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the village Breeze



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Letter from the Editor

Hello again and welcome…

On Halloween, children often dress up in costumes and go trick-or-treating to collect sweets. People also decorate their homes with pumpkins, ghosts, and other scary decorations. A popular tradition is carving pumpkins into jack-o'-lanterns.

The history of Halloween goes back many centuries. Its traditions are connected to the ancient Celtic festival of Samhain, which marked the end of the harvest season and the beginning of winter.

People decorate their homes with fake cobwebs, skeletons, bats, spiders, and other spooky objects and pumpkin-carving competitions. Although Halloween has a spooky theme, today many people see it mainly as a celebration of fun, imagination, and creativity. It gives families and friends a chance to spend time together, dress up, decorate, and enjoy special activities.

In conclusion, Halloween is a fascinating celebration with a long history and many colourful traditions. From glowing jack-o'-lanterns to imaginative costumes and bags full of sweets, Halloween brings excitement and fun to people of all ages.

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

"When black cats prowl and pumpkins gleam,
May luck be yours on Halloween."

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.

Deadline for next issue
15th October, 2026

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Step into comfort

Soft, warm carpet has firmly reclaimed its place in modern interiors. Insulating and sound-absorbing, modern carpets have also benefited from technical advances in durability, stain resistance and even sustainability.



Consider how the room will be used

The best carpet will always be the one that suits the way you use each room. Do you want to make a statement in a reception area or create a relaxed retreat? Match carpet performance to likely wear and tear. The deeper the pile and the more luxurious the finish, the greater care the carpet needs.



Choose colours and patterns wisely

If you are redecorating, it's a good idea to choose the carpet first. Pale colours can enhance a feeling of space but may show stains, while dark colours create drama but can highlight dust. Neutrals co-ordinate easily and evoke calm and tranquillity. Patterns are great for disguising marks, but can be "busy". A good compromise could be a flecked design, or a herringbone or narrow stripe. Study samples in situ in different lights

Texture is important, too

A carpet's texture has an impact on how long it lasts. Loop carpets are hard-wearing – though beware of pet claws. Twist piles are also durable and can be used anywhere, while softer Saxony is popular for bedrooms.

Don't ignore underlay

A gently bubbling water feature can be a soothing addition to a garden spa. Alternatively, simply add a wall-mounted or free-standing fountain, provided you can connect it to a power supply.

Think long term

A carpet can last up to 15 years. While statement carpets tend to date quickly, neutral colours with an interesting texture will stand the test of time.

Find your fibre

Natural fibres include wool, coir, sisal and seagrass. Naturally flame-retardant and resilient to compression, wool is warm, soft, durable and does not stain easily.

Synthetic carpets are made from nylon, polypropylene or polyester. Often budget-friendly, they are hard-wearing, stain-resistant and easy to clean.

Mixes: To enhance performance, give a particular feel or reduce price, fibres may be blended. The recommended combination is 80% wool with 20% nylon.



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DIGNITY



Winter tyres: are they worth it?

Winter is approaching and many drivers will find themselves negotiating cold, slippery roads. During this time, winter tyres can help provide the best possible traction.

HOW DO THEY WORK?

Winter tyres are designed to help improve the handling and grip of your car in colder climates and make driving in the winter months a lot safer. Standard "summer" road tyres are not as effective when tarmac is wet, icy, salty and damp.

ADVANTAGES

- Winter tyres work most effectively when the temperature drops below 7 degrees C, making them much more usable in average UK winter temperatures, as well as in snow and ice.
- They often have a more robust construction than summer tyres, allowing them to fend off bumps and potholes more easily, though they can still be punctured.
- Winter tyres give all types of vehicle a boost in grip levels during colder temperatures. For example, a two-wheel drive vehicle on winter tyres is safer to drive on snow and ice than a four-wheel drive car fitted with summer tyres.

DISADVANTAGES

- When temperatures increase, summer tyres offer more grip and improved handling than a winter tyre operating in the same conditions.
- They have more rolling resistance than a summer tyre, so you'd notice some increase in fuel consumption.
- The car's handling can be affected by the larger grooves and tread patterns.
- If you remove them during the spring and summer, you have to find somewhere to keep them.

HOW DO YOU STORE THEM?

It's recommended you store winter tyres indoors, as placing them outdoors could weaken the rubber over time. Keep the tyres away from direct sunlight, as this also damages the rubber, and make sure there's enough ventilation.

A garage or shed is best, but make sure you give the tyres a thorough clean before you store them, as they will have seen lots of mud, salt and water. This could weaken their structure. Also check the tyres for any damage, cuts or nails embedded in the rubber.

WHAT DO THEY COST?

Everything depends on the car and the wheel size. If you drive a larger SUV, expect to pay a premium over a small hatchback.

But there's a range of tyres to suit your budget. Budget winter tyres start from around £50 each, whereas mid-range rubber will set you back around £110 a corner. Meanwhile, premium versions can cost more than £170 each, making them a lot more expensive than standard summer tyres.

WHAT ABOUT ALL-SEASON TYRES?

These are designed to operate well in a broad range of temperatures, so you won't need to swap them out for each season. They're often more expensive than either a summer or winter tyre, however.

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Weird and wonderful

Some people view October as a reset month. It's known as the October Theory. You need to leave summer behind and retune the mind into autumn mode. It halts the yearning for long days and the sun's warmth and, instead, it's time for noticing the changing seasons and a gradual shutting down in the garden. It's an opportunity to appreciate the warmth of the indoors, while making the most of the shorter daylight hours.

Outdoor activity

Outside, October's actually quite a busy month. There should be squashes, main-crop potatoes, spinach and leeks awaiting harvesting, not to mention autumn-fruiting raspberries and orchard fruit, including apples and pears.



A gentle tidy-up of the garden will reap rewards, as this is the scene you will be viewing for the next few months. It's also a great time to plant spring-flowering bulbs, such as daffodils, tulips, alliums and iris. They will then be ready to spring into action as soon as the growing season comes into view.

Strange but true

That spring will come around is a given, but how many of these facts about the weird and wonderful world of gardening do you know?

- Microscopic munching in soil creates the energy that flows between plants. This plays an important role in the carbon, nitrogen and phosphorus cycle which underpins life. Studies suggest that in just one spoonful of soil there could be more life than there are people on planet Earth. It includes bacteria, viruses, fungi, archaea (single-celled microorganisms), and protozoa (single-celled microorganisms which contain a nucleus). These microbes are vital for eating dead and decaying plants and animals. Some bacteria even eat rock!
- One of the highest-maintenance plants growing in UK gardens is the hybrid tea rose. Roses are



thirsty and hungry shrubs that require pruning twice a year. Repeat-flowering varieties also need to be dead-headed. Diseases including blackspot and mildew are common. But if you opt for more informal shrub or species roses with open, single or semi-double blooms, these are more appropriate for a naturalistic, easy-going style of gardening. Just choose your varieties carefully, as modern breeding has improved many disease problems.

- Buttercups are poisonous. They can be fatal to grazing animals, including horses and cattle. All species of Ranunculus contain an oil which can cause severe mouth irritation and stomach upset if eaten. Because of this, most animals avoid them.



- There's a poison garden in the UK. This is the Poison Garden at The Alnwick Garden in Northumberland. The Chelsea Physic Garden in London also includes a dedicated area for poisonous plants, sited next to plants that have healing capabilities. Historically, this helped to teach apothecaries the importance of identifying both deadly and life-saving plants.
- The dandelion, pictured far left top, was once a useful food source, with medicinal value. Dandelion roots were cooked as a vegetable and leaves were used in salads. The yellow flowers would be used in wine and the dye could stain wool.
- There are around 200 slugs in an average square metre of garden.
- Diatomaceous earth (DE), pictured far left bottom, is a naturally occurring slug repellent. This white powder, made from fossilised remains of microscopic aquatic organisms called diatoms, doesn't harm the soil or pets.
- Bananas are the most consumed fruit in the world. However, their security is precarious. While there are more than 1,000 varieties, we regularly eat just one: the Cavendish. These bananas are clones, grown from a slice of another Cavendish plant and not from seed. This means the plants are unable to evolve. The disease known as Panama wilt has destroyed banana plantations in Asia, Africa and Australia. If it were to spread far and wide, it could wipe out the monoculture, meaning we'd no longer have bananas to eat.

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!

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Pumpkin chilli con carne

This fright-night feast isn't just for Halloween – it's the perfect winter warmer the whole family will love.

Detail...

Serves **4**
Preparation time **20 minutes**
Cooking time **1 hour**

You will need...

- 1 small pumpkin or butternut squash
- 2 tbsp vegetable oil, plus extra to drizzle
- Salt and black pepper
- 500g beef mince
- 1 small onion, peeled and diced
- 1 green pepper, deseeded and diced
- 1 tbsp tomato purée
- 1 x 400g tin kidney beans, drained and rinsed
- 1 x 500g carton passata
- 1 tsp chilli powder (heat of your choice)
- ½ tbsp dark brown soft sugar
- 1 tsp yeast extract
- 1 x 400g tin chopped tomatoes
- 700g baby potatoes
- 1x 300ml tub crème fraîche
- 30g watercress, finely chopped

Method...

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C, fan 160°C, gas mark 4.
2. Peel and halve the pumpkin (or butternut squash) and scoop out the seeds. Dice half of the pumpkin into 1cm cubes and reserve. Chop the remaining pumpkin into large chunks, place in an oven tray, drizzle with oil and season. Roast in the preheated oven for approximately 25 minutes or until cooked through.
3. Meanwhile, place a large pan on a medium-high heat. Add the oil and heat until beginning to smoke. Add the minced beef and fry until browned. Drain the beef onto some kitchen paper.
4. Turn the heat down to medium. Add the beef back to the pan, then add in the onion, diced pumpkin and green pepper, cooking until the onions are translucent. Stir in the tomato purée and cook for a further minute before adding the kidney beans, passata, chilli powder, sugar, yeast extract and chopped tomatoes. Cover the pan with a tight-fitting lid and simmer for 1 hour.
5. Place the potatoes in an oven tray, drizzle with vegetable oil and season. Roast in the oven for 30-40 minutes, or until cooked through and crisp on the outside.
6. Once the roasted pumpkin is cooked, remove from the oven and place into a blender. Add a ladleful of liquid from the chilli and blend until smooth. Add to the simmering pan and stir through.
7. Mix together the crème fraîche and watercress, and season to taste.
8. Divide the potatoes between four bowls. Add a ladleful of chilli and serve with a generous dollop of crème fraîche.

For more recipe inspiration, visit www.watercress.co.uk; for more information on the health benefits of watercress, visit www.thewatercresscompany.com.

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The Haunted Rectory

An empty haunted house in the village! How exciting! Here was something I really wanted to write about – a pleasant change from reports about the Tennis Club's AGM. Or dogs dumping their you-know-whats in the local park!

My name's Madeline. Maddy. Fresh out of uni. And a few weeks into my six-month contract as a Trainee Reporter on the *Gallows Green Gazette*.

I'll be honest with you – who believes in ghosts? I certainly don't! But, hey, why let the facts spoil a good story?

Which is why I'm now creeping past the 15th century church: notebook, sleeping bag, mobile and torch in hand; up the wide gravelled path towards the grand Gothic mansion where I plan to spend the night.

Alone!

The house is built of grey sandstone with deeply sloping roofs and pointed gables; decorative gargoyles and carved stone figures sit along the roofline with ivy-clad...(Blah! Blah! Blah! Sorry, I'm getting carried away! Note to self: Don't waffle!)

Anyway, I open the imposing entrance door which creaks ominously, and step inside. It's freezing! I immediately notice there's zero phone signal. So much for calling my boyfriend if I need help!

I reach for the light switch. Nothing. The power must be off.

Switching on my torch, I begin to explore. I've never seen so many rooms! It's absolutely wicked! (Sorry, I mean: huge!)

My tour completed, I unroll the sleeping bag and plonk myself down on the floor. And wait. The sonorous bell in the church tower solemnly tolls twelve. (Write it down!) Midnight. Somewhere, a floorboard squeaks. The eerie wind howls outside and the stained-glass windows rattle. (All good stuff!)

I scribble away furiously. Already, my imagination is in full flow. Eat your heart out, Sebastian! (He's my Editor-in-Chief!)

The seconds tick by. Nothing untoward to report – but that doesn't stop me inventing a few spooky occurrences!

Later, I'm still awake, watching and listening . . . when I hear a plaintive cry echoing in the darkness. A man's voice calling out from the shadows:

'HELLO....!'

What was that?

'Hello!' I reply. *'Is there someone there?'*

'HELLO....!' it repeats – the sound fading away into the gloom.

I feel the hairs bristle on the back of my neck.

'HELLO....!'

I'm really scared, but my editor will never forgive me if I quit now. After all, isn't this what I've been waiting for? A real ghost! Our readers will love it! My fervent imagination goes into overdrive. But then silence, again.

In spite of the unexplained voices, eventually, I fall asleep. When I open my eyes, the bright sun's streaming through the windows. I've survived the night! Let's get outta here!

Back at the office, I decide to do some online research – see if I can unearth any interesting historical facts that might shed some light on last night's events.

Two hours later, I have all the info I need! I return to the rectory, and set out to explore the nearby graveyard. The inscriptions on the headstones are hard to decipher – most covered in rambling ivy. But then I find it:

"Here lies ELOISE MOORE, 1815 – 1839, wife of John Moore, vicar of this parish."

My research reveals the couple were married in 1834. However, five years later, Eloise was unfaithful and had taken a lover. The vicar, in a jealous fit of rage, stabbed his wife savagely through the heart. Her body was discovered the following day by the grief-stricken housemaid.

It all becomes clear now: What I'd actually heard during the eventful night was John Moore repenting, and his tortured soul calling out her name.

Not "HELLO" – as I had first thought – but "ELO . . . ISE! ELO-ISE! ELOISE! His wife's name.

So, do ghosts exist? The jury's out on that one!

But I'll tell you what's real: a few months later, I was offered a full-time position as a journalist on the Gazette. Needless to say – I bit Sebastian's hand off!



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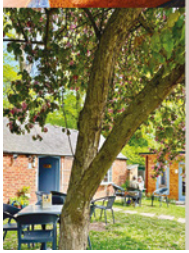
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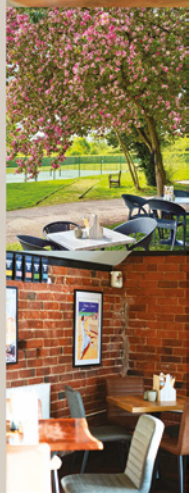
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A Relaxed Space to Eat, Meet and Unwind



It's wise to make sure all your financial information is accessible to a loved one if you were suddenly unable to manage your money yourself.

Just in case...

It's perfectly normal for one person in a family to take care of the financial admin. But too often when somebody is taken ill or dies, their loved ones face extra stress from not knowing key financial details. That's where an "In Case of Emergency" (ICE) document saves the day.

It's not about wills or powers of attorney, important as those are. Instead, it's about having one place to find details of household finances quickly.

WHAT DO I PUT IN MY ICE DOCUMENT? A good rule of thumb is that for every financial account or commitment, you should at the very least list the provider and the account number.

Some of the key areas to cover include bank accounts (including savings), credit cards, mortgages, pensions, investments (including shares), all forms of insurance, council tax, utilities and any benefits or other regular payments.

HOW MUCH DETAIL SHOULD I INCLUDE? To make the ICE document even more helpful, include a list of regular payments, such as direct debits and standing orders, along with the amounts and when they are collected or received. If your partner doesn't handle the finances, they could get a nasty shock if what they think is a monthly payment is actually annual, or vice versa.

You'll need to decide whether you want the ICE document simply to inform your partner or to give them access to the accounts. If it's the latter, a lasting power of attorney for financial affairs may be necessary.

HOW DO I STORE IT SAFELY? An ICE document is only useful if your loved one knows it exists and where to find it. It could be a physical document kept in a safe place. It could also be an electronic document, for example on a USB stick, on your computer, or as a shared (and secured) document online.

If you include account passwords and login details in the ICE document, you'll need to keep it safe and make sure you aren't invalidating any security rules on the account. Never write down a PIN or online banking password.

For physical documents, consider a locked box and make sure your partner knows where the key is or has a copy. For electronic documents, ensure your computer or USB drive is encrypted or has restricted access and that your designated person has up-to-date details to access them.

WHAT ABOUT PASSWORDS? One good solution is a password manager service, which can store information and documents as well as passwords. This means your loved one will only need to know the master password, which should be extremely secure. Never write this down in a way that identifies its purpose.

Advertisement Feature

Cashflow modelling for investments



Cashflow modelling is a financial planning tool that can be used across a range of areas, from investing to retirement, to help demonstrate how your money could work for you over time.

A professionally built model may include key financial details, such as investment performance predictions, income sources and outgoings, taxes, even State Pension forecasts, helping you to understand your overall investment portfolio and how to use it in an efficient manner.

Cashflow modelling can be utilised at any stage of life to assess your current financial position, identify the steps you may need to take, and manage expectations. A personalised cashflow model can help identify important information at different stages of investing. For someone just starting their investment journey, it can highlight suitable timescales for investing, as well as how much and how often to invest. For someone approaching retirement, it can provide reassurance by showing sustainable withdrawal rates, potential growth without regular contributions, or how long their funds might last whilst making withdrawals.

Qualified financial advisers can build a personalised cashflow model to cater to your current financial position, providing professional insight into how your investments could perform and be used over multiple years. This can help keep you motivated and focused on working towards your goals.

Predictions may differ from actual performance, so it is important to remember that investments can rise as well as fall. To keep a model accurate, it can be updated regularly with real-time figures to compare predicted and current fund values.

If you would like to understand how a cashflow model could support your financial objectives and provide greater peace of mind, please speak with your financial adviser.

Written by Ben McLean

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FIRST DRIVE

KIA EV9 GT



The EV9 GT is a hugely powerful electric car but can it still deliver what owners want from a large SUV? Jack Evans finds out.

Facts at a glance

Model as tested:
Kia EV9 GT

Price:
£82,845

Engine:
Dual electric motors

Power:
501bhp

Torque:
740Nm

Top speed:
136mph

0-60mph:
4.3 seconds

Range:
316 miles

Maximum charge speed:
210kW

WHAT IS IT?

The Kia EV9 GT is a large, spacious and family-focused SUV which has more power than a supercar from the early 2000s.

WHAT'S NEW?

The EV9 is Kia's flagship electric SUV. It's an absolutely massive vehicle. The GT aims to add some extra dynamic character and the EV9 benefits from revisions to its suspension, motors and design to make it more focused.

WHAT'S UNDER THE BONNET?

The EV9 GT adopts a dual-motor setup to provide four-wheel drive, and those motors produce an impressive 501bhp. Combine that with 740Nm of torque, and the car goes from 0-60mph in just 4.3 seconds and has a top speed of 136mph – not bad for a model weighing just over 2.7 tonnes.

Kia says you can get up to 316 miles from a single charge of the large battery but, in our experience, it's closer to 250 miles. Luckily, a speedy charge rating of 210kW means you can take the EV9 GT from 10% to 80% charge in around 24 minutes with a suitably speedy charger.

WHAT'S IT LIKE TO DRIVE?

For the most part, the GT feels like a regular EV9 drive. It is large, commanding and rather unwieldy but you get a lovely high view of the road ahead and it's easier to park than you might expect. Loads of cameras and sensors help, too.

The EV9 GT is a quick car. On the open road, it'll get up to the speed limit in no time. The only issue is that weight if you come into a corner with a little bit of pace. The clever virtual gearshift system recreates the feel of a paddle-controlled gearbox, which works well in practice and adds some engagement.

HOW DOES IT LOOK?

Like the standard EV9, the GT is large, brash and hard to miss. There are some neon-coloured touches, such as the brake calipers, and little aerodynamic touches too. But only those really in the know will pick it out against the standard car.

WHAT'S IT LIKE INSIDE?

The GT is available in six- and seven-seater

configurations. Both offer a lot of legroom for all aboard. You've got plenty of sporty Alcantara-trimmed elements, while the front seats have extra bolstering to hug you in when you're moving quickly.



Even with all seats in place, you've got a hatchback-rivalling 333 litres in the boot, and a van-like 2,318 litres with the seats down. Store charging cables in the 52-litre "frunk" under the bonnet.

WHAT'S THE SPEC LIKE?

Our test car came in at a whopping £82,845. Much of that cost is going into the dual-motor setup and performance upgrades, but Kia might be pushing things too far.

You get loads of equipment, including 21-inch alloy wheels, a 12.3-inch driver display and touchscreen, wireless Apple CarPlay and Android Auto and an upgraded 14-speaker Meridian sound system. But the standard EV9 comes with much of this too.

VERDICT

With its massive performance, the EV9 GT is a fitting flagship for the Kia line-up. But it's in conflict with what the EV9 is designed to be – a spacious, comfortable SUV – and we believe the regular car, which is cheaper and more refined, would be the far better choice.



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The heating debate...

Should you keep the central heating on low all the time or just put it on when required? It may be more complicated than you think.

Almost all of us are on a mission to lower our energy bills. But that becomes trickier once we turn the central heating on. Some people say it works out cheaper to keep it on a low temperature all day, while others insist it's more efficient and less costly just to use it when you need to. So which is best?

In fact, much depends on your circumstances.

IF YOU'RE... OUT DURING THE DAY

There's no point in heating your home when you're not in it. It uses more fuel and leads to greater heat loss. Instead, if you have gas central heating, experts, including the Energy Saving Trust, suggest programming your heating to come on half an hour before you get up and half an hour before you come home. Time it to go off half an hour before your usual bedtime.



What's not a good idea, however, is to come in and crank the thermostat right up high to heat your home quickly. As the Centre for Sustainable Living points out, the boiler still works at the same speed. You could end up paying higher bills for an unnecessarily hot house.

IF YOU'RE... USUALLY AT HOME

There's more of an argument for keeping your heating on a constant low temperature if, for example, you work from home or are retired. You can set thermostatic radiator valves lower in rooms you don't use much. Keep the main thermostat on a reasonable temperature – between 18 and 21 degrees C for most people.

IF YOU... HAVE A HEAT PUMP

In this scenario, there's some justification for leaving your heating on all the time. A heat pump runs more efficiently, and the savings you make can offset the longer running period. Its low and slow method is designed to keep your home at a steady temperature and not start from scratch every time. But you can opt for a "setback" – setting the thermostat a couple of degrees lower if you're away or at night.

IF YOU... HAVE UNDERFLOOR HEATING

Again, underfloor heating is designed to be on constantly, but with the thermostat set to a low temperature. Heat is stored in the floor screed for a while even when the heating isn't running.

IF YOU... HAVE AN OLDER HOME

Heating that's on all the time can be good for brick-built houses, which take longer to warm up but release heat back into your home. Modern plasterboard walls, however, heat up more quickly, and so on-and-off heating could be better if you live in a newer property.

IF YOU... WANT TO SAVE MONEY GENERALLY

Having your boiler serviced annually will make it run better and more cheaply. If it's over ten years old, it's likely to be less efficient, so replacing it could save on energy bills in the long run.

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From sitcoms and period dramas to musicals and documentaries, few entertainers have successfully moved between as many genres as Sheridan Smith.

Sheridan shines



Equally at home on the stage, television screen and in the recording studio, Sheridan Smith is one of the nation's most recognisable and admired actors and singers.

Born in Lincolnshire in 1981, she was raised in a family immersed in music and performance. Her parents were keen country music performers, helping to nurture her love of singing. Sheridan's natural talent led to television roles as a teenager before she became a household name through sitcoms, including *"The Royle Family"* and *"Gavin & Stacey"*.

It was her dramatic work that cemented her reputation as one of Britain's finest actresses. Acclaimed performances in television dramas such as *"Mrs Biggs"*, *"Cilla"* and *"The Moorside"* showcased her versatility. Meanwhile, her appearances in West End productions, including *"Legally Blonde"*, *"Funny Girl"* and *"Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat"*, demonstrated her powerful singing voice.

MUM'S THE WORD A recent foray into television was the BBC's five-part series, *"The Cage"*. Filmed in and around Merseyside, the story centres around Sheridan's character, single mum Leanne, a casino cashier who starts skimming cash from the safe to save her family home.

Sheridan temporarily relocated to Australia for four months in spring 2026 to film her new ITV mystery thriller, *"Two Birds"*. She took her then five-year-old son Billy, whose father is former fiancé Jamie Horn.

FACING DEMONS Probably Sheridan's toughest roles have seen her draw on real-life experience. Her elder brother Julian died of cancer aged 18. Sheridan was just eight – and she has openly credited this as a profound emotional influence on her life, which she has channelled into her acting roles.

Sheridan has opened up about the gruelling time spent making ITV's 2025 four-parter, *"I fought the Law"*. This true-crime drama tells the story of Ann Ming, played by Sheridan, who mounted a 17-year campaign to overturn the 800-year-old Double Jeopardy law to bring her daughter's murderer to justice. *(All episodes are available on ITVX.)*

"I think the time I can really act is when it's someone's pain. Whether it's my pain coming out through the acting, I don't know. But I find doing the make-believe stuff much harder. With Mrs Biggs, I'd remember the night my brother died and my mum screaming, so I'd tap into that. Now, as a mum, I imagine what if something happened to your child."

Sheridan has also spoken openly about her mental-health struggles and the pressures of fame. Her honesty has helped reduce stigma around wellbeing and resilience.

Ultimately, her journey proves that behind every celebrated performance is a determination to keep moving forward, whatever life may bring.

All episodes of "The Cage" are available on BBC One and BBC iPlayer. Image of Sheridan Smith © BBC.

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48 hours in Riga

Since Latvia emerged from decades of Soviet rule in 1991, the capital Riga has been revamping itself while paying homage to its rich and complex past. Today, trendy bars, cosy cafés and modern art centres coexist with Gothic spires and spectacular Art Nouveau façades.

Compact enough to explore over one weekend, while packing in plenty of history and culture, Riga is perfect city-break material. Here's how to make the most of two days in this Baltic gem.

DAY 1

Morning

Kick off your weekend by exploring Riga's UNESCO-listed Old Town, known locally as Vecrīga. Wander through its maze of narrow cobblestone streets lined with colourful merchant houses and hidden courtyards, and stop for a coffee in a snug café.

After Riga Cathedral (Rīgas Doms), the largest medieval church in the Baltic states, visit the iconic House of the Black Heads just a short walk away. Originally built in the 14th century, its richly decorated façade is one of Riga's most photographed landmarks. Finish off your morning tour by climbing nearby St Peter's Church, which offers panoramic views from its steeple across Riga's rooftops, spires and river.

Afternoon

Stop for lunch to sample Riga's understated cuisine. As well as high-end gourmet restaurants, you'll find hideaways loved by locals, serving traditional Latvian cuisine. Try grey peas with bacon, smoked fish, rye bread or a hearty soup.

On the topic of food, now would also be the perfect time to swing by the city's Central Market – one of the largest and most impressive in Europe. Peruse stalls selling everything from smoked fish, forest mushrooms and berries to homemade bread, and get a feel for everyday life in Riga.

Evening

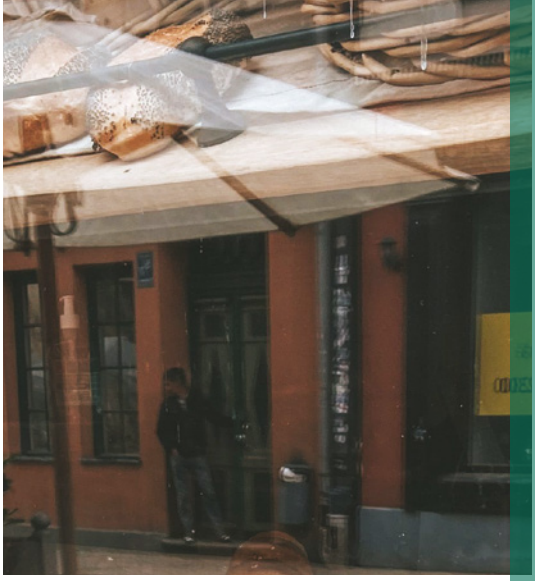
As evening approaches, head to one of Riga's rooftop bars or riverside restaurants and watch the sunset over the Daugava River. If you have the energy, why not sample the city's nightlife? Whether you prefer little wine bars or lively pubs, the city offers something for every night owl, with many venues tucked away inside beautifully restored historic buildings.

DAY 2

Morning

Start your second day with a cruise along the Daugava River and Riga City Canal. Look out for Riga Castle, the Freedom Monument and the colourful rooftops of the Old Town as you glide through the city's waterways. If the weather allows, and you're feeling adventurous, you could rent out water bicycles, kayaks or paddleboards, and explore Riga's waterways at your own pace.

Before lunch, take a stroll through the parks dotting central Riga, including Bastejkalna Park with its winding paths and canal; the views offer the perfect chance to pause a while.



Afternoon

Need a pick-me-up? Fuel the rest of your day by diving into Riga's growing café culture. The city is filled with independent cafés, many of which double up as art galleries or bike shops, spilling out onto the city's pavements during summertime. Pair your latte with a traditional Latvian pastry before embarking on more sightseeing!

Spend the remainder of your day exploring Riga's Art Nouveau district. Riga has the highest concentration of Art Nouveau architecture in the world, so you'll be constantly reaching for your camera while there. Nowhere is this more true than in the city's Jugendstil quarter. Soak in centuries of history and be sure to stop by Alberta iela, an impressive street that forms the heart of this legendary collection of buildings, built between 1890 and 1910.

Finish off your afternoon with a visit to the magnificent Latvian National Museum of Art – Riga's main art treasury.

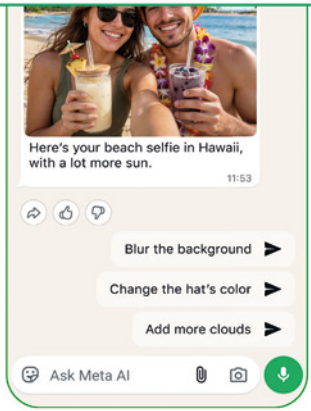




Evening

After a final dinner, wander through the city's lantern-lit streets before ending up in one of the city's intimate jazz bars or historic beer cellars. The nightlife in Riga manages to feel lively without becoming overwhelming, making it the perfect way to wind down after a long day.

TechTalk



WATCH YOUR IMAGE

Look out for the social-media small print.

This summer, Instagram quietly added a worrying new feature: other people could take your images, video and audio without asking your permission and remix them using AI. The feature was added to the Instagram app's Settings page with your content opted in by default. After a huge customer backlash, Instagram withdrew the feature for the time being.

There have been similar sharing and AI additions in other social media apps too, so it's a very good idea to go into your socials' settings from time to time to make sure you're not sharing more than you want to.

COOL IDEA

It's getting chilly – buy an air conditioner.

As we move into winter, it's a safe bet that the last thing you feel you need right now is a portable air conditioner. And that's why this is the best time of year to buy one. This summer's heatwaves saw portable units and cooling fans sold out immediately across the UK, with "scalpers" snapping up any new stock and listing it for four times the price on eBay.

Major manufacturers, such as Meaco, were expecting to be sold out until late October. That means this is a good time to buy in advance of what's likely to be another hot summer next year.





CODE RED

Does the arrival of Grand Theft Auto 6 herald the end of games on disc?

The long-awaited Grand Theft Auto 6 launches next month, and while you'll be able to buy it in the shops, you won't be getting any discs. The box will contain a download code for the digital version instead. This isn't a new idea but having the world's biggest gaming franchise go digital-only is the shape of things to come: Sony has announced that as of 2028 it will no longer make discs for new PlayStation games. That's got many gamers worried because it means you won't be able to buy second-hand games or sell your games when you're finished with them.



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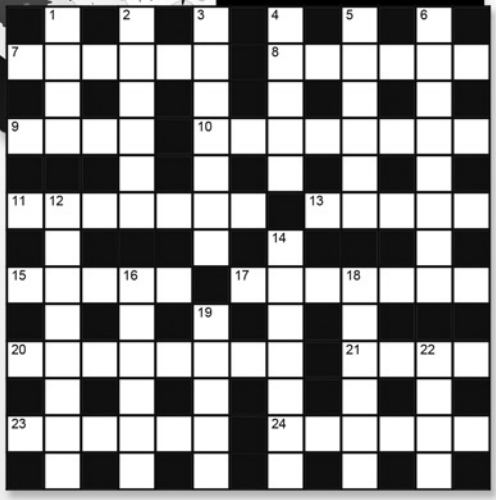
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Coffee Break

SUDOKU

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

CROSSWORD



ACROSS

7 Moscow's country (6)
8 Clears throat (6)
9 Continent (4)
10 Extra (8)
11 Picture houses (7)
13 Head organ (5)
15 Wooden barrier (5)
17 Go backwards (7)
20 Fell (8)
21 Limit, boundary (4)
23 Event, incident (6)
24 Idea (6)

DOWN

1 Pet name for cat (4)
2 Property, manor (6)
3 Yellow fruits (7)
4 Corrosive liquids (5)
5 Six-string (6)
6 Explanations, hypotheses (8)

DOWN cont.,

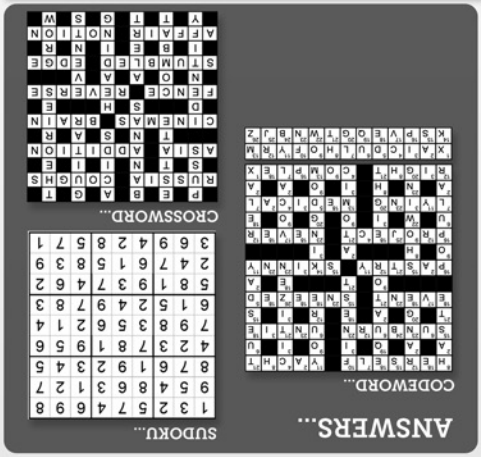
12 Recognize (8)
14 Title (7)
16 Fighting (6)
18 Occurrences (6)
19 Warn (5)
22 Enlarge, develop (4)

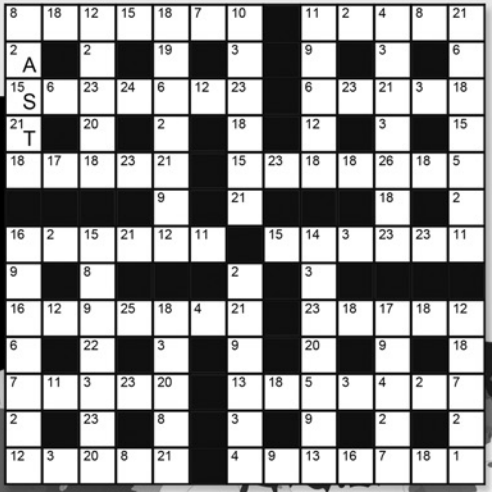
CODEWORD

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.

1	2	3	4
5	6	7	8
9	10	11	12
13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24
25	26		

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CHILDREN'S PUZZLE PAGE

THE WITCH'S POTION RECIPE!

Count how many of each ingredient is in the cauldron using the list on the right.



INGREDIENTS

How many of each can you find?

- PUMPKIN ☐
- BONE ☐
- EYEBALL ☐
- BAT ☐
- SPIDER ☐
- MUSHROOM ☐

USE THE VALUES ABOVE TO SOLVE THE SUMS BELOW

1. 🎃 + 🦴 + 🕷 = ☐
2. 🦇 + 👁 − 🍄 = ☐
3. 🎃 x 🍄 + 🦴 = ☐
4. 👁 + 🦇 + 🕷 = ☐
5. 🦇 x 🦴 − 🎃 = ☐
6. 👁 + 🕷 + 🍄 = ☐

What do you call a pumpkin that tells jokes?
A pun-kin!

What do friendly monsters eat for dessert?
I scream!

Why was the jack-o'-lantern so confident?
It had a glowing personality!

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