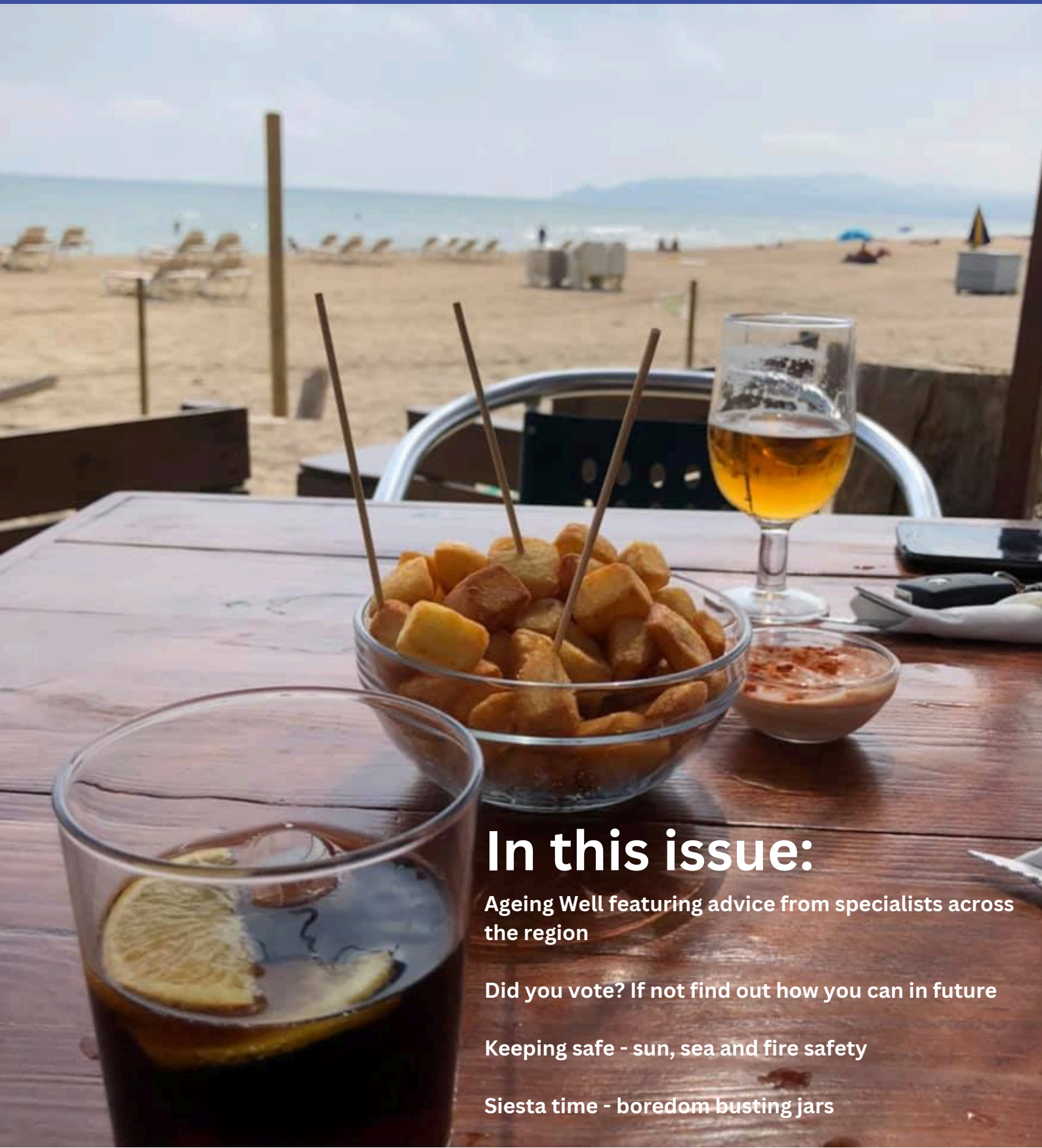


Newsletter

Summer 2024

Issue 5

BBA



In this issue:

Ageing Well featuring advice from specialists across the region

Did you vote? If not find out how you can in future

Keeping safe - sun, sea and fire safety

Siesta time - boredom busting jars

Welcome!



Well Summer has arrived, a little late but we are not complaining. After multiple drought restrictions the wet start to the summer may not have been the best for visitors but a welcome relief for those living here!

It seems all restrictions have been lifted for now as the reservoirs are up to 45%. It will still pay in the long term to be sensible with water usage though.

We have a packed issue for you this season with useful advice around staying safe and the facilities and support you can find around our region.

We have also been following the many useful workshops and coffee mornings that have been disseminating great advice and will be giving you feedback on how to register to vote in UK elections. If you weren't able to vote at this election be sure to register for any future ones and have your voice.

No matter if you are retired or working it pays to have a say in your country of origin as their decisions may well affect your life here, particularly pensioners.

Other areas of interest, and one we will be featuring heavily, is Ageing Well. This initiative has been led by our good friends and partners at Age in Spain.

One of the main draws for people relocating to this region, aside from the mild climate and the laid back lifestyle, is the food. Rich in cultural heritage, with clear seasonality and celebrating locally sourced ingredients.

In this issue we are going to be exploring fine dining to Michelin key hotels to local markets selling the freshest of produce, from farm to table

With temperatures on the rise whilst we may have beach and pool days, keeping children out of the midday heat can be a challenge so we have collected together a range of activities to keep them amused in siesta time.

We will be back in September but you can follow us on [Facebook](#) to stay up to date. If you have something to say or would like to be involved in the publication of this newsletter do please drop us a line at britbengirona@gmail.com

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Boredom Jars

Ageing Well - as an international person living in Spain



Age in Spain, is a non-profit organisation that supports English speakers across Spain, and hosted the first of its local initiatives in Girona last week with a half day workshop on Ageing Well as an international person in Spain.

The workshop was opened by Gemma Martinez, the Registrar responsible for the Girona City programme.

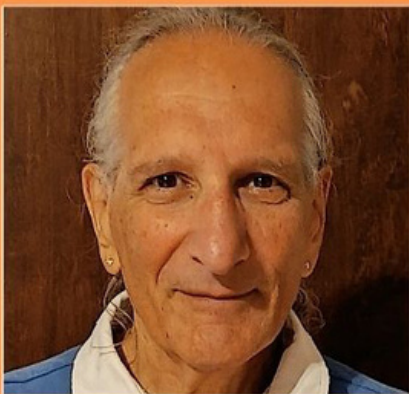
She outlined the services available to older adults and explained the new initiative to make Girona an inclusive city for older people.

This initiative will come into effect over the next few years and will include both infrastructure changes, discussions with stakeholders on how to provide services that respect the autonomy of elders and an increase in opportunities for older adults to participate in all facets of the city.



Gemma Martínez Villagrasa
Ajuntament de Girona

Age in Spain provides information for people as they plan their older age. As our physical, administrative and financial health require a lot of planning and seemingly endless monitoring, the workshop kicked off with a discussion of how international elders can promote their healthcare through open conversations with their physicians, working with integrative medicine providers and protecting their physical wellbeing



Charles Sturges MD



Javier Santiuste Blázquez



Dr Orlena Kerek

Dr. Charles Sturges, a retired US physician, talked of the need to for open and ongoing communication with medical providers, Javier Sanuiste, the director of central Ling Tai, offered the perspective five of integrative medicine, while Dr. Orlena Kerek, a renowned podcaster and English physician, gave tips on how to avoid needing to go to the doctor through diet and exercise.

Ageing Well - as an international person living in Spain



Joanna Burdzinska
Grup Cànovas 1852



Lori Clowe Sturges RN



Andrew Dickin
UP Idiomas

As Age in Spain advocates on their website, ageing well requires financial and legal planning. Joanna Burdzinska from Grup Cànovas 1852 introduced their services for foreign nationals and Helen Weir highlighted some of the services that Age in Spain offers. Lauri Sturges RN, gave a powerful presentation on the dangers of loneliness and how she has strived to make friends with her neighbors. The forum then turned to a discussion of whether it's necessary to learn either Spanish or Catalan in order to make friends and integrate more into the life of the city. Led by Andrew Dickin Director of UpIdiomas his thoughts and ideas can be found opposite.

One of the goals of the workshop was to talk about community and how to build our own personal communities as people who live away from our home countries. Whether we choose to connect with other English speaking people, immerse ourselves in the local society or some mixture of the two, its clear that nobody ages well in a vacuum and that foreign nationals face special challenges to make connections that endure when times get rough and we need more support. So what works for you? Can you advocate for yourself with your doctors? Are all your papers in place? Has making friends been a challenge? Are these areas that we can help you with?





The workshop was led and organised by Tessa ten Tusscher of Making Changes in conjunction with the Director of Age In Spain, Helen Weir. Supported by Clinica Bofil and Grup Conovas 1852

Tessa has a PhD in psychology and is a qualified clinical psychologist working as a clinician for 20 years in California before moving to Catalunya 10 years ago.

You can find out more about her organisation and contact her via her website [Making Changes](#). Feel free to contact [Age In Spain](#) for any of the guest speakers that have provided their contact details for help, support or further information.

Ageing Well - the importance of language

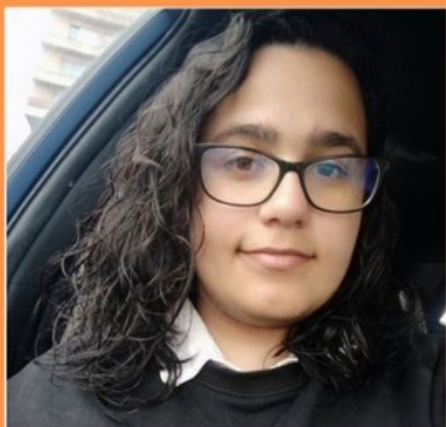
ESCOLA D'IDIOMES



Classes d'idiomes per a tots els nivells i edats / Language lessons for all levels and ages

Andrew Dickin, director of the UP! Idiomes language school, delivered a compelling presentation on the importance of language and its role in integration. Dickin captivated the audience with a thought-provoking question: "Who do you want to be? The person who speaks Spanish or Catalan with mistakes, or the person who says nothing and is silent?" His inquiry resonated deeply with attendees, sparking a lively discussion about the significance of active participation in the community.

Andrew emphasized the value of making an effort to communicate, even if it means making mistakes. He highlighted that language is a crucial tool for integration, enabling individuals to join in activities, meet new people, understand their surroundings, and navigate essential services such as healthcare. "Being able to read official communications, go to the doctor, and generally be integrated into the community is vital," he asserted, receiving unanimous agreement from the audience.



Cristina Ramos
UP Idiomas

Cristina Ramos, director of studies at UP! Idiomes language school, took the stage to provide expert advice on language learning, particularly for older adults. Ramos delivered an inspiring talk, debunking the myth that age is a barrier to learning a new language.

Her expert insights resonated with the audience, many of whom expressed a renewed enthusiasm for taking on the challenge of learning Spanish or Catalan. Ramos's message was clear: language learning is not just about communication; it's a pathway to richer social connections, mental stimulation, and a more vibrant life. For details of courses offered contact [Up! Idiomes](#)

Ageing Well - exploring the creative arts

By Artist in Residence Karen Peirson



Ageing Well - exploring the creative arts

On June 21st I was flattered to be asked to be an "artist in residence" at the Aging Well in Girona workshop organised by psychologist, Tessa Ten Tusscher, and CEO of the charity Age in Spain, Helen Weir. My challenge was to create something memorable from the themes of the day.

An extensive review of published medical papers in 2010 established that creative activities improve our mental health, especially for those who have experienced trauma. Art therapy is now an accepted part of mainstream medicine.

It has been shown that hormonal changes as you get into "the zone" are not unlike those for sport and can create a feeling of relaxation to euphoria. Some of us become equally addicted to creative activity as do the exercise junkies.

I would also argue that the product can be enjoyed by those who did not produce the work of art, literature or music, arguably more so than say sports such as cycling, but hey, that is just my bias!

My personal creative outlet is hand cut, paper collage on A4 paper just for my own pleasure with no plans to sell my work. They store easily in plastic envelope files and I can skim through them to remind me of a moment, a new story, a favourite image.

I love not only the joy of creating new works of art from beautiful ads and illustrations, but also the element of recycling, as normally they are thrown into the bin and forgotten.

When I had a Bed and Breakfast masia and holiday apartments to maintain time was never on my side, but having sold the masia, now I make time. Could you do the same?

Collage can be representative, surreal, abstract and in my case conceptual. If you are a techie-type then working with online images is a separate genre with digital works, your favourite photos for instance. More recently it is possible to create collage images and videos with AI technology which is contentious, but I believed can be equally creative.

Personally I love to zone out cutting out the images with a pair of scissors! I know some of you are thinking when you read this that you are not artistic, you can't draw, you don't understand what you should be aiming for so collage is not for you! I would argue that using photographic images and designs from others means that you can appreciate their expertise but use it to represent something that looks beautiful to you. Tell a story, fill the page with your favourite colour, object or flower and soon you too will feel the joy of being creative, making it your own.

All you need is some old magazines, paper, glue stick and scissors. So simple, just give it a go. Hand cut paper or analog collage gives me endless possibilities to create an artwork that responds to issues of the day, by recycling beautiful images from discarded magazines. I love artwork which demonstrates renewal and has a story to tell.

Ageing Well - exploring the creative arts



Ageing Well - exploring the creative arts

If anyone would like to join me for a collage workshop to develop your creative side you will find me on email, Karen@cantorras.com, Instagram @karen.cantorras or on FB Karen Peirson



Karen Peirson is an entrepreneur & collage artist. Born in the UK, she has lived in Catalonia for 25 years & previous to that, 7 years in the Caribbean.

Whilst raising a family and renovating properties in each of the countries she has been in she has developed fitness, food and tourism businesses.

Throughout her life she has used gardening, home renovation and cooking to express herself, influenced by a love of good food, conceptual art and sustainable living. Now, later in life, she is able to pursue her love of art with collage.

References:

The Connection Between Art, Healing, and Public Health:

A Review of Current Literature Heather L. Stuckey, DEdcorresponding author and Jeremy Nobel, MD, MPH Author information Article notes Copyright and License information PMC Disclaimer Go to: Abstract This review explores the relationship between engagement with the creative arts and health outcomes, specifically the health effects of music engagement, visual arts therapy, movement-based creative expression, and expressive writing. Although there is evidence that art-based interventions are effective in reducing adverse physiological and psychological outcomes, the extent to which these interventions enhance health status is largely unknown. Our hope is to establish a foundation for continued investigation into this subject and to generate further interest in researching the complexities of engagement with the arts and health.

Fire Safety



We are coming to that time of year when it pays to be vigilant and despite the recent weeks of rain (much needed!) and the reservoirs somewhat replenished we still need to be hypervigilant and careful where fire is concerned. With record temperatures forecast across Europe and with little rain for some time forest fires are a natural event in our region but most are caused

by humans. This is mainly accidental or in some cases negligence and finally some are vandalism and deliberately set. Punishment for causing or setting fires is severe with heavy fines and in some cases prison terms.

Top Tips to prevent fires:

- Take your rubbish with you accumulated rubbish is known to contribute
- If you own property and you are adjacent to countryside keep your land clear of debris
- If you own property be careful when lighting and using BBQ's, in some areas BBQ's or burning rubbish is prohibited in certain months and in some areas you have to have a permit to light a fire
- This also means using equipment that might cause a spark and cause a fire

What to do if you spot a fire

- Contact the emergency services on 112 they will gather as much information as they can from you, despatch services to deal with it and give you immediate instructions to follow.
- If you are instructed to evacuate do so immediately fire spreads quickly and is unpredictable.
- If you are instructed to remain in your home close all windows, put wet towels around the bottom of doors and windows, close blinds and stay in the lower part of your home.
- If you have pets try to secure them as best you can so that if needed you can safely remove them.

Beach Safety



Flags and what they mean

- A green flag means it is safe to swim, so jump right on in!
- A yellow flag means swimming is permitted, but caution is advised, and it is recommended that you only swim close to where there are lifeguards on duty.
- If you see a red flag, go to the xiringuito for a few beers instead – swimming is definitely not allowed!
- A black flag means that the beach is unsafe due to the condition of the sea and/or sand, but fortunately, these are very rarely seen in these parts.
- Keep an eye out as well for beach flags with a jellyfish drawn on them.

Rip Tides - if you get caught in a rip tide don't try to swim in to shore, swim parallel to the shore until you can feel that the tide has lost its power.

Cold water - for older people or those with heart conditions it is advised to enter the water gradually especially if it is very hot or the person is very hot and finds it hard to regulate their body temperature

Sunburn - always apply suncream regularly and only expose yourself to the sun gradually especially if your skin doesn't see the sun for a lot of the year!

For the full article on flags and safety visit [Njoy](#)

Heat Safety

Summer feels like it has been late arriving this year but forecast are for extreme temperatures in July and August. Greece has seen particularly high temperatures and it is likely we will see similar here. No one can avoid seeing the tragic news stories of people, particularly older people, succumbing to the heat and sadly losing their lives.

So what precautions can we take to stay safe - common sense really.

- Stay hydrated always have a bottle of water when you are out and about
- Wear a hat and light coloured loose clothing and carry a fan
- Stay in the shade at the height of midday
- Eat lightly and avoid spicy foods
- Seek out cool interiors with air conditioning or fans
- Soaking feet or hands in cold water brings body temperature down



In response to changing weather pattern and excess temperatures most municipalities have put together a climate plan. Climate shelters are defined as spaces - indoor and outdoor - that provide thermal comfort to the population and that are activated in emergency situations generated by the temperature outside (especially in episodes of high heat). Outside of these times, they have other purposes and, while acting as climate shelters, they also tend to retain their usual uses or functionalities.

The population they target is, above all, the most vulnerable to heat and cold (elderly people, people with chronic illnesses, babies, pregnant women or people with few resources and homelessness)

Due to the climate crisis, it is predicted that in the coming years there will be more frequent and intense heat waves and that temperatures will become more and more extreme. High and sustained heat, as well as exposure to cold winter temperatures, leads to increased mortality and morbidity.

These can be outdoor spaces - urban parks that are part of this network have a high presence of urban green and are accessible to people with reduced mobility. In addition, they have water fountains and places to sit. They can be parks and gardens, school yards, wooded or green areas equipped for this purpose, etc. , or,

Interior spaces - They are spaces that maintain the usual uses and that have spaces equipped to take refuge from the high temperatures. They can be libraries, neighborhood facilities, municipal sports centers, services, schools and museums. They are air-conditioned and tend to maintain an air temperature of 27 °C during the summer and 19 °C during the winter. This is the link to [Girona city's climate centres](#), contact your local ajuntament to find out where yours is

Registering to Vote in UK

Services we have provided
across the region

Our recent Hot Topics Coffee Morning helped guide people on how to Register to Vote in UK elections. We have been asked to provide the step by step instructions you need to follow on line to complete your registration

The presenter, Karen Peirson, who successfully managed to navigate the online registration and has kindly sent us the notes for you to follow.



Go to www.gov.uk/electoral-register

Have ready:

- Passport
- UK National Insurance Number
- Last known UK registered address including postcode
- Current contact details

The electoral register and the 'open register'

Get on the electoral register

The electoral register (sometimes called the 'electoral roll') lists the names and addresses of everyone who's registered to vote.

Registering to Vote in UK

Use the [register to vote](#) service to get on the electoral register.

To update your details (for example change your name or address) you should either:

- use the [register to vote](#) service if you live in the UK
- contact the [Electoral Registration Office](#) that confirmed you are registered as an [overseas voter](#) if you live abroad

To check whether you're already on the register, enter last postcode, gives contact telephone number and email, contact:

- your [local Electoral Registration Office](#) if you live in England, Scotland or Wales
- the [Electoral Office for Northern Ireland \(EONI\)](#) if you live in Northern Ireland

What happens if you do not register

You must register to vote if you're asked to do so and you meet the conditions for registering, for example you're 16 or over and you're British or a national of an EU or Commonwealth country.

If you're asked to register and do not, you could be fined.

You will not be fined if you have a valid reason for not registering, for example a long stay in hospital, or you have severe learning difficulties.

When you can register in more than one place

It's sometimes possible to register at 2 addresses (though you can only vote once in any election).

For example, if you're a student with different home and term-time addresses, you may be able to register at both.

[Register to vote](#) twice if you live at 2 addresses.

Register to vote

You can use this service to:

- get on the electoral register so you can vote in elections or referendums
- get on or off the open register
- update your name, address or nationality by registering again with your new details (if you live in the UK)

You can no longer register to vote in the General Election on 4 July 2024.

This service is also available [in Welsh \(Cymraeg\)](#).

Who can register

If you live in England and Northern Ireland

You must be aged 16 or over.

Registering to Vote in UK

You can register to vote if you're a British citizen or an Irish citizen.

You can also register if you have permission to enter or stay in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man - or you do not need permission - and you're a:

- Commonwealth citizen
- citizen of Denmark, Luxembourg, Poland, Portugal or Spain
- citizen of another EU country, if you have had permission to enter or stay - or not needed permission - since 31 December 2020, and this has continued without a break

If you live in Scotland

You must be aged 14 or over.

You can register to vote if you're a British citizen or an Irish citizen.

You can also register if you have permission to enter or stay in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man, or you do not need permission.

If you live in Wales

You must be aged 14 or over.

You can register to vote if you're a British citizen, Irish citizen or a citizen of an EU country.

You can also register if you have permission to enter or stay in the UK, Channel Islands or Isle of Man, or you do not need permission.

You can vote when you're 18 or over. If you live in Scotland or Wales, you can vote in some elections when you're 16 or over - check which [elections you're eligible to vote in](#).

Register online

You normally only need to register once - not for every election. You'll need to register again if you've changed your name, address or nationality.

It usually takes about 5 minutes.

What you need to know

You'll be asked for your National Insurance number (but you can still register if you do not have one).

[Find your National Insurance number](#).

After you've registered, your name and address will appear on the electoral register.

If you live abroad

You can use this service to register to vote if you're a British citizen.

You may need your passport details.

To renew your registration or update your name, address or nationality, contact the [Electoral Registration Office](#) that confirmed you are registered as an [overseas voter](#).

Michelin Key Hotels

The Michelin keys for hotels and accommodation are the equivalent of the Michelin Stars for restaurants.

It's been more than twenty years since the Michelin Guide started making its hotel recommendations, included in European and Asian guides. But it was only four years ago that those responsible for the guide decided to renew it to show the crème de la crème of accommodations from around the world. In the same way that the Michelin Star recognizes restaurants for their culinary excellence, the Michelin Key recognizes hotels that offer exceptional accommodation, awarding one, two or three keys based on five criteria: architecture and the interior design, the quality and consistency of the service, the personality and general character, its value for money and its significant contribution to the environment. Of the 20 hotels with keys in Catalonia, four are in our demarcation.

Mas de Torrent Hotel & Spa - located in an 18th century farmhouse in the village of Torrent in the Baix Emporda it has been awarded two keys and **Hotel Peralada Wine Spa & Golf, in Peralada** Since 1923, when the Suqué Mateu family acquired Peralada Castle, the resort has combined history, culture, food and wine, and leisure, while hosting unique experiences such as the well-known Perelada Festival.

Hotel Mas Lazuli, in Roses A boutique accommodation of just seventeen rooms located in an old convent dating back to the 11th century. The old stone buildings are nestled among palm trees, vines and olive trees, which are reflected in its infinity pool in the evening. A contemporary and sophisticated design, with earth tones, wooden floors and art and original convent ceilings, the rooms have private balconies or terraces



Hotel Mas Lazuli. Mercè Gost Parera. PTCBG Images Archive

Michelin Key Hotels

Can Mascort Eco Hotel, in Palafrugell Can Mascort is a house with more than 300 years of history, historical heritage, located in the center of Palafrugell , and restored with great enthusiasm, as indicated by its owners, to create a space where you can enjoy natural and healthy well-being. It is an ecological hotel , restored following the principles of bioconstruction, to recover its essence.

Images and details reproduced with permission read the full article [here](#)



Can Mascort Eco Hotel, Palafrugell. Lluís Català PTCBG Images Archive

Our region is no stranger to fine dining and Michelin starred establishments, Girona's El Celler de can Roca run by the Roca brothers is probably the most well known. They have also spread their empire into the hotel trade with their city centre Hotel, Casa Cacao, and their most recent purchase and opening, Espirit Roca. We wonder how long it will be before they join the ranks of these current Michelin Key holders?



The entrance to the Esperit Roca restaurant. / [THE NEWSPAPER](#)



[Roca Brothers](#)

Summer - markets around the region



If there is a meeting point par excellence between consumers and producers in Catalonia, it is the local markets. Spaces where colors, aromas, textures and life come together. Local markets are still a reality in many places in the Catalan territory, where they also act as drivers of the local economy and community life, even in the smallest towns in the Girona counties.

Here is a list of each of the main markets across the region, you can find full details on each of these markets in Clara Esparza's blog piece on [Costa Brava Pirineu de Girona's website](#)

- Mercat del León (Girona)
- Market of Olot
- Fish Market (Palamós)
- Mercat de Roses
- Blanes Market
- Figueres Market
- Palafrugell Market
- Ripoll Market

Many of the markets hold events periodically advertised locally and on social media via their Ajuntaments. Cooking classes are very popular where you can learn how to make local and traditional dishes using seasonal local produce.

You will also find agro stores across the region where local farmers and small growers take their produce to be weighed and sold, you can find further information on these in another great little article on the same website [here](#)

Supporting local communities and a more sustainable environment

Summer Activities - Boredom Jars

Keeping children entertained in the summer might seem easier than the winter when the weather is less amenable but staying out of the heat of the midday sun is just as likely to bring out that well worn phrase “I’m bored!”

We have gathered up some great ideas that might just give you a helping hand to keep your offspring and visiting offspring occupied



Tips to Make an I'm Bored Jar

- Let the kids help you make this summer activity jar with you. Not only is it a fun craft they can help you do, but being involved in the making will get them more interested in the activities and ideas!
- Put this “I’m Bored” jar somewhere that the kids can reach it without knocking it over. They can pull their ideas and bring them to you, even if they can’t read them yet.
- If you want to mix it up, you can hold back a few of the activities for a week, then swap them out with other activities that the kids didn’t really take to the first week. Then repeat. That way the ideas are “fresh”-ish.

For full tutorial visit [Ruffles and Rain Boots blog](#)

Looking for ideas to put in your jars? No worries here are some great resources for you to choose from and add to your jolly lolly sticks

- [200 activity ideas](#)
- [Zero spend activity ideas](#)
- [100 bored jar ideas and printable](#)
- [Printable boredom busters](#)
- [Bored jars to combat summer boredom](#)
- [30 I'm bored jar activities](#)
- [Fun free printable activities](#)

Summer Activities - create your own puzzles



You can create your own wordsearch puzzles on line at [Discovery Education Puzzlemaker](http://DiscoveryEducationPuzzlemaker), simple step by step online form and voila you could do it yourself or if you can't peel yours away from a screen have them make their own. Or how about generating a crossword puzzle with your own clues? Lots of other puzzle creation ideas on the same site and free to use.

Partners and local providers we work with

To find out more about these organisations click the images to go to their websites.

Want to join our Partnership Programme? Connect your business and services to our membership. Sponsorship starts from as little as 20euro for inclusion in our quarterly newsletter, promotion across our social media and annual entry in the partnership section on our [website](#)



Providing information and support to English speakers in Spain since 1992, check out their website for the wide range of locations you can meet with other members as well as online support



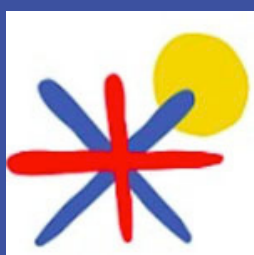
Offering help and support to those with life limiting illnesses and their families



Anglican Church in the Costa Brava, holds Zoom services on a Sunday and other meetings online, some physical Church services are held check the website for details



Spanish Red Cross site in English [some explanation needed as to what services are being offered]



The British Benevolent Fund is a Spain wide Charity for when times are tough – providing financial support to help Britons in Spain get back on their feet



The Royal British Legion provides lifelong support for the Armed Forces community – serving men and women, veterans and their families. District North Spain covers an area from the French Border to Almeria



The British Society of Catalunya – Bay of Roses since 1995 members group welcoming people of all nationalities organising social and group events including sports across the region check the website for details



Formerly Girona Grapevine changed to online Meetup during Covid and has kept the online presence but now organising physical events and meetings again check the web for details



An informative and useful website. The site will assist you with all aspects relating to living, visiting, owning a holiday home or investing in Spain.



U3A Girona region, members groups and events across the region, check the website for details



A Diocese of Girona organisation the website is in Catalan but should translate automatically if using Google translate option in your search engine



A central hub for volunteers in the region, from training to projects and opportunities



British Benevolent Association



GIRONA PROVINCE

The British Benevolent Association for the Province of Girona (BBA) was set up as a registered charity in 2007 with the aim of providing practical help and support to any British or Commonwealth subject living in, staying in or passing through the province of Girona and the Costa Brava. Practical help is provided through a network of volunteers across the region and supported by donations and fundraising events.

Do you need help now?

Call the BBA between 8am – 8pm Tel: 695 210 108 To speak to one of our volunteers

Email: britbengirona@gmail.com

or call the 24 hour emergency number at the British Consulate Barcelona

Emergency 24 hour telephone: (+34)902 109 356 or (+34)917 146 300

Spain Emergency Number: 112

