

Things to entertain and enthuse you during Coronavirus

As many of us endeavour to stay well, we still need things to keep the brain ticking over while we spend time at home staying safe.

These are in four groups

- Festive films - Christmas films you may like to look out for.
- YouTube channels – A tiny selection of the more interesting channels available
- Internet – Another small sample of the better opportunities available that were available during the peak of lockdown – not of these, eg some of the theatre productions may not still be available
- Activities at home – practical and rewarding things to fill your time.

Festive Films

Christmas is a time when the TV Channels dust off their big selection of Christmas Classic films – and many of us have the time to watch them. So here are ten you may like to look out for:-

- **The Santa Clause (1994)** – When Scott Calvin accidentally kills Santa Claus he is expected to take his place. He refuses at first but then he physically morphs into Santa in front of his disbelieving ex-wife. A trip to the North Pole follows.
- **Miracle on 34th Street (1947 and 1994)** - The ultimate in cuddly Christmas afternoon film, in which Kris Kringle, who must prove he is in fact Santa Claus – not least to a young girl who has lost the true meaning of Christmas. Your choice of 1947 original, with Natalie Wood, or the 1994 remake, with Dickie Attenborough.
- **It's a Wonderful Life (1946)** - Tinged with magical passages, buckets of good will and an alternate plotline with the disturbing kick of a “Black Mirror” episode, this tribute to the efforts of a small-town do-gooder cements the idea of Christmas as a time for giving.
- **Elf (2003)** - This comedy is about a guileless giant elf searching for his father in New York, but the film is not just about humour. There is an abundance of heart and soul in the way the story cherishes holiday cheer; this is one modern Christmas film that is genuinely sweet.
- **White Christmas (1954)** - Christmas may have been white, but this time Irving Berlin's musical was in Technicolor. Inspired by “Holiday Inn” this follow-up could not be more Christmassy. Snow, shows and romance all added up to a massive festive box office hit.
- **Meet Me in St Louis (1944)** - This warm and charming film is responsible for one of the best Christmas songs ever made: “Have Yourself a Merry Little Christmas”.
- **The Polar Express (2004)** - On Christmas Eve, a young boy embarks on a magical adventure to the North Pole on the Polar Express, while learning about friendship, bravery, and the spirit of Christmas. Includes reindeer, elves and LOTS of snow.
- **A Christmas Carol (1938)** - This early version of Charles Dickens's much-told story remains one of the finest, with Reginald Owen as Ebenezer Scrooge and Gene Lockhart as Bob Cratchit. There's something oddly comforting about watching snow fall in black and white.
- **The Snowman (1982)** - Raymond Briggs's book comes to life every year on TV. This animated film tells of a boy whose snowman magically becomes real – but not forever. Add the haunting song “Walking In The Air” and you have a true Christmas classic.
- **Love Actually (2003)** – Richard Curtis's film seems to be an absolute Christmas fixture! Wickedly funny, especially Bill Nighy's turn as an ageing rock legend. Emma Thompson and Alan Rickman's marriage-on-the-rocks plot will leave you in bits. But of course heart-warming too.

Selection of YouTube channels:-

Here we come up with another tiny selection of the more interesting YouTube channels you might not otherwise have come across:-

- **LockPickingLawyer** (<https://www.youtube.com/c/lockpickinglawyer/featured>) - This channel with over 2 million subscribers aims to educate consumers about weaknesses and defects in security devices so they can make better security decisions. It stresses that you should not use any of the information presented in the videos for illegal purposes. However, it may be that you have a Damascus moment in terms of your career choice. That would not be surprising as the Channel is based in Damascus – the one in Maryland, USA.
- **The Gardening Channel** (<https://www.youtube.com/user/0TheGardeningChannel>) - The Gardening Channel brings you practical, easy to follow advice from qualified horticultural experts. The aim is to show you what you need to know so that you make the most out of your garden. They also upload old broadcast gardening programmes. It may be the right time to watch the video on “How to plant spring flowering bulbs”.
- **Wickes** (<https://www.youtube.com/user/wickesvideo/featured>) - Lots of practical DIY advice here – and not just for Wickes’ own products. You may even like the video here on “How to build your own garden bar” – but you have to supply your own drinks.
- **Watch Repairs** (<https://www.youtube.com/user/jewldood>) – The aim of the Watch Repair Channel is for you to sit back and relax with the world of watch repairs and restorations. This is led by Mark Lovick who claims to have many “exciting projects” on this channel. Do you have any old watches sitting around that no longer work? Why not start a project to get them back in working order with snappily titled videos like “OMEGA WATCH RESTORATION - A Classic 1960s Mechanical Watch Service & Repair Tutorial”.
- **Bridge Channel** (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCOaZnFbFH1OlbhVm25z4rLQ>) - Run by Peter Hollands, an Australian Bridge professional. This channel offers tips on playing and memory techniques as well as games with videos uploaded every Tuesday, Thursday, Friday. Try “calculating the opponents move” and many more.
- **Photography** (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCkJld-AoXurbT2jDnfM8qjA>) – Nigel Danson is a British landscape photographer who invites you to follow his adventures taking beautiful landscape pictures in the UK and US. His stated aim is to inspire viewers with landscape photography tips and techniques. You can follow his journey photographing landscapes from all over the UK (The Lake District, Peak District, Snowdonia and Yorkshire) and US (California, San Francisco, Tahoe and Yosemite). Why not try his tips in “7 Steps that had the biggest impact on my photography”.
- **TED Talks** (<https://www.youtube.com/user/TEDtalksDirector>) - This channel was founded in 1984, with TED standing for “Technology, Entertainment, and Design”. They are known for their concentrated (ie no more than 18 minutes) but accessible lectures on a myriad of topics. They benefit from some very high profile speakers, eg Bill Gates “Mosquitoes, Malaria and Education”.
- **Big Think** (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCvQECJukTDE2i6aCoMnS-Vg>) - This is considered to be one of the best sources of interviews and mini-lectures on stimulating topics and ideas eg the universe in a nutshell by Michio Kaku.
- **The B1M** (https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC6n8I1UDTKP1IWjQMg6_TwA) - Host and founder of this channel, Fred Mills, takes you on a tour of some of the biggest and most interesting building projects on the planet. The videos are from around the world and most are under 10 minutes. But for something with more local interest try “Inside Big Ben’s Makeover”.

- **Easy Languages** (<https://www.youtube.com/user/magauchsein>) – If you have had enough of Lockdown lingo and want to try somebody else’s lingo instead, this is the place to go. The channel records interviews in many countries and subtitles them in both the local language and English to help you learn both the language and some of the local culture. For some humour as well why not try “7 More Things Not To Do in Germany”.
- **Great Big Story** (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCajXeigtFL-rb5-gXI-aG8Q>) - This is an offshoot of CNN based in New York and London that produces short films and micro-documentaries from 100 countries around the world about culture, inventions, science and politics! You can try a range from “What breakfast is like around the world” to “Building a prosthetic arm from Lego”.
- **The Tim Traveller** (https://www.youtube.com/results?search_query=the+tim+traveller) – Tim is a Briton who produces eccentric travelogues. When we cannot travel ourselves, why not share some of Tim’s experiences. You could see the forgotten underground seashell temple in Margate of all places or the Monster Excavators Digging The Biggest Hole In Europe in Hambach, Germany.

Internet based opportunities:-

- **Chelsea Flower Show** – the Chelsea Flower Show this year had to be cancelled but if you missed seeing it you can revisit the BBC’s coverage with highlights from previous years and various interviews. You may need a BBC account to access this site. <https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0071yhs>
- **Keukenhof Gardens** – These beautiful Gardens in the Netherlands are offering a 360° tour as the gardens are currently closed. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GUeI2iINhpY>
- **Château de Villandry** – amongst the most beautiful gardens in the world, Château de Villandry in the Loire region of France now offers a virtual tour. <https://www.chateauvillandry.fr/en/explore/an-overview-of-villandry/virtual-tour/>
- **ZSL London Zoo** – Bringing the Zoo to us during lockdown, this offers webcams, animal antics and zookeeper interviews. <https://www.zsl.org/zsl-london-zoo/virtual-london-zoo>
- **Chester Zoo** – The most visited zoo in the country and featured regularly on TV. On their home page look at “Things to Zoo at home” and click on “Watch our virtual zoo”. <https://www.chesterzoo.org/>
- **Taronga Zoo** – Australia’s premier Zoo offering views over Sydney’s amazing harbour has set up Taronga TV to keep wildlife fans happy during lockdown with a similar range of facilities to ZSL. But with the time difference, their webcams offer the novelty of live coverage of nocturnal creatures during our day time! <https://taronga.org.au/taronga-tv>
- **Glyndebourne Opera** – video streaming of performances recorded in East Sussex – operas available change periodically - <https://www.glyndebourne.com/on-screen/>
- **Berlin Philharmonic** - Classical Music video streaming with a redeemable voucher which gives free access to their extensive archive - <https://www.digitalconcerthall.com/en/home>
- **Guggenheim Museum, New York** – Online access to their collection - <https://www.guggenheim.org/collection-online>
- **Rijksmuseum, Amsterdam** - A variety of art works and articles to view - <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/rijksmuseum>
- **Uffizi Gallery Florence** – A variety of art works and articles to view - <https://artsandculture.google.com/partner/uffizi-gallery?hl=en>
- **British Museum** – Brilliant virtual tour of hundreds of artifacts in the British Museum identified by timeline, region or theme, each with pictures and explanations (in addition to Curators Corner below) - <https://britishmuseum.withgoogle.com/>

- **English Heritage** – For many of their properties there is a history and virtual tour, eg for Stonehenge and Dover Castle - <https://www.english-heritage.org.uk/visit/>
- **National Theatre** – Live streaming of a different performance each week - <https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/nt-at-home>
- **Shakespeare plays** – Clips from the RSC at <https://www.rsc.org.uk/education/teacher-resources/online-performances> or at The show must go on - <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KOAj4ANGKw&t=3327s>
- **Royal Opera House** – Our house to your house series with regular changes - <https://www.youtube.com/user/RoyalOperaHouse>
- **British Museum** – Curators Corner videos which also change each week <https://www.youtube.com/user/britishmuseum>
- **Science Museum** - Virtual tours etc <https://www.youtube.com/user/sciencemuseum>
- **National Trust** – Regular podcasts available from the National Trust - <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/features/listen-to-podcasts-from-the-national-trust>

Activities around your home:-

- Have you revisited your photo albums either to sort them out or to remind you of the times before lockdown??
- Have you sorted out your shed or your garage recently??
- Have you written down your own family memories or your family history??
- Sort out the loft or the spare room – wherever things go that you are not sure what to do with!
- “Spring clean” your paperwork – have you got bills etc going back years, well now is the opportunity to sort them out.
- Revisit your bookshelves – which books have you not read yet? Which ones are well worth reading again?
- Your own Repair Shop – the BBC Repair Shop programme is filmed at the Weald and Downland Museum which we now won't be visiting until July **2021**. Do you have a cherished item that is looking a little sad – a family heirloom or something that has special memories. Why not have a go at restoring the item to its former glory – it can be very satisfying!

Please do make the most of your time while staying well and staying safe!!