

Life *Almanac*

From russet leaves to radiant ideas – October is the month for thoughtful podcasts, fireside reads, and day trips with just enough chill in the air to justify a flask of something warming. Here's what's clever, cultural, and quietly brilliant this month.



Noted & noteworthy

October's nature marker – the rustle beneath your feet

There's a particular kind of magic in an October walk. The light turns amber, the air smells faintly of woodsmoke, and every step crunches with that satisfying rustle of fallen leaves. Sycamore helicopters whirl down like confetti, squirrels are in a frenzy of stashing, and hedgerows gleam with sloes and hips. It's not showy like spring or sun-drunk like July – it's subtler, deeper. A moment to feel grounded, grateful and quietly glad to be alive.

WORDS: CAROLINE BLIGHT & EMMA COXON. IMAGES: SHUTTERSTOCK & VARIOUS BRANDS.

What's on: fresh air, big ideas & cosy joys

From conker championships to brilliant podcasts, woodland wanders to weekend reads – this month is full of thoughtful ways to feel good, stretch your mind and enjoy the season.

TENSE
TELLY
WITH A
TWIST

MUST-WATCH SERIES

Cold Water, ITV – Andrew Lincoln plays John, a repressed middle-aged man, unhappy at being a stay-at-home dad, who moves his family to the fictional Scottish village of Coldwater for a safer life. He's befriended by next-door neighbour Tommy (Ewen Bremner), who seems charming and is the husband of the local vicar. But John's wife Fiona (Indira Varma) is convinced there is something strange about Tommy and is worried as John becomes more entwined in their friendship. As this thriller takes us through twists and shock revelations, John finds himself in a dangerous situation that will keep you on the edge of your seat.

Stage spotlight

Black Sabbath – The Ballet is a cross-collaboration none of us knew we needed, until Birmingham Royal Ballet made it happen. Recognising the success of the rock band originating from the same city, this unique show features incredible dance alongside full orchestrations of legendary Black Sabbath tracks, including *Paranoid* and *Iron Man*. There are also new orchestral works inspired by their music to enjoy as the show tours the UK. Six composers and choreographers came together to create a trio of acts that celebrate the birth of heavy metal and its legacy, with the blessing of the band themselves. *Black Sabbath – The Ballet*, starts 18 September, Birmingham Hippodrome.

BANGING
BALLET



Podcast picks for October days

Off Air with Jane & Fi

Think coffee with your cleverest, funniest friends. Jane Garvey and Fi Glover bring their signature warmth and wit to a podcast full of conversation, curiosity and the occasional guest who has no idea what they've walked into. It's like *Woman's Hour* went rogue – and we love it for that.



The Rest Is History

Tom Holland and Dominic Sandbrook dive into the quirks, dramas and sheer weirdness of the past. October's episodes include witch trials, ancient curses and a few truly bonkers royal scandals. It's highbrow-ish fun with just the right dose of irreverence.

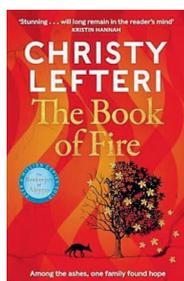




Must-read this month

The Book of Fire
by Christy Lefteri
(Manilla Press)

From the bestselling author of *The Beekeeper of Aleppo* comes this moving, thought-provoking novel about survival, motherhood and healing. Set in the aftermath of a devastating wildfire in Greece, it's as luminous and powerful as its title suggests. Perfect for readers who like their fiction fierce, but full of heart.

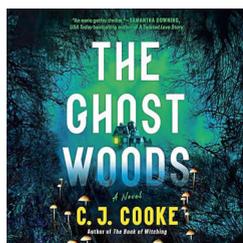


AUDIOBOOK SPOTLIGHT

October escapes for your ears

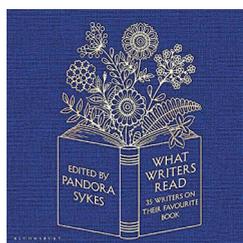
The Ghost Woods
by C.J. Cooke
(HarperCollins, read by Sarah Ovens)

Set in a crumbling Scottish manor in the 1960s, this gothic mystery weaves folklore, found families and female power into a beautifully eerie tale. When two pregnant women arrive at a home for “troubled” girls, dark secrets begin to unravel. With lush narration and just the right amount of chill, it's perfect for October evenings when the wind starts to howl.



What Writers Read
by Pandora Sykes
(Audible Original, read by the author and guests)

From Zadie Smith's childhood bookshelves to Elif Shafak's literary rituals, this joyful collection of interviews with brilliant writers offers a peek into the books that shaped them. Hosted by journalist and author Pandora Sykes, it's like a salon for the ears – inspiring, funny and full of recommendations you'll want to scribble down.



On the big screen

Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale – It's our last chance to visit the Crawley family and their staff at *Downton Abbey* – and the beloved drama is certainly going out on a high. We join them as they enter the 1930s and life is certainly not running smoothly. The pace of social change is proving a challenge, Mary is at the centre of a public scandal, and the family faces financial trouble. How will the household cope with the threat of social disgrace?

'It really is about tying up loose ends and not shuttering the house, but shuttering the story,' says Hugh Bonneville, who plays Lord Grantham. 'There is a sense of closure.'

Downton Abbey: The Grand Finale, in cinemas from 12 September.



Get your tickets: Knives are out, curtains are up

Calling all mystery lovers and Daniel Craig devotees: director Rian Johnson's third instalment of the Netflix *Knives Out* series, *Wake Up Dead Man: A Knives Out Mystery*, is opening this year's BFI London Film Festival in proper style, at the LFF Opening Night Gala, hosted at the Southbank Centre's Royal Festival Hall. Expect red-carpet glamour, plot twists galore, and a cast so starry you'll need sunglasses. Tickets officially go on sale 16 September, but BFI Members can jump the queue from 9 September, and American Express Cardmembers get an early peek from the 12th. Mark your diaries, polish your monocles, and head to bfi.org.uk/lff for more.



THE SOFT SEASON BAM YOGA WEAR

As the season invites us to turn inward – to rest, stretch, reflect and recharge – it’s the perfect time to invest in self-care that starts with what we wear. If you love your yoga kit to be as soft as your savasana – but still work hard for its place in your wardrobe – then BAM might just be your new favourite brand. Designed with comfort, sustainability and proper grown-up style in mind, BAM’s pieces are made from bamboo and feel like a second skin. Whether you’re stretching, strolling, or simply Sunday-ing, their high-waisted leggings and cosy sweatshirts are breathable, beautifully cut and last forever. Bonus points for their strong ethical ethos, BAM is proof that practical can still be utterly gorgeous. bambooclothing.co.uk



October 1984 This month in history

When shoulder pads ruled the world

Dynasty was topping TV ratings, Joan Collins (below) was strutting through our living rooms like a perfectly coiffed hurricane, and power dressing officially became a national sport. Women weren’t just watching the drama – they were living it, in cinched blazers and skyscraper heels. Fashion got louder, glossier, and unapologetically fabulous. It wasn’t just style; it was



armour. A wink to a time when we turned up the volume – in our wardrobes and our ambitions – and proved that glamour and grit go hand in hand.

WORTH THE TRIP IKEA: MAGICAL PATTERNS

Until 17 January, 2026

Ready to see IKEA like you’ve never seen it before? *IKEA: Magical Patterns* at Dovecot Studios in Edinburgh takes you on a joyfully nostalgic spin through 60 years of the brand’s bold, beautiful textiles. From charming early designs by Swedish creatives to standout collabs with icons like Zandra Rhodes and Marimekko, there are 180 fabrics to swoon over. And if you’ve ever fancied trying your hand at pattern play, there’s even a pop-up studio where you can mix, match and make your own. Flat pack? Not this time – this one’s all about flair. dovecotstudios.com



Bonkers for conkers

The World Conker Championships, Southwick, Northamptonshire, 12 October

A little daft, entirely nostalgic, and gloriously British, the World Conker Championships are autumn eccentricity at its finest. What began in 1965 as a pub joke is now a full-blown tournament, drawing competitors from around the world, each armed with their finest horse chestnut (and a competitive streak). Expect a charmingly serious approach to this childhood pastime, complete with gloves, safety goggles, and a lot of enthusiastic cheering.

Whether you’re playing or spectating, it’s a joyful throwback to simpler times.

worldconkerchampionships.com



WORDS OF WISDOM

'And the day came when the risk to remain tight in a bud was more painful than the risk it took to blossom'

Anaïs Nin