

A Barnsley Chronicle Publication

WINTER *Living*



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Welcome to Winter Living

AS a temperate summer fades into scarves, frosty windscreens and early sunsets, Christmas is a beacon of light and festivity that gets many of us through the colder days.

As Santa is set to fly his sleigh over the borough, Barnsley is gearing up for Christmas.

With Christmas lights illuminating the streets and plenty of festive activities, the town's Christmas spirit will soon be in full swing.

The Barnsley Christmas Market is set to become a must-see destination, with everything from handmade gifts to delicious hot drinks and street food.

Winter also marks the release of the latest edition of our seasonal magazines, Winter Living, which is sure to entertain whilst curled up by the fire with a mug of hot chocolate.

Featuring a fun-filled festive line-up of events suitable for the whole family, you'll never be short of days (or evenings) out.

There is plenty more in the magazine including a few holiday suggestions which are a bit away from the norm.

Readers can also get a headstart on their gardening for next year thanks to our handy guide and there is a deep dive into whether doing a DNA test is really worth it.

My colleague Josh rounds off the magazine in typical fashion – behind the wheel of a fast car.

Once the weather thaws and the tulips bloom, keep an eye out for our Spring Living magazine – giving you an expert's guide to the season that will make you feel like a spring chicken.

If you would like to see yourself in the next edition of our seasonal magazines, give us a call on 734400, or email us on bcsales3@barnsley-chronicle.co.uk.

Charlotte Oldroyd



Also in the magazine...

Page 12

Get some dates booked in with our entertainment guide



Page 18

Which books are going to be Christmas crackers



Pages 34-35

We get behind the wheel of a Cupra Born VZ



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TOURS / SHOWS / EVENTS

TOURS

DATES	HOTEL	PRICE
15 - 19 Dec	Paignton - Palace Hotel	£396
23 - 27 Dec	Blackpool - Park House Hotel	£632
23 - 27 Dec	Paignton - Queens Hotel	£705
23 - 27 Dec	St Annes - Monterey Beach Hotel	£596
23 - 27 Dec	Torquay - Derwent Hotel	£568
23 - 27 Dec	Whitby - Royal Hotel	£528
23 - 27 Dec	Yarmouth - Nelson Hotel	£431
27 - 30 Dec	Blackpool - Ruskin Hotel	£322
30 Dec - 2 Jan	Blackpool - Park House Hotel	£452
30 Dec - 3 Jan	Paignton - Torbay Court Hotel	£470
30 Dec - 2 Jan	St Annes - Monterey Beach Hotel	£487
30 Dec - 2 Jan	Whitby - Royal Hotel	£448



DATES	HOTEL	PRICE
30 Dec - 2 Jan	Yarmouth - Nelson Hotel	£359
5 - 9 Jan	Torquay - Derwent Reservoir	£355
12 - 16 Jan	Whitby - Royal Hotel	£368
18 - 23 Jan	Blackpool - Ruskin Hotel	£326
26 - 30 Jan	Torquay - Derwent Hotel	£295
2 - 6 Feb	Eastbourne - Queens Hotel	£308
2 - 6 Feb	Weston-super-Mare - Anchor Head Hotel	£296
9 - 13 Feb	Blackpool - Queens Hotel	£286
9 - 13 Feb	Torquay - Riviera Hotel	£275
14 - 15 Feb	Scarborough - Cumberland Hotel	£97

TOURS (continued)

DATES	HOTEL	PRICE
16 - 20 Feb	Llandudno - Chatsworth Hotel	£355
16 - 20 Feb	Babbacombe - Anchorage Hotel	£240
16 - 20 Feb	Torquay - Derwent Hotel	£337
23 - 27 Feb	Blackpool - Ruskin Hotel 60's Themed	£350
23 - 27 Feb	Weymouth - Royal Hotel	£346



SHOWS / EVENTS

DATES	SHOW	PRICE
Sun 15 Feb	Birmingham Tattoo	£53pp
Sat 28 Mar	Fawlty Towers	£70pp
Sun 5 Apr	Matilda	£107pp
Sun 10 May	Harry Potter Studios	£97 Ad £87 Child
Sun 10 May	Steps 'Here & Now' Musical	£80pp
Sat 13 June	Bodyguard Musical	£80pp
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London trip was a memorable one...

By Chronicle chief reporter
Jack Tolson...

IT'S very rare that I roam outside the borough of Barnsley during my working week – that's obviously a given due to my role.

That's why that when I received a call asking if I'd be able to travel down to London to witness a historic meeting between Claire Throssell and the Prime Minister I jumped at the chance.

The capital's a bit of an unknown for us folk up north.

Other than the odd Wembley trip with the Reds – albeit there's been a few in recent years – we much prefer our home comforts.

But I headed down south on the train early in the morning and arrived in London just before midday.

Navigating the tubes is hard enough as it is, but there were some serious issues with the way they were running which made it even harder to get to Westminster.

I don't think I've ever seen as many people in one place as I did that day.

It is a little overwhelming but I found the nearest pub to try to pass some time before my appointment and bought a Pepsi.

Six Great British pounds – I couldn't believe it.

I don't know how southerners do it.

But I wasn't going to let it dampen my spirits and I eventually went down to Downing Street at about 3pm.

As you can imagine the security there is like something out of a movie.

Just to get onto the street you need to go through airport-style scanners and be checked – and once you pass that you're there.

It really is just a street but there's some-

thing different about seeing it on TV and then being there in the flesh.

I took my customary picture outside the front door and even had the stroke of luck to meet Larry the Cat – probably the most famous living being I've ever met.

When you actually go through the doors you have to leave all electrical items in the hallway and so I didn't manage to take any photos myself.

But you're taken aback immediately by the decor in there – I didn't want to sit down on the sofas because of how posh they looked.

Claire's story is so incredibly emotional so it was heartwarming to see the Prime Minister greet her with such openness.

We were only in the room for a few minutes before the pair spoke behind-closed-doors – but it was long enough to show that he did genuinely care about her and her mission.

After leaving Downing Street I immediately went down to Parliament to speak with MP Marie Tidball and Claire and once again I was blown away by the building itself.

You definitely wouldn't get anything like that up here in little old Barnsley.

After the long but immensely worthwhile day had ended I got back on the tube, and just as I thought I'd be able to relax, it didn't move for 20 minutes.

And when it did eventually start running, it would stop again.

A usual 25-minute journey turned into an hour-long one before I managed to get to St Pancras.

I returned back to Barnsley just before 11pm and I was knackered.

But I'm glad I got to experience it and tell Claire's story again.

Although I think it'll be a long time yet until I venture back down south...



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You can enjoy yourself and limit the damage this Christmas

THE festive season is a glorious time of year.

There's twinkling lights, indulgent feasts and endless gatherings with friends and family. But let's be honest... it's also the time when fitness routines tend to slip down the priority list, replaced by mince pies and mulled wine.

The good news is that staying active doesn't mean missing out on the fun.

Weaving fitness into your celebrations can make the holidays even more joyful. Here's how to keep moving, laughing and feeling fabulous all season long.

Turn workouts into tradition

You don't have to wait until the New Year to start your fitness journey. Why not reinvent festive traditions with a fitness twist? Instead of just strolling around the Christmas markets, power-walk with friends while carrying those shopping bags.

It's resistance training disguised as retail therapy! Decorating the tree? Stretch high, squat low, and treat it like a mini workout.

Even wrapping presents can be done standing up, with calf raises thrown in for good measure.

Balance Indulgence with Movement

You'll probably eat more than usual and that's perfectly fine. The trick is balance.

For every slice of Christmas cake, add a brisk 20-minute walk. For every glass of bubbly, dance to a festive song.

This way, you're not denying yourself the treats, but you're also keeping your body energised and metabolism ticking.

Dance like nobody's watching

Holiday parties are the perfect excuse to hit the dance floor.

Whether it's a family living room disco or a New Year's bash, dancing is cardio

in disguise.

Ten songs later, you'll have burned off a gingerbread man without even realising it. As a handy bonus, dancing boosts mood, so it's an easy way to beat the winter blues.

Embrace the outdoors

Winter walks are magical. Crisp air, frosty scenery, and maybe even a sprinkle of snow, it's nature at its finest.

Bundle up, grab a friend or the dog and head out for a festive stroll. If you're feeling adventurous, try ice skating or sledding. These activities burn calories whilst delivering heaps of fun.

Make fitness social

The holidays are about connection, so why not make fitness part of the bonding?

Organise a family football match in the park, challenge your cousins to a plank competition, or take a group yoga class before the big feast.

Shared activity not only keeps you fit but also creates memories far more long-lasting than another round of charades.

Keep it short but sweet

Forget long gym sessions. The festive season is busy, so aim for short bursts of activity.

Ten minutes of bodyweight exercises in the morning, a quick jog before dinner, or a stretch session before bed all add up.

Think of it as sprinkling fitness throughout your day. You can always build up to longer sessions as the weather warms up and the days draw out.

Fitness during the holidays isn't about restriction. It's about joy, balance and creativity.

Just keep moving and you'll discover that festive fitness is the best gift you can give yourself.



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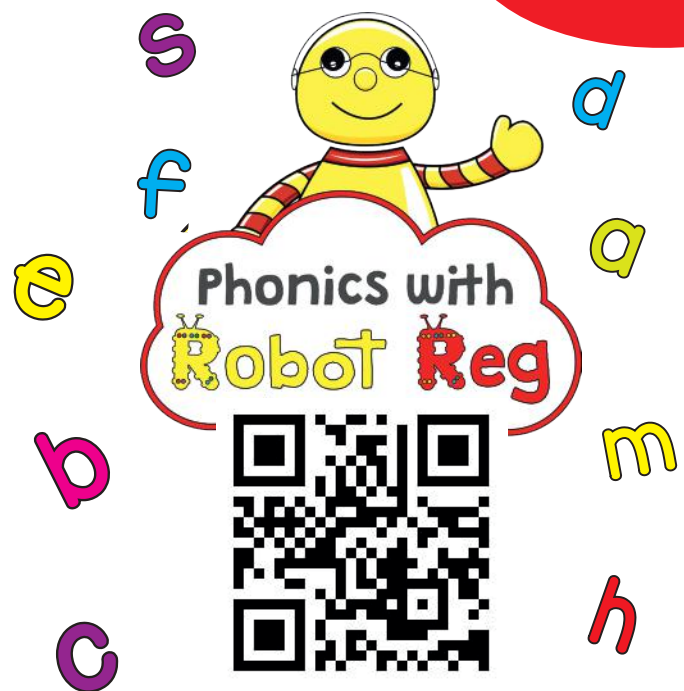
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There is something for everyone this winter...

THIS winter, Barnsley is sparkling with entertainment for the whole family.

From a dazzling light festivals to amazing music showcases, there's something for everyone to enjoy.

As the nights draw in, the town comes alive with festive cheer.

Families can look forward to cosy Christmas markets, where the scent of mulled treats and the sparkle of handmade crafts create the perfect backdrop for festive shopping.

For those who love live performance, local venues are hosting a variety of concerts and community events.

Whether you're wrapping up warm for an evening stroll through twinkling lights, enjoying the rhythm of local bands, or sharing laughter at family-friendly shows, Barnsley offers a winter season brimming with creativity.

This year, the magic is right on your doorstep.

Birdwell Venue, Bon Jovi Experience

The Bon Jovi Experience is perfect for fans of the musical icon, both old and new.

Fronted by the talented Tony Pearce, who has been recognised by Bon Jovi himself, gives a thrilling show and memorable tribute. The show will run on Saturday December 13, with doors opening at 7pm.

It is open to individuals aged 14 plus, with under 16s being required to attend with someone who is 18 plus.

Advance tickets are priced at £19.80, (£18 with booking fee).

They are available via <https://birdwell-venue.com/event/387669-BonJoviExperience>.

Barnsley Civic, The Nutcracker

The Let's All Dance Ballet Company presents The Nutcracker, a sparkling festive treat for all ages.

With Tchaikovsky's score, dazzling dancers, and enchanting storytelling, join Clara and her Prince on a magical journey.

Every show ends with children meeting the cast for unforgettable Christmas memories.

The show will run on Tuesday December 30, at 1pm and later the same day, at 3pm. Tickets are £13.50 or £7 at the concessionary rate.

Tickets are available via <https://barnsley-civic.co.uk/event/the-nutcracker/>.

Penistone Paramount "It's A Wonderful Life"

"It's A Wonderful Life" is the ultimate seasonal feel-good film.

Starring James Stewart as George Bailey, the man who receives the greatest Christmas gift of all and a superb ensemble cast including Donna Reed and Lionel Barrymore, this tale ranks as an all-time favourite of fans and critics alike.

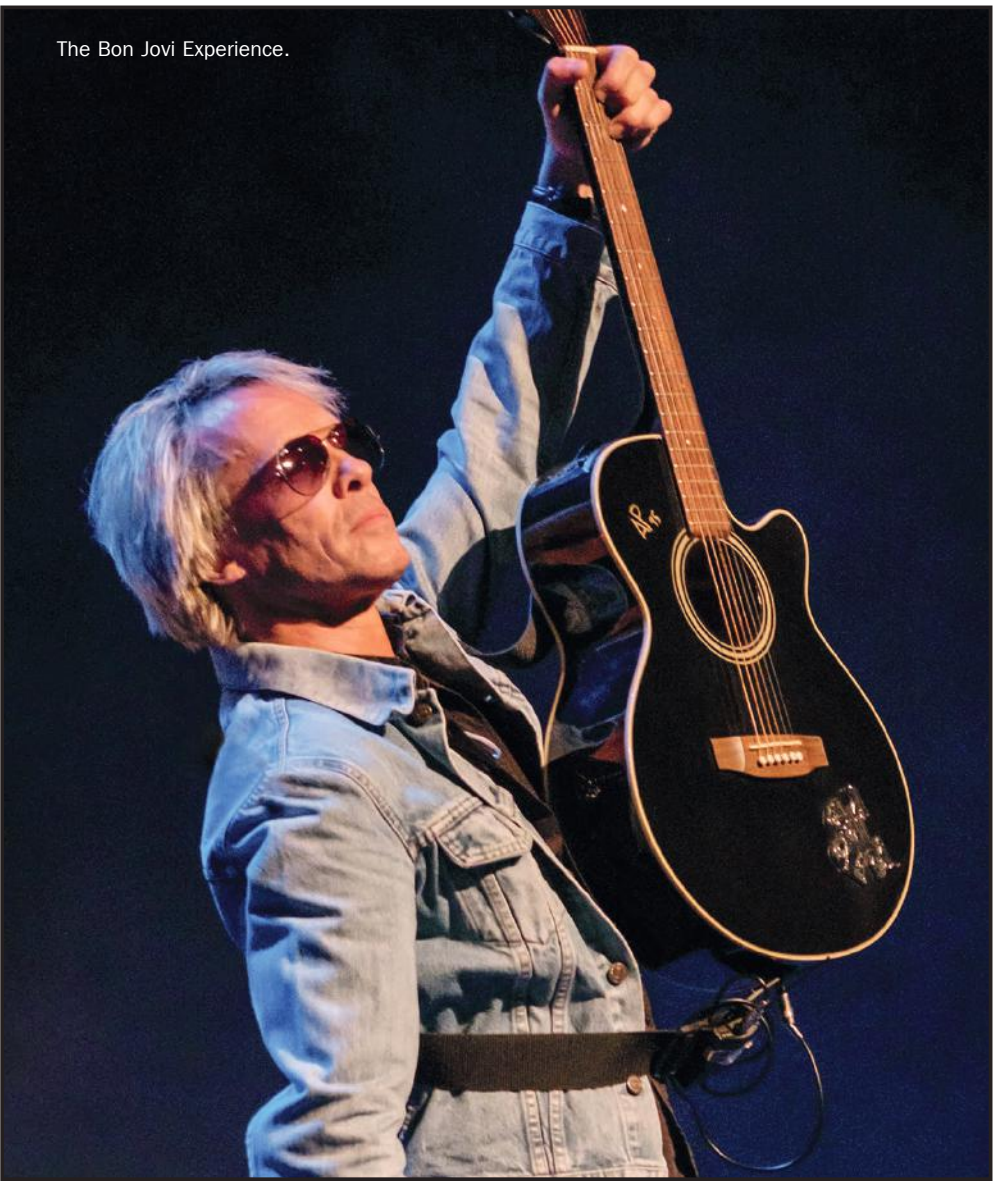
It will play on Thursday December 11, at 7.30pm and Wednesday December 17, at the same time.

Tickets cost from £8.15 and are available online.

Lamproom Theatre, Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs

A show by Barnsley Theatre Trust, Barnsley's number one pantomime returns.

Packed with laugh-out-loud comedy, song and dance, the show is suitable for the whole family to enjoy. Ticket costs are dynamic, starting at £20. The show runs from December 6 to January 3, 2026.



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New Year's Eve Party

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Digging deeper into your DNA... is it really worth it?

THE saliva swab has replaced the dusty family photo album as the ultimate genealogical tool.

Across the UK, millions have sent off their DNA to companies promising to unlock centuries of ancestral secrets.

But for every heartwarming discovery of a long-lost cousin, there's a serious question mark over data privacy and unexpected family revelations.

Before you drop that sample in the post, here is a breakdown of the compelling pros and the crucial cons of having your DNA analysed.

The Good:

Ancestral DNA kits aren't just a novelty; they offer genuine, life-changing discoveries that traditional paper records simply can't match.

1. Shattering Genealogical Brick Walls

The primary driver for testing is the thrill of discovery.

Traditional genealogy often hits a "brick wall" – a lost record, a common name, or a missing birth certificate. DNA analysis cuts straight through this, using autosomal DNA inherited from both parents to find biological matches up to eight generations back.

For thousands of adoptees or those dealing with unknown parentage (NPEs), this is more than just a hobby – it's the only way to find their identity. These tests can reveal close relatives who hold the missing piece of the puzzle, often leading to moving and transformative reunions.

2. Refining Your Cultural Identity

Beyond finding direct ancestors, the ethnicity estimates provide a rich, detailed picture of where your forebears lived.

Due to the massive databases held by the big companies, results are often highly specific for UK residents, differentiating between



regional English, Scottish, Irish, and Welsh ancestry.

This knowledge can give people a deeper, scientifically-backed sense of belonging and motivate them to explore the cultures they never knew were part of their past.

3. The Unofficial Health Alert

While the main services are for ancestry,

many kits offer optional health predisposition reports (for an extra fee).

Crucially, a positive result for a serious genetic risk – such as the BRCA1/BRCA2 mutations linked to breast cancer – can serve as a critical early warning.

This information allows a UK consumer to approach their GP or the NHS with a focused concern, prompting them to seek the official, validated clinical testing and genetic counselling necessary for preventative action. This proactive step can be a literal lifesaver.

The Bad:

The simplicity of ordering a kit online belies the complex, lifelong risks involved, particularly in the areas of privacy and emotional health.

1. The Permanent Privacy Risk

Your DNA is the most sensitive information you possess – it's your entire biological blueprint.

In the UK, this is classified as "special category data" under GDPR, offering high-level protection.

However, when you send your sample to a private company, you are entrusting this data to a commercial entity, often one based outside the UK and subject to different legal jurisdictions.

The core problem is that genetic data can never be truly anonymised.

Every biological relative you have, living or dead, is also in that database, whether they consented or not.

Users must accept the permanent risk that the company could be hacked, sold to a different corporation, or compelled to share data with law enforcement, forever compromising the privacy of an entire family line.

2. The Emotional Minefield of Discovery

While finding a long-lost cousin is joyful, discovering an unexpected truth about your

immediate family can be devastating.

These revelations, often involving non-paternity events (NPEs) or adoption secrets, can shatter family structures, cause identity crises, and lead to serious psychological distress.

The NHS provides mandatory pre and post-test counselling for clinical genetic testing.

Direct-to-consumer companies, however, are not legally obliged to provide this support, leaving customers to handle life-altering emotional turmoil on their own, often with nothing more than an emailed result.

3. Straining the Already Busy NHS

The health results from DTC tests are often viewed with scepticism by the British medical community.

The kits use broad screening methods that can lead to either false positives or negatives which could trigger unnecessary visits to the GP.

Every time a doctor has to validate a commercial test result or reassure an anxious patient, it places an additional, preventable burden on the already-stretched NHS, consuming resources that should be allocated to true clinical need.

The companies profit, but the NHS handles the fallout.

Ancestral DNA testing is an irresistible gateway to self-discovery and a powerful tool for tracing lineage. For those prepared to embrace the unknown, the rewards of finding biological family and tracing historical migration patterns are immense.

However, the decision requires a sober assessment of the risks.

It is a trade-off between personal history and permanent privacy.

Before you seal that envelope, you must accept that you are not only submitting your own secrets but also those of every person you are biologically related to.

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This year's literary Christmas crackers...

THE Christmas charts are typically dominated by a split between celebrity titles, best-selling fiction heavyweights, and non-fiction lifestyle/cooking.

Bestselling Fiction Heavyweights

These titles are almost guaranteed high spots thanks to immense public loyalty to their authors, often driven by a new volume in an existing smash-hit series:

The Impossible Fortune by Richard Osman (Crime/Mystery): The latest instalment in The Thursday Murder Club series is a near-certain bestseller.

Osman's combination of cosy crime, humour, and witty characters has made his books a cultural phenomenon, and a new hardback released for the autumn/winter season will be a massive Christmas gift hit.

The Secret of Secrets by Dan Brown (Thriller): Following the long-established pattern of his Robert Langdon series, a new Dan Brown novel, especially one released in the latter half of the year, will command huge sales.

His blend of code-breaking, art history, and global conspiracies remains a reliable driver of gift purchases.

Circle of Days by Ken Follett (Historical Fiction): Follett's epic historical sagas have a huge, dedicated following. A new, substantial hardback from him is perfect for the serious reader and carries the weight of a major gift book.

Sunrise on the Reaping by Suzanne Collins (YA/Dystopian): While a Young Adult novel, the announcement of a new prequel in The Hunger Games universe generates massive cross-generational excitement.

Its November release positions it perfectly for gift-giving and a likely dominance of the chart.

Atmosphere: A Love Story by Taylor Jenkins Reid (Fiction): Reid has become a dominant force in character-driven fiction globally.

Her latest novel, set against the backdrop of the 1980s space shuttle programme, is expected to be a major literary and commercial success, appealing broadly across contemporary fiction readers.

The Celebrity & Lifestyle Slot Christmas is historically defined by high-profile hardback non-fiction, often in the form of memoirs or cookbooks.

Frankly by Nicola Sturgeon (Memoir): The revelatory memoir from the former First Minister of Scotland is expected to generate significant sales and media coverage, appealing to a broad audience interested in modern political history and personal stories.

Mary 90 by Mary Berry (Cookbook): A new cookbook from the universally beloved baking star is a perennial Christmas staple. A title focused on her 90th birthday celebration and perhaps classic British recipes would be a guaranteed seller.

The Long Shoe by Bob Mortimer (Humour/Memoir): Following the runaway success of his previous memoirs and novels, Mortimer's unique brand of surreal humour and gentle storytelling is a proven festive winner, making his new title a highly sought-after stocking filler.

The Literary and Children's Favourite Rounding out the top ten are often a beloved children's author and a beautifully illustrated, heartfelt literary title:

Always Remember by Charlie Mackesy (Illustrated Non-Fiction): The author of the global phenomenon The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse consistently produces



gentle, profound, and beautifully illustrated gift books. Any new title released in the run-up to Christmas will sell in huge numbers due to universal appeal and high gift-purchase rate.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Partypooper by Jeff Kinney (Children's Fiction): The latest volume in this massively popular children's series is a dependable chart topper. It's an

essential purchase for parents and grandparents, guaranteeing its place among the highest sellers every festive season.

These ten titles represent a reliable mix of genres and authors who consistently achieve multi-million sales, making them the most likely blockbusters of the Christmas 2025 book market.



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Just because the plants are dormant does not mean you should be...

DECEMBER brings a unique set of challenges and opportunities for the dedicated gardener.

With short daylight hours, the ever-present threat of hard frost and the chance of snow and strong winds, gardening transitions from active cultivation to essential maintenance, protection and crucial planning for the year ahead.

Far from being a month of total rest, December offers a vital window for tasks that lay the groundwork for a successful and vibrant garden when spring finally arrives.

Essential Protection and Preparation

The priority is safeguarding your plants and garden infrastructure from the harsh winter elements.

Tender plants, especially those in containers, are highly vulnerable to frost and water-logging.

Group potted plants together in a sheltered spot, ideally against a house wall, and raise them onto pot feet or bricks to ensure good drainage and prevent the roots from sitting in frozen water.

For more susceptible plants, or those in terracotta pots (which can crack), wrap the containers in bubble wrap or horticultural fleece.

Crucially, check on less hardy shrubs and climbers.

Pile a thick mulch of straw, bracken, or bark chips around the base of tender shrubs to insulate the roots.

For tree ferns or other exotic specimens, wrap the crown and trunk in fleece.

If heavy snow falls, gently brush it off greenhouse panes, sheds and the branches of evergreens to prevent damage from the weight.

Winter weather can wreak havoc on garden essentials.

Lagging outdoor taps and pipes is non-negotiable to prevent freezing and bursting.

It is also the ideal time to clear and check the security of sheds, fences, pergolas, and trellises.

High winds are common so make sure all climbing plants are securely tied to their supports to prevent them from becoming detached or damaged.

On days when the ground is firm and dry, take time to clean, sharpen, and oil your garden tools before storing them, ensuring they are ready for the spring rush.

Pruning for Structure and Health

While plants are dormant, is the best time for structural pruning for many woody subjects. The absence of leaves allows you to clearly see the shape of the plant and make informed cuts.

Fruit and Ornamentals

Focus on winter pruning of apples and pears. The goal is to create an open, goblet-like structure that allows light and air into the centre of the tree.

Remove any dead, diseased, or damaged branches, along with any that are crossing or growing inwards. It is also the correct time for the 'two-stage' prune of Wisteria, cutting back the whippy summer growth to about two or three buds from the main spur.

For soft fruit, cut back the canes of autumn-fruiting raspberries right down to the ground. Prune blackcurrants, gooseberries, and redcurrants, aiming to remove older wood to stimulate new, more productive growth. Remember, however, do not prune stone fruits like plums and cherries in winter, as this makes them vulnerable to silver leaf disease.

Planting Opportunities

Surprisingly, December offers one of the best times for specific types of planting, provided the ground is not frozen or water-logged.

This is the peak season for planting bare-

root trees, shrubs, and hedging. Buying bare-root stock is cost-effective and gives the plants a head start, as they can begin establishing a root system during the dormant period before needing to push out leaves in spring.

Popular choices include native hedging like hawthorn and beech and bare-root roses.

Ensure the planting hole is well-prepared, firm the soil well, and water them in if the weather is dry.

Winter Colour

Introduce instant cheer by planting winter-flowering shrubs like Sarcococca (Christmas Box) and Daphne, which provide both fragrance and colour in the bleakest months.

Check and top up containers with hardy winter bedding like pansies, cyclamen, and violas.

Harvesting and Soil Care

Continue to harvest hardy winter crops such as leeks, parsnips, kale, and Brussel sprouts. If a hard frost is forecast, lift root crops like carrots and parsnips and store them in a cool,

dark, frost-free location in boxes of sand.

Clear the vegetable patch of all old crop debris and weeds to reduce overwintering pests and diseases.

Once cleared, dig over empty beds and incorporate well-rotted manure or garden compost, allowing the frost to break down the soil over winter, which is particularly beneficial for heavy, clay-based Northern soils.

Under Cover

In the greenhouse or cold frame, maintain a clean environment.

Brush snow off the glass and, if using a heater, monitor temperatures carefully. Ventilate on warmer days to reduce humidity, which prevents fungal diseases.

For those planning a productive season, now is the time to start sowing hardy annuals like sweet peas in a cold frame or unheated greenhouse for an early display.

Planning and Ordering

With less active work outside, this is the perfect time to review the past season and plan next year's crop rotation.

Order seeds, fruit bushes, and summer-flowering bulbs before the spring rush begins.

A warm seat by the fire with seed catalogues is a crucial December job.

Caring for Wildlife

In the depths of winter, garden wildlife needs your help more than ever.

Keep bird feeders topped up with high-fat, high-energy food like suet and fat balls, which are essential for birds to maintain body heat.

Ensure a supply of fresh, unfrozen water – floating a small, lightweight ball on the surface of a bird bath can help prevent it from freezing over completely.

Creating a log or leaf pile in a quiet corner provides vital shelter for hibernating hedgehogs and insects.

By focusing on protection, precise pruning, selective planting, and essential planning, the gardener ensures their outdoor space is secure, healthy, and perfectly positioned to burst into life as the first signs of a spring emerge.



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Date	Tour	Days	Price	Date	Tour	Days	Price
January 2026				May 2026			
5th - 9th	Oxfordshire - Warners	5	£499.00	4th - 8th	Torquay	5	£449.00
11th - 12th	London	2	£119.00	4th - 7th	Cardiff Bay Cruises, Royal Mint & Castle	4	£449.00
12th - 16th	North Wales - Warners	5	£399.00	9th - 13th	Bognor Regis	5	£449.00
19th - 23rd	Torquay & South Devon	5	£239.00	10th - 11th	Lake District	2	£159.00
23rd - 25th	Warwickshire	3	£149.00	10th - 11th	Leicester and King Richard III Visitor Centre	2	£159.00
30th - 2nd Feb	Scarborough	4	£219.00	11th - 15th	Aberfoyle	5	£439.00
31st - 1st Feb	St. Annes	2	£119.00	18th - 22nd	Northern Treasures Rail & Sail	5	£599.00
February 2026				20th - 24th	Great Yarmouth	5	£469.00
1st - 2nd	Buxton	2	£99.00	June 2026			
8th - 9th	Bridlington	2	£79.00	1st - 5th	Llandudno	5	£439.00
13th - 15th	Whitby	3	£189.00	1st - 5th	Aberdeen, Royal Deeside & Coastlines	5	£399.00
20th - 22nd	Blackpool	3	£139.00	8th - 12th	Weymouth	5	£489.00
23rd - 27th	Bournemouth	5	£289.00	13th - 17th	Criccieth	5	£499.00
27th - 2nd	Llandudno	4	£199.00	14th - 18th	Cream of The Cotswolds	5	£599.00
March 2026				19th - 21st	Longleat	3	£299.00
6th - 9th	Cromer	4	£319.00	19th - 21st	Windsor	3	£299.00
7th - 8th	ABBA Voyage	2	£219.00	22nd - 26th	Scarborough	5	£379.00
9th - 13th	Sand Bay Holiday Village	5	£219.00	26th - 29th	Whitby	4	£449.00
15th - 16th	St. Annes	2	£119.00	29th - 2nd July	Newquay	5	£499.00
16th - 20th	Llandudno	5	£289.00	29th - 3rd July	Isle of Man	5	£699.00
21st - 23rd	Scarborough	3	£149.00	July 2026			
23rd - 27th	Folkstone	5	£229.00	10th - 12th	RHS Badminton Flower Show	3	£379.00
23rd - 27th	Torquay	5	£329.00	12th - 17th	Torquay English Riviera and South Devon Explorer	6	£649.00
27th - 29th	Wartime Hero's Weekend	3	£199.00	13th - 17th	Llandudno	5	£489.00
April 2026				20th - 24th	Aberfoyle	5	£469.00
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11th - 15th	Isle of Wight	5	£479.00				
13th - 17th	Blackpool	5	£219.00				
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3rd - 7th	Warwickshire	5	£399.00	30th - 2nd Nov	Scarborough	4	£339.00
7th - 9th	Liverpool	3	£199.00	<i>November 2026</i>			
7th - 10th	St. Annes	4	£369.00	2nd - 6th	Llandudno	5	£449.00
7th - 10th	Glasgow & The Edinburgh Tattoo	4	£429.00	6th - 8th	North West Cities Discoverer	3	£199.00
9th - 14th	Bournemouth	6	£589.00	7th - 8th	Blackpool Illuminations	2	£99.00
16th - 17th	Lake District	2	£159.00	9th - 13th	Whitby	5	£399.00
17th - 21st	Shropshire	5	£649.00	15th - 16th	Liverpool	2	£99.00
21st - 23rd	Newmarket Racing	3	£419.00	16th - 20th	Poole & Bournemouth	5	£499.00
24th - 28th	Tenby & South Wales	5	£669.00	22nd - 23rd	Thursford Christmas Spectacular	2	£259.00
24th - 28th	Llandudno	5	£449.00	23rd - 27th	Skegness	5	£429.00
31st - 4th Sept	Inverary Castle, FortWilliam Wildlife & Whisky	5	£799.00	27th - 30th	Glasgow Christmas Markets & Cream Tea	4	£429.00
31st - 4th Sept	Isle of Wight	5	£529.00	27th - 30th	St. Anne's Turkey & Tinsel	4	£349.00
<i>September 2026</i>				30th - 4th Dec	Torquay	5	£399.00
3rd - 7th	Wiltshire & The Cotswolds	5	£699.00	30th - 3rd Dec	Dumfries House by Candlelight	4	£379.00
7th - 11th	Historic Border Countries, Lakes & Haldrian's Wall	5	£659.00	<i>December 2026</i>			
14th - 18th	Torquay	5	£439.00	6th - 7th	London	2	£99.00
21st - 25th	Porthcawl	5	£449.00	11th - 14th	Durham Xmas Festival & Beamish Museum	4	£349.00
25th - 27th	Blenheim Palace & Bletchley Park	3	£349.00	12th - 13th	ABBA Voyage	2	£219.00
28th - 2nd Oct	Lake District Autumn Colours	5	£479.00	13th - 14th	Liverpool Christmas Market	2	£99.00
28th - 2nd Oct	Weymouth	5	£459.00	14th - 18th	Folkstone Turkey & Tinsel	5	£289.00
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This menu scales down the traditional turkey to a flavour-packed chicken, complemented by maple-sweetened British root veg, and finishes with a comforting, autumnal crumble.

This feast serves four and takes just over two hours to complete.

Roast Chicken with Cider & Sage, Traditional Gravy, and Maple-Glazed Carrots

This main course is the perfect centrepiece, offering all the aromatic joy of the holiday without the stress of wrestling a huge bird.

Ingredients:

Whole Free-Range Chicken
Dry Cider 300 ml
Fresh Sage Leaves 10–15 leaves
Unsalted Butter, softened 50g
Onion, roughly chopped 1 medium
Stuffing: Breadcrumbs 100g
Red Onion, finely chopped 1 small
Fresh Sage, chopped 1 tbsp
Lemon Zest 1 tsp
Egg, beaten 1 small
Carrots, peeled and halved 500g
Maple Syrup 2 tbsp
Unsalted Butter 1 tbsp
Gravy Hot Chicken Stock 500ml
Plain Flour (or Cornflour) 1 tbsp

1. Prep the Chicken and Stuffing (30 minutes)

Preheat your oven to 200°C (180°C Fan/Gas Mark 6).

Aromatic Butter: Mix the softened butter with salt, pepper, and 1 tablespoon of chopped sage. Pat your chicken dry, then generously rub this herb butter all over the skin. Place the roughly chopped onion and remaining whole sage leaves inside the cavity.

Sage & Onion Stuffing: Combine the breadcrumbs, chopped red onion, sage, lemon zest, salt, and pepper in a bowl. Add the beaten egg and mix lightly – don't overwork it! Form into small balls or press into a small, oiled oven dish. Never stuff the chicken cavity, as this prevents even cooking.

2. The Roast (90 minutes)

Place the chicken in a roasting dish. Pour the cider around the base; this will steam the bird and infuse the gravy.



Roast for approximately one hour and 15 minutes to one hour 30 minutes.

If the skin darkens too quickly, loosely cover with foil.

Place your stuffing alongside the chicken for the final 30 minutes of cooking.

The chicken is done when the juices run clear when pierced in the thickest part of the thigh.

3. Glazed Carrots (20 minutes)

While the chicken rests, boil the prepared carrots until they are tender-crisp (about 10-12 minutes). Drain them well.

Melt the butter in a pan, add the cooked

carrots, and stir. Pour over the maple syrup and gently cook for 3-5 minutes until the carrots are beautifully glazed and sticky. Season lightly.

4. Making the Gravy (10 minutes)

Crucially, let the chicken rest for 15-20 minutes after cooking.

This keeps the meat juicy!

Place the roasting dish on the hob over a medium heat, scraping up all the delicious, caramelised residue (the fond). Strain the liquid into a saucepan, discarding the solids, and skim off most of the fat.

For a traditional finish, whisk in one table-

spoon of plain flour (or a pre-mixed cornflour slurry for a gluten-free option) into the pan juices. Gradually whisk in the hot chicken stock.

Simmer until the gravy thickens to your desired consistency. Taste and season.

Warm Apple and Blackberry Crumble

A light, comforting, and quintessentially British dessert is the perfect palate cleanser after a rich roast.

Ingredients:

Filling Bramley Apples, peeled and chopped 400g
Blackberries (fresh or frozen) 200g
Caster Sugar 50g
Water 2 tbsp

Topping:

Plain Flour 175g
Unsalted Butter, cold and cubed 75g
Light Brown Sugar 75g
Oats (optional) 25g

1. Soften the Fruit (15 minutes)

Combine the apples, blackberries, sugar, and water in a saucepan.

Simmer gently for five to seven minutes until the apples have just started to soften. You don't want them mushy!

Pour the cooked fruit into a 20cm ovenproof dish.

2. Create the Crumb (10 minutes)

In a large bowl, use your fingertips to rub the cold butter into the flour until the mixture resembles coarse breadcrumbs – lift your hands high to incorporate air.

Stir in the light brown sugar and oats (if using).

3. Bake and Serve (30 minutes)

Sprinkle the topping over the fruit.

Bake in the oven at 180°C (160°C Fan / Gas Mark 4) for 25-30 minutes, until the topping is golden and the fruit is bubbling.

Serve warm with thick cream, good quality vanilla ice cream, or a silky custard.

This menu blends the hearty, thankful spirit of an American feast with the best of seasonal British produce.



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GLORY DAYS: Youngsters who are probably well into their 30s now are pictured back in their youth thanks to a dip into our extensive archives at the Chronicle. We selected a bunch of random football squad photos from the early 2000s for this special feature. The teams include one based at Penistone Church FC, Redfearns and Ardsley. Do you recognise anyone in these images?



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SUDOKU

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

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

There is just one simple rule in Sudoku. Each row and each column must contain the numbers 1 to 9, and so must each 3x3 box. This is a logic puzzle, and you should not have to guess.

DOUBLE CROSSWORD

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

CRYPTIC CLUES

ACROSS

- 7 Any blog replacing writing implement? Far from it! (2,1,4,5)
- 8 Fellow by scientist's workplace turned up ointment (6)
- 9 Containing nothing yet MP is worried (5)
- 10 Firmly establish two points on candle bracket (8)
- 13 Simple plant, ally gave half away (4)
- 15 Contributes to confusing dads (4)
- 16 Desire, yes, working (8)
- 17 Appearance of noisy supporters (5)
- 19 Peg put on rotten sweet (6)
- 21 Ah, chiropody! New name kept for unfounded health worries (12)

DOWN

- 1 Got into a bed unsteadily (8)
- 2 Mother has afterthought for charts (4)
- 3 Animal that might hold an Aberdonian celebration? (8)
- 4 Feel good about backward leer (4)
- 5 Tramp retains answer for priest (8)
- 6 Soil left trapped by Caribbean sandbank (4)
- 11 Certain players needing club (4-4)
- 12 Fabric made last, an extra piece (8)
- 14 Cleverly augment line of colour (8)
- 17 Artist who practised yoga, perhaps (4)
- 18 Nymph in the choir (4)
- 20 Old ruler's reported this game (4)

MISSING LINK

Each pair of words has a missing word between them that acts as a link to both (eg FRONT - DOOR - MAT). The shaded squares of the six answers (reading downwards) will spell out a random word.

NURSING						ECONOMICS
ANGEL						DOWN
ARTICULATED						DRIVER
ROYAL						SUGAR
SNOWED						CANVAS
BLACK						TIME

TODAY'S SOLUTION:

Spelling: HELM
Home, eyes, lorry, icing, under, mark

TODAY'S SUDOKU SOLUTIONS:

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

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

WORD BUILDER

Using all nine letters provided, can you answer these clues? Every answer must include the central letter. Which word uses all nine letters?

5 letters

- Brawl
- Dark period
- Northern Irish lough
- Plural of his or her
- Scottish fjord

6 letters

- Bale, Welsh footballer
- Jones, ex-Blue Peter host
- Iran's capital city
- Mild terror
- Pick up

7 letters

- Cargo
- Domestic warmth
- Rollers cover

8 letters

- Old British coin

N	I	R
E	H	A
F	T	G

TODAY'S SOLUTION:

Fight Night Neagh Their Firth Gareth Hainnet Farthing Fathering

QUICK CLUES

ACROSS

- 7 Far and away (2,1,4,5)
- 8 Medicinal ointment (6)
- 9 Containing nothing (5)
- 10 Establish safely (8)
- 13 Aquatic plant (4)
- 15 Appends (4)
- 16 Aching (for) (8)
- 17 Appearance (5)
- 19 Chewy caramel (6)
- 21 Morbid anxiety over health (12)

DOWN

- 1 Acquired (8)
- 2 Atlas entries (4)
- 3 New Year's Eve (8)
- 4 Eye flirtatiously (4)
- 5 Army priest (8)
- 6 Brick material (4)
- 11 Ferrous alloy (4,4)
- 12 Clingy synthetic fibre (8)
- 14 Dark bluish-grey colour (8)
- 17 Spanish artist (4)
- 18 Resound (4)
- 20 Algarve town (4)

TODAY'S SOLUTION:

DOWN: 1 Obtained 2 Maps 3 Hogmanay 4 Ogile 5 Chaplain 6 Clay 11 Cast iron 16 Yearning 17 Guise 19 Toffee 21 Hypochondria

ACROSS: 7 By a long chalk 8 Balsam 9 Empty 10 Ensconce 13 Alga 15 Adds

MORE GREAT PUZZLES NEXT WEEK!

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Planning a late winter city break? You can avoid the usual suspects...

FORGET the predictable ice rinks and crowded mega-markets.

This winter, it's time to trade in the well-worn paths of Paris and Rome for something a little more... unexpected.

Europe is full of hidden gems that truly sparkle when the temperature drops, offering a blend of unique culture, stunning scenery, and fewer crowds. Pack your warmest coat and prepare to discover a side of winter travel you never knew existed.

1. Rovaniemi, Finland: The Official Hometown of Santa Claus

While the Nordic capitals have their charms, for a truly fantastical winter experience, journey north to Rovaniemi in Finnish Lapland.

Yes, it's famous for being the official residence of Santa Claus, but this Arctic city break offers far more than a festive photo-op.

Imagine stepping directly into a snow globe. Rovaniemi, sitting right on the Arctic Circle, is your gateway to authentic winter adventure. Days are short, bathing the snow-covered landscapes in a magical, ethereal blue light.

Beyond the charming Santa Claus Village, you can plunge into the Arctic world.

Try your hand at husky sledding through silent, white forests, feel the thrill of a reindeer sleigh ride, or race across frozen lakes on a snowmobile.

But the real showstopper? The Northern Lights.

Winter nights here are long and dark, offering prime conditions for witnessing the Aurora Borealis. Warm up after a long day of Arctic exploration with a traditional Lappish meal, perhaps some sautéed reindeer, and a hot cup of glögi (mulled wine).

Rovaniemi is a city break that promises pure, unadulterated winter magic, perfect for the adventurous spirit who still believes in fairy tales.

2. Ljubljana, Slovenia: The Green Dragon's Winter Lair

If you're looking for a fairytale setting without the Arctic chill, head to the utterly charming capital of Slovenia, Ljubljana. Often overshadowed by its flashier neighbours, this compact, pedestrianised city transforms into a cosy, festive haven in winter.

Ljubljana's heart is the Ljubljanica River, crossed by picturesque bridges, including the famous Dragon Bridge.

The city centre is mostly car-free, making it an absolute joy to stroll. During December, the city lights up with an artistic, unique display of illuminations that are far more sophisticated and imaginative than the usual holiday lights.

The Christmas market is small, perfectly formed, and focuses on local crafts and warming Slovenian treats.

Take the funicular up to the majestic Ljubljana Castle for a breathtaking view over the snow-dusted city rooftops. For an easy and truly spectacular day trip, Lake Bled is only a short journey away. Seeing the iconic church island and its medieval castle framed by a serene, often fog-shrouded or snow-capped landscape is an unforgettable winter sight, offering an escape that feels both undiscovered and wonderfully romantic.

3. Timisoara, Romania: A Cultural Canvas in the Cold

For a dose of Eastern European charm far from the well-trodden routes of Prague or Budapest, consider a trip to Timisoara, Romania.

Designated a European Capital of Culture, this city offers a rich tapestry of history, art, and a vibrant café culture, all without the winter crowds.

Timisoara is known as "Little Vienna" for its beautiful Baroque architecture and sprawling public squares. In winter, the city's squares – Victory Square (Piata Victoriei) and



Timisoara.

Union Square (Piata Unirii) – host a spirited Christmas market filled with Romanian handicrafts and traditional festive foods.

The atmosphere is warm and welcoming, a stark contrast to the cooler temperatures.

The city's tumultuous history, particularly its role in the 1989 Revolution, adds a fascinating layer to your visit.

Spend your days exploring the museums and art nouveau buildings, and your evenings seeking refuge in a cosy, character-filled cellar restaurant sampling hearty Romanian cuisine like sarmale (cabbage rolls) and warming local wines or tuica (plum brandy). Timisoara is an intellectual, historic, and delightfully off-beat choice for a winter city break.

4. Bergen, Norway: Fjordland's Colourful Harbour Town

While many rush to Oslo or chase the lights in the far North, the coastal city of Bergen offers a uniquely Norwegian winter experience. Nestled among seven mountains and serving as the gateway to the magnificent fjords, Bergen is colourful, historic, and surprisingly mild thanks to the Gulf Stream.

The UNESCO World Heritage site of Bryggen, with its iconic row of colourful wooden houses, looks particularly striking against a backdrop of dark winter skies and often snow-capped mountains. Take the Fløibanen Funicular up Mount Fløyen for panoramic views that showcase the city and its fjord setting in all their chilly splendour.

Winter is the perfect time for a spectacular fjord cruise, where the water is calm and the sheer rock faces are often dusted with snow, creating a dramatic and serene scene with fewer boats and tourists.

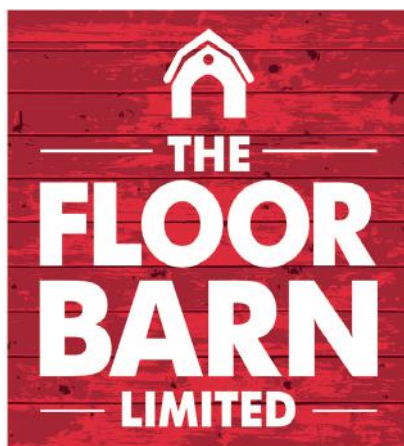
When the cold bites, dive into Bergen's excellent seafood scene, savouring freshly caught fish and shellfish in a snug harbour-side restaurant. Bergen delivers a blend of urban culture and accessible, breathtaking nature that makes for an unforgettable, picturesque winter escape.

So, this year, why not shun the usual suspects?

These European cities offer not just a break from the routine, but a genuine opportunity to discover new cultures, breathtaking landscapes, and a quiet, unique kind of winter joy.



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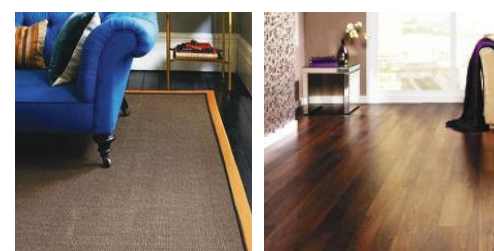
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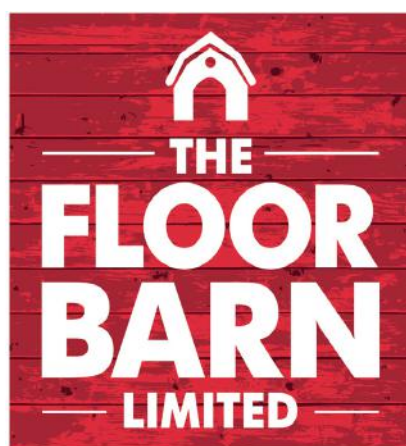
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Josh Timlin gets behind the wheel of a Spanish superstar



Born to be wild over VZ...

I DON'T remember much about Spanish lessons in high school but I do recall one particular word aside from the obvious. 'Veloz' – or 'fast' in English – struck a chord, no doubt because I wished the lesson would end as quickly as possible.

So, when a car arrives with its shortened-down moniker – VZ – your mood is instantly perked up by the prospect of what potentially lies ahead.

That's heightened even more so when you

drink in its spec sheet's details: this sportier version promises a staggering 40 per cent more power than the already great car it's based on and an absurd torque hike of 75 per cent.

I'm talking about the Cupra Born VZ, a car which bowled me over in its 'regular' guise thanks to its pace, handling and – despite its weight – it becoming a bonafide EV version of a hot hatch.

The VZ – with its 322bhp and 402lb ft of

torque – makes this Golf-sized hatchback a formidable operator on paper, with the 60mph dash coming up in five-and-a-bit seconds, while its rear-drive set-up is also music to the ears of people who like being at the wheel of more playful cars.

As has become the case with the Born, this one's subtle-yet-classy styling touches haven't moved the game on but have merely accentuated an already good-looking thing – there's a VZ badge on the rear but aside from that,

you'd be hard pushed to immediately tell the difference unless you're in the know.

However, its interior is completely altered by some of the best seats I've ever sat in.

This again makes a big difference.

Made by Sparco, they're undoubtedly a skinnier fit but the way they clasp you in your place as you push on is what you feel in specialist cars worth four times as much as the Cupra.

They look as good as they feel, too...



Ahead of you is the model-wide steering wheel which – despite its slightly irritating haptic elements – remains brilliant, being just the right size.

The interior as a whole is well-appointed and although I would prefer a centre console-mounted gear selector as opposed to its steering column-mounted ‘wand’, what it does do is give you an enormous amount of storage space.

Other developments include a new 12.9-inch multi-media display and a pair of key paddles for shifting brake energy regeneration – I’m unsure of your preference, but I immediately used these to dial out any braking as I find it incredibly annoying.

Despite its near two-tonne weight, the Born VZ feels like a very familiar hot hatch to drive; it’s one of those few EVs that has the ability to belie its bulk, feeling very much the well-sorted companion within seconds of moving. It’s its driving position – afforded by those fantastic seats – that sets the right tone from the off: there’s proper steering feel and there’s a genuine hunger for corners.

It makes the most of its rear-driven layout and its compact footprint, which allows it to tuck in to tighter bends enthusiastically.

It will power out of them with the alacrity only EVs possess – it’s properly quick, and Cupra’s toed the line perfectly with the amount of power it’s given its VZ. Its delivery is also a plus point; in too many EVs it’s akin to flicking a switch and after that first dose of power you’re left a little cold, but in the Born it feels a tad more progressive, meaning you’re interested for longer.

Get it on to a good stretch of road and you’d have to be insatiate to not smile. It’s thoroughly entertaining how it goes about its business and yes, of course, it’s not as involving as a Honda Civic Type R, but it’s most definitely a match for something like a VW Golf GTI.

Although it does manage to disguise its weight better than it ought to, the only time when you do feel it is when you’re really leaning on it and asking perhaps a little too much of it. At seven-tenths it’s a great car but anything after – when the properly special cars come into their own – it’s left lacking somewhat.

However, the Born VZ is a cracker, of that there’s no doubt. It ticks so many boxes and offers a 250-mile range with ease – it’s the first EV hot hatch and it deserves its place amongst its petrol-powered peers because it can hold its own.

Muy bueno, muy bueno, Cupra.



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