

# Together

magazine

**BEAUTY**  
*Vivacious  
Valentine's*

**TECHNOLOGY**  
*Drones are coming*

*Motoring*  
**THE JAGUAR XE**

**LUXURY  
JEWELLERY**

**WINE**  
*Wines of Languedoc  
Chateaux in Bordeaux*

**SELF HELP**  
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*The Middle East*

**TRAVEL**  
*The Utrecht Canals  
Cycle the world  
Ski Les Arcs*

**MONEY**  
*Invest in 2016*

**NUTRITION**  
*Be positive*

**Tom  
Hardy**

**INTERVIEW**

# Mentalis

TRENKER

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\* Il a été scientifiquement démontré que l'Ashwagandha aide le corps à résister au stress et contribue au maintien des capacités physiques et mentales en cas de fatigue.





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\* En **renting financier**. Valable uniquement à des fins professionnelles. Prix mensuel HTVA au 1<sup>er</sup> décembre 2015 pour une Jaguar XF Pure 2.0D 163 ch (prix catalogue 40.350 € TVAC). Plus d'infos sur [www.jaguar.be](http://www.jaguar.be). ATN net mensuel de 108 €, calculé à titre informatif sur base du précompte professionnel le plus élevé : 53,5%. Plus d'infos sur [www.jaguar.be](http://www.jaguar.be). Informations environnementales (AR 19/03/04) : [www.jaguar.be](http://www.jaguar.be). Modèle illustré : Jaguar XF S avec options. Jaguar Care : 3 ans de garantie, d'assistance et d'entretien programmés, kilométrage illimité. Donnons priorité à la sécurité.



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### AND LIVE DIFFERENTLY

Matter of fact, don't wait for tomorrow to come. Pack your backpack or duffel bag and sail away. Take the time now, right now, to plan your future adventure. Free yourself from life's constraints and lead a life of intrepid adventure. You owe it to yourself. Take a year out and treat yourself with a life of everyday sunrises and sunsets. The time has come to catch and conquer your dreams, once and for all. That Ocean, that archipelago, that mountain and that jungle? They're yours to discover.



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Le plaisir  
de conduire

## Editor's LETTER

*Together:  
Inspiring you  
to reach your dreams...*

### ON THE COVER



Tom Hardy stars in  
*The Revenant*

## A BOX FULL OF DREAMS

*That old devil called love, as the song goes.*

The Valentine's industry has grown from simply-made valentines being dropped surreptitiously through letter-boxes, often in the dead of night when, no doubt, the recipients could not sleep for waiting for the gentle clack of the flap and the gentle plop of an envelope on the mat.

Even the redoubtable J.C. Hall, founder of Hallmark, would blush at the billions that are earned from all manner of cards that no longer state simply 'that violets are blue' but must sing and dance and even make the tea. Hall's is a remarkable story. At the tender age of eighteen he arrived in Kansas with nothing more than two shoe boxes full of postcards. By 2014, Hallmark's revenue was \$3.8 billion.

I blush too when I think of the first Valentine's Day that I recall. I resolved to leave a card for Miss X, who was in my primary school class. But I forgot, and when the day came I tried to avoid her. She caught up with me eventually and beamed a big smile. Quick as a flash I said: "So you got my card?" She kissed me on the cheek and skipped off.

One of my earliest life lessons. All thought of the callous deception I had carried out vanished. I scanned the playground. Who gave her that card?

**Paul Morris**  
EDITOR



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ISSEY MIYAKE  
L'EAU D'ISSEY  
POUR HOMME



## La rénovation est un art



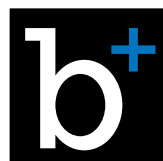
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**Interview**  
Tom Hardy



**Travel**  
Ski Les Arcs

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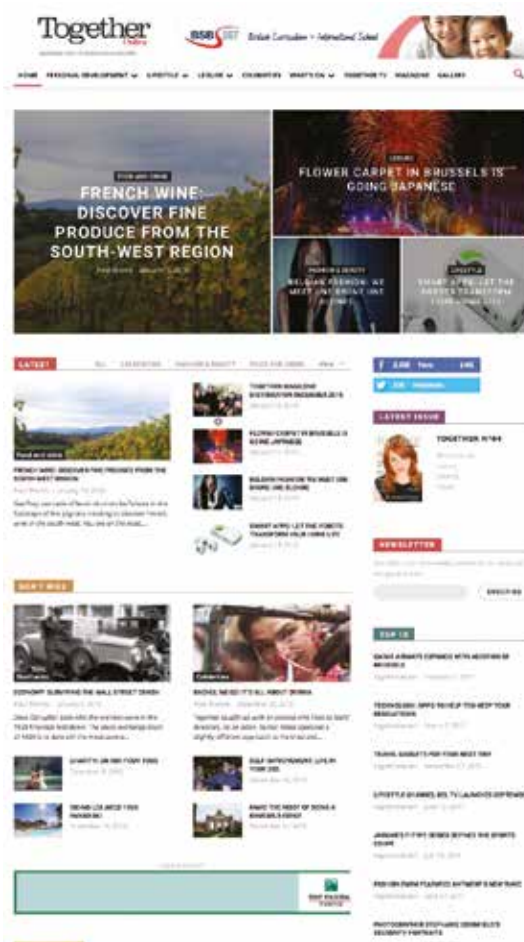
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## Rachel Weisz: It's all about drama

*Together* caught up with an actress who likes to 'stalk' directors. As an actor, Rachel Weisz operates a slightly different approach to the tried and tested method of waiting by the phone for a job. A more dogged approach. "At this stage," she says, "I pursue filmmakers who I admire, who I want to work with. That's how I operate. I devise a way to make it happen."

## Belgian fashion: Meet Une Brune Une Blonde

Cheeky, edgy, Made-In-Belgium accessories label Une Brune Une Blonde has been creating quite a tinkle in the Benelux area since its launch three years ago by young Charleroi designer Emilie Pinet. Une Brune Une Blonde is part rocker, part glamour, classic meets funky, Chanel meets punk. The label is a contradiction in feminine terms, a one-style-fits-all approach that adds refreshing verve to staid fashion rules.

## Self-help: Isn't it ironic?

Self-help advisor Gemma Rose's best intentions bring about the opposite outcome. "I'm very interested." She stared at me intently, holding my gaze. A flush of both excitement and relief washed over me all at once. "Are you sure you want it?" This woman was sending me all the right signals, but I was no fool...

## Smart apps: Let the robots transform your home life

Colin Moors delves into the smart apps that will make your life easier and more fun. Now we're officially in the future, with all the utopian and dystopian films and books uniformly failing to come true and provide us with hoverboards, flying cars and homicidal time-travelling robots, what can we expect in the not-too-distant future, the one in which certain ideas may well come to fruition?

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# Starring in Belgium



### Bryan Adams

Adams celebrates the thirtieth anniversary of the release of his legendary, amazingly popular album *Reckless*. **25 May**, Sportpaleis, Antwerp. Tickets from **€44** - [www.livenation.be](http://www.livenation.be)



### Joe Jackson

Joe will be his 'own opening act', in the sense that he will begin each show solo on the piano for a few songs before being joined on-stage by his band. *Fast Forward* is the title of his latest CD, but look out for classics such as *Is She Really Going Out With Him*, *Fools In Love*, *Breaking Us In Two* and *It's Different For Girls*. **22 February**. Ancienne Belgique. Tickets: **€33** - [www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)



### Newton Faulkner

Newton is an English singer-songwriter and musician from Reigate, Surrey, known for his percussive style of guitar playing - he's just released a new, fifth CD, *Human Love*. Faulkner has been called "the most creative guitarist on this side of the seventies". **1 March**. Ancienne Belgique. Tickets: **€15** - [www.abconcerts.be](http://www.abconcerts.be)



### Natalie Merchant

An Evening with Natalie Merchant, part of The 2016 Paradise is There Tour. **21 March**. Cirque Royal, Brussels. Tickets from **€27** [www.livenation.be](http://www.livenation.be)

# The Cirkular effect

**Paul Morris** came across a food delivery firm that thinks long-term

**A**t Together we love it when we discover a business that thinks long-term, that believes in sustainability and puts it into practice. That's exactly what Cirkle does. Their slogan sums it all up: "We make it easy to eat well and do good."

The fresh food they deliver is combined with a free recycling service which, in turn, benefits social causes. Among their providers are shops such as Jack O'Shea and Les Tartes de Francoise. Their boxes can be packed with meat, or just vegetables or even wine and beer. They also supply all manner of fruit and nuts, and traditional bread from the bakery.

## The philosophy

I asked the company's founder Ben Bramich how important it was to them to get involved directly in charity and sustainability. "With the recent recession, scandals in the banking industry and with interest rates being so low, there appears to be an appetite in investing in companies that have more than just financial value. Investors are increasingly looking at business models that have a social value. In addition to this, innovative companies are implementing 'circular' initiatives to reduce waste through their businesses. The circular economy is regenerative by design, meaning that the reduction of waste is built into the business model, ideally to reach zero waste. At Cirkle we are combining a circular model with social value."

## So how does it benefit good causes?

You make your order and it's delivered to you – and there's your chance to hand over something of value that can be recycled/reused where it's most needed.



Cirkle encourages people to stop before they throw anything away, to see if it has value. They collect more than 20 different types of household waste, and most have some kind of value. The items that can be reused are given directly to charities to be sold by them. The other items are recycled. Any money generated from the recycling also goes to charities. A few items do not have a value, but they collect them for your convenience to be recycled.

And how have customers reacted to the extra value? "Our clients are very happy to use our free recycling service of 20 types of household waste," Bramich said. "The convenience of the service is appreciated and the fact that all donations are given to charities is an added bonus. We have a high participation rate and are generating plenty of income for charities as a result."

Every month they choose a different charity, and funds collected from recycling goes directly to them. A company that is clearly thinking outside the box.

[www.cirkle.be](http://www.cirkle.be) 1

# Green Key: Opening the door to sustainable tourism

**Paul Morris** finds out more about an impressive initiative to make our hotel stays more environmentally friendly

**G**reen Key is a non-governmental, non-profit, independent programme, recognised and supported by the World Tourism Organization and UNEP. It is the largest global eco-label for accommodation and has a national administration centre in each participating country. The object is to bring the positive effects of responsible tourism to bear on the industry, creating a major benefit for the environment.

Among Green Key's objectives are the education of staff, clients and owners towards increased sustainable development and environmental awareness, environmental preservation, management by the reduction of consumption and strengthening tourism and leisure by encouraging them to take responsibility broader than their individual establishments.

Being awarded the Green Key label means that an establishment has fulfilled a list of strict requirements. And one local hotel group, Thon Hotels Group, takes its responsibility very seriously. Hans Van der biesen, General Manager of the Thon Hotel EU explained: "We were still in the early stages of opening when we focused on responding to Green Key sustainability expectation, investing in photovoltaic panels and various 'green' investments."

A 'green team' has been created to plan different initiatives throughout the year and



implement two or three new 'green' ideas per year. "At the same time," said Van der biesen, "we are working with external businesses chosen for their own respectful approach to the environment, as in the case of the security firm that only works with electric vehicles."

Ilse Huenaerts, Sustainability Section Manager at the group's Stanhope Hotel said: "The different initiatives we deliver are similar to those implemented by the Thon Hotel EU (Client Eco-check, European Week for Waste Reduction, recycling, waste sorting, awareness-raising for personnel, etc.) but since our hotel is older, we have to adapt the building gradually, and gradually change the outlook of the staff and clients."

One unusual initiative in the Thon Hotel EU is the introduction of beehives on the rooftop. Bees are very good for the environment and provide very tasteful honey that is used in the restaurant's kitchen.

On 20<sup>th</sup> January 2016, the Thon Hotel Bristol Stephanie joined its fellow hotels in winning the coveted Green Key following months of hard work to comply with the label's requirements.

The next time you book a hotel room look out for that little green key symbol and you'll know you are doing your bit for the environment.

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# PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

*Summer wasps and flies have given way to a new form of aerial attacker – the drone*

PERSONAL  
DEVELOPMENT

Fitness

# Focus on functional

myAspria Editor **Maité Mignot** takes a close look at functional training



**A**spria Brussels Royal La Rasante is taking another look at fitness: the area has been completely renovated and divided into 15 zones. Obviously you'll find a few of the classics there, such as free weights and cardio machines, but you can also discover a Milon zone where the machines adapt themselves independently to your body shape, a Sports Performance zone for competition addicts and a functional training zone.

## Functional training in detail

You've probably heard of the term 'functional'. What does it mean?

Classical (or analytical) training asks you to flex your forearm, for example, by lifting a dumbbell. You're going to work the biceps and elbow joint. Functional training, however, favours movements which reproduce those of your sports activities or simply those of everyday life. The biceps exercise of analytical training will become a pulling exercise in





**“THE  
TRAINING  
EXERCISES  
CAN BE  
PERFORMED BY  
ANYONE AT ANY  
LEVEL”**

functional training. You'll still be working the biceps, but also the shoulder muscles, the upper back muscles and the chest. Don't be alarmed: the pulling exercise is a difficult one at an advanced level. It's just an example to illustrate!

#### Who is it for and why?

I also refer to the functional training zone as the 'playground'. The training exercises can be performed by anyone at any level and are great fun. You work in a circuit and follow a varied sequence of exercises, adapted to your needs.

A young mum could do bending, lifting and rotation exercises which will help her carry her child, and will also help with putting the stroller in the car and lifting it out again, for example. An older person will probably work on bending and extending the legs to develop the strength needed to sit down and get up again completely safely. A golfer or tennis player will aim to improve stability and muscular control, while compensating for the imbalances caused by these asymmetrical sports.

A final important element of functional training, which concerns everyone this time, is that it involves the core muscles of the body. A bit more jargon (sorry) these are the muscles located between the ribcage and the hips: abdominals, lower back and pelvic muscles. These muscles help you balance and co-ordinate movements combining the upper and lower back, and they also contribute to good posture, which reduces the risk of problems with your back or neck.

Functional training therefore helps you to improve those essential qualities of your everyday life, such as agility, co-ordination, speed and strength. And that's at the same time as working your cardiovascular system and fat-busting.

Trying it is taking it up! You'll never give it up because the exercise options are endless and, above all, you'll appreciate its benefits every day. It's addictive.

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# Reviving those New Year's Resolutions

Our nutrition expert **Sophie Bruno** encourages a positive outlook for 2016

**I**t is that time of year again when we take stock of how well we have managed to implement well-intended New Year's resolutions. This often involves setting goals that aspire to bring about some form of dietary or weight improvements; although the intent is optimistic, such objectives have a tendency to be overly centred on what should be eliminated from diets. People often commit to removing a victimised nutrient, pledge to banish junk food or shed an unrealistic amount of weight. Many of these simply confuse a resolution with a wish. Moreover, although many toast to the New Year with good prospects, resolutions are more commonly than not broken and cast off.

Embedded perceptions surrounding resolutions need to be reformed: New Year's resolutions should be about embracing positive changes and integrating healthy nutritional habits into everyday lifestyles. Energy should be channelled into making concerted efforts to make realistic, positive changes to the diet via small steps in place of exclusively focusing on removing elements.

So if your resolutions have fallen by the wayside here are seven keys for optimizing your health in 2016; these can be implemented effortlessly and will confer instantaneous and long-term benefits to your health.

## Eat more vegetables

This is an undisputed philosophy advocated by health professionals and experts alike. Vegetables confer a plethora of health and nutrition benefits. Not only are they low in fat and calories; they are also rich in healthful components such as fibre, micronutrients and antioxidants. This combination is the perfect recipe to stave off your risk of disease and increase quality of life. The high-fibre content



also acts to enhance satiation, ensuring you feel fuller for longer. This also means you are less likely to be tempted to snack. Above all, vegetables are delicious and versatile as they come in a multitude of varieties, flavours and colours. As such, they deserve a prominent place in

your diet. In order to benefit from the health advantages delivered by vegetables, this should translate into consuming *at least* five fruit and vegetable portions each day.

## Don't skip meals

Another important mantra is that structure is more effective than any fad diet in conferring balance. Whatever your dietary goal, skipping meals is counterproductive. Research shows that people who skip meals throughout the day are more likely to overeat at the subsequent meal due to increased cravings for energy-dense foods. This predisposes them to a spectrum of dangerous metabolic changes including elevated fasting glucose and delayed



insulin response. These are not only factors for weight gain, but they are also concerning precursors to cardiometabolic syndrome, including diabetes and heart disease. Ensure your body has a steady supply of fuel throughout the day to function.

### Start the day with a healthy breakfast

The implementation of healthier eating practices starts with breakfast. By ensuring you eat a healthy breakfast, you are more likely to continue making healthy choices all day long. Your concentration levels will be heightened as your body converts the food into energy. This will also confer stable blood sugar levels, important for controlling appetite. Moreover, the evidence demonstrates that those who eat breakfast are more likely to be a healthy weight.

### Antioxidants

Oxidative stress is the cumulative, day-to-day assault that our cells endure, induced by free radicals. This process is balanced by the body's internal antioxidant system, co-factors and the incorporation of food sources of antioxidants. However, as we age, our bodies are increasingly subject to oxidative stress, as we are less able to combat this manifestation. This can cause permanent damage to our DNA and has been implicated in cancer, cardiovascular disease and a cluster of other chronic conditions. As such, you should aim to have a diet rich in antioxidants. A healthy, balanced diet encompassing fruit, vegetables and whole grains will deliver a range of powerful antioxidants and bioactive components, including vitamin C, E, A, flavonoids and selenium. Specific foods that are identified as being particularly rich in antioxidants include blueberries, almonds, beetroot and green leafy vegetables such as broccoli, spinach and kale.

### Omega-3

Omega-3s are currently a hot topic as they have been shown to have an important role in ageing and the prevention of heart disease, Alzheimer's disease, improvement of

hypertension, blood lipid profiles and cognitive function. They have also been linked with the healthy development of babies during pregnancy and breastfeeding. Omega-3s are also reputed to have anti-inflammatory and antioxidant properties. Fish is one of the richest sources of long-chain omega-3s, especially oily fish. To benefit from the health effects of omega-3 aim to consume two portions of fish per week, one of which should be oily, such as salmon, mackerel, sardines, fresh tuna and anchovies. Consuming whole fish over supplementation may be more advantageous, due to the synergistic interactions nutrients found in fish that bring about health benefits.

### Eat mindfully

If you practice eating slowly and be more conscious of the eating experience moment, your body stands more of a chance of perceiving when you are full, avoiding overindulging. Your brain and digestive system are intricately connected via an extensive

network of neurons, chemicals and hormones, called the gut-brain axis.

They constantly feed messages back to the

brain such as the status of hunger or if we have ingested a disease-causing microbe. It normally requires 20 minutes after food is ingested to transmit signals to the brain. As such, by taking your time while eating you are more likely to sense when you are full, decreasing the use of food to mask a deeper emotional need.

### Drink plenty of water

Aim to drink two litres of fluid per day in order to remain hydrated. A lack of water consumption can result in headaches, tiredness and under performance. Drinking water can be a good strategy to feel fuller. Water is also affordable and a healthy way to quench your thirst as it contains no calories. If you don't like the taste of plain water, try sparkling water or adding a slice of lemon or lime.

1

## “ PRACTICE EATING SLOWLY ”



## MEETINGS, TEAMBUILDINGS & INCENTIVES AT THERMAE.COM

**Overbooked agendas and tight deadlines often characterise the term 'work' in the year 2015. On the other hand, empty agendas without deadlines are devastating for an organisation, so it is important to find a humane way to deal with them. Our answer: mens sana in corpore sano! A cliché that has been confirmed by countless studies.**

At Thermae, we know that relaxation is the best remedy against stress and fatigue, but a couple of hours of physical exercise also alleviate the mind! Therefore, Thermae Sports Merchtem has joined the list of already established centres (Boetfort & Grimbergen). It is a club with a wide range of sports and wellness facilities, where the general well-being (both mentally and physically) of each customer is central. Besides the standard facilities (fitness, group lessons, wellness, tennis) we consciously make time for guidance and coaching.

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Naturally, you can also invest long-term in better health, less absence, higher productivity, fewer conflicts and growing self-confidence and motivation.

It is up to you!

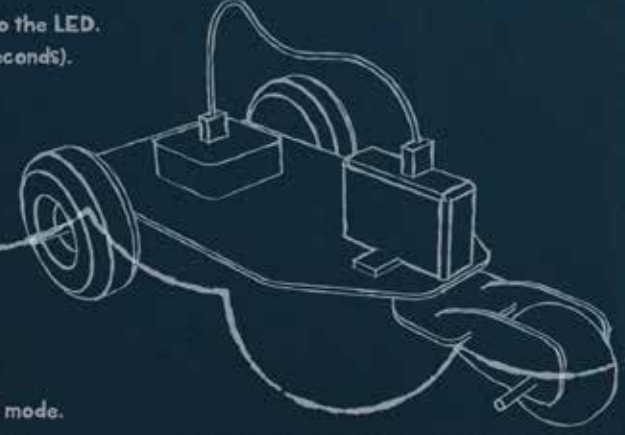
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```
#define LEDLINK_PIN 13 // I/O pin connected to the LED.
#define LEDLINK_MS 1000 // Blink rate (in milliseconds).
void setup()
{
  pinMode(LEDLINK_PIN, OUTPUT);
}
void loop()
{
  ledBlink();
}
void ledBlink()
{
  static unsigned int ledStatus = LOW; // Last set LED mode.
  static unsigned long ledBlinkTime = 0; // LED blink time.
  if ( (long)(millis()-ledBlinkTime) >= 0 )
  {
    ledStatus = (ledStatus==HIGH ? LOW : HIGH);
    digitalWrite(LEDLINK_PIN, ledStatus);
    ledBlinkTime = millis()+LEDLINK_MS;
  }
}
```



# Facebook: Set yourself free

**Gemma Rose** looks back at a year fasting... from Facebook



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**“ I WASN’T QUITE  
ABLE TO BRING  
MYSELF TO  
COMMIT VIRTUAL  
IDENTITY  
SUICIDE ”**

**A** year ago, I swore off Facebook. I was on holiday, idly spending the hours Facebook stalking when I saw a picture of someone who had blocked me about six months before. He was the first person ever to block me, an action I found so disproportionate and unreasonable at the time. When I saw the photo of him, my face glowered with rage for a few seconds, reliving those feelings. Once the rage simmered, I jolted up and thought: “What am I doing, wasting my precious time looking at this idiot?” I decided then and there to quit Facebook...well deactivate actually. I wasn’t quite able to bring myself to commit virtual identity suicide.

Facebook is the world’s leading social networking site, with 1.18 billion monthly active users. It’s wonderful in



## PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

### Self-help

many ways: allowing long lost friends and lovers to regain contact, bringing like-minded people together, spreading news and providing a counter-argument to mainstream culture. But it has also wreaked havoc: breaking up relationships, catfishing, grooming, spawning trolls and slut-shaming, not to mention the invasion of privacy and ownership of personal data by Facebook itself.

One of the major privacy scandals of Facebook took place in 2014 when it sneakily conducted a mood experiment. It manipulated the news feed of 689,000 users by reducing their exposure to positive or negative content. The study found that users exposed to positive content would publish more positive posts as a result and vice versa.

The experiment caused outrage amongst academics, lawyers and activists, since it was done without informed consent as well as the damaging repercussion of such experiments: that Facebook has the potential to manipulate behaviour on a large scale just by controlling content. Nonetheless, prior to this scandal, invasion of privacy was one of the main reasons for people quitting Facebook. According to a study by the University of Vienna published in 2013, 48% of those surveyed left the site because of it.

Facebook stalking may have triggered my reaction to quit, but it was just an accumulation of my addictive usage, which was really the cause. I logged on several times a day. I would come into work every morning with sweet anticipation of notification alerts. This little icon would spike or dip my dopamine levels accordingly. I logged on more regularly when I was bored, stressed or needed a break. It is quite troubling now to think about how often I would do so.

Leaving Facebook was difficult at first; having to fight the urge and instinct to check it. I did miss catching up on updates of friends and

family abroad. I did notice absence, and I wondered if people forgot to invite me to things because I was no longer on it. But quitting also brought about great relief. I didn't waste time on it. I didn't feel guilty about unfriending people or not accepting friend requests. I was relieved at not seeing cute baby pics, wedding photos or holiday snaps. I was also saved from not driving myself mad imagining that people were living far more exciting lives than I.



In response to the 2014 scandal, the Dutch NGO 'Just' set up a 99 days of freedom campaign, inviting users to quit Facebook for that period, with a check-up at the 33-day and 66-day intervals to see how they were doing. Cornell University analyzed the data and noted that people who

succeeded the challenge were those who felt better for leaving it, had privacy concerns or used other social media. Those who were worried about their reputation for leaving it or who appeared to be addicted to it were more inclined to revert before the expiration date.

The most important thing I learned from my Facebook fast was that I didn't really miss out on much. My real friends did not abandon me. I continued to follow the news and stayed up-to-date with causes close to me via other means. I still took part in events, advertised my flat and sold my furniture without having to rely on Facebook. Once I realized that my life had not been negatively affected by leaving it, I was confident that I would no longer crave it.

To appease my other half, this month I logged back on. I return with fresh eyes and because of this, I'm much stricter in controlling my information. This time, I know I won't fall back into addiction because I have survived without it!

2015 was one of the most satisfying years of my life. It was also the year I wasn't on Facebook. ●

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**PERSONAL**  
DEVELOPMENT

Technology

## The drones are coming

Our technology guy **Colin Moors** looks at the impact of the robots buzzing above our heads



**Y**ou have probably noticed how, recently, the summer wasps and flies have given way to a new form of aerial attacker – the drone. This season's must-have gadget has really captured the imagination of nature watchers, would-be spies and a host of other assorted people besides. They are the ultimate boy's toy and the new public enemy number one, depending on who you're talking to. I'm here this month to demystify the drone and allow you to decide for yourself.

A drone, for the purpose of this article, isn't the sort of thing that a US president would send down the chimney of an alleged bad guy in order to deliver exploding death, but rather the more innocuous buzzing things with four propellers and an inept handler you will have

seen in the local park. Or, if you're unlucky, your garden.

December's *New Scientist* estimates that around 1 million Americans will have found a drone from Santa Claus in their Christmas stocking this year. Extrapolating those figures to include Europe, it would be safe to assume that between two and three million will be on the loose by the time you read this. They also report that a man from Nottingham (UK) was the first in the country to be prosecuted for "drone-related charges". We're all adults here, aren't we? I think we can guess what he was up to.

With this in mind, what could a drone legitimately be used for? Well, for a start,



there's drone racing. Once a minority sport for serious nerds only, drone racing is likely to take off (pun intended) this year as more people wonder just what the hell to do with their new toy. The good news is that if you really can fly one well, you could be in with the chance of picking up a \$25,000 top prize, as one competitor did in Sacramento last summer.

The real-world applications are only just beginning to take shape, however. Some farmers are using the larger, more expensive ones to monitor their crops and the things that are trying to eat them using HD cameras. There are fledgling applications in the fields of medicine and disaster relief too, with drones being used to survey disaster areas, assess dangerous situations prior to medical and emergency teams being dispatched and even being used to deliver vital supplies like food, water and defibrillation equipment. Structural engineers are saving hundreds of thousands of euros by using camera-equipped drones to check out damage and cracks in structures and are able to assess damage without the need for expensive scaffolding.

Oh yes, all these ideas are very worthy but I have two firm favourites. The first is a South African company, Darkwing Aerials, that pioneered the process that drones were undoubtedly made for – beer delivery. At the OppiKoppi music festival in Limpopo in late 2013, beer was delivered to order by drones. Naturally, the beer was safely packaged in a plastic cup to avoid any danger (and litigation) and floated gracefully down by parachute. To further avoid complications, the service and beer were free. Although the drone locked onto the coordinates of the thirsty festivalgoer's mobile phone, wind shear could easily have delivered it to someone else. Darkwing also make some pretty cool videos using their drones too ([www.darkwingaerials.com](http://www.darkwingaerials.com)).

The second is the possibility to weave

buildings. That's right – strange though it may sound, if a building framework exists, drones can be programmed to weave metal cables across and around it, creating a structure ready for concrete or other building materials. Developed by Eidgenössische Technische Hochschule Zürich, the system has been well received by everyone except the general public, who seem to not be able to rid themselves of the notion that this technology is a mere stepping stone to flying mechanical spiders. I blame the TV.

The potential for abuse is quite high and there have been numerous problems with even the smallest drones flying within 30 metres or so of commercial aircraft, and less dangerously but perhaps more publicly reported is the banning of drones from skiing events following the near-hit on Austrian skier Marcel Hirscher in December of last year. So you'd think "there must be a law against it".

## “THEY ARE THE ULTIMATE BOY'S TOY”

You'd be right. And wrong. Because they have only been around a few years and only really

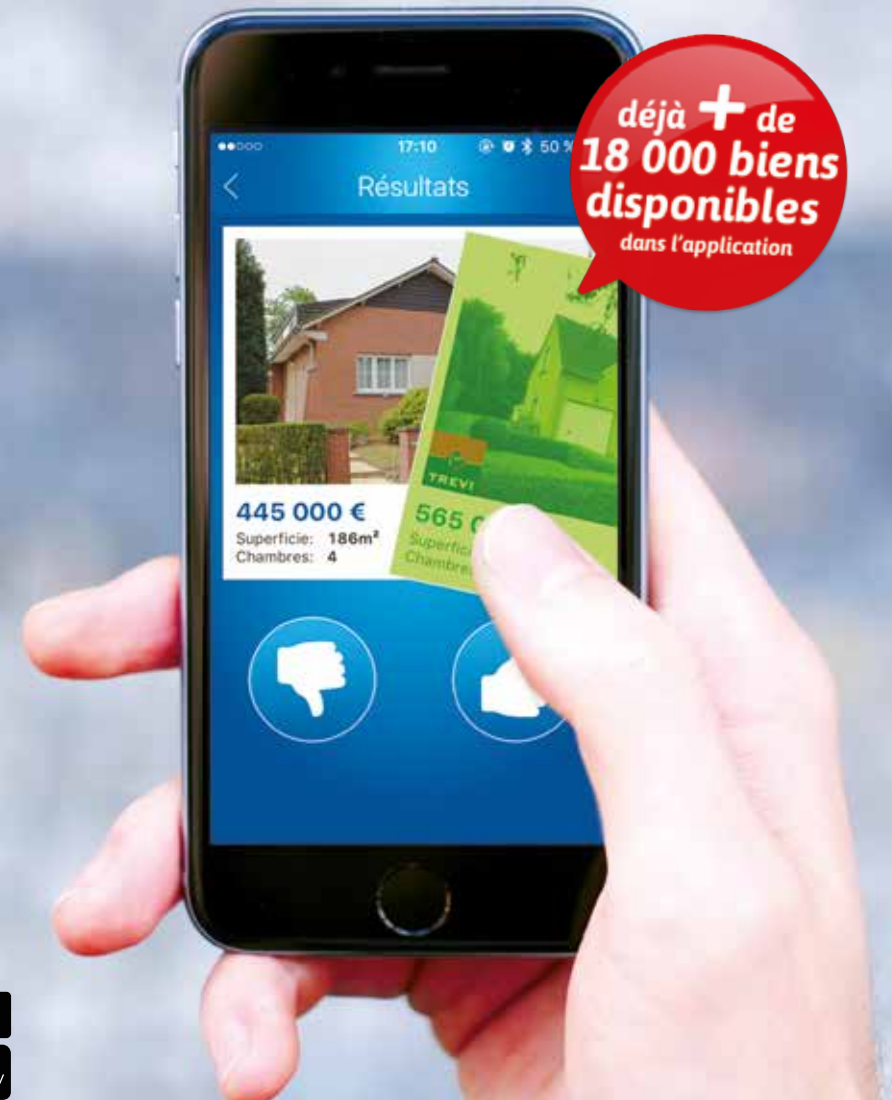
popular in the past 18 months or two years, there is very little in the way of regulation. Obviously, spying on people in their homes and gardens is as illegal as if you were there in person, this much seems clear. A quick Google search will reveal one of the top questions about drones: "It's bothering me, can I shoot it?" Spoiler: No, you can't.

As far as US law (as set down by the Federal Aviation Administration) goes, a drone can be flown over your property as long as certain height and weight constraints are met. Provided these conditions are true, a drone is considered a civil aircraft, and we don't need reminding what a dim view the law takes on shooting down civil aircraft. Have fun with your new drone, race your friends and try not to get any (more) pictures of Jennifer Lawrence in her birthday suit and we'll all be just fine.

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# Managing the Middle Eastern giants



**Gerry Callaghan** examines Europe's task in the growing tensions between Iran and Saudi Arabia

**E**uropean leaders face a tough challenge of de-escalating rising tensions between the governments of Saudi Arabia and Iran. The two nations clashed at the beginning of the year over the execution of Sheikh Nimr al-Nimr, a leading Shia cleric, by the Saudi authorities and the subsequent retaliatory attack on the Saudi embassy in Tehran.

The European Union must be careful in its response and ensure impartiality to tackle the deterioration of the situation between the two Middle Eastern giants. Taking sides will only serve to exacerbate insecurity in the already troubled region, delaying a possible solution to the escalating trouble in Syria.

On 2 January, the Saudi interior minister announced, at a press conference, the execution of 47 prisoners. Among them was al-Nimr, who had taken part in anti-government protests calling for democratic elections and for greater rights for the Shia minority in Saudi Arabia, a Sunni Muslim state. He had been arrested on terrorism charges in 2004. His beheading drew immediate condemnation from both Sunni and Shia people throughout

the world. In response, the Saudi embassy in Tehran and the Saudi consulate in Mashhad were swarmed by a large crowd of outraged Iranian Shia protesters and set ablaze.

Directly after the events in Tehran, Saudi Arabia announced a severing of diplomatic ties with Iran. Following this announcement, a few other Saudi-allied countries followed suit. Bahrain, Sudan and Djibouti quickly cut relations with Iran and the United Arab Emirates, Kuwait and Qatar recalled their ambassadors.

In a joint statement, EU officials condemned the actions of the Saudi government, saying that al-Nimr's execution "raises serious concerns regarding freedom of expression and the respect of basic civil and political rights" in the Gulf state. It also stated that the action has "the potential of enflaming further the sectarian tensions that already bring so much damage to the entire region".

Quick to denounce both sides' actions, EU foreign relations chief Federica Mogherini called the Saudi foreign minister Adel al-Jubeir and his Iranian counterpart, Javad Zarif the day after the events. She told al-Jubeir she

## “BAHRAIN, SUDAN AND DJIBOUTI QUICKLY CUT RELATIONS WITH IRAN”



"deplored the attack" on the Saudi embassy in Tehran and voiced her and Europe's "concern for the risk of an escalation of sectarian violence in the Muslim world".

The decision by Saudi Arabia and some other Gulf countries to cut ties with Iran does not represent a radical shift in their bilateral relations. On previous occasions, both Iran and Saudi Arabia have resorted to downgrading or suspending diplomatic ties. But it is, nonetheless, worrying for EU leaders, given growing sectarian problems in the region and their spillover into Europe.

The Iranian Revolution of 1979 and the Iran-Iraq war in the late 1980s only served to invigorate historical tensions between the political powerhouses. The current foreign policies of both countries reflect this. The countries have repeatedly exchanged blows, most notably through their proxy battles in Syria, Iraq and Yemen – they supported opposite sides in conflicts there. Iran has often been accused of interfering in the internal affairs of Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and other Gulf countries with significant Shia minorities. Iran, on the other hand, has accused Saudi Arabia

of promoting anti-Shia policies and practices.

A few weeks ago, the two countries sat for the first time at the same table to discuss the situation in Syria. The UN Security Council Resolution, calling for a ceasefire and a transitional government in Syria, passed after the EU and the US made serious efforts to accommodate both parties enough for negotiations to begin. Recent developments make it unclear how the two countries will pursue these negotiations within the framework. Iran and Saudi Arabia may aim to strengthen their proxy wars in the Gulf and tilt the situation to their own advantage. In this case, the progress achieved by Europe and its partners within the framework of International Syria Support Group in recent months may very well evaporate.

The EU must do everything it can to ensure it stays impartial and plays the role of mediator in the conflict. Finding a solution in Syria and bringing stability back to the region should be Europe's priority in the coming months, as the knock-on effects of the regional struggle are becoming ever more evident.

❶





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# Investment opportunities in 2016

After the worst start of the year for the stock markets in a long time, **Dave Deruytter** wonders what to expect next



**F**alling share indices all over the world at the start of this year is something we have not seen in a long time. Both the Dow Jones and the Eurostoxx 50 were down almost 10% within two weeks and the stock market index in Shanghai by almost 20%. The bigger drop in China is due to the fact that its index increased very quickly until the summer of 2015 when the Chinese authorities had to intervene to stabilize the market with measures that are still partly in place today. But it also hints at the fact that Chinese investors are maybe still not yet as mature as the Western ones in the sense that the Chinese look at short-term return more than long-term, whereas Western structural investors do the opposite.

We were getting used to ever-increasing financial markets over the past five years. At the same time, interest rates were going down gradually during that period. And when there was no more room for the easing of interest rates, Central Banks started Quantitative Easing (QE), by directly buying financial assets.

**“ LITTLE WONDER  
PETROL PRICES  
AND OTHER RAW  
MATERIALS ARE AT  
THEIR LOWEST  
FOR A DECADE ”**

Now we have come to a situation where the Federal Reserve in the US has partly reversed QE and even started to increase interest rates slowly, but surely. Although the interest rates in the US are only increasing because the economy is doing better and employment is strong, observers are not sure that the type of jobs created over the past years in the US are jobs that are paid well enough to help domestic consumption.

Furthermore, the most important engine of economic growth in the world for nearly a decade, China, has slowed down to 7% GDP growth with the expectation of further slowing to 6% in 2016. The other BRICS countries are not growing at all or not fast enough, with the exception maybe of India. Yet the latter is still not living up to expectations, after the electoral win of Mr Modi and his party more than a year ago, of taking over



the double digit GDP growth China once had over many years. Little wonder petrol prices and other raw materials are at their lowest for a decade.

Adding to all of this news that is hardly supportive for the financial markets, Europe is busy managing Greece and a few other countries plus it has to handle the most important refugee crisis in a generation. The UK is preparing a popular vote on staying in the EU or not. Terrorism is flaring up all around the globe.

Added up, that is a lot of potentially bad economic and political news for the financial markets in 2016.

Yet there is so much bad news and negative predictions for 2016 in the press that one can be almost be sure that not all of that will materialize. Soon people will be over gloomy about share prices.

Firstly, with all the measures taken in the aftermath of the 2008 crisis, banks and the financial system in general are in a much stronger shape to weather a headwind, or even an economic storm, than before.

Secondly, a look at the micro economic news, at the company level, shows a better picture than on the macro level, the country level, obviously with the exception of the oil and raw material industry. Profits of companies are high and the digital economy is growing fast in itself, plus it is helping existing companies to be more efficient, read profitable. The BEPS (Base Erosion Profit Shifting) initiative of the OECD may increase the taxation of multinational companies, but it is for a good cause: to put the finances of the member countries in order.

Although it may take time to materialize, the climate agreement of Paris at the end of 2015 will also add to structural economic growth in the coming years. Companies and countries alike will need to invest in green technology for the agreed emission targets to be reached.

Last but not least on the more technical

side, dividend yields are still much higher than interest rates, even long-term interest rates over ten years, and that will not change overnight. This will support the holding of shares of companies particularly for those investors that need a regular income stream.

On the bond side, the expectation for further increases in interest rates in the US is not good news for the longer end of the yield curve in USD, but on the shorter end there may be opportunities. The picture may be very different in other currencies. In Europe there is no expectation of a rate increase yet. And with slowing growth in China and other developing countries, bonds there may continue to perform well also on the longer end of the yield curve.

Real estate is a good asset to have in a diversified portfolio. Pay attention to the risk and all the real costs involved in owning a specific property. There may be better options in mutual funds or shares of companies that invest in different types of property.

#### **So what to invest in 2016?**

You need to know your investor profile and time horizon. Then it is important to take the portfolio theory into consideration: the more you diversify your investments the lower your risk and the higher your return, at least in the long run. The rest is a matter of personal preferences or beliefs. It is always good to inform yourself on trends, but they may be already discounted in the share or bond price. You can never beat an efficient market.

If you venture into speculation or day trading, keep in mind that, at least in Belgium, it is taxable income. Indeed, the non-taxation of capital gains on movable assets has since the first of January 2016 only been applicable if you hold the assets for six months or longer. Plus this non-taxation was never intended for transactions that do not fit with the 'normal management of a household'.

Finally, don't forget to also enjoy your money as it seems that you cannot take it with you into the afterlife. ❶

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## LIFESTYLE

Hair styling

# I'm (also) a Queen!

**Sophie Van Cruchten** samples the services of famous hairdresser Maison Roger, who are by appointment to royalty

**L**adies, it's probably already happened to you – it's a Saturday morning, and your mirror sends you a reflection that is, well, let's say... unflattering! Today's the day to change my look.

A few hours later, I am sitting comfortably in hairdresser Maison Roger. I took advantage of their new valet parking, and I have chosen to entrust my hair to the expert hands of this coiffeur's 25-strong team. After all, Maison Roger are by royal appointment...

Before my new golden blonde look arrives, I want to try the medical pedicure. Once my toes are all pretty and pedicured, I still have time to enjoy a mozzarella salad. Pure happiness.

The staff are very caring and attentive. After a shampoo and conditioning, I am in the hands of the new owner, Alain Tholl de L'Enclos, in person! Following his deft work with scissors and impeccable brushing, I feel brand new, and my hair is delighted.

A well-deserved relaxing break in a very cozy atmosphere that's anything but flashy. Obviously, such comprehensive service comes at a price, but there is also a 'Prêt à Porter' formula that's more affordable and which includes a cut and styling.

I leave enchanted and transformed. I feel more beautiful than ever! Tonight, I dare to ask: "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who is the most beautiful who's going dancing?" Thank you, Maison Roger!

Monsieur Alain Tholl de L'Enclos



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### Competition

Win one of three cuts/brushing offered by Maison Roger (value €150) by answering this question:

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- 1 Queen Mathilde of Belgium
- 2 The Snow Queen
- 3 Queen Maxima of Holland

Your answer should be sent by mail to: [david@togethermedia.eu](mailto:david@togethermedia.eu) before 1 March 2016.

Winners will be drawn and notified personally. Good luck! ●



# Luxury jewels

If you're looking for something unusual to give your loved one for Valentine's Day, look no further than these famous pieces of jewellery



Photo © Marie Louise Empress wearing the necklace

## Napoleon Diamond Necklace

To get hold of this historic piece of jewellery you would have to persuade the Smithsonian Institute to part with it. But if you want a look, it can be seen in the Gem Gallery at the Smithsonian National Museum of Natural History in Washington, D.C..

The necklace was a gift from Emperor Napoleon to his second wife, Marie-Louise, to celebrate the birth of their son, Napoleon II, in 1811. It consists of 28 mine cut diamonds set into a single thread, with a fringe of alternating pendeloque and briolettes diamond cuts. There are 234 diamonds in total.

The necklace was put together in Paris by Nitot and Sons. Jeweler Ernst Paltscho examined it and estimated its value at 376,275 French francs, a huge sum of money at the time. It passed through several hands (including con artists) until the wonderfully named Marjorie Merriweather Post bought and donated it to the institute in the early 1960s. [geogallery.si.edu/](http://geogallery.si.edu/)



## William Goldberg Briolette Diamond Necklace

Some people's lives begin with a dash of destiny. William Goldberg was born on Tiffany Street in the Bronx, on December 22, 1925. His parents owned a small candy shop, but somehow managed to find the \$250 required for their son to begin his apprenticeship as a diamond cutter. Over the decades, William Goldberg became synonymous with the most spectacular diamonds in the world.

He once said: "You shouldn't cheat a diamond out of its right to be beautiful." And he was true to his words when the Briolette arrived at William Goldberg as a 160.5 carat rough. After carefully shaping the diamond into facets to reflect light, the 75.51 carat Briolette was complete. It sold at auction for a cool \$11.1 million.

[www.williamgoldberg.com](http://www.williamgoldberg.com)



## Elizabeth Taylor Diamond

We're not saying that Brad Pitt is a cheapskate by any means (he graced *Together's* cover page as did his lovely partner Angelie Jolie in a separate issue). And he did fork out 500,000 for her ring. These days it seems that's the starting price, the one at the front of the tray in the high-class jeweller's, intended to whet your appetite. So, imagine the current value of the ring that Richard Burton put on the finger of his wife and muse, Elizabeth Taylor. Formerly known as the Krupp diamond, we know it's value in 2011 – it was sold at auction for \$8.8 million.

The 33-carat, D color, potentially internally flawless diamond set on a ring was a gift from her husband, Richard Burton. The celebrated actor gave her the ring on 16 May, 1968. It was considered the most iconic of her white diamonds and was the ring she wore nearly every day.





## LIFESTYLE

Luxury

### Mouawad – Most valuable

Many people strive to make it into the Guinness book of Records by performing outstanding feats, but one privately held multinational jewelry and timepiece company has no fewer than four listings, all of which begin with two words: 'most valuable'. The most valuable necklace in the world, at \$55m is called L'Incomparable Diamond Necklace and features the world's largest internally flawless diamond, the Incomparable diamond weighing in at 407.48 carats.

The Mouawad family can also lay claim to the most valuable handbag in the world, the 1,001 Nights Diamond Purse, valued at \$3.8m). The most luxurious and expensive piece of lingerie ever made is also theirs — it's called the Very Sexy Fantasy Bra, worth \$11m. The fourth is most expensive single pear-shaped diamond in the world, the Mouawad Splendor, which would set you back \$12.8m.

[www.mouawad.com](http://www.mouawad.com)



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# Sail Away

Photographer: Maria Dawlat@ claudia Trucco  
Assistant Photographer: Émile Tonnelier  
Production & style: Nicholas Sirot  
MU&H: Eva Peeters [www.evapeeters.be](http://www.evapeeters.be)  
Models: Leodie@IMM  
Special thanks to Diny for location

Body: Eres  
Socks: Falke  
Bracelet: Carine Vyfeyken





Total look: Passionata





Slip: Love Stories  
Dress: Diane von Furstenberg  
Bracelet: Carine Vyfeyken



Body: Eres



Slip: H&M  
Socks: Falke  
Bracelet: Carine Vyfeyken





Black slip: Freya  
Black bra: Eres  
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# Will you be my Valentine?

Our beauty expert **Delphine Stefens** gives you a helping hand on the 14th

**E**ver since the High Middle Ages when English poet Geoffrey Chaucer first associated Saint Valentine's Day with good old-fashioned love, partners and would-be partners have been exchanging flowers and other gifts – and, of course, valentines, those little cards that express your love for someone. Roses fade, bonbons melt... but have no fear, Delphine is here with ten beautiful, fragrant ideas to treat yourself or your loved one on Saint Valentine's Day.



**Chloé** Love Story (from €53.33).

**Cacharel** Amor Amor  
Mon Parfum du Soir  
(from €40).



Photo : Vincent Wulvenyck © Cartier

**Cartier** Déclaration d'un Soir  
Intense (p.o.r.).



**Chanel** Sunkiss Ribbon  
Limited Edition (€57).





**Estée Lauder**  
Modern Muse Eau de Rouge (from €45.52).



**Diptyque** Rosaviola (190GR/€55).  
Exclusively available at Senteurs d'Ailleurs.



**Ralph Lauren** Polo Red Intense (from €80).  
Exclusively available at Ici Paris XL

**Rimmel** Provocalips N°500 Kiss Me You Fool (€11.99).

**Yves Saint Laurent** Holiday Palette Kiss & Love (€94.50).



**Dior** Poison Girl (from €65.90).



# L'Or d'Aquastelle

There are places that inspire dreams and escape

**L**'Or d'Aquastelle, the luxury getaway. Magical places, draped in gold and black that reveal a cozy and warm atmosphere, by an open fire where thoughts can wander.

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The centerpiece is under the heavens... a spa that is unique in Belgium with a magnificent mosaic that reflects the warm colours of the South Seas.

Let yourself be carried away by the sweetness of the water, the magnificence of the location.

An exclusive address that is located only minutes from downtown Brussels. Created in perfect harmony, L'Or d'Aquastelle combines luxury, comfort and relaxation - to perfection.

Several arrangements are possible on request.

*Saint Valentine's chez Aquastelle*  
Introduce your other half to your private sauna, hamman Jacuzzi, swimming pool heated to 31°, or swim spa heated to 35°, and showers and relaxation area, for a duration of two hours.

Aquastelle also offers appetizers (special Valentine's surprises), soft drinks, water, towels and bathrobes, shower gel, shampoo and beauty products.

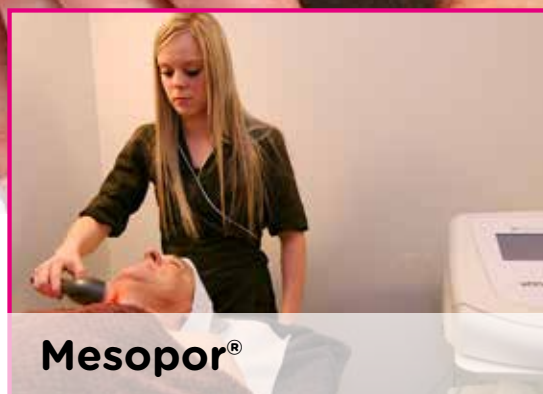
Basket of chocolate-covered strawberries. Two glasses of champagne or non-alcoholic drink. €250 to €400 (depending on the time) for 2 people (120 min) with breakfast, lunch, tea or dinner.

**L'or d'Aquastelle & Aquastelle**  
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\*Remboursable à la prise d'un abonnement, offre non cumulable.



# Shopping



## Senteurs d'Ailleurs

Brussels-based beauty specialists bring aromas from around the world. For men, Byredo Midnight Candy. €350  
[www.senteursdailleurs.com](http://www.senteursdailleurs.com)

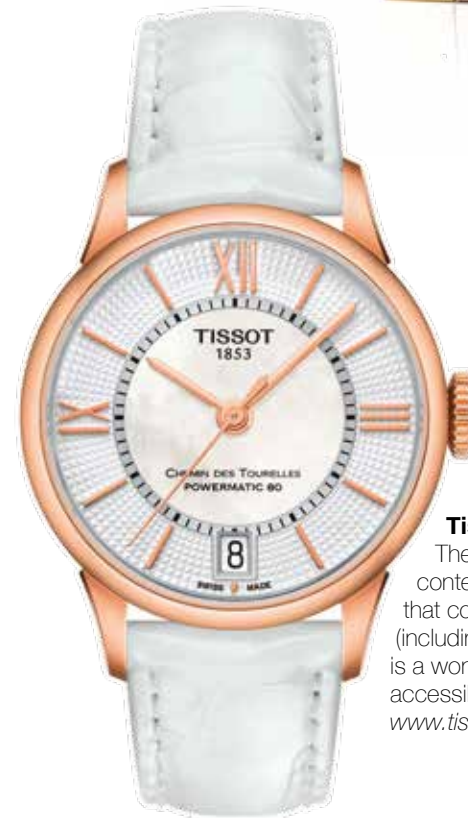


## Vanessa Tugendhaft

Vanessa Tugendhaft Joaillerie is a fine jewelry brand that was created by its eponymous young Belgian designer who had the idea to add a diamond on the famous red thread bracelet. This piece of jewelry has been a success since its launch and has been seen on the wrist of many celebrities. Charm ring 0.065 carat diamond. €355  
[vanessa-tugendhaft.com](http://vanessa-tugendhaft.com)

## Short Copenhagen Necklace

Delicate bib necklace inspired by Scandinavian design. A minimalist five-houses element creates a stunning pendant, linked to a delicate link chain. Made of high quality 24K matte gold or silver plating over brass, wood veneer and FORMICA® and you will receive a 1 year warranty. 52€  
[www.hopono-shop.com/fr/](http://www.hopono-shop.com/fr/)



## Tissot

The Tissot Chemin des Tourelles offers a contemporary design with an elegant case that comes in a variety of different finishings (including polished and brushed). The result is a wonderfully luxurious style, but still easily accessible. Ladies version. €870  
[www.tissotwatches.com](http://www.tissotwatches.com)



## LIFESTYLE

Shopping

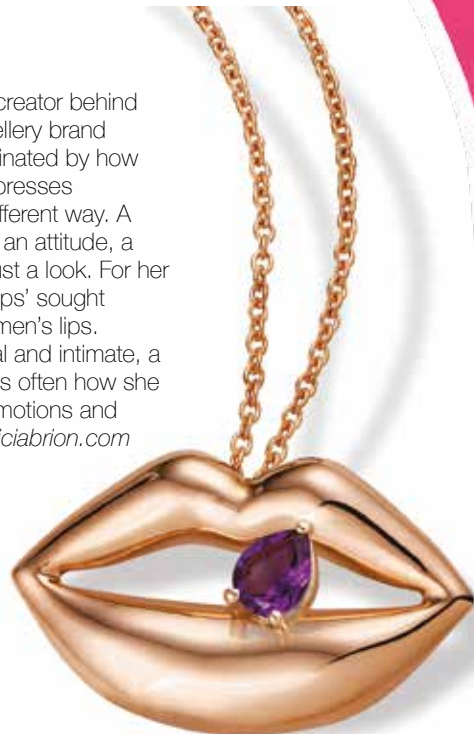
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[www.ice-watch.com](http://www.ice-watch.com)



### Alicia Brion

Alicia Brion, the creator behind The Belgian jewellery brand éponyme is fascinated by how each woman expresses sensuality in a different way. A gesture, a word, an attitude, a certain style or just a look. For her collection 'The Lips' sought inspiration in women's lips. Sincerely sensual and intimate, a woman's mouth is often how she expresses her emotions and feelings. [www.aliciabrion.com](http://www.aliciabrion.com)



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# LIFE OF LEISURE

*A 16-day two-wheeled trip across the Tibetan Plateau*

LIFE OF  
LEISURE

Motoring

## Jaguar XE : Seductive

Our motoring correspondent **Bob Monard** takes the XE for a spin

**H**er older sister was born under the sign of X. To her successor just add an E. E for exciting. Normal for Jaguar, whose sales figures have been rising steadily for five years. In addition to the XE, the firm has also added the new XF and F-Pace.

The XE, therefore, takes over the X-Type which appeared in 2001, and we appreciated its design and soundproofing. That was a front-wheel drive, and XE is a three-wheel drive – like any self-respecting Jaguar. We congratulate Jaguar, because this is a brand-new car, equipped with 2-litre petrol engines (200 and 240hp) and 3-litre compressor (340hp). It boasts 2-litre diesel and engines with 163 and 180hp. Effective, but not a gas guzzler. A real discovery ...

With frowning headlights, a vertical upright grille and an imposing ribbed hood, she certainly stands out and appears even more imposing than her predecessor. From the front you would think it's a stylish roadster... XF style! As for the stern, we equate that to the Audi A5. Let us face the facts: the XE wants to steal the thunder of the three Germanic vehicles: Audi A4, BMW 3 Series and Mercedes C class.

To achieve this laudable and ambitious aim, it retains the firm's character, inside and outside. The passenger compartment is more upscale than its direct competitors. The dashboard and central console, which combine foamed plastics, hard (unfortunately) and leather with



stitching, certainly does not lack class. The layout of the controls, assembly and finish are OK. However, the steering wheel is quite crowded, with too many buttons. There is not enough storage, it can hardly be called generous – however, the seats offer good comfort and sympathetic support. At the rear, the headroom is sufficient and there is appropriate leg-room for most people...as long as larger individuals do not occupy the back seats.

We enjoyed the performance of the new 2-litre diesel 163hp (3.8 litres per hundred!) and the 200hp, both gasoline with 8-speed automatic transmission. On the road, it produces a veritable symphony as the sound fades as the speed stabilizes into a cathedral silence. A pure delight. On winding roads, it is a pleasure to drive.

This lively three-wheel drive gets to top speed without swaying at the wrong moment and without fuss. The small steering wheel controls



# Tom Hardy: Not as tough as he looks

*Together met up with an actor whose star is on the rise in the Hollywood firmament*



are highly precise, and the directional stability proves to be unflappable. The flattering frame is 75% aluminum.

Measuring 4.672 X 2.075 X 1.416 metres and with a wheelbase of 2,835 metres, this motoring family is very well put together and boasts a multitude of technologies. It achieves comfort on board as well as security, with monitoring progress on the automatic gearbox, corner brake control, emergency-braking assistance, Dynamic Stability Control, hill-start assistance, line-crossing warning, electric power steering, adjustable steering and seats, panoramic glass roof... everything is there to guarantee a journey free of surprises in a refined environment.

Besides its devilishly successful silhouette, the XE is a real pleasure to drive. There is a family sports model available in 18 colours with 94 options and 160 accessories, with three-year maintenance free with unlimited mileage, three-year free support and three-year warranty. Priced from €34,990 and €56,200, it is not spoiled by a few inadequacies – it's a remarkable global ambassador for the UK.

## Jaguar's history

Founded in 1922 by William Lyons as the Swallow Sidecar Company, SSC took the name Jaguar in 1945. Nationalized in 1966, it joined the British Leyland Motor Corporation in 1968, was privatized in 1984 and acquired by Ford in 1990. Owned by India's Tata Motors since 2008, Jaguar, its official name 'Jaguar Cars Ltd', has spent 80 years producing sumptuous limousines such as the XJ and sports coupés such as the E Type, XJS and XK 8.

Winner of the 24 Hours of Le Mans seven times, Jaguar is thriving. Its sales have been increasing since 2010 and reached 76,930 units in 2014, an increase of 5% compared to 2013. In the Belgian market, the 2014 performance amounted to 920 vehicles, an increase of 10.05% from the previous year.

The house slogan is 'Better looks, better drive, better value'. Certainly not impossible! In any case, it's all excellent news for this 80-year-old – a great and prestigious 'feline'. 🐾



It's been a big year for Tom Hardy and it keeps getting better by the month. In October, the British star became a father for the second time when his wife Charlotte Riley gave birth in London. In November, his film *Legend*, in which he plays both identical twin gangster brothers, the Krays, earned him rave reviews for his two-fisted performance. And in January, Hardy was back on the big screen when the historical Western thriller, *The Revenant*, was released. And he has been

nominated for an Oscar as Best Supporting Actor for his performance in the film. Directed by noted filmmaker Alejandro G. Iñárritu, who earlier this year won Oscars for Best Picture and Best Director for *Birdman*, *The Revenant* co-stars Hardy alongside Leonardo DiCaprio as 19th century fur trappers battling each other and the elements in treacherous terrain in the Rocky Mountains. After DiCaprio's Hugh Glass is abandoned and essentially left to die by Hardy's John Fitzgerald, the former goes on a



quest for revenge against his partner. Based on a true story, the film also saw DiCaprio earn an Oscar nomination as best Actor. At the time of going to press the award ceremony had not taken place...

Hardy and his fellow cast and crew members were pushed to the limit in wintry sub-zero conditions during the course of a gruelling nine-month shoot that took place in the wilderness regions of Alberta, Canada and Tierra del Fuego in Argentina.

"I was pushed harder than I have ever been pushed before," Hardy recalls of the experience. "We shot in minus-20 Celsius temperatures, with snow and wind and ice and it was the kind of thing where you wonder if you're going to make it out alive. I loved it, though, and I loved how Alejandro was committed to taking things to the limit."

That kind of adventurous, risk-taking bravado is what defines Tom Hardy's indomitable spirit. The 38-year-old actor is fast becoming one of Hollywood's top stars following his work on this summer's *Mad Max: Fury Road* that went on to earn nearly \$400 million. Best known for his acclaimed work in a variety of acclaimed indie features including *The Drop*, *Locke* and *Bronson*, he also made headlines with his Batman-killing performance as Bane in *The Dark Knight Rises*.

Tom Hardy lives in London with his wife Charlotte Riley and their new-born baby. The couple first became romantically involved while working on *Wuthering Heights* in 2009 and eventually married in July 2014. Hardy is also a doting father to a son, Louis, 7, from his previous relationship with Rachel Speed.

**Together: Tom, this has been quite a year for you. How do you put it all into perspective?**

Tom Hardy: I just look for great stories and the chance to work with interesting people. I don't have a big plan and I don't even want to think about what it all means. I think of myself as an ordinary guy who has a great job. As an actor, I view myself as someone who gets to participate in the vision of incredible filmmakers like Nolan, Winding Refn or Iñárritu. I'm fascinated by the process of how they achieve what they set out to do and I love being along for the ride and being able to contribute as much as I can to the process.

**There's this contradiction between your screen image and your real nature. You play very tough characters but in real life you're very friendly and gentle and you're known for giving people hugs as a sign of that warmth?**

I'm not a tough guy. I can be if I need to be but that's not my nature. A long time ago I discovered that fear

played a big role in the way I reacted to things and that's why I would get into fights when I was younger. But it's so pointless and stupid. That's not the way I want to live. I still have that fear inside me but now I understand it and I can manage it. I don't let it dictate my behaviour any more... I want to embrace everything that is kind and good in life. I want to be a good example as a father and be someone who is going to be a healthy and happy influence.

**There is sense about you that you could explode if provoked, though?**

Maybe there's still a sense of anger inside me and way back I could get strike back if I was pushed sufficiently. But that kind of thing only gets you into trouble and once you've

gotten into a certain position you just have to forget about that kind of stuff. Sometimes the perception that you might get angry can stop people from behaving in a way that you don't like. But the best thing is that directors might see that in me and ask me to play these characters where I get to pretend that I'm tough. But that's not who I am. I'm just glad to get the work.

**You often have a dog around you and you seem to enjoy their presence. What is so special about dogs for you?**

I've always loved dogs. I love the way they will stick with you and never leave your side. They are very loyal and will never leave your side. I find that so beautiful about them they



only want to be part of whatever it is you're doing and they're happy just to sit at your feet because they feel that closeness to you. I'm a very loyal person myself and I have this pack mentality just the way a dog has. They want to belong, they want to attach themselves to you and be part of what you do. I just love dogs.

**You've been working pretty hard of late. First you spent nearly a year working on Mad Max and more recently the shoot on The Revenant lasted much longer than originally planned.**

It was a much bigger beast than anyone

**“ IT WAS A MUCH BIGGER BEAST THAN ANYONE EXPECTED ”**

expected. Alejandro has his own vision and he will do anything to achieve what he set out to do. I admire that intensity and dedication even though it sometimes drives you crazy.

**What drew you to the project?**

It wasn't the idea of freezing for nine months

that made me do it. (Laughs) But I liked the novel by Michael Punke and the themes of survival and revenge. The story has an epic quality and you're taken into this struggle of man vs nature as well as two men fighting each other.

**Wasn't Leonardo DiCaprio responsible for bringing you on board the film?**

(Laughs) I was going to work on another film (Splinter Cell) but Leo called me and told me I was being an idiot if I didn't read the script and take a look at the story. Leo's a brilliant bloke, very dedicated and very tough.



“ WE SHOT IN MINUS-20 CELSIUS  
TEMPERATURES, WITH SNOW  
AND WIND AND ICE ”





**Many people are touting you as a major movie star and there's the Oscar nomination.**

I don't want to hear any of that talk. It's too much... I never think of myself in those terms where I'm the star and someone whose name is going to bring in the audiences. I see myself as a character actor who has had the chance to play in some important films and where some of those roles have been leads.

I'm not looking to play in blockbusters. They've happened more by chance and Mad Max was really the first big one for me where I play the lead. I enjoy doing the smaller films like Locke or London Road and I want to keep making



different kinds of stories.

**Are you by nature drawn to extreme characters?**

(Laughs) I think a lot of directors see me as someone who is capable of playing extreme or tough characters. I can draw on extreme emotions when I need to and maybe some of that comes from my own experiences in life when I was much younger.

I feel like I have a pretty normal life as a husband and father. I don't choose to play tough characters but I am very interested in the

**“ I NEVER THINK OF MYSELF IN THOSE TERMS WHERE I'M THE STAR ”**

twisted psychology of human nature. That's why I wanted to play both Kray brothers. How can you not want to take on a challenge like that?

**Your work also reveals a very sensitive side to you at times.**

Your flaws and doubts and vulnerabilities are going to be much more interesting and reveal much more of you than your aggressiveness. That's really a mask to prevent people from knowing who you are. I like being sensitive and emotionally available. I still remember the time I spent with James Gandolfini (on *The Drop*) and getting to know him. I will never forget how this big man who looked so intimidating was actually very sensitive, vulnerable and so kind in person. He was just a beautiful man.

**You've been very open about some of the difficult times you went through as a young man. Does being an actor make it more complicated to lead a stable life?**

Actors need anything they can find to find balance in their lives. You're constantly throwing yourself into characters with very different emotions and personalities and you often need to draw on very intense emotions of your own to be able to play those roles which are sometimes violent and disturbing. You can easily lose your sense of reality.

**How were you ultimately able to ground yourself and find that balance?**

I had to fight hard to find stability and become

**“ THIS BIG MAN WHO LOOKED SO INTIMIDATING WAS ACTUALLY VERY SENSITIVE ”**



a better man. It takes a lot of work and perseverance and also the help of many good friends. Becoming a father also gave me a greater sense of responsibility and there was no way of ever f--king around with that. When you are responsible for another life you have to forget about being selfish and take care of your family and become the kind of father and husband you need to be. ❶



# A dinner for lovers in NYC

**Sophie Van Cruchten** returns to New York to sample a restaurant that is a real treat



**W**hat a joy to rediscover New York, 'our city', where it all began for me and my husband! Where he proposed to me four years ago and where I said YES to share his life. Feeling a little nostalgic, it was time for us to make another trip to the Big Apple, on a pilgrimage.

To celebrate our return to the city that never sleeps, we chose to spend the evening in a great restaurant. For the evening, my man donned his good suit and I put on one of my best dresses (well, I donned my best pair of shoes with 10cm heels...we were in NYC after all! If don't reveal that here, I probably never will...) Comfortably installed in our taxi (I was **not** about to walk a few kilometres in my heels!), we were en route towards the Peninsula, a fabulous five-star hotel located between 5th Avenue and 55th Street for a gourmet dinner at the restaurant Clement.

We were a little early, so we took the elevator to the rooftop of the hotel to enjoy a drink on the terrace. The view is breathtaking – we were lulled by a calm wind and lounge music from the resident DJ, and my Mojito whetted my appetite perfectly.

Once seated a few floors down at a very nice table in the Clement, we perused the menu. The knowledge of Sommelier Jared Fischer and his passion for his craft have established a complete, structured wine selection, which was honoured with the distinction of the 'Award of Excellence' in the 2014 *Wine Spectator*.

Chef Kida, the former head of Lutèce, has developed a menu that is adapted to the seasons, with produce from the region. It's a local and sustainable approach, but above all, it's a real treat.

What a great evening! My husband and I left the magnificent restaurant humming Sinatra, of course: "These vagabond shoes, are longing to stray, Right through the very heart of it, New York, New York, I want to wake up, in a city that never sleeps, And find I'm king of the hill, Top of the heap..."

**Clement Restaurant at The Peninsula**  
700 5th Ave, New York, NY 10019, United States

[www.peninsula.com/clement](http://www.peninsula.com/clement)

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KEEP CLIMBING





# A unique experience in the Med

**Caroline Dierckx** set sail for Mediterranean cities with MSC Croisières

**O**ur journey began onboard MSC *Preziosa*. We set sail on a beautiful Saturday in October from Marseille – ahead of us lay seven days in the Mediterranean. Impressive! That's the first word that comes to mind on seeing this majestic ship docked. After registration and depositing our luggage, we were led inside the boat to the discovery of a new way of holiday life.

## Life on board

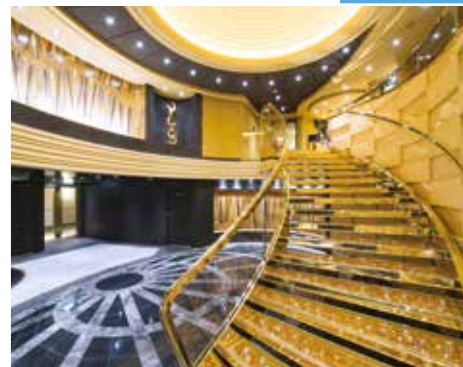
MSC boasts 5-star comfort. We had a balcony cabin that was both elegant and refined! It had a spacious bed, a sitting area with a sofa, bathroom and study. The staff assigned to the room during our stay were so devoted and attentive. An exclusive service!

## Gastronomy

Food-wise, MSC gives great attention to dining. Several restaurants are located on the ship. Chefs and their brigades concoct dishes of a high quality with local and fresh products (Italy, France and Spain). There are soirées and themed meals every day, all in a wonderful atmosphere. Here, too, were pampered by the waiting staff. The evening continues with a show that is worthy of the greatest! We were on Broadway! For others, the many bars and/or piano bar offer a different atmosphere. The Casino is bustling and partygoers are unleashed on the disco dance floor.

## Activities

During our entire time at sea, the entertainment team got us to dance the cha-cha and merengue... or encouraged us to win cocktails at aperitif hour. The various facilities for children are awesome, including a slide that is several metres long, an outdoor water play area, video



games, 4D cinema. They were in paradise onboard a ship that is a veritable floating city!

## Discoveries and excursions

Arrival by boat in a harbour is a unique sensation. Indeed, during our trip, *The Preziosa* docked in seven cities on the Mediterranean basin. Marseille, Genoa, Civitavecchia (Rome), Palermo, Cagliari, Palma de Mallorca and Valencia, Spain. We went on the outside deck to admire exceptional views of these cities that face the sea – sometimes hills stretched as far as the eye can see, other times we passed hidden and unique landscapes. You can choose to book excursions with the company with transport and a guide or do your own thing. You are free to do what you want, whether customized or simple depending on the chosen package.

My special memories include a beautiful city to stroll in Valencia, a town with quite stunning architecture. And Sicily's capital Palermo has atmospheric, narrow streets, where we stopped at very Italian terraces in the shade to enjoy a good coffee.

Here are just some of the highlights of the cities visited

“ ARRIVAL  
BY BOAT IN  
A HARBOUR  
IS A UNIQUE  
SENSATION ”







during our cruise.

### Marseille

The Old Port of Marseille has recently been renovated and made broader for pedestrian traffic, and new art galleries have sprung up recently in the hills above. Stroll La Canabière and perhaps stop to sample the town's most famous drink – *pastis*.

### Genoa

Take a leisurely walk down Via Garibaldi in the historical centre of town. It is renowned for its ancient palaces, including Palazzo Rosso, designed by the architect Pietro Antonio Corradi in 1671 and now an important art gallery.

### Civitavecchia (Rome)

Civitavecchia ('ancient town') lies 80 kilometres west-north-west of Rome, across the Mignone river. You can't miss the massive *Forte Michelangelo*, the upper half of which was designed by the great man.

### Palermo

Head directly for Pretoria Square, a luminous piazza where you'll find the baroque-style Santa Caterina Church.

### Cagliari

If the beach is not your thing take one of the many parks, especially Monte Urpinu Park perched on a low hill and packed with pine and evergreen oak. It smells of the Mediterranean.

### Palma de Mallorca

The maze of streets in the Old City are redolent with signs of its Arab origins – if you have time visit the Banyas Àrabs, or Arab Baths, a remnant of Palma's Moorish past,

### Valencia, Spain

The ancient winding streets of the Barrio del Carmen contain buildings dating to Roman and Arabic times, while Norman Foster's Palau de congressos provides a modern counterpoint.

### Choose your cruise

To satisfy all tastes and interests, MSC offers a variety of itineraries worldwide. Just choose the departure date and destination, and from there MSC will realize your dream.

[www.msccroisieres.fr](http://www.msccroisieres.fr)

## Discover the 'Isle of Beauty'

Exchange the concrete jungle for the mighty Corsican mountains rising up from the Mediterranean Sea.

The island of **Corsica** possesses on its own the wonders of all continents: mountains, green valleys, forests, maquis, **sandy beaches**, little rocky creeks, a crystal clear sea, cultural and historical sites, gastronomic specialties and **tasteful local dishes**.

Thanks to the development of small-scale tourism with respect for the environment and culture, Corsica has managed to preserve its wild character and nature, its traditions and its heritage.

**The nice climate** between April and October makes it possible to take a step back and let the good life that rules the island take over.

No matter if you like a sporty holiday, discover the culture in the footsteps of historical figures like Napoleon, Columbus and Pascal Paoli or to just relax, **all types of holidays** are possible: individual car or motorcycle tours, beach holidays, local guesthouses, cruises, organized bus tours, mountain hikes...

And all of this at just a **1h50 flight** from Brussels!

### How to get to Corsica:

**Corsica Travel**, the Belgian specialist for Corsica, has in collaboration with **Brussels Airlines** **5 direct flights** per week from Brussels to all Corsican airports.

Brochures for the summer of 2016 are available in travel agencies or at [www.corsicatravel.be](http://www.corsicatravel.be)

Tel. 02/395 87 85 – [info@corsicatravel.be](mailto:info@corsicatravel.be)





# Arcs 1950: Savoy jewel in the heart of French Alps

*Together* took to the slopes in a small ski resort that thinks big



**W**hen you stay in Les Arcs 1950 you leave a bit of your soul there. This small resort has everything the big ones can offer. First, its location in the heart of one of the largest ski areas in the world, made up of Paradiski (which includes the Arcs), La Plagne and Peisy Vallendry, all connected to one another by the Vanoise Express, the biggest and most modern cable cars on two stages in the world. 425km track of slope, of which 232km suit all levels. 70% of the ski area is above 2,000m – in other words skiing pleasure throughout the season.

This newest villages of Les Arcs has a surprisingly large capacity for all-5-star accommodation, with Pierre & Vacances

Premium and Radisson Blue being the two main players. Studios and apartments for up to ten people, impeccable service worthy of the best hotels. Access to all aspects of the wellbeing centre (pool, sauna, steam room, relaxation and sports area). And for the most demanding there's Le Deep Nature Ferme de Marie, a place that excels at healing!

Les Arcs 1950 is totally pedestrian, so head for the slopes on foot. No cars block the view of the landscape, since the station is built on top of its unique giant parking.

The resort is ideal for spending time with friends and the welcome from all the shopkeepers is exceptional. I will never forget



Le Gourmet Montagnard where friendly saleswoman, Laura, stoutly defends her local Savoy produce with a passion that makes you want to try them. Cheese, meat and delicacies. You can find everything to prepare a drink with friends or a family meal. At Les Arcs they know how to make sure you have fun!

## Culinary delights

*Together* spotted some essential and exceptional addresses nestled in the heart of and around the station. Former sheep pen, the *Bellieu la fumée* restaurant inspires foodies. Owners Annie and her husband offer tasty cuisine cooked over a wood fire in the fireplace and traditional dishes. With a table on the terrace you can admire the summits of the peaks – the scenery is absolutely fabulous.

On the slopes, the *Les Châlets de l'Arc* is not far behind, with very friendly service and unique and typical dishes from Savoie in a

wooded mountain setting. The atmosphere is convivial and quality is the order of the day! An agreeable time was had by all!

## A lively atmosphere

The village strives to satisfy young and old alike with weekly themes, activities and games on the village square.

Located in the heart of the resort, a must is the club/bar O'Chaud. At the controls is Fred Metral, an international DJ who also knows how to offer an extraordinary welcome to his guests of honour. He is supported by a strong team, such as Emilien who concocts fabulous cocktails with panache! A luminous party atmosphere to round off the night!

Les Arcs 1950 is such an inspiring resort that you will miss every minute spent there for months...

[www.arcs1950.com](http://www.arcs1950.com) 



# Riad Anata: Falling in love with Fez



**T**he fame surrounding Fez has enticed Muslim students and scholars, Jews and Christians from all walks of life – including Valérie Janczewski, who fell in love with the town and decided to share her passion for travel and culture with others by opening a very special Andalusian-inspired guest house. Welcome to Riad Anata.

As well as boasting excellent staff who look after your every need, the Riad Anata is a place full of warmth, where relaxation is the key word. It's clear everyone there enjoys helping guests – an example is the personalized menu that you can order in advance, and chef Samira Anata can even teach you some of the basics of traditional Moroccan dishes.


You only have to look through the guest house's colourful and useful Roadbook to feel the energy. It's, packed with hints and tips on how best to enjoy your time in Fez. There's everything from which taxis to take, to when to avoid the medina (old city) when all the shops are closed! From the best spas to suggested walking tours, and suggestions for sightseeing further afield in places such as



Moulay Idriss and Tazekka National Park. Golf lovers will enjoy the Fez Royal Golf Club, a beautiful 18-hole golf course nearby, where local caddies gladly carry your bag and give you golf and course tips for a small fee.

Each of the five rooms is made for peace and quiet. Sleep in a high quality bed, eat a hearty breakfast, enjoy impeccable service, relax on the roof terrace which overhangs the medina or cool off at sunset in the wading pool. It is ideally located in the main tourist area of the medina, just two steps from Place Batha.

Only a three-hour flight from Brussels South, Riad Anata is ideal for a romantic Valentine's getaway.

Derb El Hamia 16b - 30200 Fez  
+212 (0)535 74 15 37  
[www.riad-anata.com](http://www.riad-anata.com) - [info@riad-anata.com](mailto:info@riad-anata.com) 

# Cycling holidays: Six of the best

*Responsibletravel.com* has trawled (or cycled) the planet to find cycling holidays that you may not have heard of

## 1. Cycling Safari

Discover the back roads of East Africa on a ride through from the foothills of Mount Kilimanjaro to the sparkling seas and white sand beaches of the Indian Ocean, through

tucked away villages, lush rainforests and wildlife-filled savannah plains. The 16-day journey costs from £3,302 per person excluding flights and local bike hire.



Photo © Escape Adventures

## 2. Desert Adventures

Unleash your inner Indiana Jones in Petra and pedal back in time in the deserts of Jordan. Ride along remote desert roads, camp out under the stars with the Bedouin in Wadi Rum

and treat yourself to a soak in the salty waters of the Dead Sea. Nine days of desert adventure costs from £1,399 per person including flight, but excluding local bike hire.



Photo © Exodus Travel



### 3. Head in the Clouds

A tour to quite literally take your breath away, across the top of the world. A 16-day two-wheeled trip across the Tibetan Plateau, taking in the iconic Potala Palace, Everest Base

Camp and dramatic Himalayan passes costs from £2,718 per person excluding flights and visas.



Photo © China Highlights

### 4. Your own Tour de France

The competitive with a love for lycra might want to consider a holiday to race your own Tour de France. This five-day break gives you the chance to participate in the 'Etape du Tour', the

very serious, amateur version of the main event. Last minute places available with a £175 discount for the already fit and well-prepared only. From £1,079 per person.



Photo © Exodus Travel

### 5. Coast to Coast across India

From the backwaters of Kerala and the lush Western Ghats, to the vast plains of Tamil Nadu and the beaches of the Bay of Bengal.

This two-week cross-country epic takes you through some of India's most stunning natural and cultural landscapes from £1,240 per person excluding flights.



Photo © Kalypso Adventures

### 6. Foodie Finds

This trip through Catalunya combines daily cycling with the chance to sample some of the fantastic produce this area has to offer and you can enjoy dining in some first-class restaurants. On your journey you will visit vineyards, organic olive oil producer, an ancient rice mill, a cheese producer, a small jam factory that creates over 107 varieties of jams and chutneys, local markets, the fishing

port and market in Palamos. From £758 for seven days excluding flights. Includes B&B accommodation, three dinners incl. wine, airport transfers or collection from Figueres station if arriving from Barcelona.

About [responsibletravel.com](https://responsibletravel.com) *responsibletravel.com* is the world's leading online travel agent for responsible holidays and a pioneer of responsible tourism. <sup>1</sup>



Photo © Cycle Catalan



# Utrecht: Arteries of city life

**Lesley Williamson** discovers contemporary buzz and medieval history along Utrecht's picturesque canals



**T**he Netherlands has a relationship with water unlike that of any other country in the world. Since medieval times, the Dutch have been building canals for travel, trade and irrigation. Of course, internationally acclaimed Amsterdam is on every traveller's check list, but if encountering its splendid architecture, pretty bridges and historic canals never fails to impress, it fails to represent the coziness or, in Dutch, the *gezelligheid* of the Netherlands. For a more intimate city break experience and authentic Dutch culture, I headed to Utrecht, a charming city that is relatively unknown to the mainstream tourist. If you dream of sauntering across picturesque canals, exploring 2,000 years of history through quaint medieval streets and indulging in cosy cafés, you're in luck. Utrecht has it all.

## Quintessential Dutchness

Back in the middle ages, Utrecht was a busy market town and an important commercial waterway along the Rhine. Masterpieces of Dutch ingenuity and engineering excellence, these are the only inner-city canals in the world to have a unique two-level street system allowing boats to dock and directly unload their cargo onto the wharf cellars lining the canal. Many of Utrecht's 732 wharf cellars along three-and-a-half miles of canals fell into disrepair in the 19th century when commercial transportation became increasingly popular across the country. In 1948 however, thriving in the aesthetic beauty of these 13th century wharves running along the Oudegracht and Nieuwegracht, the city of Utrecht initiated a large-scale restoration programme and today

the cellars boast bustling restaurants, cafés, craft shops and trendy boutiques.

The heart of the historic city is centered around the picturesque old canal, but the skyline is dominated by the reigning symbol of Utrecht, the Dom tower, the tallest church tower in the Netherlands. Built as part of a Gothic cathedral on the site of an older Romanesque church more than 600 years ago, this tower and the grand Domkerk across the Dom square are all that remain of the majestic cathedral. The central section of the building was wiped out by a tornado in 1674 and never rebuilt. Standing at 112 metres high, the soaring Dom tower affords spectacular views of the city and far beyond – a breathtaking 360° bird-eye sight well worth the steep 465 steps up. The capital of the Bishopric of Utrecht was part of the Holy Roman Empire and the religious centre of the country since the 18th century. It is no surprise that gems of Christian devotion are peppered across the city. The Paushuize, the city's second oldest historic building, was built in 1517 by Adrianus VI, the only Dutch Pope in history. The majestic house was completed before he became a Pope, when he was attached to the court of Charles in Spain. Elected Pope in 1522, he died one year later in Rome and sadly never got the chance to live in his papal residence in Utrecht.

Spiritual serenity can be found in the enclosed Pandhof – the idyllic monastery garden of the Cathedral is tucked away from the bustling busy streets, an oasis of peace surrounded by a gothic cloister and boasting the central bronze statue of a 14th century priest. To delve even deeper into Utrecht's historic timeline, the DOMunder tours are a unique way to explore the cathedral's underground foundations, from the Romans' castellum Trajectum to the



founding of the city by Willibrord in the 8th century to present day archeology taking place under the Dom square.

## Urban regeneration

Out with the old, in with the new. Utrecht is a perfect example of a European city that has accomplished repurposing, preserving and maintaining the past and where the concept of recycling buildings is mastered with expertise. The glorious Winkel van Sinkel, the Netherlands' first department store, is now a sumptuous grand café, the former police station an art-house cinema, the Courts of Justice a boutique hotel and the water tower the Dutch Waterways museum.

In Achter Clarenburg, Café Olivier is housed in a converted 16th century clandestine church from the time when Utrecht was strictly Protestant. This secret church looks like an





ordinary building from the outside, as showing your Catholic faith and praying was risky during the Reformation. Blessed with high, vaulted ceilings, religious carvings and an imposing organ, the sacred atmosphere of heaven for beer lovers is lively and vibrant. Utrecht has a long tradition of café culture. The French may have invented the concept of grand cafés, but the Dutch implement it with true panache. Nothing beats a few hours spent lounging in a grand café, Winkel van Sinkel to start with, Lebowsky facing the Dom Tower or the Stadskasteel Oudaen housed in a medieval defensive tower house, which serves homemade beers only, exclusively tapped at Oudaen. The range of social outlets in Utrecht is impressive, and the city has arguably one of the largest outdoor terraces in Europe.

In a recent attempt to tenaciously fight frivolous and impulsive buying of clothes and shoes, I was determined to resist the urge on this trip, only to realize that when it comes to shopping, the compact pedestrian inner city centre has it all, once again. Fashion wise, you are spoilt for choice with the abundance of big brands, little independent boutiques, craft and jewellery shops, not to mention the indoor department



## “THE SOARING DOM TOWER AFFORDS SPECTACULAR VIEWS OF THE CITY”

stores. *De Bijenkorf* on St Jacobsstraat or *V&D* stock some of the best fashion brands while Hoog Catharijne is believed to be the biggest shopping centre in the Netherlands.

Utrecht is also a city where you can visit a market every day of the week. The largest and oldest fabric market in the Netherlands is the *Lapjesmarkt* held every Saturday, the *Bloemenmarkt* (flower market) at *Janskerkhof* or *OudeGracht* and *Bakkerbrug*. The large general market at *Vredenburg* is the perfect place to sample a traditional bread roll with fresh herring.

Yes. In the sheer loveliness of this exquisite canal city, temptation is endless.

**How to get there:** European train experts booking website ([www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com)), with high speed Train Thalys to Rotterdam. For the best deals, book three months in advance.

**Eat out:** Traditional food at *Deans Café*, fusion flavours at *Umami*, organic at *Gys*, or authentic food coupled with homemade beer at *Stadskasteel Oudaen* or *Talud9*.

**Not to miss:** *DOMunder*, the underground experience ([www.domunder.nl](http://www.domunder.nl)), climbing the Dom Tower ([www.domtoren.nl](http://www.domtoren.nl)), the Grocers Museum ([www.kruideniersmuseum.nl](http://www.kruideniersmuseum.nl)) and the light art route *Trajectum Lumen*.

**To Stay :** New boutique hotel just outside of the city, *Star Lodge Hotel* ([www.starlodge.nl](http://www.starlodge.nl)) or *Mary-K Bed&Breakfast* by the old canal ([www.marykhotel.com](http://www.marykhotel.com)).

**Official tourist board:**  
[www.visit-utrecht.com](http://www.visit-utrecht.com)

Text and photography by Lesley Williamson

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offers charm, elegance and modernity. The stunning views of the Spa valley will surprise you, and Le Soyeureux will take you through its different ambiances, from the bright dining

Welcome to your relaxing home, where time has no hold on you. Be seduced by the charm of the architecture of Georges Hobé, a great Art Nouveau architect who is not as well-



room with cozy lounge and adjoining terrace, an English billiards room and bar, a retro dining room, with six spacious and unusual bedrooms and three charming bathrooms.

An HD home cinema with large screen and surround sound projects you into another world, while a sauna wellness centre invites you to come and relax.

There is a fully fenced recreational area, where your children can play, while you have the opportunity to barbecue over a wood fire, or relax on deck chairs after a wonderful Nordic

bath in the woods.

Easily accessible, Le Soyeureux is located about 1.5 km from the Thermes de Spa and only 800 metres from the Royal Golf Club – it's a 10-minute walk to Lake Warfaaz and six kilometres from the famous racing circuit of Spa Francorchamps.

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**+32 (0) 475 560 889**

Or visit our website:

**[www.lesoyeureux.be](http://www.lesoyeureux.be)**

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LE SOYEUREUX





# Wines of Languedoc

**Geoffroy van Lede** of le-vin-du-mois. be makes a strong case for l'Hérault



**B**etween Carcassonne and Montpellier, between the famous melons and the beaches of Cap-D'agde, there is sun all year long and Roman architecture – a French region full of surprises. Enjoying a Mediterranean climate, l'Hérault hosts mostly red or rosé vineyards and is famous for some of its appellations (AOC): Corbières, Fitou, Frontignan and Minervois.

In this one place, visitors would be stunned by the appealing and diversified nature. From the west to the east, imagine three types of landscapes for three types of appellations and how they produce excellent wines.

## Saint-Chinian

At the foothills of the mountains, lowlands here extend to infinity and offer two choices. Up north, the soil is the union of schist and sandstone. Take it easy: these red wines are round and fruity. Down south, the land consists of clay and limestone. Be prepared: these reds give you the spicy hit you were waiting for!

## Vicomté D'Aumelas

The ancient lands of lords and barons, this place boasts the oldest abbeys in France. Located between valleys, banks and plateaus, vines benefit from a great exposure, and a feeble wind. Results: the new kings here are grapes such as Carignan, Grenache and Syrah, and its princely offspring are full-bodied and spicy wines.

## Frontignan

Along a crescent of land which ends in Marseille, Frontignan is a town for sunbathing, penetrated by the sea. A wet wind comes often and attracts enough drops of water to push the grapes to their limits. That's why the star here is a muscat (sweet type of wine) which offers a savoury but gentle taste. Find these wines and our subscription concept on our site [www.le-vin-du-mois.be](http://www.le-vin-du-mois.be) or call 0498 586 545. 📞



# Au Repos des Chasseurs

## Menu Saint Valentin

*Amuses bouche*



*Tranche d'amour du Périgord et sa gelée au porto  
Ou Carpaccio de thon rouge*



*Bisque de homard tradition*



*Marcassin à la moutarde à l'ancienne, pommes-airelles  
Ou Filet de Bar en sauce verte et petits légumes  
Ou Filet de Bœuf aux champignons des bois*



*Assortiment de Fromages*



*Le Cœur de la St Valentin*

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# A tale of two vineyards

**Paul Morris** hopped aboard the tour bus to visit and sample a bit of Bordeaux



## Château Maucaillou

The first vineyard we visited was a very grand affair founded by the Petit-Laroche family, wine merchants in the 19th century. From those humble beginnings, Château Maucaillou has grown to be more than just a vineyard – it has its own wine museum, packed with the strange instruments once used to create the good stuff. Some of the exhibits appear to belong in an old apothecary.

The wine tasting went well in very spacious cellars, and we were handed a smart brochure at the end of the tasting. When it came time to visit the shop I noticed that not many of my fellow travellers were buying the wine.

## Château Baudan

Our next stop was Llistrac-Medoc where the welcome was entirely different. When Alain and Sylvie Blasquez started their business at Château Baudan there were no vines on the land – now they stretch out in glorious sunshine as far as the eye can see. They are both clearly passionate about what they do and the tour was very personal. They took the time to explain about each wine we tried – their Médoc Cru Bourgeois is clearly one of the best Llistrac – and took us into cool cellars (it was baking outside) to explain about the various vats.

When it was time to go to the boutique the tills were ringing as their guests bought wine and corkscrews. One curious item on the land, just before the vines begin, is a golf flag, for practicing pitching. I asked Alain Blasquez: "Who's the golfer?" He replied: "Me, but I never get the time."

[www.chateaubaudan.com](http://www.chateaubaudan.com)

Book your wine tour at the tourist offices, and happy tasting!

[www.bordeaux-tourisme.com](http://www.bordeaux-tourisme.com)

## Where to stay

Close to all the attractions, La Cour Carrée is a very comfortable boutique hotel. The courtyard in the name is a central courtyard open to the sky and flooded with light.

[www.lacourcarree.com](http://www.lacourcarree.com)

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# New look, new vibe at Martin's Brussels EU

**E**ver a popular retreat for bureaucrats, business people and travellers alike, Martin's Brussels EU hotel – a stone's throw from the EU institutions yet quiet and secluded – is getting a whole new look.



February sees the grand 're-opening', even though the hotel is still very much open for business. Showing me around the hotel, General Manager Andy Dubrai explained: "We needed to renovate the entire hotel and take the rooms from the 1980s straight into the 21st century to meet the needs and expectations of our guests." The rooms have certainly seen the benefit of a tasteful and thoughtful refurbishment. Gone are the dull browns and dour reds of old and in come light flooring, open spaces and plenty of light. "We decorated with warmth as well as light in mind," explains Andy. "Just enough colour to ensure a cosy atmosphere, while retaining the feeling of space – it's like home but with service."

It's not just the décor that's seen a facelift. The rooms are all fully wired – not just for sound but for anything you need. Smart TVs have on-demand movies and series, alongside the channels you'd usually expect. If those aren't to your taste, hook up your device via Bluetooth and the room's audio becomes your audio. The TVs come with HDMI and there are USB ports everywhere you find a power point.

The hotel retains its five meeting spaces, accommodating between 5 and 120

delegates and you can still relax in the sauna, work out in the gym or take advantage of the beautiful hotel garden. If you are hungry, the hotel's restaurant is highly recommended by regular guests and first-timers alike. A fine restaurant with standards to appease the most discerning of

diners, their signature may come as no surprise to those familiar with Brussels – the waffle. Naturally, this is not the street-corner cream and chocolate sauce type – although they're good too – but rather the waffle as a vehicle for some uniquely Belgian flavours. The sweet ones include seasonal fruits (think home-made strawberry sauces in June) but also its minimal sweetness lends it to enhancing the flavours of seared mackerel and pomelo or the distinctly Belgian Sole with grey shrimps.

Valentine's Day sees the restaurant transformed into a collection of intimate tables, still in the same room but spaced for private conversation and romance with a special Champagne menu. Because of the special layout, places are likely to be highly sought after, so don't disappoint your Valentine – book now.

## Martin's Brussels EU

Boulevard Charlemagne 80 - 1000 Brussels  
+32 2 230 85 55 - [www.martinshotels.com](http://www.martinshotels.com)

## Icones restaurant

+32 2 235 17 28 - [Icones@martinshotels.com](mailto:Icones@martinshotels.com)

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# The food of love

*Together* suggests some stylish gastronomic destinations for Valentine's Day



## Le Louis XV

The restaurant Le Louis XV, led by a young chef and dynamic management, serves up gourmet cuisine with a Belgian accent, seeking to find the flavours of traditional dishes, using only products from Belgian soil – and all of this in sumptuous surroundings. In addition to the restaurant, the Pavillon frequently hosts exhibits by young artists in order to promote their talent. [louisxv.be](http://louisxv.be)

## Restaurant Bocconi

Try the romantic 'Fall In Love Again' package at the 5-star Hotel Amigo, set among the cobbled streets of Brussels' historic centre. Marcolini's chocolate hearts await you in your room. Head out to explore the city and return to your room to find the bed strewn with fresh rose petals. Then enjoy an elegant dinner in the Ristorante Bocconi, with a special menu created by Executive Chef Marco Visioni in partnership with renowned Italian Chef Fulvio Pierangelin. [www.rocfortehotels.com](http://www.rocfortehotels.com)



## La Villa Emily

Put yourself in the safe culinary hands of chef Mathieu Jacri, who creates refined dishes using high-quality and preferably seasonal products which he transforms with care so that they retain their authentic characteristics. He places a great deal of importance on the origins of products and is highly skilled at combining flavours to produce his elegant dishes. [www.lavillaemily.be](http://www.lavillaemily.be)



## Menu Saint Valentin

Samedi 13 février et dimanche 14 février

### Amuses bouche

### Entrée

*Carpaccio de Saint-Jacques, zeste de main de bouddha rapé, caviar de citron, sorbet aux citrons de Sicile*

### Seconde entrée

*Magret de canard poêlé du Périgord, Fève des Marais avec réduction de Porto et figue de Liesse*

### Plat

*Filet de sole, jeunes pousses d'épinards et saumon fumé*

### Dessert

*Coeur de la Saint-Valentin aux fruits rouges*

65 € (hors boissons)



**La Vigne** - Avenue de Tervuren 368 - 1150 Bruxelles - Infos & réservations - +32 2 318 46 72





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**LIFE OF  
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Dining



## La Soeur du Patron

If you prefer something more laid back and very hospitable head for Auderghem and a restaurant with a culinary philosophy that is very eclectic. People come here with the certainty that everyone will find something to his or her taste. The menu plays 'Belgitude' notes of course – with classic shrimp croquettes – but there are more exotic specialties according to the chef's whim, such as the 'casquinha de Siri', succulent crab gratin accompanied by a small caipirinha. It has just opened a hip bar, suitably named Le Bar du Patron.

[www.lasoeurdupatron.be](http://www.lasoeurdupatron.be)

## Au Point de Vue

Head south to Liège and go back in time in a restaurant that produces traditional local food that is, sadly, too rare. From the unmissable fricassee to the Liège salad, via the kidney in Péquet and Juniper or grandmother's veal chop, everything here is pure 'Liégitude'. And that includes desserts such as a genuine Liège coffee, sugar waffle or authentic *bouquette* (a buckwheat crepe with small grapes).



And, of course, the famous boulettes de Liège, prepared like back in the day and served in small cast iron casseroles, flanked by excellent home fries and a small salad – and it doesn't cost the Earth.

[www.brasserie-aupointdevue.be](http://www.brasserie-aupointdevue.be)



## Wine Bar Marolles

The Wine Bar Sablon Marolles has had a facelift and has become the Wine Bar Marolles. The same team, the same enchanting setting that seduces and enchants as much by the quality of its cuisine as by the wonderful cellar. Located in the heart of the old Breughel-Marolles quarter, it also boasts its own delicatessen, Wine Bar du Marché.

[www.winebarsablon.be](http://www.winebarsablon.be)



# Happy's: Contentment personified

A trendy atmosphere and a benchmark for gourmets – they are the hallmarks of Happy's, which is to be found in the heart of Brabant Wallon.

Happy's is a beautiful location with contemporary decor, comfortable for all who come to have a drink, such as in the new lounge area, or dine at the restaurant. The hotel also makes a point of honour in its welcome to customers.

Beside the classic menu and lunch, Happy's offers matured meats and wines by the glass that change every month. Indeed, Happy's is very much a restaurant that pays particular attention to the quality of its kitchen – frankly, the whole concept is a gem.

The seafood served is well above expectations, while even vegetarians will find happiness. Lastly, we should not forget to mention another essential part of Happy's: its excellent Sushi bar, which falls under the precise and demanding control of master Bo Yang, a specialist who officiates here from Tuesday to Saturday evening, providing *sushi sashimi*, California rolls and other *futomakis*, available in a series of menus to eat-in or take away.

The house also takes great pride in its cellar, housing a very intelligent selection of wines chosen with care for their fantastic range of flavours and value.



Photo © Luc Viatour

To sum up, Happy's is beautifully equipped for professional meetings as well as large family gatherings, with a diverse programme of activities such as thematic tastings and mini-concerts – here is an address that you'll certainly be happy to visit.

**Happy's Restaurant**  
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Photo © Luc Viatour



Le Carnaval de Stavelot © CGT-A. Kouprianoff

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# What's on Belgium



## Traces

The latest Maria Clara Exhibition curated by Kis'keya & Caroline, with paintings, ceramics, jewellery and more. **Until 25 March.** Maria Clara Art Point. 8, rue De Pascale - 1040 Brussels (Quartier Européen). [www.mariaclara-artpoint.be](http://www.mariaclara-artpoint.be)



## The Heart Museum

Discover an unusual, but timely spot for Valentine's Day.

The heart is recognized worldwide as a symbol of love. It very quickly became the most prevalent and preferred symbol, and it has also won an important place in the Christian religion, with the veneration of the Sacred Hearts of Jesus and Mary.

By far the most numerous, curious and oldest are the religious objects: ex-votos, reliquaries, chrismatory items, oil lamps, holy water stoups, sculptures, paintings, prints and the like.

Very popular in the secular world since the 17th century has been heart-shaped jewellery, which is found as a symbol of love in country after country, as brooches, bangles, rings, necklaces, etc. It is impossible to list all the other objects in heart form or with a heart motif. Among the commonest, however, are boxes, perfume bottles, flasks, plates, glasses, ink-pots, ashtrays, clasps, cake moulds, furniture, embroidered cushions with pearls, and postcards. Parc du Cinquenaire, Brussels.

[www.kmkg-mrah.be/fr/musee-du-coeur](http://www.kmkg-mrah.be/fr/musee-du-coeur)

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## VALENTINE'S AT CRYSTAL LOUNGE

On February 13th and 14th, the Crystal Lounge is teaming up with Cupid to make this Valentine's weekend extra special.

Let our Chef Adwin Fontein seduce you with his special Valentine's menu: a 3-course explosion of savors that will awaken your taste buds. Are you single? With Sofitel Brussels Le Louise, no one is left behind. The night before Valentine's Day, the Crystal Lounge creates unexpected and wonderful encounters with the Speed M'Eating Evening starting at 7pm.

Enjoy Adwin's menu, and switch seats at every new course. Continue the evening with an amazing live dinner-show featuring La Diva, and meet - who knows - your prince or princess charming.

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What's on



#### Créations belges

Group Show including Damien Gernay, Valentin van der Meulen, NOIR, Antoine Rose, Bruno Timmermans. The young Liege artist BLACK recently painted a fresco in the image of David Bowie in the gallery of the Toison D'Or at the request of Sony Music Belgium. Until 9 April. Mazel Galerie, Brussels.

[www.mazelgalerie.com](http://www.mazelgalerie.com)



#### Daniel Buren

The internationally renowned French artist is known for his *in situ* works, characterized by the presence of a recurring motif made up of alternating white and coloured stripes.

Buren will create a work in the Horta Hall, on the fringes of the exhibition circuit. This work will be in relation to the architecture of the Centre for Fine Arts.

[www.bozar.be](http://www.bozar.be)







### Vincent Glowinski - Mater Museum

After decorating the face of the Botanique with his massive frescoes, Vincent Glowinski (alias Bonom) occupies the Museum space this year with a procession of fascinating creatures from another time.

The artist has been linked with the Botanique for some years now. It began with the installation of one of his giant skeletons in the Grand Salon for the 2012 Les Nuits festival, along with a jungle painting on the walls of the Rotunda, which would spread two years later across the walls of the Orangery.

With Mater Museum, Vincent Glowinski turns the museum into the site of an internal archaeology. His bones, fossils and other primitive forms, seemingly escaped from a natural history museum, turn the spotlight on the idea of origins. It is therefore no surprise that he should turn his attention to his own origins, invoking the figure of the mother. Works by his own mother, Agnès Debizet, are displayed alongside his own sculptures in an immersive and unsettling presentation.

The exhibition becomes the drama of a filial bond in which unexpected objects, prehistoric remains, remnants and memories accumulate and intertwine. **Artworks by Vincent Glowinski and Agnès Debizet. 25 February – 17 April. Botanique. 5,50€**  
[botanique.be](http://botanique.be)



### Béatrice et Bénédict

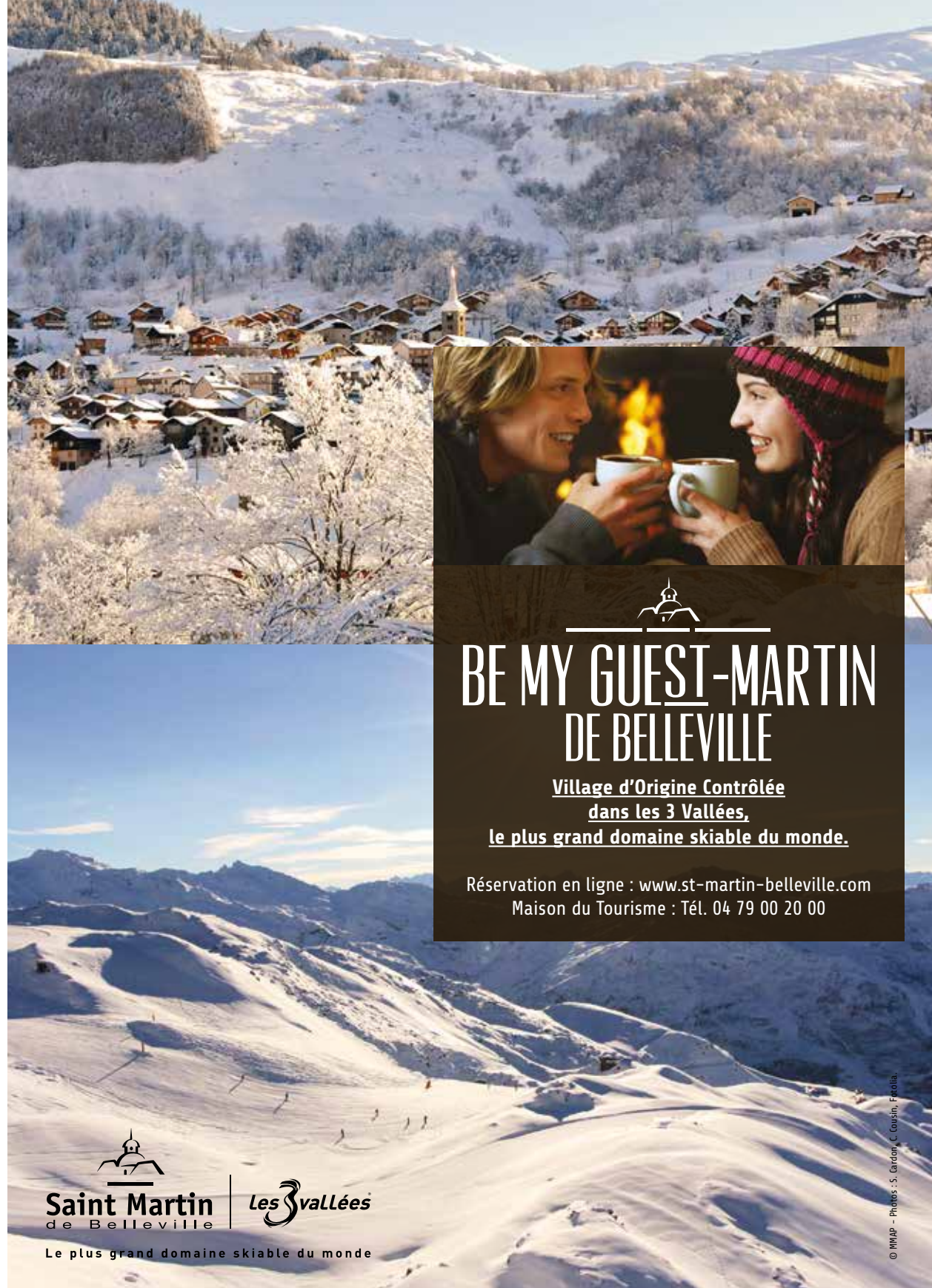
Inspired by *Much Ado About Nothing*, one of the most popular Shakespearian comedies, the opera concentrates exclusively on Béatrice and Bénédict, a comic couple in the Elizabethan mould, and the various plots hatched by their entourage to get them married off to each other. Known for his spirited versions of the classics, Richard Brunel brings his hallmark touch to this, his first production for La Monnaie. He aims to restore all the subtleties of Shakespeare's play to the score: under the smiling comic mask, the melancholy and existential doubts that are intrinsic to love are already beginning to surface. **24 March – 6 April.** La Monnaie. Tickets, see website  
[www.lamonnaie.be](http://www.lamonnaie.be)



### Humo's Rock Rally

Humo's Rock Rally is a Belgian contest for rock bands, organized every second year since 1978. It is organized by the Belgian magazine HUMO.

Every band that has not yet released an official recording may enter the Rock Rally, by submitting a demo to HUMO. Humo then selects 100 bands to compete in the pre-selections, followed by semi-finals and a final with 10 bands. The competing bands are assessed by a professional jury. Money prizes are awarded to the top three bands, as well as to one band chosen by the audience. Join them, enjoy your evening and discover the new upcoming Belgian bands. **4 March.** Muziekcentrum TRIX. Tickets: **€15**  
[Facebook Humo's Rock Rally](https://www.facebook.com/Humo'sRockRally)



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**Paul Morris**  
visited the  
dramatic former  
home of several  
'popes in exile'

## The Palace of the Avignon Popes

**C**ivil war in Italy in the 1300s sent the popes fleeing and they settled in Avignon. In 1305 Pope Clement V made Avignon the new seat of the papacy.

Construction of the Palace of the Popes was started in 1335 – in fact this section is known as the 'Old Palace' – it's vast and austere, a reflection of the background of the Pope Benedict XII, a former Cistercian monk. His successor, Pope Clement VI, was an aristocrat with demanding taste. He brought in a team of artists from Italy to embellish his new palace, working under the direction of Matteo Giovanetti. The change in architectural style is very striking when you pass through the archway that joins the two palaces.

Get a good night's sleep and have a hearty breakfast before you take on the tour of three hours or so – you'll need your strength for the winding stone staircases that suddenly open out into wonderfully atmospheric halls such as The Honour Courtyard, which has been a prestigious venue for the Avignon Festival since 1947; The Grand Tinel, the setting for papal banquets where five courses (each with four dishes) were served; The Great Chapel, an enormous room where papal coronations and funerals were held; and the smaller, more intimate papal bedroom. Avignon was home to seven popes and two anti-popes, before the papacy definitively



Photo © Tognopop

returned to Rome, and they all left their mark on this wonderfully evocative palace.

### Where to stay

Do it in style and stay in the Hotel d'Europe, a wonderful five-star hotel set in a cobbled lane in the medieval city centre – it has terraces galore looking out on the rooftops.

Mathieu Desmaret,

the young chef in the hotel's Restaurant La Vieille Fontaine restaurant, produces wonderful fare. He said: "For me cooking is like making music." And I asked him who the drummer was in the kitchen. Quick as a flash he said: "Me. I'm the drummer."

### How to get there

As a frequent non-flyer I booked on [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com), the European rail expert and official online distributor of high speed train tickets in France and Europe. The mobile application and the website [www.voyages-sncf.com](http://www.voyages-sncf.com) are dedicated to bookings from Belgium for all train journeys in France (TGV, iDTGV, Intercités) or international trains (TGV, Thalys, Eurostar, Elipsos, TGV Lyria, TGV France Italie, TGV France Espagne, CityNightLine, Italo). The online calendar makes it possible to book the best deals three months in advance on more than 200 train journeys.

Check the website below for all manner of events staged within the palace.  
[Provenceguide.com](http://Provenceguide.com)



# Love at the flicks

Film critic **James Drew** stocks up on hankies and reviews six classic romantic weepies

**W**ell, it's **that** time of year again (funny, isn't it, how it's always **that** time of year, for something or other?) – it's time to pay due tribute to the loved one who's already sharing your life, or to acquire a new paramour for St. Valentine's Day.

And this year, why not let the crowds fight over the available tables, choose to stay in and cuddle up, treat yourselves to a good bottle of bubbly and settle down with one or more of the following six films which, for this critic, simply define love on the big screen?

You'll probably be able to predict a few of my choices, but I think that there will be one or two surprises, and they are all so worth yours and your beloved's time. So, counting down from sixth to first place, we're rolling...

## 6. *What's Up, Doc?* (1972)



Before he unfortunately ruined a good portion of his career with mega-flop *At Long Last Love* (1975), Peter Bogdanovich proved his mastery of the screwball comedy with this, which

remains one of the funniest films ever to emerge from mainstream Hollywood and, with the sassy, sexy and ultimately very romantic pairing of Barbara Streisand and Ryan O'Neal at its core, it's priceless.

**Judy (Streisand): Love means never having to say you're sorry.**

**Howard (O'Neal): That's the dumbest thing I ever heard.**

94 mins.

## 5. *Truly Madly Deeply* (1991)



To mark the very sad passing of Alan Rickman – Juliet Stevenson is inconsolable with grief at the passing of her partner Jamie (Rickman), but then he returns to earth as a ghost. Anthony Mingella, to be fair, directs with much flair and warmth, and it is difficult to keep the eyes dry in more than a few places.

**Nina (Stevenson): I can't believe I have a bunch of dead people watching videos in my living room.**

106 mins.

# “ LOVE MEANS NEVER HAVING TO SAY YOU'RE SORRY ”

## 4. *Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind* (2004)



Written by Charlie Kaufman (who else?), Michel Gondry's film is one of the most intriguing, unsettling and ultimately joyous takes on what it might mean to truly lose your love from your life – not through death but, when the loving relationship of Joel Barish (Jim Carrey) and Clementine Kruczynski (Kate Winslett) turns sour, by attempting to 'erase' each other from their respective memories, using an innovative new process invented by Dr. Mierzwiak (Tom Wilkinson). Kruczynski goes first, then Barish follows suit, taking us with him but, once he is inside the process, he realizes that he really doesn't want to lose his love. Trouble is, he's running out of places in his mind to hide her...

The title comes from Alexander Pope: "Eternal sunshine of the spotless mind! Each pray'r accepted, and each wish resign'd?" - be very careful what you wish for. Sublime performances, particularly from Carrey, with an ending that will have you hugging your nearest and dearest hard.

**Joel (Carrey): [voice over] Random thoughts for Valentine's Day, 2004. Today is a holiday invented by greeting card companies to make people feel like crap.** 108 mins.

## 3. *Brief Encounter* (1945)



Totally transcending its terribly, terribly prim set-up, David Lean's romantic masterpiece is still one of the most moving accounts of frustrated love some 70 years on from its first release. Celia Johnson and Trevor Howard are the star-crossed would-be lovers whose paths cross in a railway station café, and from then on it's a wonderful, whimsical will-they-won't-they journey. Best bit? Howard's last touch on Johnson's shoulder as he is leaving her for the last time...

**Dr. Alec Harvey (Howard): I love you. I love your wide eyes, the way you smile, your shyness, and the way you laugh at my jokes.**

**Laura Jesson (Johnson): [whimpers] Please don't.**

86 mins.



**2. The Lives of Others  
(2006)**



Florian Henckel von Donnersmarck's film has been categorized as a thriller, but for yours truly it is also one of the most affecting, tragically beautiful accounts of love, and the price that you may have to pay to hold on to it. The sadly departed Ulrich Mühe plays agent of the secret police (Stasi) Hauptmann Gerd Wiesler in 1984 East Germany. He becomes more and more involved in the lives of an author and his wife, who love each other very much but who know that their existence is more than a little precarious, given the anti-state nature of the man's writing. A happy ending it doesn't have, but there is redemption in spades.

**Minister Bruno Hempf: Take a look behind your light switches. We knew everything. We even knew that you weren't man enough to satisfy our little Christa.**

**Georg Dreyman: [contemptuously] To think that people like you ruled a country.**

137 mins.

**And the winner is...**

**1. Casablanca  
(1942)**



Come on, you can't say you're surprised at this taking the number-one place, can you? Bogart, Bergman, Henreid and Rains in what is simply the most sublime romantic film ever committed to film, and which will simply never be surpassed. 'You must remember this...' - Happy Valentine's Day!

**Rick (Humphrey Bogart): Inside of us, we both know you belong with Victor. You're part of his work, the thing that keeps him going. If that plane leaves the ground and you're not with him, you'll regret it. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow, but soon and for the rest of your life.**

102 mins.

1





# 3 New Year's Resolutions to stick to in 2016



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who has ever stuck to these?  
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were picked this year.  
Here are 3 to choose from.**

**① Enjoy life** More than 70% of people trying to enjoy life more actually manage to do so. Why not give it a thought? It is not bad to act impulsively once in a while. Unscrew a bottle of Champagne, leave for a weekend on a whim, offer yourself some flowers, eat chocolate without feeling guilty about it. As the saying goes, add more life to your years!

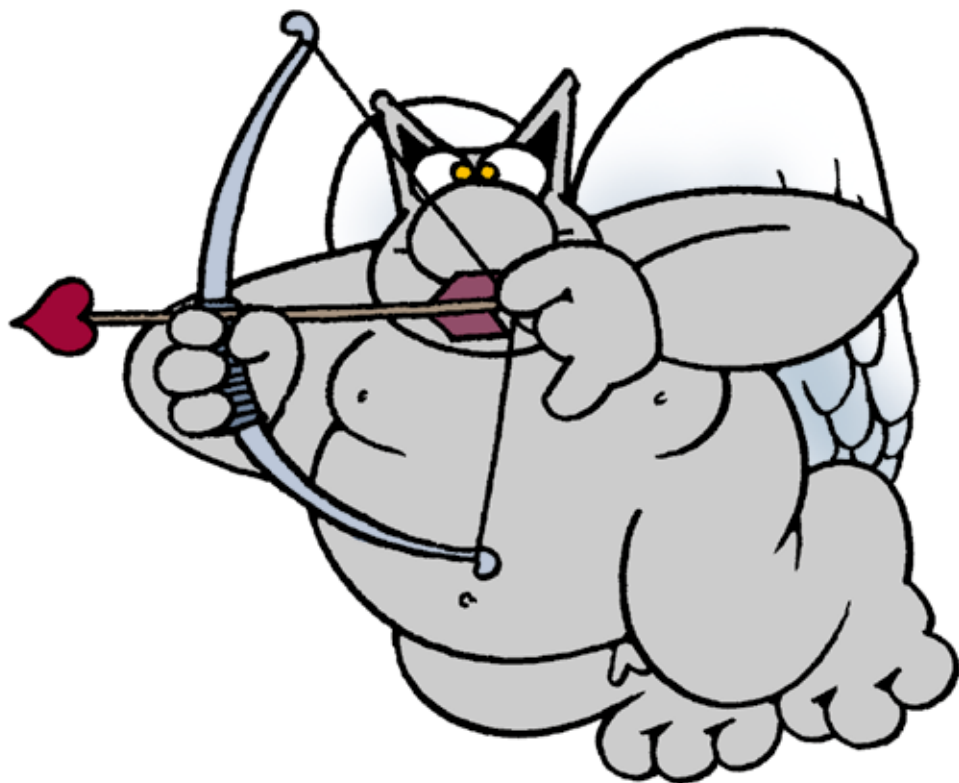
**② Meet up with the family** Nowadays it is not unusual to have more contact with your neighbours or friends than with your family. The family only comes together once in a while for weddings, funerals or Christmas Eve. A shame, isn't it? Pick a weekend to meet up with the whole family and enjoy fun and relaxing moments. Why not in a holiday cottage in the Ardennes? You will find a great amount of holiday accommodation there for the whole family, big or small!

**③ Learn to disconnect** You do not have to be on call 24 hours a day for your boss, your children, your parents... When you get back home after your working day you should disconnect yourself from the world and relax. Here is the trick: leave your mobile phone at the back of a drawer once a week. You will feel how soothing it is to have it off your mind.

Ardennes-Etape wishes you  
the best of luck in 2016 !  
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# Love is in the air



LE CHAT by Philippe Geluck

togethermag.eu | 130

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