

January / February 2026

Local Life

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Some of the articles included

p6



p20



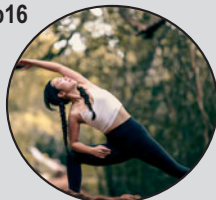
p11



p23



p16



p26



**Hello and
welcome to this
edition of
The Local Life.**

Happy New Year! Best wishes to you all for 2026. Lets hope this year is a success and enjoyable one for businesses, residents and all of the local community.

I am looking for a couple of people to join our delivery team. Rounds are available in Delamere. Are you interested in delivering the magazines every other month? Perfect for your son or daughters first job, must be age 13+ offering a good rate of pay. Please get in touch for more details and to apply for the role.

Are you self-employed or a business owner and want to make 2026 your best year yet? Have you considered advertising in the next edition but haven't ever got round to it, now is the time to do so! Get in touch today to have your business featured in the next edition and start making our loyal readers, your loyal customers.

If you are involved in a local club, team, charity, non-profit making organisation or event please get in touch. I would like to start to increase the amount of local content included in the publication and will be offering free space to local events, clubs, fund-raisers etc.

*Best Wishes,
Charlie*



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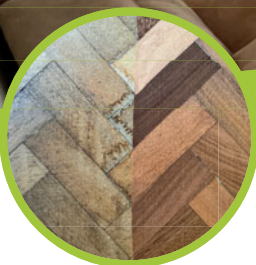
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Joke Junction

WHY DID THE DONUT make a RESOLUTION? - IT WANTED TO GET INTO SHAPE.

Why did the gym close in January? It just didn't work out.

WHY DID THE CALENDAR GO TO THERAPY? IT FELT LIKE ITS DAYS WERE NUMBERED.

Why did the artist make a New Year's resolution? She wanted to draw the line somewhere.

Here's to 2025 — may your Wi-Fi be strong, your coffee stronger, and your resolutions optional!

What happened to the man who stole a calendar on New Year's Eve? - He got twelve months!



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You may or may not have written your personal list of goals and aspirations for the coming year, which likely cover everything from health hopes to positive habits in the home; but do any of these take into account your pet? It can be easy to overlook the needs of our beloved animals, but it's worth taking a moment to consider how you can make their life better at the same time as your own.

I will get those steps in

If you've promised yourself to hit the 10k daily steps mark, then why not set a goal for your furry friend too? A human can cover mile in as little as 2,100 steps, but for a dog it can take between five to eight thousand.

Really, the numbers are arbitrary as both dogs and humans can have vastly different fitness needs depending on lifestyle, diet and breed (the last one only applies to dogs!) - the point is to get outside and take your pup with you.

I will keep up-to-date

Pets can be pretty techy these days, with the standard collar tag being replaced by a microchip. A legal requirement for all cats and dogs in the UK, microchips are inserted in pets while they are young - a small device implants the tiny chip just under their skin and is not painful or invasive, allowing the owner to be identified should they get lost.

While such technology helps aid pet reunions, it can also have the opposite effect if the information on the database is not updated, so make sure your pet's chip has the correct name, address and contact number for you.

I will health-check

Similarly, it is really important to keep on top of the likes of immunisations and flea/worm medications, and to attend regular check-ups which help track weight and overall vitality. Many vets offer a 'pet club' whereby they charge a monthly fee that includes an annual checkup, vaccinations and a discount of food and medications. These are all designed to help you (and your pet) stay on track, whilst also saving you money.

I will be age aware

They may seem eternally young, but like us, pets have different needs throughout their lives. This includes dietary needs (both nutrition and amount change over time), supplements changes for issues such as bone density, and constantly altering physical needs and capabilities. It's worth seeking information for different life stages.

I will make every day wonderful

Stimulating walks, yummy food, plenty of cuddles and exciting toys and treats all make your beloved pet's life better, and why would you not want to make them feel loved and secure every moment of their lives?

Year of Cheer

New years resolutions for pet owners.





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When it comes to online etiquette, you can never be too cautious. Those already familiar with the social rituals performed at business meetings (handshake or air kiss etc.) will know the fallout from such faux pas.

Fortunately, this short guide will help you perfect your prowess in the virtual sphere.

Virtual meetings

Whether you're hosting or attending a virtual meeting, maintaining professionalism is vital. Firstly, and one of the absolute basics, is be punctual, joining meetings a few minutes early if possible.

Secondly, unless advertised as an 'audio only' event, remember to dress appropriately. If you're feeling lazy you can look smart on your top half as a minimum – and be sure to wash off last night's make up.

Before the meeting begins, make sure you're prepared: check your mic, camera and internet connection. Also, have a clear agenda at hand or some points you want to raise, to ensure things stay on track.

If you're the host, break the ice by introducing everyone at the start; and most importantly, mute when you are not speaking! This prevents background noise from disrupting the conversation, and it's definitely okay to remind others to do the same, because no one wants to hear Sean's dog barking at the postman.

Messaging apps

Messenger apps can be for business or social interactions, and while they are a casual space, courtesy still counts, especially in group chats. Rule one: don't spam. Flooding chats with forwards, memes or unnecessary messages will irritate anyone who isn't in your immediate friend or family circle.

SMART SOCIAL

Top tips for navigating the treacherous online world.

Also, avoid messaging late at night or early morning unless it's urgent, and use emojis and tone carefully because text lacks nuance. Emojis help, but don't overdo it.

If you're in a situation where things have got a bit heated or off topic, remind members the purpose of the group and suggest they move to a personal chat.

In general, it is important to be aware of how many people may be reading your messages, so always be vigilant! There are safeguarding options in place on many of these apps, such as blocking inappropriate websites and images. You can also set messages to delete after a certain period of time, though bear in mind that this will often delete them for everyone, and if you are not an admin it can be interpreted as bad manners.

Finally, don't add anyone to a group without their permission and definitely don't be offended when people start abandoning 'Dave's 50th booze up' group six months after the event.

Social media

Whether you're posting, commenting or messaging, always think before you act! Avoid sharing misinformation, offensive content or overly personal details, and respect the privacy of others. For instance, don't tag people in photos or posts without their permission.

Finally, keep it civil. Disagreeing is fine - being rude isn't.

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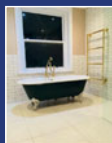
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Ginger Peanut Chicken

Tasty and moreish!

Servings: 4

Preparation time: 20 Min

Cooking Time: 50 Min

Ingredients

Ginger chicken

500g chicken, cut into small bite-sized chunks

Thum-sized piece of ginger, grated

3 spring onion, thinly sliced

Zest and juice of 1-2 limes

2 tbsps brown sugar

1 1/2 tsp salt

1 tbsp olive oil or avocado oil

2-3 cloves garlic, minced

50g chopped roasted peanuts (dry roasted are great)

20g coriander

Pak choi

Coconut Rice

250-30g Jasmine rice

1 tin coconut milk

Method

In an oven-proof dish (either non-metallic or stainless steel), mix the chicken with the ginger, half the spring onions, lime zest, brown sugar, salt, and oil. Marinate for 2 hours.

For fluffy coconut rice
Wash the rice until the water is quite clear, to remove the starch. This is important because coconut milk is thicker than water, so without washing, the rice will be gluey. Then let the rice soak for an hour.

Preheat the oven to 200°C/ 180°C fan / Gas 4. In a large oven proof saucepan combine the can of coconut milk with a can of water and bring the mixture to the boil. Then add the rice. Cover with foil and bake, for 40 minutes. Oven-cooking allows the rice to steam without scorching the base of the pot. After 40 minutes, remove the pan from the oven and leave to rest for 15 minutes. The rice will absorb any remaining moisture and become fluffy.

The ginger chicken
Heat a large frying pan or wok to medium-high heat. Add the marinated chicken to the pan (split it into 2-3 batches depending on the size of your wok). Don't stir the chicken too much, to allow it to develop a caramelised surface. When all the chicken is cooked and caramelised, reduce the heat slightly and add the peanuts and garlic. Sauté for 3-5 minutes until the garlic is fragrant.

Add the coriander, the remainder of the spring onions, and the pak choi. Squeeze lime juice into the pan and season with more salt and pepper as needed.

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Photo Finish:

The Construction Of Tower Bridge

An extraordinary snapshot from the late 19th century shows one of London's most ambitious landmarks taking shape - the skeletal beginnings of Tower Bridge, rising above the River Thames in a feat of Victorian engineering brilliance.

Few sights are as synonymous with London as Tower Bridge. Completed in 1894 after eight years of construction, it remains both a practical crossing and a global symbol of the capital's ingenuity. Yet, in this rare photograph from the 1880s, the familiar twin towers are still in their infancy - exposed steel frameworks standing tall on each bank, slowly inching toward the middle of the river.

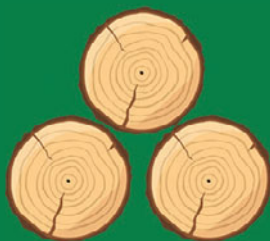
The bridge was born from necessity. By the 1870s, the East End's booming trade required a new Thames crossing downstream of London Bridge, but one that wouldn't block the busy shipping lanes to the Pool of London. The chosen solution was as ingenious as it was audacious: a bascule bridge (essentially a drawbridge) with two enormous moveable roadways that could lift to let tall-masted ships pass.

Designed by Sir Horace Jones (the City Architect) and engineered by Sir John Wolfe Barry, the bridge combined advanced steel engineering with a medieval façade to complement the nearby Tower of London. It's for this reason that many assume the bridge to be older than it actually is!

Over 11,000 tonnes of steel form its internal structure, clad in Cornish granite and Portland stone to lend it the Gothic appearance that continues to charm visitors today.

When it finally opened in June 1894, Tower Bridge was hailed as a marvel of modern engineering. The hydraulics that powered its twin bascules originally ran on steam and were later converted to electricity in 1976. Even now, the bridge opens around 800 times a year, proving that functionality and beauty can indeed coexist.

Today, an estimated 40,000 people cross Tower Bridge every day, either on foot or in a vehicle - many barely glancing up at the soaring towers that took nearly a decade to complete. Yet in this photo, frozen in time, we're reminded of the ambition and craftsmanship behind one of Britain's proudest landmarks.



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YOGA FOR FLEXIBILITY

The ancient mind-body practice of yoga has been found to benefit physical and mental health, and especially flexibility.

Yoga, which in ancient Sanskrit means to unite, signifies a joining of mind, body and spirit has been around for thousands of years but here in the UK its popularity is growing every year with up to half a million of us participating every week. The benefits are many, better balance and strength, reduced stress levels and improved mental wellbeing, combats depression and improves concentration, and it can even help you get a better night's sleep. But for many improved flexibility, joint and muscle health is the main goal.

Exercise and breathing

Improved flexibility, balance and strength are attained in yoga not only through exercise but by mindful breathing which naturally helps the body to purge tension and gently stretch muscles. Unlike many forms of exercise yoga is gentle, but highly effective, and uses low impact movement to strengthen the body. It is these gentle yet effective movements that appeal to so many people.

Basic poses for flexibility

Child's pose or Balasana – is a basic and useful movement. This is often a pose that acts as a joining pose between other exercises but is easily achieved even for beginners and very effective for improving flexibility and strength. As you kneel and fold your torso forward on your thighs, place your head on the ground and gently stretch your arms forward on the ground beyond your head.

Downward-facing dog is perhaps the most famous yoga movement but highly effective at improving flexibility and strength in legs, arms and core. On all fours you create an inverted 'v' shape.

Bridge pose or Setu Bandhasana starts by lying on your back and lifting your hips, opening the chest. This pose is an excellent way to strengthen the core and hips in a gradual, gentle way.

Different kinds of yoga

There are many different types of yoga, but five main styles, hatha, lyengar, vinyasa, ashtanga and hot yoga. Hatha Yoga tends to encompass slower and more gentle movements whilst Ashtanga and Vinyasa tend to be physically demanding and better suited to people who are experienced in the practice. Lyengar tends to build upon Hatha Yoga poses and utilises props such as pads, blankets and straps. Hot Yoga takes place in a warm environment to promote deeper movements because the body is warmer. It can also encourage the body to detoxify by sweating, although great care must be taken to hydrate sufficiently.

Yoga is an excellent way to get stronger, fitter and more flexible. And especially when you are beginning your yoga journey doing the poses at home can help you decide if it is for you at very little cost and in the privacy of your own space. But professional guidance is an excellent way to learn correct technique and practice. Taking a yoga class is also an excellent way to meet new people and enjoy socialising whilst getting fitter and healthier.

By Rob Bullock



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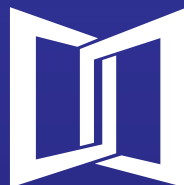
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If you're feeling the winter blues and simply can't wait till your summer holiday, then consider Las Palmas, a sun-kissed haven that's a mere four-hour flight from the UK, and where January highs hover around 21°C. Blending vibrant urban life with golden beaches, it's an ideal winter escape that will hopefully see you through the cold snap!

Weather

January in Las Palmas is refreshingly mild. Daytime temperatures average 19°C to 21°C, dipping down to around 16 after dark. Skies are mostly clear, with just a few light showers across the month.

This stable climate means you can swap your winter coat for light layers: think breathable fabrics and maybe a cashmere shawl for cool evenings.

Beach

Playa de Las Canteras is the city's crown jewel. Its golden shore stretches for 3km, framed by a natural reef that keeps the waves calm.

Morning swims and snorkelling sessions here feel tropical - water temperatures settle comfortably around 20°C. Just beyond the sand, the city's promenade bustles with joggers, cyclists and evening strollers. Rent a bike or join a group walking tour along the coast to spot local murals and hidden coves.

Viva Las Palmas

Seek out some winter sun with this vibrant island city.

Culture

Las Palmas has plenty of history and art for the intellectually inclined. Wander through Vegueta, the UNESCO-listed old town, where cobbled streets open onto grand plazas; or Casa de Colón where you can trace Columbus's voyages.

In January, you might catch a flamenco show or a live jazz night at a tucked-away tavern - check local listings for pop-up performances.

Cuisine

For foodies, this city doesn't disappoint. Start your day with a tostada topped by local mojo sauce. For lunch, try 'papas arrugadas' (wrinkled potatoes) served alongside fresh fish or grilled octopus. And don't miss 'gofio', a toasted grain flour that appears in soups, desserts, and even home-made ice cream.

Finish with a glass of sweet Malvasía wine as the sun sets over the Atlantic.

Practical Tips

Book accommodation near Las Canteras for beach and city access - this will make your entire trip a breeze. Then, if you do fancy an exploration of the more mountainous areas, you can rent a car for the day. Having said that, public buses are reliable and cover most tourist sites for under €3 a ride.

Though the temperatures may seem fairly low, be sure to pack sunscreen (remember, your skin has been in hibernation mode), ensuring you drink plenty of water too, especially if you are also having a few daily cervezas. In general though, Las Palmas is a friendly, modern and fun place to get your winter sun. Cheers to that.



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January is one of the best months here in the UK for both small and large screen entertainment and this month there is something for everyone.

Whilst the The Ashes, Premier League football and English Premier League rugby continue to entertain sports fans this month, there are some award-winning dramas, fan favourites and brilliant sit-coms to keep us entertained in our living rooms. But the silver screen has some excellent offerings in the not so tranquil village of Grantchester in this most English of TV gems.

Grantchester - Season 10 - ITV - tbc

DI Geordie Keating (Robson Green) and Reverend Alpha Kottaram (Rishi Nair) return for the highly anticipated tenth season of this fan favourite. The season begins with the duo investigating a suspicious death during Easter festivities in the not so tranquil village of Grantchester in this most English of TV gems.

A Thousand Bows - Season 2 - Disney + January 9th

From the creator of Peaky Blinders (Steven Knight) this second season of the drama set in the brutal East End of London stars award winning actor Stephen Graham (Adolescence), Malachi Kirby and Erin Doherty with a stellar cast. Expect plenty more plotting and scheming and edge of your seat action.

World Darts Championship Final - Sky Sports - 3rd January

Whilst there are plenty of outdoor sporting events to entertain us this month, many indoor sports fans look forward to the action from the Oche at London's Alexandra Palace each December and January. The field is open this year. Teen sensation Luke Littler came a close second to Luke Humphries in 2024 but triumphed in 2025 and has maintained his excellent form during the past year but there are some legends who might still win.

January Entertainment

Film and TV Highlights - Rob Bullock

Hamnet - January 9th

Irish actors, Laurence Olivier Award winner Jessie Buckley and Paul Mescal (Gladiator II) star in this adaptation of Maggie O'Farrell's 2020 novel. Hamnet is based upon the fictional interpretation of the real life of William Shakespeare's son, Hamnet, who died in 1596 aged 11. The film sensitively addresses how the Shakespeare family, especially his mother Agnes (Anne Hathaway), deal with the death of their son rather than on William's life as the playwright we all know so well.

Rental Family - January 16th

This heartwarming comedy drama stars Brendan Fraser (The Mummy) as a lonely American actor who lands the job for a Japanese rental family service agency playing stand-in roles for strangers at weddings and other family events. As he plays these roles for people he does not know, he discovers himself, the power of connections and unexpected personal fulfilment.

Charlie the Wonderdog - January 16th

A wonderful, animated adventure starring the voice of Owen Wilson as Charlie which is bound to delight kids young and old. Shy boy, Danny imagines a make-believe world where he and his dog Charlie have fantastic adventures, but when Charlie is mysteriously abducted by aliens he is given real superpowers and emerges as Charlie the Wonderdog!

At the start of each year we're told that a certain sector of car has had its day... the gas-guzzler and the diesel immediately spring to mind. Yet spare a thought for the manual, whose predicted removal from our roads has been spoken about for decades.

Yet with every passing era, the manual gearbox – complete with humble clutch pedal and the occasional grinding of gears – continues to thrive, and here's why.

For years, the message seemed clear: the future was automatic. Electric vehicles don't need gears, city traffic makes constant shifting a chore, and modern automatics are more efficient than ever. Yet something interesting continues to bubble on the surface of the nation's tarmacked roads, and that's the continued thrill of manual gearbox cars.

In the UK, manual cars still account for around 30% of new registrations, and while that's far lower than a decade ago, for many enthusiasts the thrill of changing gears not only creates more exciting driving; it's also become something of a badge of honour.

Why? Because driving a manual demands engagement. You can feel the road, sense the car's rhythm, and take full control of power delivery. It's a tactile, mechanical connection that's often lost in the smooth, seamless surge of an automatic. For petrolheads, that involvement is the very essence of driving.

Brands have taken note. Mazda, for instance, continues to offer manual versions of its MX-5 roadster - a model that's almost become shorthand for pure driving pleasure. Toyota, too, has reintroduced manual options on performance models like the GR Supra, responding directly to customer demand. Even MINI still offers stick-shift variants for those who prefer a hands-on drive.

And it's not just about performance. A manual gearbox can also mean cheaper servicing, lower purchase prices and, for used buyers, a wider range of affordable options. Insurance can even be lower for manual cars, depending on the model.

Of course, there's no denying the convenience of an automatic, especially in stop-start traffic. And for EVs, the argument is academic - there's no gearbox to shift. However, as electric cars become more common, there's growing appreciation for the analog simplicity of a manual petrol or diesel engine. For some, it's a small act of rebellion against the sanitised future of motoring.

BOXOUT:

Five magnificent motors that thrive on a manual gearbox.

- Mazda MX-5 (from £28,000) – The classic two-seat roadster with a crisp six-speed manual as standard.

- Toyota GR Yaris (from £44,000) – A rally-bred pocket rocket that insists on driver involvement.

- MINI Cooper S (from £28,000) – The ultimate hot hatch.

- Honda Civic Type R (from £49,000) – A modern performance hero that refuses to go automatic.

- Porsche 911 Carrera T (from £110,000) – Proof that even at the top end, there's still a place for a proper manual sports car.

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Moving house is one of the most stressful things in life, but by using a professional removal company you can make the process much more manageable.

A professional removal company can literally remove much of the heavy lifting from a house move, but they can also use their experience and professionalism to suggest many ways to make the whole experience much less stressful.

Start Early

The key to making moving house as stress free as possible is to start as early as possible. Once you know the details of your move it is time to begin looking for some professional help. And remember, a good mover will be in high demand, so you need to book them as early as possible.

There are lots of people and companies offering removal services, but the level of service varies greatly. A good place to start is with any family or friends that might have recently moved as personal recommendations from someone you know and trust is invaluable. Also, personal testimonials and online reviews might help you decide who will be best for you. A reputable mover will be happy to put you in touch with satisfied customers if you want more information.

Home Removal Surveys

According to the National Guild of Removers and the British Association of Removers (BAR) always begin with asking for at least three companies to do a home removal survey. This will not only help them provide an accurate quote, but it could flag up things that might be an issue when you move and make the move less stressful.

Why Use Professional Removal Companies When Moving House? By Rob Bullock

A home removal survey could be done in person or via video by a mover and will help them evaluate the scale of the move, identify any pieces of furniture that might require special consideration, and it gives customers a chance to discuss any issues or potential problems. A home removal survey may identify whether storage might be required and whether this is a service the remover can offer.

The removal company you choose should be a member of the above professional organisations and should be fully insured. Always ask to see details of a company's insurance before you book.

Key Benefits of Professional Help

Generally using a professional remover will save you a lot of physical effort, but it will also save you a lot of time as professionals can advise on packing before the big day and what to take and when on removal day. Packing is one of the most stressful elements of moving but a professional remover can not only offer advice on how to pack which is especially important for valuable items and they can do the packing if requested, but they can also supply packing boxes and materials.

With the average cost of a UK removal starting from around £500 for a one-bedroom house to just under £2000 for a five-bedroom house making sure you find the perfect remover for you is vital. But the right professional can make a house move as safe and stress free as possible.



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Gardening In January

By Rob Bullock

January is the beginning of the gardening year and an exciting month for gardeners as they look forward and prepare for spring.

Much outdoor work is weather dependant this month but there is plenty to do indoors on days when the weather is inclement including perusing seed catalogues and gardening websites ordering seeds and plants, especially seed potatoes and onions in preparation for spring planting. January is an excellent month to tidy or reorganise a shed or tool store and consider better ways to make use of the space you have. There are some excellent shelving systems out there that can make the most of your space.

Outside

Many gardening jobs this month will focus on battling the elements. It is important to regularly check for damage after autumn and early winter storms starting with your greenhouse and cold frames which might have some damaged panes that need repairing or replacing.

Guttering systems around greenhouses need to be cleaned regularly and make sure your water butts are not clogged. If you have not got a rain harvesting system in your garden perhaps this is something to consider this month as we look ahead to the drier spells of weather ahead. 2025 saw an extensive drought and hosepipe restrictions that effected many gardeners so using the rain to keep your garden healthy is an excellent idea. There is a lot of choice on the market with DIY systems starting from less than £50 but a professional contractor could supply a bespoke system that allows you to substantially cut how much mains water you use even in the worst drought conditions.

Flowers

Any snowdrop bulbs you have in your garden should be appearing this month but there is still time to head to your local garden centre or nursery to buy some snowdrop plants to help you have a dramatic show of these beautiful winter flowers and with over 2500 different varieties you have a lot to choose from! Winter flowering pansies or violas also need to be regularly deadheaded this month to encourage fresh growth.

Vegetables

There are plenty of vegetables to be harvested this month including Brussel sprouts, kale, leeks, celeriac, swedes and turnips. And parsnips are one vegetable that taste so much better after some frosts because the cold temperatures convert any stored starches into sugars.

January is an important month for rhubarb plants which are just sprouting. You need to cover the plants with an old dustbin or large bucket to encourage, or force, early growth which produces tender, sweet stems.

Looking forward, sow winter salad in the greenhouse or sunny windowsill to give you fresh salad in a few weeks.

Wildlife care is vitally important this month so make sure that your bird feeders are filled regularly and there is fresh water available. And, if your pond is frozen or covered in snow brush it off to let in light so your pond plants can continue to photosynthesise. But do not break the ice as this could create deadly shockwaves.

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Smart Swaps

Simple lifestyle changes that lead to big savings over time.

Saving money is often associated with huge sacrifices such as a ban on holidays, subsisting on beans and rice and, basically, having zero fun ever. Yet, in reality, some of the most effective savings come from small, consistent swaps in everyday habits.

Making coffee vs buying

If you're often left wondering where all your money has gone, consider your caffeine habit. A daily, basic barista-made latte is around £3.50. Multiply that by five days a week, and you're spending almost a thousand pounds a year on the dark stuff!

Compare this with brewing your own coffee at home and, even factoring in quality beans, milk, and electricity, the cost per cup is closer to 40p. That brings your yearly spend to roughly £100–£150, saving you in excess of £800. That's enough to cover several months of utility bills, or instead let it fund a cheeky weekend getaway.

Packed Lunch vs takeout

These days, grabbing lunch out can easily cost up to £10. If you do this four times a week, you're spending around £2,000 annually. Preparing lunches at home – think pasta salads, sarnies or leftovers – brings the cost down to about £2 per meal.

Walking or cycling vs. public transport

If you live in a city, commuting costs add up quickly. A monthly travel card in London, for example, can cost over £160 – that's nearly £2,000 a year. If your commute is short enough, cycling or walking will not only cut that cost dramatically, it will also improve your health and general wellbeing.

Even if you invest in a decent bike (£400) and maintenance (£100 annually), you could still save £1,500+ per year, so get on your bike!

Branded vs own-label groceries

Supermarkets charge a premium for branded items but own-label alternatives are often just as good. Swapping branded cereal, pasta and cleaning products for supermarket versions can shave 20–30% off your grocery bill. For a household spending £80 a week, that's a saving of around £1,000 annually.

This is not just a financial swap, but a psychological one. Pay attention to your own feelings and responses when it comes to labels and try to remove the powerful association between brand and personal status.

SIM-only vs contract phone plans

Finally, many people stick with expensive phone contracts long after their handset is paid off. A typical contract might cost £50 a month, while a SIM-only plan with plenty of data can be as low as £10. You could even use that saving to purchase a refurbished or second-hand device!



Horoscopes for January - by Philip Heaton

Aries (March 21 to April 20) The year begins with counting your blessings in life and acknowledging the benefits of loved ones. This may be a part of why spring 2026 is a time of a new vision based on the soul not substance. Travel may enlighten you further. May gets you back moving quickly again with determination to make life count. A new arrival or news of a loss changes everything in summer and through autumn preparations of all kind in the home happen. This year ends with the benefit of partners, through

their wisdom you can reflect on the years events and take stock for the future. **Taurus (April 21 to May 21)** You are taking stock both financially and in respect of changes in your value structure in the first quarter of 2026. For all Taurus natives recent years have seen sudden changes. This period is now over however there is an echo of potential disruption until August. This is to do with a new and all consuming involvement with your social life. New group activities, new friendships. Finances suffer and the stark reality of life's true meaning is present from September. Try and keep your resources under control as misunderstandings potentially

legal issues may arise. **Gemini (May 22 to June 22)** You start 2026 dreaming up the new religion you want to entwine into your career path. You see yourself as the guru, you may need to lie on a beach to finalise the mantra however. May sees the planet of sudden change Uranus enter your birth sign and things start to get lively. Early summer sees you embroiled in relationship issues which trigger childhood fears and deep psychological needs. August and September could see disruption, confusion and power struggles in the home and your local environment. Winters big news from you 'I'm doing this whatever the cost.' **Cancer (June 22 to July 22)** The year begins with a definite emphasis on external matters for Cancerians. Your affinity to the energy of the Moon

means for usually private sensitive people you do get involved with the public often. It is difficult and causes a faith crisis. June until late August however sees benefit financially despite deep reflection on the true cost to you. Affording yourself some luxury in August is a good thing to do. From then on it is back to work and for the rest of the year there is a huge effort to create your perfect domestic shell and turn your back to the waves. **Leo (July 23 to Aug 23)** Is 2026 a new start in a new job role, if so all you kings and queens of the jungle will hit the ground running pretty fast and working hard. Despite good finances you will feel detached from your home routine in the den and by April need a holiday. Good news or bad it really is all about working and gaining the associated status until September when new people who share the same philosophy as you appear. A more social energy replaces the work. Entertainment or with music and the arts stimulates your creative Leo's natural talents, so dare to dream the dream Lions.

Virgo (Aug 24 to Sep 23) The message to all Virgo sun people, especially those that were born in the early days of the astrological time period of the sign, is to expect the unexpected from summer 2026. June particularly could see difficulties in relationship communication both in business and domestic realms. You may stage a huge emotional fight back through August and September leading to completely doing your own thing with quite some determination for the rest of the year. This could also show as a new way of expression or look. A desire to keep control in chaos at all costs. **Libra (Sep 23 to Oct 23)** "Beware the Ides of March" From Shakespeare's Julius Caesar. A very good thing to remember for Libran people in 2026. The events of this month will provide you with a feeling of what will be the strong theme of your life from August until the end of the year. Finances are the big issue, however it is the involvement in money, borrowed or invested or perhaps legacy derived that may see intense feelings occur. This will be after a summer of social interaction at home. It may seem a good time to need more room or move home, however forewarned is forearmed. **Scorpio (Oct 24 to Nov 22)** This year more two factors run side by side throughout. Your health in general and the ability and way you earn a living. From January to July it is a case of life as usual, the balance between work and home life. Events in July however could see yourself or perhaps a close relation have unusual difficulties. You will attempt to obscure events by working but things are changing and affecting your wider world and contacts. From September to December you must and will focus

on yourself and even force the issue of working at your own speed and in your own time. **Sagittarius (Nov 23 to Dec 21)** 2026 starts off with some serious hard work and associated challenges, but you are coming out well on top and your status is growing. So much so that from February to June it is your dreams and all things not yet set in stone that you can afford to think and talk about. July however may see a reaction in your domestic life to your success and August will bring emotional conversations and deal with any issues powerfully. The rest of the year continues to see you rise and develop into a creative, enthusiastic, generous and even bigger boss than ever. **Capricorn (Dec 22 to Jan 20)** You may start the year a little vague still about who you are and what is life asking. It will only take a couple of months to feel all the drive you need return to your soul again and whatever mountain you wish to conquer you have more than enough energy. June and July may see some tensions with a partner over career or personal choices. However in September even though it might take until your birthday month to manifest, talk of holidays and luxury will ease the stress. 2026 is a year for all Capricorns to acknowledge they rarely reach the top without support. **Aquarius (Jan 21 to Feb 18)** A year of change, no problem any true Aquarian would reply. Your planetary affinity to Uranus this year however could prove more of a problem as it changes sign into Gemini in May. Communication from it seems simply everyone in your personal world comes with challenges. Friendships, children, authorities, partners, all want to urgently speak to you, and you feel everything is holding you back. Listen carefully however as from September onwards you may experience a life changing event to do with your income or job, out with the old in with the new. **Pisces (Feb 19 to March 21)** A game of two halves this year for all born under the

sign of the Fishes. January to July you are dealing with the world around you, particularly in March where it is very hard work and responsibilities come your way. You will realise any or all the benefits of where you are in July and a freedom comes, or it may be you are a bit lost. August may see you take a break and have fun. Then September asks what do I do? Well it is time to be a bit selfish and make changes to your work, your immediate surroundings, perhaps to dealings with siblings. But most of all...yourself.

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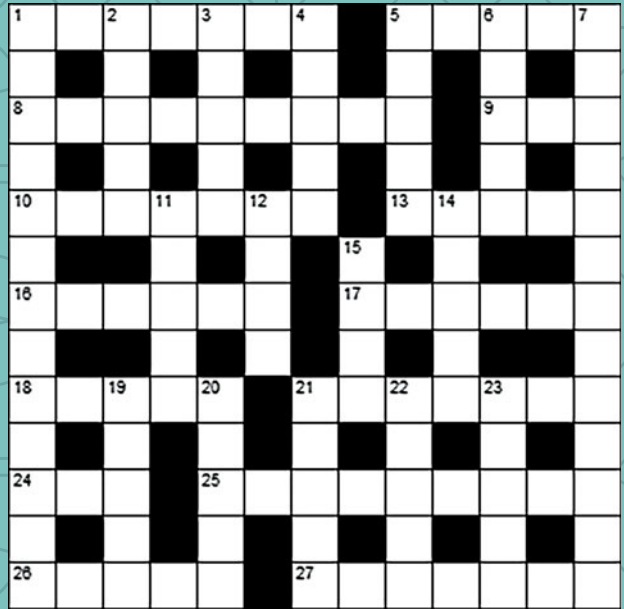
Across

1. Top prize (7)
5. All the animals (5)
8. Man made lake (9)
9. Bulgarian currency (3)
10. Doubtful, dubious (7)
13. Organic compound (5)
16. Narrow-bladed sword (6)
17. Elegant sight hound (6)
18. Hemispherical top (5)
21. Directive, communication (7)
24. Forty winks (3)
25. Counterfeit, unoriginal (9)
26. Vacant (5)
27. The most high in stature (7)

Down

1. Knowledge of law (13)
2. Prices (5)
3. Money bag (5)
4. Rainbow or brown ____ (5)
5. Blacksmith's workshop (5)
6. Dark (5)
7. Persuasive promotion or notice (13)
11. Heyday (5)
12. Keep in check (4)
14. Goes off in a huff (5)
15. Small area of land surround by sea (4)
19. Clean a liquid spillage (3,2)
20. Flower or girl's name (5)
21. Damp (5)
22. Woollen wrap (5)
23. Not dead (5)

Crossword



Wordsearch



M	I	N	E	R	V	A	B	A	C	C	H	U	S	B
E	H	C	Z	K	T	V	E	N	U	S	P	K	J	Z
R	D	P	N	L	A	B	U	N	D	A	N	T	I	A
C	F	O	R	T	U	N	A	D	T	J	U	N	O	C
U	H	L	X	N	R	F	I	Q	N	Q	M	G	J	H
R	N	Q	A	V	E	P	A	A	D	D	I	A	N	A
Y	B	J	E	L	U	P	J	U	P	I	T	E	R	X
P	E	A	Q	C	E	J	T	T	N	O	K	M	Y	S
D	L	N	U	G	C	V	C	U	G	U	L	D	O	K
V	L	U	I	C	E	A	E	K	N	Q	S	L	F	C
Z	O	S	T	Y	K	U	R	V	G	E	Y	X	O	A
I	N	D	A	O	B	R	E	C	Y	B	E	L	E	E
P	A	H	S	M	K	A	S	M	E	G	D	H	P	L
Z	B	V	H	C	W	V	U	L	C	A	N	L	P	U
K	Z	A	C	C	A	L	A	R	E	N	T	I	A	S

Astronomy

Abundantia	Ceres	Jupiter
Acca Larentia	Cupid	Mars
Aequitas	Cybele	Mercury
Apollo	Diana	Minerva
Aura	Faunus	Neptune
Bacchus	Fortuna	Pluto
Bellona	Janus	Venus
Caelus	Juno	Vulcan

COSMOS

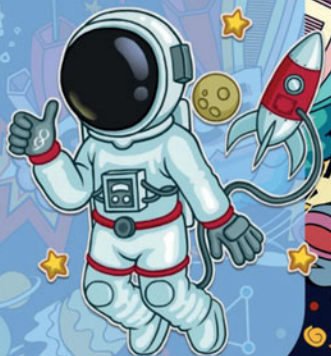
Kids' Page

COSMO

Can you find all the space-related words in the letter grid?

A	A	E	R	S	W	Y	H	R	V	W
T	H	D	M	T	A	S	P	V	E	T
M	O	D	U	L	E	T	Y	S	U	V
V	R	R	E	J	J	T	U	A	Z	T
N	B	H	Z	R	I	N	N	R	E	W
E	I	E	A	V	E	O	W	N	N	N
B	T	N	A	V	R	T	A	N	R	T
U	U	R	Q	T	D	L	W	X	E	M
L	G	J	S	E	P	H	T	M	Y	N
A	G	A	L	A	X	Y	O	W	O	Q
R	O	C	K	E	T	C	M	L	F	N

ASTRONAUT
 COMET
 GALAXY
 GRAVITY
 LUNAR
 MODULE
 NEBULA
 ORBIT
 PLANET
 ROCKET
 SATURN
 VENUS



Space Scramble

All the scrambled words below are linked to space. Can you work out what they are?

TCKERO
 SOALRGY
 BNAELU
 RBOIT
 VYRTIGA
 ACEOTSRSNUT

ALIENS!

ALIEN MESSAGE

Scientists have managed to decode an alien message. They found that every letter in alphabet has been shifted three letters forwards, so A=D and B=E etc.

Can you decode their message to us for 2026?

NHHS ORRNQJ XS DQC
 GUHDP ELJ

ALIEN MESSAGE ANSWER
 Keep looking up and dream big

A	A	E	R	S	W	Y	H	R	V	W
T	H	D	M	T	A	S	P	V	E	T
M	O	D	U	L	E	T	Y	S	U	V
V	R	R	E	J	J	T	U	A	Z	T
N	B	H	Z	R	I	N	N	R	E	W
E	I	E	A	V	E	O	W	N	N	N
B	T	N	A	V	R	T	A	N	R	T
U	U	R	Q	T	D	L	W	X	E	M
L	G	J	S	E	P	H	T	M	Y	N
A	G	A	L	A	X	Y	O	W	O	Q
R	O	C	K	E	T	C	M	L	F	N

Word Grid Solution

SPACE SCRAMBLE ANSWERS
 1. ROCKET 2. GALAXY 3. NEBULA 4. ORBIT 5. GRAVITY 6. ASTRONAUT

Quiz

1. What fruit is traditionally eaten 12 times at midnight on New Years Eve in Spain?
2. What does "A.M." stand for in timekeeping?
3. What was the first animated Disney film?
4. What is the hardest natural substance on Earth?
5. What is the national flower of Wales?
6. Which long-running soap first aired on BBC in January 1985?
7. What is the average gym membership signup increase in January in the UK?
a). 12% b). 18% c). 25%
8. What is traditionally eaten on Burns Night?
9. Which two months were added to the Roman calendar by the second king of Rome, Numa Pompilius?
10. Which non-fitness related hobby sees a huge rise in interest every January due to the cold weather?

Sudoku

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

Solutions

Quiz

1. Grapes
2. Ante Meridiem
3. Snow White
4. Diamond
5. The Daffodil
6. EastEnders
7. a) 12%
8. Haggis
9. January & February
10. Knitting

Crossword

J	A	C	K	P	O	T		F	A	U	N	A
U	O		U		R		O		N			D
R	E	S	E	R	V	O	I	R		L	E	V
I		T	S		U		G		I		E	
S	S		S		P	E	C	T		E	S	T
P		R		U		I		U				T
R	A	P	I	E	R		S	A	L	U	K	I
U			M		B		L		K			S
D	O	M	E	D		M	E	S	S	A	G	E
E		O		A		O		H		L		M
N	A	P		I	M	I	T	A	T	I	V	E
C		U		S		S		W		V		N
E	M	P	T									

Wordsearch

M	I	N	E	R	V	A	B	A	C	C	H	U	S	B
E	H	C	Z	K	T		V	E	N	U	S	P	K	J
R	D	P	N	L	A	B	U	N	D	A	N	T	I	A
C	F	O	R	T	U	N	A	D	T		J	U	N	O
U	H	L	X	N	R	F	I	Q	N	Q	M	G	J	H
R	N	Q	A	V	E	P	A	A	D	O	T	I	A	N
Y	B	J	E	L	U	P								
P	E	A	Q	C	E	J	T	T	N	O	K	M	S	
D	L	N	U	G	C	V	C	U	G	U	L	D	O	K
V	L	U	I	C	E	A	E	K	N	Q	S	L	F	C
Z	O	S	T	Y	K	U	R	V	G	E	Y	X	O	A
I	N	D	A		B	R	E		C	Y	B	E	L	B
P	A	H	S	M	K	A	S	M	E	G	D	H	P	L
Z	B	V	H	C	W		V	U	L	C	A	N	L	P
K	Z	A	C	C	A	L	A	R	E	N	T	I	A	S

Sudoku

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

Advertisers Index

Bathrooms

Splash - Bathrooms, Plumbing, Heating

Beds

M6 Bed Warehouse

Building / Home Services / Handyman

Horne Roofing Limited

LPB Building & Roofing

PRH Electrical & Handyman

Cleaning

Howard The Gutter Man

LPB Roof Moss Removal

Zero Dry Time

Education / Pre School

Smallworld Day Nursery & Pre School

Electrical

Kingsley Communications

PRH Electrical & Handyman

Flooring / Carpets

Zero Dry Time

Fuel / Logs

Cheshire Logs Direct

OJT Logs

Gardening / Tree Services / Lawn Care

Greenery Tree Care

OJT Tree Services

Health

10 Sound Ears

Heating

9 Cheshire Boilers

Plumbing Plus

10 Rightio Plumbing & Heating

Joinery

22 MC Bespoke Joinery

Kitchens

35 & 36 Collins Kitchens

21 MC Bespoke Joinery

Plumbing

Plumbing Plus

29 Rightio Plumbing & Heating

Splash - Bathrooms, Plumbing, Heating

Roofing

22 Horne Roofing Limited

LPB Building & Roofing

3 LPB Roof Moss Removal

Security / Alarms

15 Kingsley Communication

Windows / Doors / Glass / Guttering

Howard The Gutter Man

Northwich Glass

10

1

12

4 & 27

22

7

22

12

4 & 27

10

26

13

21

12

35 & 36

18 & 19

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