



We're not going on a summer holiday



Although we can now meet other people in 'bubbles', for many the prospect of hopping on an Easy Jet flight is off the agenda, with most of us spending a lot more time at home this summer, looking for fun ways to pass the time. As always in the UK the ever-changing weather keeps us on our toes, meaning BBQs, park picnics and long-distance bike rides might potentially be off the cards. So, if you're completely over quizzes and are convinced there is literally nothing left to do with your time, think again. I've trawled the internet to find a few different ideas of things you can do to keep yourselves and your families entertained whilst safely staycationing this summer.

First up, it is crucial to have some form of structure to your day; with two children already on school holidays I can vouch that! This is essential not only for your mental health but for the whole family. Kick off by making a staycation 'bucket' and a loose timetable. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

Host a games night

Bored of yet another pub quiz? Organising a games night is a sure-fire way to keep the whole family or your friendship group entertained and here's a few tips...

- Assign someone the 'happy hour host' and ask them to give a live cocktail masterclass.
- Assign 'drinking games masters' and ask them to orchestrate some drinking games and forfeits.
- Play a good old game of charades.
- Get one person to mute themselves and mime phrases and see who can read their lips the best.
- Ask guests to submit a surprising fact about themselves beforehand and see who can guess which fact correlates to which person on the Zoom.

Live stream a beach cam

Just because you're not physically going abroad doesn't mean you have to miss waking up to the sound of waves. At the click of a mouse you can be transported to an idyllic beach wherever your heart desires, from the Maldives to Majorca. Click here to be transported – just add flip flops, shades and a cocktail – or google the country of your choice and fly away...not literally! www.skylinewebcams.com/en/webcam/maldives/lhaviyani-atoll/naifaru/maldives-innahura.html

Go wild swimming

The beaches are crowded and leisure centres still closed, so why not dive head-first, into some of London's under-the-radar wild swimming spots?

Last year the British Medical Journal actually proved that wild swimming had a positive impact on our mental health, in the same way that forest bathing gives us a much-needed dose of nature therapy, wild swimming too helps us focus on key senses and surroundings. It might be raining but you're going to get wet anyway.

Here's a list of the best spots to give it a try:

www.glamourmagazine.co.uk/gallery/best-wild-swimming-london

Indulge in virtual karaoke

Famed karaoke bar Lucky Voice is offering people a month's free subscription to karaoke service, head to their online karaoke player and enter code LUCKY20 then belt your heart out in the comfort... and safety (!) of your own home! www.luckyvoicekaraoke.com

Host your own 'Come Dine With Me'

Get your family to make the most of meal times by hosting your own version of the popular show. Take a night of the week each and impress your family with a three-course meal and entertainment before judging each other's efforts. A bit of competitive spirit will add some fun to boring dinnertimes – and also gets someone else taking on cooking duties for the evening. Mix it up and incorporate your favourite holiday cuisines!

Go on safari – well almost...

Watch live animals in their natural habitat and in the comfort / safety of your front room. From elephants in South Africa to moon jelly fish in Long Island and giant pandas in China. <https://explore.org/livecams>

"In the rush to return to normal, use this time to consider which parts of normal are worth rushing back to."

Take time to look by Emma Symons

My inspiration for this week's article came to me while I was driving to work last week. I try to practise mindfulness whenever I can. Mindfulness isn't about sitting in meditation trying to clear your mind, it's about being in the present moment, noticing thoughts and letting them go without getting caught up in the inner dialogue.

My drive to work takes me about 35 minutes and part of it is along a very dull dual carriageway – and that is what inspired this article. Every day, while being mindful, I see things on the dual carriageway that, probably, very few people notice. Almost every day there

is a red kite that sits somewhere along the side of the road, on a fence, a bush or tree branch. About halfway along there is a beautiful patch of purple wildflowers, and in a field near the end there are cows with new calves.

How many of the other people who drive that road notice the kite sitting on the fence, the patch of flowers or the calves in the field? How often do you drive on autopilot and don't even remember most of the journey? I don't need to take my eyes off the road to see these things, I just have to stop focusing on the chatter in my head and be in the moment to notice what most

people pass by.

How much do you notice while you are travelling to work? Do you spend most of your journey on autopilot? Why not set yourself a challenge to be mindful and see how many new things you can spot?

It's amazing how many things are there if you really look.



Just a spoonful of sugar

By Elaine

Most of the foods we love unfortunately contain lots of sugar which can prematurely age your skin over a period of time and cause weight gain. I love chocolate, cakes and sweets but I do notice if I have something sugary, I get a very quick spurt of energy, then a real slump afterwards causing lack of concentration and generally feeling sluggish for the rest of the day. Sugar, believe it or not, is highly addictive and eliminating this from your diet is extremely difficult as I tried a few years ago – three weeks was my maximum, but afterwards I noticed an improvement in my taste buds, lost weight and had tons more energy. Keeping off the sugar on a regular basis is hard but we can find healthier alternatives such as honey and stevia. Luckily most products now contain clear labelling showing levels of sugar usually colour coded red, amber and green. Please keep a look out for labels/ingredients if you want to cut down on sugar. You will be surprised of some foods that do contain sugar – bread, flavoured crisps, salad dressings, soups and fruit smoothies especially, which claim to be very healthy but hide lots of sugar. But as I have said previously, everything in moderation and a little bit of what you want will not do you harm!

I have read recently that using artificial sweeteners can have some long-term effects. Aspartame is used in fruit squashes and 'no sugar' fizzy drinks and is said to be 200 times sweeter than normal sugar! Sweeteners that we use in our tea and coffee (usually saccharin) can also result in brain fog and used long term, can increase the amounts of bacteria in our gut which could be the start of diabetes. Nutritionists say it is better for us to use sugar if we really have to rather than sweeteners, just try and cut down the amount you use.

Quarantini time...

Purple Rain

from Charlotte McCabe

Ingredients (to make a jug)

Ice • 75ml Vodka • 75ml Gin • 50ml Blue Curaçao
50ml Lime Juice • 50ml Lemon Juice • 200ml Soda Water
150ml Grenadine

Half-fill a 1.5-litre jug with ice, then pour in the vodka, gin, blue curaçao, lime juice and lemon juice and stir well. Top up with the soda water, grenadine and more ice, then stir again. Half-fill glasses with ice, pour over the cocktail and garnish with the slices of lime.

Why does receiving a bunch of flowers make us feel so good inside? Believe it or not, they actually make us release the 'cuddle chemical' oxytocin. So sending some is really the next best thing to a hug!

