

# Life *Almanac*

From sequins to slow moments, January arrives in a shimmer of celebration and calm. The fizz of the festive season is still in the air – fairy lights twinkling, jumpers jingling – but there's a new kind of brightness too. The kind that whispers you made it through the year, now breathe. Whether you're dancing into 2026 or curling up with a book and a leftover mince pie, this month is about soft beginnings, simple pleasures and finding your glow again.

## *Noted & noteworthy*

### January's Nature Marker - The Quiet Resilience of Snowdrops

They push through frozen earth like tiny miracles in white. Long before daffodils make their showy entrance, snowdrops remind us that hope doesn't need fanfare. Spot them in churchyards, along woodland paths, or even on your neighbour's lawn – a small, defiant sign that light always finds its way back.

WORDS: CAROLINE BLIGHT & EMMA COXON. IMAGES: HUGO GLENDINNING. FOR SCROOGE; ELJAY BRISS FOR SAVE THE CHILDREN; OLIVER ROSSER FOR SHERIDAN SMITH; & SHUTTERSTOCK.



# What's on: Fresh starts & sparkly spirits

Cultural pick-me-ups for post-festive days: exhibitions that lift, and events that make winter weekends something to look forward to.



## TERRIFYING TV

A ghost story adaptation from Mark Gatiss has become a real Christmas treat, and this year – the eighth for Gatiss – we are promised a nightmarish tale. It's the inter-war era where, for 15 years, Roger Winstanley has been haunted by an unsettling, recurring dream. In it he gets an invitation to spend the night in an acquaintance's house where an unseen terror lurks. When in real life he is invited to "the room in the tower", it becomes overwhelming. 'I've always wanted to adapt the great E.F. Benson's ghost stories, and this is one of his chilling best,' promises Mark. 'And with Tobias Menzies and the legendary Dame Joanna Lumley to boot!'  
*A Ghost Story for Christmas: The Room In The Tower*, BBC2.



Off Menu with Ed Gamble and James Acaster

A delightfully silly and surprisingly insightful food-and-chat podcast in which the hosts invite guests to pick their dream menu – starter, main, side, dessert and drink – with all the quirks and curiosities you'd expect. Cue bursts of laughter, culinary nostalgia and tangents about life that lead far from the plate. It's the kind of show you can wander into on a cold January evening and stay for two episodes more than you intended.



## Thought-provoking theatre

Two-time Olivier Award winner Sheridan Smith is back on stage in Alan Ayckbourn's darkly comic psychological drama *Woman in Mind*. The show follows Susan, who finds her world splits after she suffers a bump on the head. One part of her life is mundane, the other imagined, and when the two worlds overlap, it brings her close to self-destruction. The play has not been seen on the West End since 1987 and after the London run it travels to Sunderland Empire and Glasgow Theatre Royal. 'It's a brilliant play and I can't wait for you to see it,' says Sheridan.  
*Woman in Mind*, 9 December–28 February, Duke of York's Theatre, London



## CULTURE FIX

### *Beautiful ballet*

It's time to visit a wonderful world where anything is possible and everything is mind-blowing. It's Christmas Eve in Edwardian London and a visit to Drosselmeyer's Sweets and Delights Emporium introduces Clara to an enchanted Nutcracker doll. Her magical journey, with over 100 dancers and musicians, takes her from a battle with the Rat King to an enchanting land where the Sugar Plum Fairy hosts a grand celebration. The English National Ballet Philharmonic perform Tchaikovsky's iconic score live as the classic ballet is performed with skill as stunning as the sets and costumes.

**The Nutcracker**, 11 December–11 January, The London Coliseum.

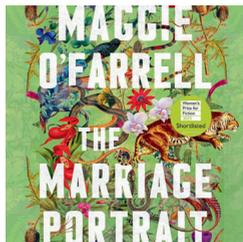
CHRISTMAS CLASSIC



## AUDIOBOOK SPOTLIGHT

The Marriage Portrait by Maggie O'Farrell (Tinder Press)

Step into the opulent, dangerous world of Renaissance Florence as O'Farrell breathes life into the tragic Lucrezia de' Medici. With Genevieve Gaunt's rich, emotive narration, every whispered secret and painted glance feels close enough to touch. It's a story of art, power and defiance – proof that even in confinement, a woman's spirit can't be silenced.



## Movie Mystery

Daniel Craig returns as suave master detective Benoit Blanc to solve an impossible murder in a secluded church community in upstate New York. Father Jud Duplenticy (Josh O'Connor) is sent to Our Lady of Perpetual Fortitude in the fictional town of Chimney Rock after an altercation at his previous posting. It's run by Monsignor Jefferson Wicks (Josh Brolin) who is certainly not a typical man of the cloth. With an all-star class of congregation under suspicion, including Glenn Close, Mila Kunis, Andrew Scott and Kerry Washington, it also explores the complexities of faith and corruption in religion.

**Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery**, in cinemas from 26 November and Netflix from 12 December.



BENOIT IS BACK

## Seasonal spotlight

It's nearly time to pull on your most marvellously over-the-top knit – Save the Children's Christmas Jumper Day returns on Thursday 11 December, and this year's line-up of celebrity supporters is as bright as the sequins on your sleeves.

Alison Hammond, Joe Swash, Myleene Klass, Ashley Jensen, Ade Adepitan, Dom Joly and Jen Brister are all championing the cause, encouraging everyone to raid their wardrobes (or the local charity shop) for something gloriously woolly and raise funds to help children stay safe, healthy and learning.

'I absolutely love Christmas Jumper Day! It's such a fun way to do some good,' says Alison. 'If your December's jam-packed, just pop to your nearest charity shop and grab a fabulous pre-loved jumper.'

The idea is simple: wear a jumper, donate what you can, and make the world better in a sweater. Sign up your school, workplace, friends or family at [christmasjumperday.org](http://christmasjumperday.org).



# Make a day of it - January edition

January isn't for grand plans – it's for gentle adventures. A day that begins with a good coffee and ends with rosy cheeks and a quiet sense of ah, that was lovely. From glowing gardens and creative workshops to sea air and slow craft, these wintry outings are proof that joy doesn't hibernate.

## 1 RHS GARDEN WISLEY: GLOW 2026, SURREY Until 4 January

Wander through Wisley's gardens after dark and see them transformed into a wonderland of colour and light. The glasshouse glows like a jewel, the lake twinkles, and the café serves excellent hot chocolate. Perfect for stretching those winter legs while still feeling festive. [rhs.org.uk/wisley](https://rhs.org.uk/wisley)



## 2 COASTAL FORAGING CLASSIC COURSE, SOUTH WALES

### Selected January dates

Join expert forager Craig Evans on the wild Pembrokeshire coast and discover the edible treasures hiding in rock pools, salt marshes and seaweed beds. You'll learn how to identify, harvest and cook your finds – finishing with a freshly prepared feast by the sea. Find out more at [coastalforaging.co.uk](https://coastalforaging.co.uk).



**Win! A family coastal foraging classic course, worth £180, for 2 adults and up to 4 children.**

To enter, please email [platinum.letters@kelsey.co.uk](mailto:platinum.letters@kelsey.co.uk) with the title Coastal Foraging Competition and your full name. Entries close at 23:59pm on 16th December, 2025. A winner will be selected at random and notified by email.

## 3 PRINTMAKING WITH JO BODDY, THE LIGHTBOX, WOKING 17th January 2026

Try your hand at linocut printmaking in this hands-on workshop led by artist Jo Boddy. You'll sketch, carve, ink and press your own small edition prints – a lovely way to get tactile, slow down and take home something made by your own hand. [thelightbox.org.uk](https://thelightbox.org.uk)



## Mindful Moment

### The Gentle Reset

Forget 'New year, new you.' January is for 'Same you, softer edges.' Instead of reinvention, think restoration: slow mornings, long walks, warm soups and people who make you laugh from the belly. The trick isn't to change everything – it's to notice what already feels good and do more of it.

### WORDS OF WISDOM

*'And suddenly you know: it's time to start something new and trust the magic of beginnings'*

Meister Eckhart

