
- 22 Lively dance (5)
- 23 Disorder (7)
- 24 Female sibling (6)
- 25 Lively (6)

DOWN cont.,

- 7 Big cats (6)
- 8 Protest (11)
- 14 Rude remarks (7)
- 15 External (7)
- 16 Modifies (6)
- 17 Tired (6)
- 19 Astound (5)
- 21 Brass instruments (5)

Each letter in this puzzle is represented by a number between 1 and 26. The codes for three letters are shown. As you find the letters enter them in the box below.

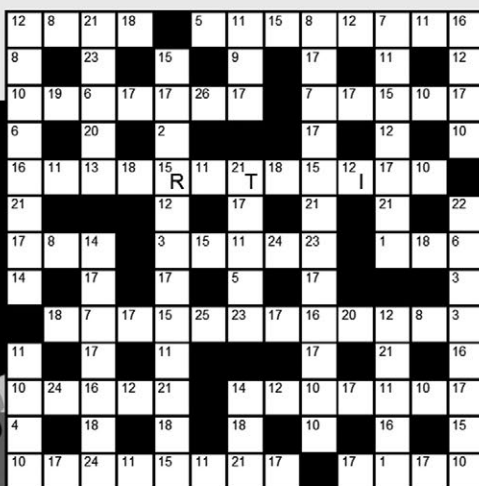
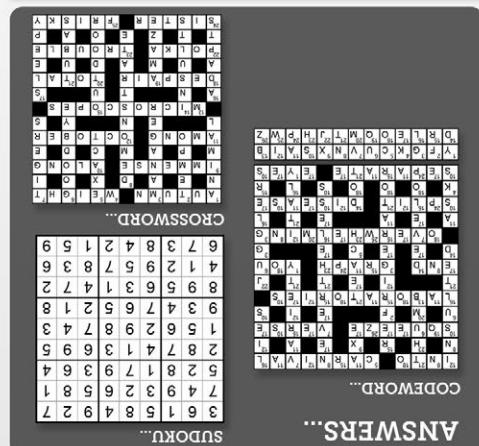
CODEWORD



DOWN

- 1 A horse for example (6)
- 2 Rhythm (5)
- 3 Person in charge (7)
- 5 Precise (5)
- 6 Farewell (4-3)

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GOOD NEWS

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Around 15 million pregnancy tests are thrown away every

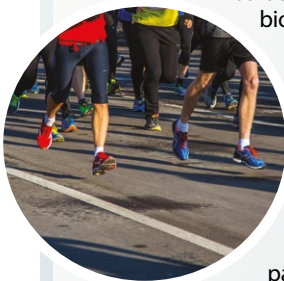
year – and they all contain plastic. Penelope Helbest, a student at the University of East Anglia in Norwich, is aiming to change that. The MA Creative Writing student from Cambridge has launched an eco-friendly sexual wellness company that plans to offer biodegradable pregnancy tests made from seaweed-based material. Her idea recently won the top £2,000 prize in the university's annual Change Makers enterprise competition.

TRAIL BLAZER

A new ten-kilometre race through historic buildings in Halifax combines sport with culture. The inaugural event, which took place this Easter, is the brainchild of runner Andrew Bibby. He came across a similar "urban trail" race while holidaying in France. The route of the Halifax Urban Trail, thought to be the first such run in the UK, took participants from all over the UK through landmarks such as the Piece Hall, the minster and the market.

ROAD TO GOOD HEALTH

A monthly health hub for truckers has opened at a motorway service station. A team of nurses from Somerset NHS Foundation Trust offers blood pressure, cholesterol, weight and blood sugar checks, and health and wellbeing advice. This is offered to drivers who pull up for the night at Junction 24 of the M5, at North Petherton. Some truck drivers have been referred to their GP. It's a convenient service for HGV drivers who work long hours away from home.



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